

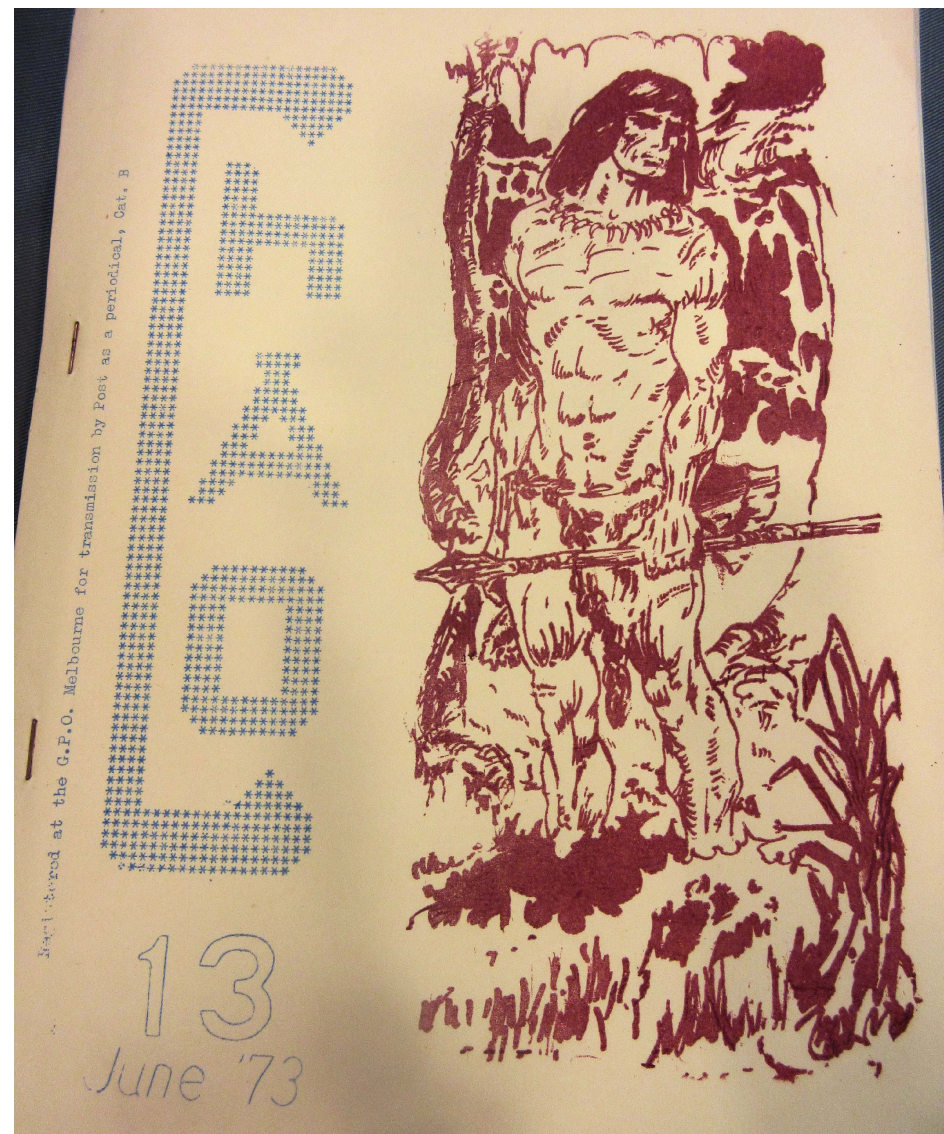
# iOTA 12

## November 2017

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**Art:** Sue Clarke, p.9; Dick Jenssen, p.13; Mike Gilbert, p.16;  
 Danny Strelkov, p.22; anon, p.25



*iOTA* is the little efanzone put together by Leigh Edmonds who can be contacted electronically, and in almost no other way, at [hhandc@hemsleypark.com.au](mailto:hhandc@hemsleypark.com.au).

This little efanzone is produced as a progress report on my project to research and write a history of Australian fandom, focusing on the period between 1956 and 1975. *iOTA* is a research tool and document, containing some of the material and thoughts that will be used in writing the history. It is also a place where I publish bits and pieces of the writing and art from Australia's fannish past to help introduce you to the rich vein of material that previous generations of Australian fans have left us. If you want more details about this history project you'll find them in the first issue of *iOTA*.

*iOTA* is more or less available from me for 'the usual' but two things bring its editor the greatest fannish pleasure. One is great gobs of egoboo and the other is a contribution to the discourse of understanding and writing a history of Australian fandom. If all else fails, issues of *iOTA* are put up on *efanzines.com* fairly soon after I've completed them.

### **Thisish's Cover**

Steven Campbell is the artist for this cover, a talented fellow who is these days living in Warrnambool on the south west coast of Victoria and makes an appearance from time to time.

You will also notice, I hope, that this cover is printed in two colours on buff card. However, those colours were not common for those using the mimeo reproduction process, suggesting that the editor of *Chao 13*, John Alderson, had a number of colour drums that he used in printing his fanzine. If only he could have laid off the green ink for the interior printing.

## **Editorial - Progress Report Sydney Expedition**

Due to the health condition I mentioned a few issues ago I thought it prudent to travel between Ballarat and Sydney by surface transport rather than by air. Of the two options, road or rail, I took the rail option because the overnight timings were more convenient for getting in a full day's work in Sydney and because, what with becoming an old fan and tired, I got a hefty discount on the train fare.

You will recall that, a few issues ago, I printed a report by John Foyster about going to the Sydney convention in 1970 by train and how long it took he and Elizabeth to get there. I can tell you that things have not improved much in the following 47 years and it is something I will never do again. The first four or five hours of the journey were perhaps novel, but eleven hours of it was almost at the limits of my endurance. Now I know why they invented airliners; the passenger comfort is better (even down the poor-people's end) and the ordeal is over much quicker.

Sydney hasn't changed much since I was last there, which was earlier this year for an aviation studies conference at Sydney University. Just to keep that ball rolling my first appointment was with one of the organizers of that conference and we chatted about things academic and aviation for an hour or so bright and early on Wednesday morning. After that I had nothing else on the agenda apart from three days in Rare Books at the Fisher Library of Sydney University and then a day with Doug Nicholson, a Sydney BNF of the 1950s.

Planning to spend three days in Rare Books was something of a gamble since my intention was to trawl through the fanzines

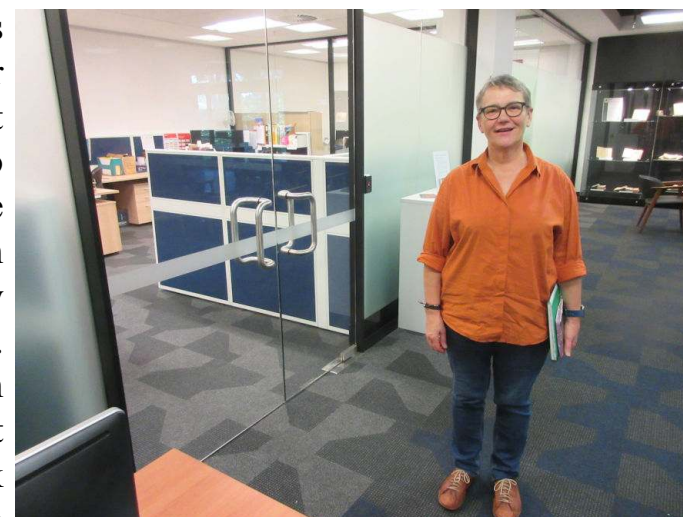


that Ron Graham had collected and donated to the library. I knew from my research, and the 1972 paper that Ron wrote about early Australian fanzines, that he had assembled a large collection of fanzines, five boxes of Australian and over a dozen boxes of overseas fanzines. However, there was no catalogue for what was in those boxes so I had organized with Julie Price, one of the librarians there, to have the five boxes ready when I got there with some of the boxes of overseas fanzines in reserve in case I ran out of things to look at. The only equipment I took with me was my trusty digital camera and a list of all the Australian fanzines I've already seen so I didn't duplicate earlier work.

The entrance to Rare Books in the Fisher Library, hard to miss when you know where it is



Rare Books at the Fisher Library is not much different to Rare Books in the Monash University Library in Melbourne. The main difference is that you have to work hard to miss Rare Books at Monash -



Julie Price, a princess among librarians

turn right after you go in the main entrance of the library and it is difficult to miss. Rare Books in the Fisher Library is a little harder to find, being on the first floor of the building which is two levels down from the main entrance. My discovery of Rare Books there was not helped by the attendant at the main desk who remembered that Rare Books was on the second floor (which it apparently had been) and so I spent some time wandering around there before getting new and more accurate directions.

Julie Price welcomed me and was a very knowledgeable, pleasant and helpful person - like most librarians I meet. (Do librarians have bad days too, like the rest of us?) She had got out the first three boxes of Ron Graham's Australian fanzines and they were ready and waiting for me. After a discussion of what I was doing and how Rare Books works, and the usual formalities of gaining access to these kinds of places, Julie let me loose in the reading area with the first box.



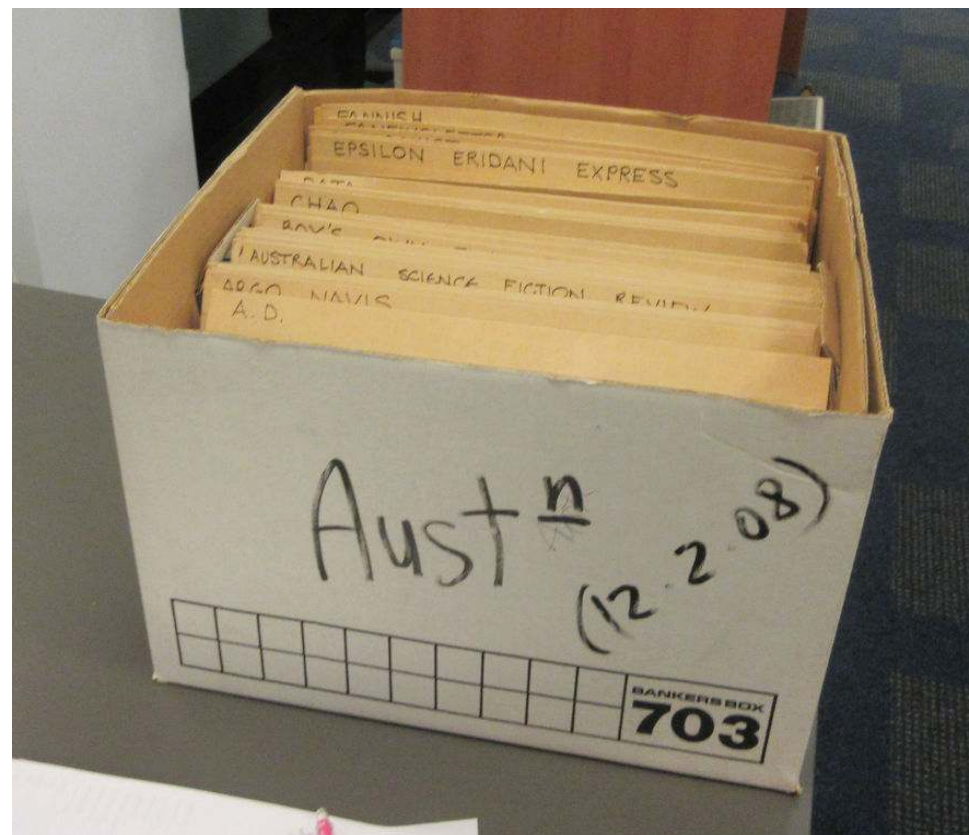
Where I sat and worked for three days. The little black box on the corner of the table is the recharger for the camera battery, a very necessary item.

Rare Books at the Fisher Library is open from 9.30am to 4.30pm and I spent as much time as I could there, taking only short breaks for lunch each day. Of the five boxes I had hoped to see I only got through four of them and took over 7,000

images of pages of the fanzines in them.

The first three boxes comprises fanzines in alphabetic order, beginning with *AD*, published by Adelaide University fans in the early 1970s and concluding with *Zeus*, published by a consortium of pre-war Sydney fans. Each title has been sorted into its own manila folder in alphabetic order and there have been other fanzines inserted between those folders, but still in overall alphabetic order. The fourth box was a lot more jumbled but there were fanzines grouped by title, some in plastic folders, others loose. I'm assuming that the fanzines in the fifth box are in a similar arrangement. From the arrangement of the four boxes I saw I gained the impression that Ron had begun sorting them into order but had not completed the process. I can only wonder what are in the boxes of overseas fanzines in Rare Books, judging by some of the rarities among the Australian fanzines I'm certain

there would be many very interesting and rare items in the other boxes as well.



The first of Ron Graham's boxes of Australian fanzines

With the exception of a few photocopied issues of *Cosmos* and *Luna*, all the fanzines I saw were in good to excellent condition. Looking at the collection over all it seems that Ron went to some trouble to collect early Australian fanzines but was more relaxed about collecting later ones, from the mid 1960s on. There is not a complete run of either *Australian SF Review* or *SF*

*Commentary*, which seems odd, and there is not one copy of *Futurian Observer* which was a prominent early Sydney fanzine or *Etherline*. In any event, the overall collection gives a very good picture of Australian fanzines from the beginning (with quite a few well preserved issues of *Ultra*) through until the mid 1970s. It is a pity that they are not catalogued but I imagine doing that would mean breaking up the collection as it went from Ron to the Library, and there is value in Ron's organization too.

Before going on to mention what else I did in Sydney, a comment or two on the value and strengths of the three major Australian fanzine collection in Sydney, Monash (in Melbourne) and Murdoch (in Perth) universities. It appears to me that the three collections compliment rather than compete with each other. The Sydney collection is strongest in the earliest Australian fanzines, having almost nothing published after about 1975. The Murdoch collection is strongest in the period from the late 1960s to the late 1980s - partly because the main phase of my fanzine accumulation was from about 1970 to about 1987 when they went to Murdoch. That collection also has Don Tuck's collection of early Australian fanzines which means there's some doubling up between the two collections, but not as much as I expected. The two strengths of the Monash collection is the Melbourne SF Club fanzine collection and the John Foyster papers. What I have seen of these suggests that most fanzines from the Melbourne SF Club collection cover the period after 1980 through until the 2000s. The Foyster papers are a true lucky dip but, since everything he had up to 1966 was destroyed in a house fire that year, there is little from before that period in his papers.

Between the three collections (not counting John Ryan's

collection in the National Library and other assorted collections) I think we have a very good and extensive collection of Australian fanzines from the beginning through until the recent past. A small part of the collections have been catalogued and it is worth consulting the various university libraries on-line catalogues to see what is available. However, significant parts of the holdings of each of the universities has not been catalogued - the Ron Graham collection at Sydney, my collection at Murdoch and the Foyster papers at Monash for example. As a result the only way to do extensive research is simply to go to those libraries and spend time trawling. For some this would be very tedious process, for me this is as close as it gets to an adventure as I'm likely to get, or want to get.

So what else did I do in Sydney?

I booked a little apartment about twenty minutes walk from the Fisher Library and spent most of my time either at the Library photographing fanzines and in the apartment beginning the process of sorting the photographs into folders, each one containing the images for an individual fanzine. This is a tiring task and I only started on it in Sydney.

On the first evening I found a Turkish take-away place close to where I was staying and got something from there. I have no idea what made its food Turkish but it was not great and I did not go back.

After the second day in the library I walked down to Central railway station - about twenty minutes - to get an Opal card for the Sydney public transport system. Earlier in the day I had chatted to Doug Nicholson on the phone and he'd mentioned the Sydney





The Sydney tram at the Dulwich Hill Station

light rail network. There is a tram track right outside Central so, with my new card in hand, I got on the tram that pulled up there and rode out to the end of the line and back again. They call it a network but, at the moment it's only one line and, unlike Melbourne's extensive tram network which runs mainly on the city's roads, this track ran mainly on what appeared to be an old railway alignment. It was interesting to see inner city Sydney from the comfort of what, to anyone who has traveled on Melbourne trams, seems like a very ordinary tram. But somehow Sydneysiders seem to inhabit their trams in a different way to Melbournians. After I got back to Central I walked up Parramatta Road in search of a Mexican restaurant but the only one I saw was crowded, so I kept on walking. Eventually I found a restaurant selling what they called Indian Street Food, which was not what you usually find in an Australian Indian restaurant, but very pleasant. While enjoying this, and a glass of plonque, I sat and chatted with Valma back in Ballarat on the mobile phone. One of the great advantages of modern technology.

After the third day in the library I wandered back to my little

apartment through the side streets of that part of the city. I was particularly intrigued by a motel I'd seen just off the main road which looked like the place Valma and I had stayed in often while we were working on the Barwon Water history and I wanted to have a good look at it. Any of you who are familiar with Geelong will know the Mercure hotel that sits up on the corner of Gheringhap and Myers Streets overlooking the city centre and will be interested to learn that the same hotel exists just off Paramatta Road at the south end of Sydney University. A building that is big and significant in Geelong is insignificant and dwarfed by other buildings in Sydney. A little bit of Geelong in Sydney or, more likely, a little bit



The Geelong motel in Sydney

of Sydney in Geelong. My stfnal brain wondered if the two identical motels might be an alien matter transmitting device so if you are the right kind of alien you enter a lift in the building in Geelong and get out in Sydney or, more happily, for some, get in in Sydney and get out in Geelong.

After this discovery I wandered the back streets a little more and found a pizza place only a few meters from where I was staying, ordered one of their vegetarian gourmet pizzas (hold the



The sign just outside the Edgecliff railway station

olives) and retired for another evening sorting images.

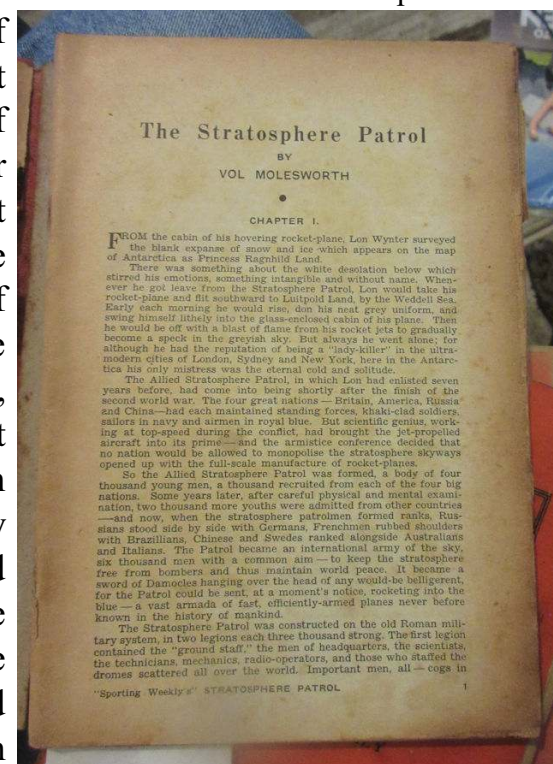
Doug Nicholson and I has arranged for me to wait for him at a spot in the Edgecliff railway station the following morning at 11 so I caught the bus down to Central station and found that Edgecliffe is on the line to Bondi. So, having a little time to kill, I went out to Bondi, which isn't the beach at Bondi (but there were huge queues of tourists waiting to get on the local bus to go to the beach from the station). I wandered there for a while but, despite the name, it was like any other shopping centre in Australia so I caught the train back to Edgecliff and wandered around there. Across the road from the station was a big sign saying 'Literacy is Freedom' which made me think there might be a decent bookshop over there. No, there was an office for a literacy promoting organization, but there was instead a Violin Shop. I have never seen any of the orchestral string instruments close up so I went in and had a lovely time looking at the beautiful instruments and

chatting to the staff. I also bought the score of the Bach sonatas and partita for solo violin, not that my music reading skills are very good but I thought it would make a good souvenir of the trip. (The shop proprietor suggested that I should get a music stand and leave the score open in a prominent place in our house so visitors would think we are highly intelligent and intellectual, 'like knowing Latin only better'.)

I was not long back from that shop before Doug arrived. By then I'd got tired of trying to make sense of Bach and lowered myself to reading Doc

Smith's *Children of the Lens*. As a result our conversation started off talking about stf, and went on from there, a lot of which I recorded for posterity, some of it about Sydney fandom in the 1950s. His wife was off visiting her family so we had the house to ourselves, uninterrupted. At about three in the afternoon Valma rang to ask how my interview with Doug had gone and I told her, 'we're still at it'. A bit later we stopped for a bite to eat and a bit later again we began

I forgot to take a photo of Doug but here's a picture of one of the things he showed me while I was at his place





looking at photos. Around 6.30 Valma rang me again to see how it had all gone. 'Still going,' I told her. But Valma was concerned that I was wearing myself out (and Doug) so I told her we'd wrap it up and Doug has me back at the station at about 7 in the evening.

Doug is a very enjoyable and entertaining person whose politics line up nicely with mine. Much of what we talked about will end up in the history I have to write but the afternoon was a valuable experience in helping me understand that, although the Sydney Futurian view of Australian fandom may be the dominant one to those who were not around at the time, there was also a branch of fandom in Sydney much closer in temperament to the deliberately unorganized Melbourne SF Group of the same period. On occasions they called themselves the Sydney Science Fiction Group or, more commonly, the Thursday Night Group. Melbourne fans since the 1950s have considered the strict organization of the Futurian Society of Sydney bonkers and the wrong way to go about organizing fandom, but I'm now beginning to get a handle on the fact that the big split in Sydney fandom in the early to mid 1950s came from those who were allied to the Futurians and members of the Thursday Night Group. My fannish temperament is strongly on the side of the Thursday Night Group but I will have to be more balanced when it comes to write the history. More about this later.

Back at Central on Saturday night the streets were starting to fill up with people and I did not relish the thought of having to fight my way through crowds that are dense to one who lives in Ballarat to find a bus back to where I was staying. So I caught a taxi. It pulled me up outside the Pizza joint so I ordered a Mexican pizza and took it back to the apartment. Having just about burned

my brain out over the previous four days I turned on the tv for the first time and was greeted by the sight of one of the Doctor's young female assistants pretending to be Queen Victoria. It took me a short while to realize I was not watching a new episode of Dr Who.

The next morning I was up bright and early to catch the train all the way back to civilization. The trip was no more comfortable than the trip up but it was daylight and so I spent the



The Sydney-Melbourne express on a Sunday afternoon. Welcome to the 1980s.

eleven hours gazing out on the south-east Australian countryside gliding by (jolting might be a better descriptor). What a lovely land to live in at this time of the year when everything is green and

flourishing. The bit I liked best was out over the plains between Wagga and Albury and then across the plains of northern Victoria into Melbourne. The only moment of excitement was pulling into Junee and seeing two burly coppers waiting on the platform. They went to a carriage at the back of the train so I don't know what had happened there, but the long stop gave me time to get to the buffet car for a bite to eat without being tossed around by the roughness of the ride.



What a pleasure, after those eleven hours, to get into one of the Victorian regional rail trains with their comfortable seats and smooth ride. In no time I was back in Ballarat, but it took my inner ears a long



We cross the Mighty Murray River and return to civilization

time to calm down after the eleven hours of jolting they'd experienced coming down from Sydney. As I said at the beginning, never again.

So, you may ask, what did I learn from my four days in Sydney? I gained a much better understanding of the dynamics of Sydney fandom in the 1950s, the failure of which led to the creation of a new, Melbourne based fandom in the 1960s. Although Australian fandom went into recess after the 1956 convention and the end of *Etherline* I'm beginning to see the outlines of what happened in the period up to the 1966 Easter convention in Melbourne, a period which had previously been a 'dark ages' to me.

## To Be Done

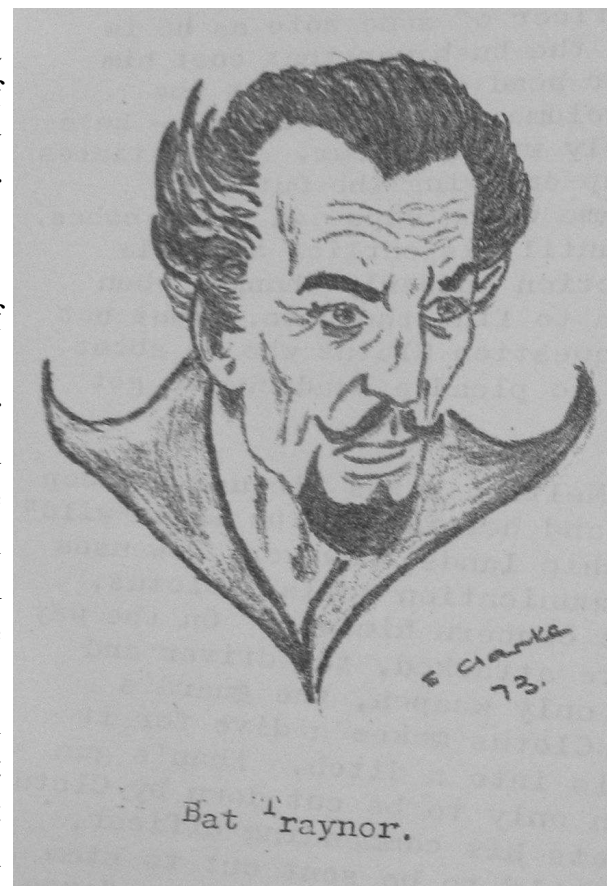
The over 7,000 pages of photos I took now have to be sorted, read and converted into evidence for the history. I was beginning to get on top of all the fanzines that I had already copied

but I feel that I'm back at the bottom of the hill, pushing that boulder upwards again. So, apart from a trip or two to Rare Books at Monash University I expect to be spending the vast majority of my time in front of this computer making use of all the material I picked up in Sydney.

## A Note About Appearance

So far in iOTA I've tried to make the reproduction of the images I use as good as possible, mostly by scanning rather than photographing them.

While this is good as a policy it takes up a lot of time and had I taken my scanner to the Fisher Library Rare Books collection I would have seen only about half of what I did get through. Consequently, in order to give good representation to all the art that has appeared in Australian fanzines I'm going to have to use images taken as photographs rather than scans. This means that the reproduction will not be as good as I would like and some of the



Sue Clarke, *Ark* 2 p.24, 1974

images will be a bit skewed because the camera was not directly over then when I clicked the shutter. However, I think it is important to show you the wide range of what Australian fan artists did (and what some overseas fan artists did for Australia) even if the reproduction is not perfect. Bear in mind that *iOTA* is not the history of Australian fandom, it is a working document towards that history and when the history is written and published proper scans will be taken and all the necessary clearances obtained, for writing and illustrations.

## 1941 - A Grand Plan for Australian Fanzines

One of the reasons given for the great falling out among pre-war Sydney fans was said to be the competition for material for their fanzines. This may be partly the truth, but another is some of the difficult personalities that caused trouble again in the 1950s.

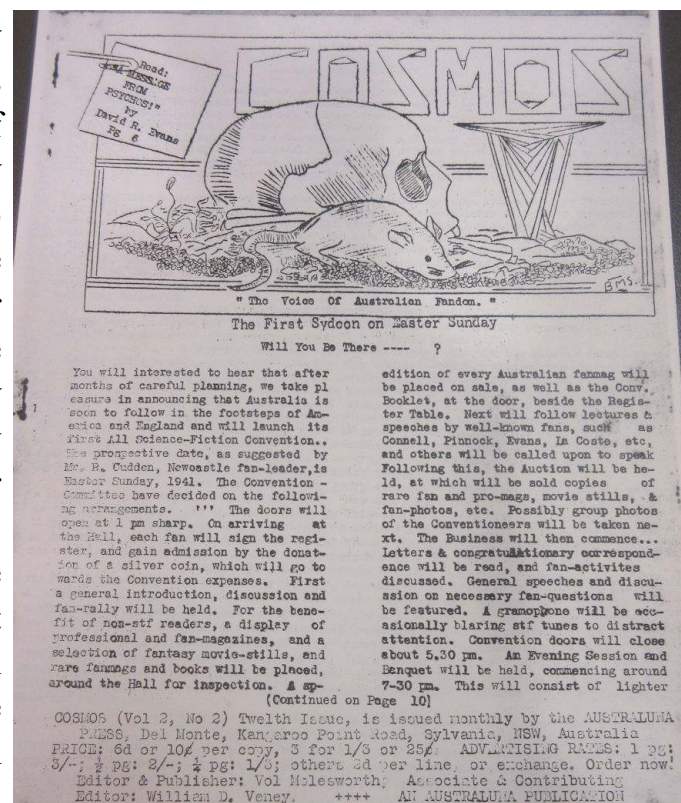
Despite this problem the (almost always) reasonable Bill Veney did his best to end the conflict between feuding fans by instigating the first Sydney SF Conference in December 1940 that we reported on in *iOTA 10*, reprinted from the third issue of *Melbourne Bulletin*, published in January 1941. In the following issue of *Melbourne Bulletin*, also published in January 1941, Veney put forward a plan to rationalize Australia's fanzine publishing by allocating particular parts of what was being written locally to suitable fanzines. It was a worthy idea but it didn't work, telling fanzine editors what they can do is easy but making it stick makes herding cats look easy. As a result, Sydney fans continued their feuding ....

Even though Veney's grand plan failed I'm reprinting this item from *Melbourne Bulletin* because it gives something of the

flavour of early Australian fanzines and the kinds of material that they published. It also gives me an excuse to publish cover images from some of these early fanzines that I saw in the Fisher Library.

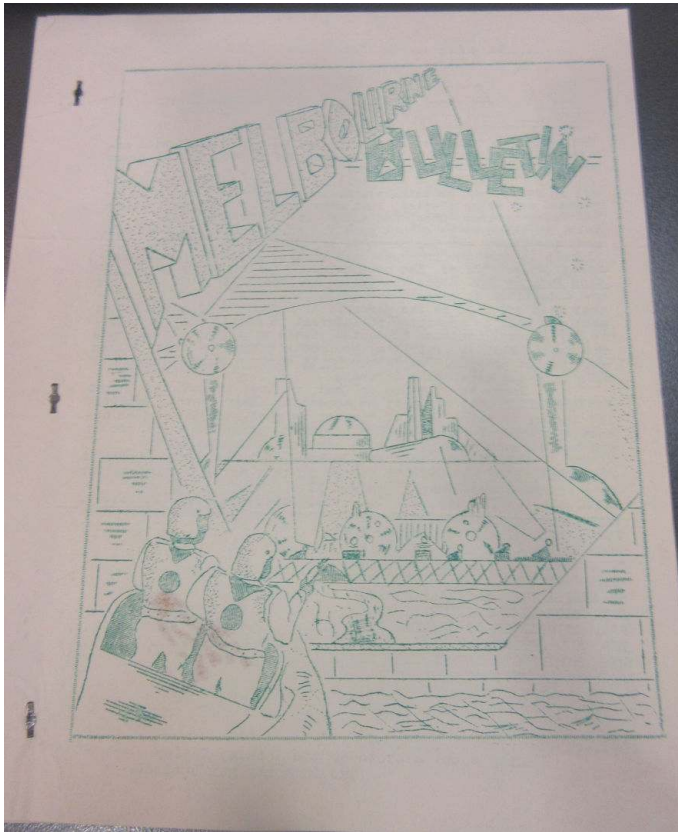
It is one thing to read about pre-war Australian fanzines (see the Veney article in *iOTA 03* and Ron Graham's paper in *iOTA 4*) but seeing

them in the paper is another thing. The piles of *Ultra*, *Cosmos* and *Zeus* that were published in just over two years between late 1939 and the end of 1941 bring home the immense amount of effort that the small band of Australian fans put into their fanzine publishing. I have yet to form an opinion about where this huge burst of publishing energy came from but I'd hazard a guess that it was partly the excitement of finding an outlet for their creative energies and partly the need to create fanzines that



Vol 2 No 2 of *Cosmos*, probably published in late 1940. This is a black and white photocopy





The sixth issue of Warwick Hockley's *Melbourne Bulletin*, probably published in early 1941

Ackerman's *Voice of the Imagi-Nation*, Warner's *Spaceways* and Tucker's *Le Zombie*.

### SITUATION - FANMAGS - 1941

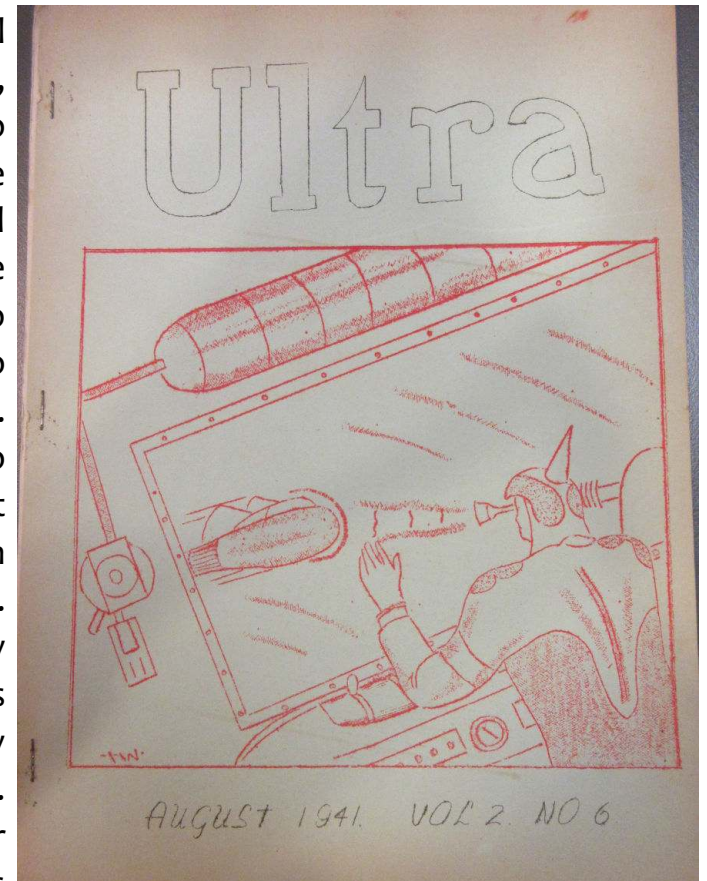
**William D Veney**

Now that fan magazines in Australia have reached formidable proportions, it is time we took stock of the situation and made some plans for future progress. With 'A-F', 'OZ', 'RA', 'OBS', 'BEN' now definitely established, and an 'agreement'

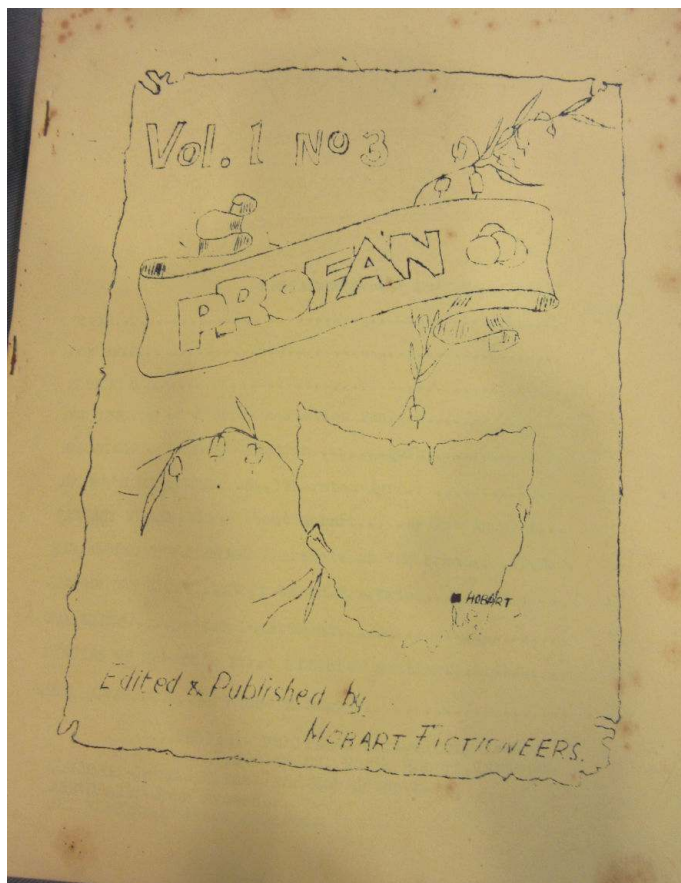
brought Australian fandom into the international fannish network, helping to overcome something of the isolation from the rest of the English speaking world that Australians felt in the days before the Boeing 747. It is also interesting to see the influence of overseas fanzines in what Australian fans were publishing, in particular

between official and pseudo 'Z's', we can be said to have passed the experimental stage and are now prepared to advance to something new. But what is it to be? As yet it must remain an undefined field. New developments create new situations. However, I'll offer my suggestions as to a possible new conception of Australian fan publications.

'Austra-Fantasy', situated as it is outside the arena of general activities, could mirror the opinions of all Aussey fans on matters of vital concern. Whereas a Sydney editor would be biased one way or another by current events or personal concern, Hockley is in a position to judge disagreements purely on their facial merit or demerit. He doesn't come into daily contact with many active fans and hasn't to tolerate their



The August 1941 issue of *Ultra*



The third issue of *Profan* published by Tasmanian fans in September 1941

various moods outside fan activities. Hence, articles of a type relating to fan doings and opinions should be submitted to his magazine. Offhand I would suggest: 'And May I Ask Why?', 'The Awakening', 'The First Sydney Convention', as suitable types. Articles that are near to the personal desires of the individual.

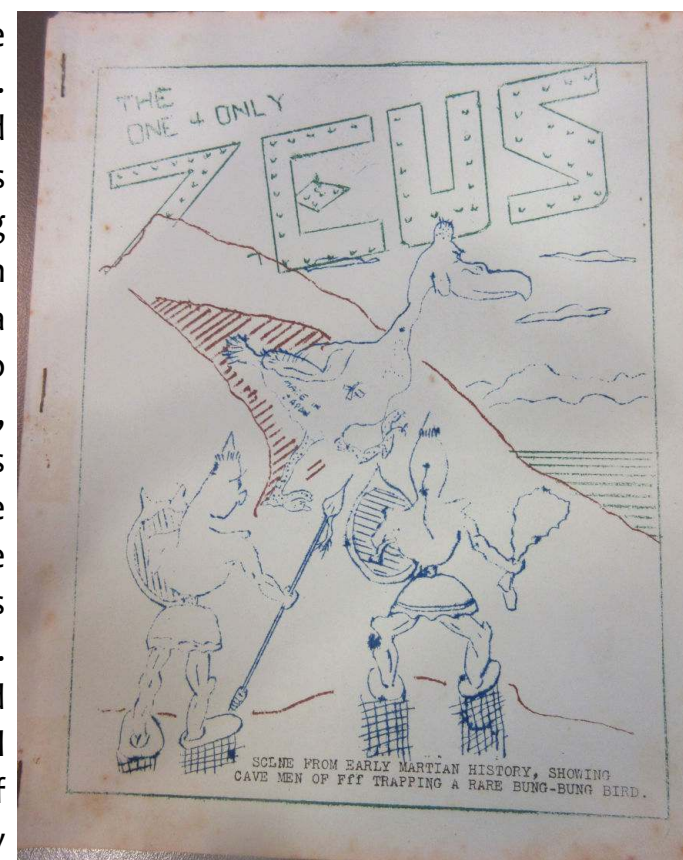
Assuming

'Cosmos' is to remain a larger size magazine & intends to appear regularly, then I would suggest the following scheme. The fiction content to remain high, roughly half the magazine, of a 'down to earth' style now appearing. Unusual and off trail should predominate, such as 'Pseudohuman', 'A Message from Psychos', 'Bones of the Ray', etc., The other half of the magazine could be letters commenting on general items, after

the idea of the first seven issues. Fan patter and news is always interesting especially when dished out à la Doktoro Vomsworth, whose remarks often make the difference between pickles and ice cream. This setup would be a logical continuance of the present policy when applied to the new order.

'Ultra' is

unfortunately placed under the barrage of the Futurian onslaught, but its editors still can gain material from other quarters so a definite and important place must be found for it. Ultra should lean more to the review and deep thought styles of articles, as represented by 'Creature of Imagination', 'The Chances Are'. 'As I See Fort', 'SF Comics'. [Mkgawd, Bill, not that thing!] while the fiction could be allowed a free hand such



The final issue of *Zeus*, produced by a Sydney collective of fans in Spring 1942



as: 'Time Immemorial', 'John Kent, Dimensional Explorer', 'Death's Head Through the Void'. Stories where new ideas are introduced or amazing adventures experienced. Other-worldish stories, with a tang of the unknown and fantastic. As with 'Cosmos', an intensification of certain existing conditions.

We now come to a magazine radically different to the type already discussed. 'Futurian Observer'. Unlike the larger magazines, it does not depend for its contents upon contributors, but from, in most cases, the personal writings of its editors. As a general rule it attempts to stick right behind the type of material suggested by its name, that of observing all facts of interest to the average science fiction fan. When crisis arrives, however, it is easily and quickly converted into a propaganda sheet, giving editorial views of current events on the fan front. But even here a change could be made. With the cooperation of the business manager, Bert Castellari, it could be a detailed record of the FSS's activities for the benefit of interstate and overseas fans. Besides being the general reference of FSS members. This is actually a personal matter, and this is of little interest of the fan-contributor.

'Melbourne Bulletin' is in much the same state of affairs as OBS and the same plan could be applied. Few fans are aware of the exact situation in Melbourne and Hobart. So BEN could easily enlighten us by interview, article and sidelight on the general state of affairs in the southern portion of Australia. [It shall be done.]

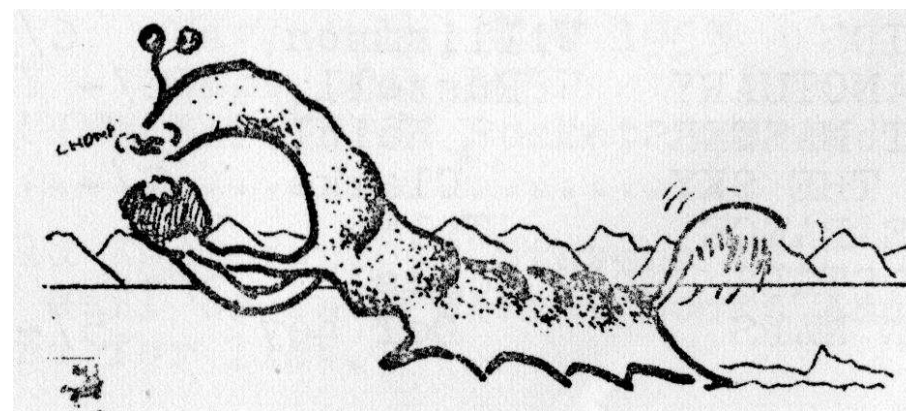
The position existing between the two 'Zeus's' is not yet cleared so an exact plan cannot be formulated. I won't state

any opinion except to quote my words when the first 'Zeus' was launched ... 'The need for an Australian fan mag devoted primarily to humor has been a necessity for quite some time, and it is my opinion that 'Zeus' will fill this need ...' Well, what about it boys? Who'll take the lead in this direction.

In conclusion, may I point out that none of my ideas are actually new, but merely a clarification of the present trends and opinions. By deciding the scheme best suited for the individual requirement, fan editors can narrow down the type of material required for publication and give readers a clearer conception of what to expect from their magazine. Contributors could then be encouraged to attempt different styles of writing, and plot construction for different magazines. All this should lead to a greater enjoyment of fan activities.

William D Veney

Melbourne Bulletin, January 1941



Dick Jenssen, *Etherline* 29, May 1954

## **Bride of 1953 - Sydney and Melbourne meet in Albury**

(If the 'Bride of ..' in the title above bemuses you, then you are too young to be reading this.)

I hope you will recall that in the previous issue of *iOTA* I published report from *Etherline 11* written by Ian Crozier about the business session of a get-together of Melbourne and Sydney fans in Albury in 1953. I said it was a pity that we didn't know more about this gathering and wrote, later in the issue, that if there were no more historical evidence to be found about other events that had taken place that weekend then they might as well not have happened at all in relation to a project to write a history of fandom in this period.

It turned out that I was wrong. In shuffling through the fanzines in Rare Books in the Fisher Library I came across a sheet of foolscap paper titled *Australian Science Fiction Society, Circular to Members, 20/0/53*. It contained two short reports of the weekend giving some details of the events that had taken place around the business session and I'm reprinting below. (Chris Nelson had the same thought and sent me a copy he had made of the same circular. It arrived about five minutes after I had finished transcribing these reports from the copy I'd made in Rare Books. Great minds for sure. Thanks Chris.)

I was wrong in the date that I gave for the conference as October 1953. This report gives the dates as 8-9 August. I was inexplicably mistaken in giving that date because both *Etherline 11* in which the Crozier report was written and this circular bear publication dates of 20 August 1953, less than two weeks after the conference. So much for my historical accuracy!

Both reports paint the conference as having been a very enjoyable affair. However, the hopes of having more of these get-togethers does not seem to have born fruit. There was another conference, in Canberra a couple of years later, but perhaps the difficulties of traveling in Australia in the 1950s and the events that transpired in Sydney not long after this conference put paid to those ideas.

### **Melbourne-Sydney Conference at Albury (Two Reports)**

By now, most fans will have heard of the first Interstate SF Conference between Melbourne and Sydney, held at Albury on the week end of August 8-9, henceforth to be known as the Riverinacon. The business side has already been covered in Futurian Society News and Etherline; but here are my impressions of some of the more lurid details of that memorable week end.

Incident No 1: At the last moment, Sydney fan Don Lawson decided to attend, arranged to board the train at Strathfield ('All trains stop at Strathfield'). Imagine everyone's surprise when the train roared through without stopping! Those of us on the train regretted two things - Don's missing the train, and our missing his facial expression as we sailed past. Better luck next time, Don!

Incident No 2: Yours truly figured prominently in this one. On the Saturday morning eleven intrepid fen set off to scale the dizzy heights at whose summit towered the War Memorial, visible from all parts of the town. It had been raining. At one place water was running across the earth path. This character



thought he would be smart, commencing to climb an earth embankment to avoid the flood. 'Quel Maladroit!' He sank at least two feet into the mire. It had been raining - for two weeks! Has anyone seen a pair of black (sorry, dirty brown) shoes?

Albury is quite an impressive town - population 25,000, hotels 35, picturesque countryside, the Hume Weir, etc. Thanks to Albury fan Jack O'Shaughnessy we had no worries about accommodation or transport over the week end. On Saturday morning we toured Albury on foot. Saturday afternoon we held a semi-formal business session. Saturday night three went to the pictures ('Frankenstein meets the Wolf Man' and 'The Cat Creeps') while the rest of us yarned in the hotel lounge - what? No liquor after midnight?

Sunday morning was not particularly energetic until O'Shaughnessy arrived with two cars. Off we went to inspect the Hume Weir. Late in the afternoon all but one of the Melbourne group left by car, farewelled by hearty handshakes, well-wishing and many requests and promises to 'write soon'. Those remaining then adjourned to the lounge, where Ian Crozier and Sydney fans discussed future fan projects.

This conference was marked by its very friendly atmosphere and goodwill. Before it ended both groups were planning things as one ('Why shouldn't we do this, or that...') It was a great success and delegates went away with many stimulating ideas and a genuine desire for co-operation and future meetings later.

Another conference may be held soon, this time between Brisbane and Sydney, maybe in November. Following, we hope,

early in the new year, to have a meeting between Melbourne, Sydney and the newly formed Adelaide group. How about it, Adelaide?

– Brian Finch

For the general purpose of getting together and interchanging ideas twelve fans - six from Sydney - five from Melbourne and one of Albury - met and mingled with delightful informality at Albury in the Conference. The first relay from Sydney arrived on Friday by day train (Riverina Express) with the second team following on the Saturday morning by night train (Spinal Depress).

Here, I feel it incumbent upon me to state, with all due humility and respect, that I had not quite realized just how far the germ of science fiction had spread - I am referring, of course, to the New South Wales Transport Department. The futuristic foresight of the NSWTD cannot be too highly commended, particularly in regard to their 2<sup>nd</sup> Class, non-sleeper, chin-up, chest-out seating accommodation. Obviously designed with an eye towards compulsory evolution, it evokes tantalizing visions of descendants with no legs; slide-rule, collapsible spines, and removable, sponge-rubber heads! Food, in the shape of pie a la carte et horse, was provided (at a nominal charge) by courtesy of the NSWTD at various points along the route, and entertainment in the form of party games like 'Who can find the Iced Water Drinking Tap In the Dark' and 'Sleeping' - an ingenious game of chance - whiled away the witching hours and the 371½ miles to Albury.

Having arrived at our destination in the early hours of the

morning and being suitably installed at the Albion Hotel, we set out on a short walk to the War Memorial. This prominent feature is situated at the top of a steep, straight, yellow earth road and commands an all-embracing view of the city and the surrounding verdant countryside, set in gently rolling hills. Here photographs were taken before the return journey to the hotel.

Saturday afternoon was devoted to the main business session of the Conference, held at the residence of our attendant Albury fan and Conference host, John O'Shaughnessy. Reports on fan activity from Melbourne (Bob McCubbin) and Sydney (Graham Stone) were tendered, and many constructive suggestions were put forward in regard to the programme of the forthcoming 1954 Convention to be held in Sydney. After an excellent afternoon tea provided by our host, and having inspected his imposing science fiction library, we wended out weary way back to the hotel, where some of the party spent the rest of the evening chatting over their drinks while others betook themselves to a double-feature horror show.

Sunday morning saw the Hume weir, some 10 miles distant, survive our tour of inspection, while the afternoon provided us with a fine opportunity for discussing science fiction over sundry liqueurs before a blazing log fire. It was at this point that the majority of the southern visitors dragged themselves unwillingly back in the general direction of Melbourne, leaving the remaining conspirators to compose themselves for their respective journeys homeward.

The Albury Conference, held in pleasant surroundings and

with congenial company, was an unqualified success, and we look forward to many more such happy gatherings, which give us an excuse for meeting and discussing science fiction with our co-fans from Interstate

Loralie Giles

*Australian Science Fiction Society, Circular to Members, 20 August 1953 (Graham Stone ed)*



Mike Gilbert, *Australian SF Review* 19, cover, 1969

## About History Facts and Values

In this segment from Carr's *What is History?* he discusses the relationship between - and also the differences between - facts and values. He says that the historical facts we chose to use in writing history, and the ways in which we chose to use them, are dictated by our values and that our values are created by the facts of our environment, upbringing and education. I agree.

This poses for me something of a dilemma. When I discovered fandom one of the things that attracted me was its subversive intellectualism. What kept me in fandom was its combination of a way of having fun with ideas, its dedication to hard work if it was necessary to achieve a goal and the camaraderie of a shared interest in science fiction and other matters. The other factor in this upbringing, fannish and otherwise, was a general disregard (disdain even) in Melbourne fandom for what I understood to be early Sydney fandom. So, that is my background and my bias.

After embarking on this project I've come to understand that my beliefs about and bias against early Sydney fandom is a result of the values that I and those fans making up Sydney fandom held. Just as importantly, I did not have in my understanding all the facts about Sydney fandom and so my thinking on the subject was quite wrong. This was as a result of my fannish values and how they had led me to an incomplete understanding of the facts.

As a result of my research and writing I am beginning to form the hypothesis that the schisms in Sydney fandom were the result of different value sets about the importance and role of science fiction in society held by fans who came into opposition

with each other as a result of these values. As to which group was right and which wrong, all my fannish values tend me towards the Thursday Night Group rather than the Futurians, and that is something I will have to sort out for myself.

What is beginning to interest me is why this schism did not develop in Melbourne in the way that it did in Sydney. Melbourne fans certainly held a range of value beliefs but, with one exception which we will come to in the next issue, Melbourne fans put their differences aside and co-operated in a way that all the fans in Sydney could not. It is tempting to put the difference down to personality clashes in Sydney, but are things that simple? This is an important question because working out what was going on in Sydney fandom creates a lense through which to see more clearly what was going on in Melbourne.

'Compare and contrast' as those essay questions used to say. However the challenge is that what we compare and contrast depends on the values we hold and the facts at our disposal. Writing about Sydney and/or Melbourne is starting to turn this into a problem of binary opposites and Structuralism always did my head in. So, let's read what Carr has to say instead of watching me get myself even more confused:

Let us now take another look at this alleged dichotomy between fact and value. Values cannot be derived from facts. This statement is partly true, but partly false. You have only to examine the system of values prevailing in any period or in any country to realize how much of it is molded by the facts of the environment. In an earlier lecture I drew attention to the changing historical content of value-words like liberty, equality, or justice. Or take the Christian church as an institution largely



concerned with the propagation of moral values. Contrast the values of primitive Christianity with those of the medieval papacy, or the values of the medieval papacy with those of the Protestant churches of the nineteenth century. Or contrast the values promulgated today by, say, the Christian church in Spain, with the values promulgated by the Christian churches of the United States. These differences in values spring from differences of historical fact. Or consider the historical facts which in the last century and a half have caused slavery or racial inequality or the exploitation of child labor - all once accepted as morally neutral or reputable - to be generally regarded as immoral. The proposition that values cannot be derived from facts is, to say the least, one-sided and misleading. Or let us reverse the statement. Facts cannot be derived for values. This is partly true, but may also be misleading, and requires qualification. When we seek to know the facts, the questions which we ask, and therefore the answers which we obtain, are prompted by our system of values. Our picture of the facts of our environment is molded by our values, ie, by the categories through which we approach the facts; and this picture is one of the important facts which we have to take into account. Values enter into the facts and are an essential part of them. Our values are an essential part of our equipment as human beings. It is through our values that we have the capacity to adapt ourselves to our environment, and to adapt our environment to ourselves, to acquire that mastery over our environment, which has made history a record of progress. But do not, in dramatizing the struggle of man with his environment, set up a

false antithesis and a false separation between facts and values. Progress in history is achieved through the interdependence and interaction of facts and values. The objective historian is the historian who penetrates most deeply into this reciprocal process.

A clue to this problem of facts and values is provided by our ordinary use of the word 'truth' - a word which straddles the world of fact and the world of value, and is made up of elements of both. Nor is this an idiosyncrasy of the English language. The word for truth in the Latin languages, the German *Wahrheit*, the Russian *pravda*, all possess their dual character. Every language appears to require this word for a truth which is not merely a statement of fact and not merely a value judgement, but embraces both elements. It may be a fact that I went to London last week. But you would not ordinarily call it a truth: it is devoid of any value content. On the other hand, when the Founding Fathers of the United States in the Declaration of Independence referred to the self-evident truth that all men are created equal, you may feel that the value content of the statement predominates over the factual content, and may on that account challenge its right to be regarded as a truth. Somewhere between these two poles - the north pole of valueless facts and the south pole of value judgements still struggling to transform themselves into facts - lies the realm of historical truth. The historian, as I said in my first lecture, is balanced between fact and interpretation, between fact and value. He cannot separate them. It may be that, in a static world, you are obliged to pronounce a divorce

between fact and value. But history is meaningless in a static world. History in its essence is change, movement, or - if you do not cavil at the old-fashioned word - progress.

I return therefore in conclusion to Acton's description of progress as 'the scientific hypothesis on which history is to be written'. You can, if you please, turn history into theology by making the meaning of the past depend on some extra-historical and super-rational power. You can, if you please, turn it into literature - a collection of stories and legends about the past without meaning or significance. History properly so-called can be written only by those who find and accept a sense of direction in history itself. The belief that we have come from somewhere is closely linked with the belief that we are going somewhere. A society which has lost belief in its capacity to progress in the future will quickly cease to concern itself with its progress in the past. As I said at the beginning of my first lecture, our view of history reflects our view of society. I now come back to my starting-point by declaring my faith in the future of society and in the future of history.

E H Carr, *What is History?*, pp. 131-32.

### **1954- The Thursday Night Group**

I was going to go straight on to the fanzine review at this point but, having raised the matter of the two groups in Sydney, this seems to be an appropriate point to place this item.

(This issue is starting to get out of control again! In the previous issue I accused Bruce Gillespie of producing issues of *SF Commentary* that were too big for their own good and now I'm doing the same thing. At least, I'd like to think of *iOTA* as *Die*

*Meistersinger* rather than *Götterdämmerung*.)

Back at the beginning of the 1950s the Futurian Society of Sydney established an informal meeting group on Thursday evenings which eventually became competition to Futurian meetings and other functions. Some Futurians and Thursday Nighters mixed, others did not, and an antipathy developed between the two groups - but let's not go into the reasons for that here.

In many ways the Thursday Night gatherings had a great deal in common with meeting of the Melbourne SF Group with their informality, the availability of stf to borrow from a library or buy, a convivial atmosphere and other social activities. One of the things this group did to create additional cohesion was to publish a regular sheet of news and comment called *Scansion*. The twist with *Scansion* was that issues had different editors so that a wide range of opinions and views turned up in its pages. One thing many issues had in common, however, was their love of poking fun at the Futurians. Sad perhaps, but the Futurians at that time seem to have made themselves an attractive target for ridicule.

This is issue 18 of *Scansion* was produced by Doug Nicholson. Because of the rolling editorship there was always some confusion in the numbering of issue so there are two issues of *Scansion 18* and Chris Nelson - the expert on this period of Australian fandom - thinks that some of the gaps in numbering might be because the next editor lost track of what the number of the previous issue had been.

Some of the references to other people in this and other issues of *Scansion* are vague, probably because the people they refer to were not afraid to threaten libel action if they were not

please by what they read. This vagueness hides some of the details but Doug tells me that the person referred to towards the end of this issue who was frightening the unnamed Graham Stone was Nikki Gore; ‘ Fifty per cent taller than him and twice as wide’.

### **SCANSION**

**Number 18 Thursday, 9<sup>th</sup> December 1954.**

#### **SCIENCE FICTION NEWSLETTER .....**

After a break of some weeks, occasioned by two of SCANSION’s editors being tied up in University of Technology examinations, and the antics of a character who considered himself to have been insulted in SCANSION 17, edited by Pat Burke, SCANSION is back. This is good? ... well, take your own line on that.

The antics of the individual mentioned above deserve some comment; the attitude struck by one of science fiction fandom’s more controversial figures, who has been maintaining that Sydney fans have split into an intellectual and a ‘bobby socks’ (his expression) group, he and our ‘insulted’ friend belonging to the intellectual section, of course, lost a certain amount of its force when the latter arrived at the doorway of the bobby-sockers’ headquarters the other Thursday night, and announced ‘Where’s Burke? I’m going to flatten him.’

Was there a brutal assault on the editor of no 17? Was SCANSION put out of action for three weeks by intimidation? Is that how our libeled friend succeeded in disturbing our schedule? No. He was offered the opportunity of producing a SCANSION himself, and, apparently feeling he wished to unburden himself of a few choice remarks, he verbally accepted.

However, when we attempted to confirm his intended appearance in this printed form, the courtesy of a reply was not forthcoming. How ignorant can an ‘intellectual’ get?

The annual examinations have not left your present editor much time to scan the science fiction that’s around at the moment. WILD TALENT, serialized in NEW WORLDS, concluded as well as the earlier two parts had led us to believe it would. A slower moving tale than THE LONG LOUD SILENCE, and without the vividly convincing manner of THE CITY IN THE SEA, it is yet a story that is quite successful within the scope of the object the author has set himself. The plot is best described as ‘standard S-F thriller, with telepathy, spies, two beautiful women, and the usual trimmings’. However the standard of writing is high, and the sketching in of characters, if not strikingly good, is competent.

I have not yet embarked on THEY’D RATHER BE RIGHT, or GLADIATOR AT LAW, recent serials in ASTOUNDING and GALAXY respectively, since I haven’t as yet all the parts. However, the run of extremely bad short stories, and the two sad specimens of short novels in the Sept and Oct (USA) ASTOUNDING must be remarked upon. The shorts are all idea stories, skimpily written about ideas that were either silly or overworked to start with. Of the two short novels, Anderson’s THE BIG RAIN is a similar mixture of very convincing passages and interesting ideas, with laughable blood-and-gutspilling sequences and end-justifies-the-means philosophy, to his earlier UN-MAN. Fred Brown’s MARTIANS GO HOME reads as though pounded out without revision in a grim overnight session to pay



the rent. There is little more pathetic than an unsuccessful comedy, and this will certainly bring a tear to the eye of those who treasure the memory of PARADOX LOST and ARENA. The idea has been used to much better effect by John Banian.

The other item up for review is Sturgeon's blow-up of BABY IS THREE. This novel, given the International Fantasy Award for 1954, is far from being a successful whole. It is obviously BABY IS THREE with fore and aft parts tacked on by a Sturgeon who has become somewhat impressed with his own ability as a writer. The novel still repays the reader most handsomely, but the thought content and the character work groan under the load of far too much 'writing'.

With 1954 just about run down, the Fourth Convention is getting very close. We of the Committee regret that this coming Convention has not received the support from one of the more affluent sections of Sydney's fans that it deserves, a state of affairs which has necessitated our planning on a modest scale than otherwise would have been possible. However, the support given by the majority of Sydney fans and all fans interstate has allowed us to make arrangements for a show that should not compare unfavorably with the previous three. Secretary Arthur Haddon is preparing an announcement of details to be available at the same date as this SCANSION.

From the peace and quite of Thursday night science fiction club meetings, we are moved to wonder as to what, if anything, is going through the minds of our Futurian brothers. No, not the August executive leadership, whose motives seem to be quite apparent to all, but the seemingly feeble-minded and

spiritless rank and file, who will vote out a motion to ban fellow fans of different views from the Darlinghurst clubrooms, leaving only the proposer and seconder voting for the motion, then permit their executive to impose the ban anyhow. Whatever we may think of the present Director of that body, it seems that the rest of the membership put together lacks the character to oppose him. The only issue on which even rumor seems to indicate he has not been able to achieve his own way was in his desire to ban from the room a person from whom, we have been told, he feared physical violence. It appears that the Committee would not agree to this, and so SHE may still enter.

RIP Australasian Science Fiction Society: we learned at last year's Convention that the organizer of this society, possibly having extracted as much boost for a struggling little ego as he could, intended to allow it to collapse. However, he now seems to be trading on its past reputation to support his own little splinter organization, continuing mailing, but cutting his opponents off his mailing list, without of course, returning their subscriptions. ASFS did a fine job at one stage, it's a pity to see it fall on such times.

This issue published and edited by R D Nicholson, 24 Warren Road, Double Bay, NSW, Australia.

### **Fanzine Review**

**CHAO 13**, June 1973, John J Alderson, Havelock, Victoria 3465. 40¢ per copy or trades could be arranged.

John Alderson was one of those unforgettable characters you come across in fandom. He was a farmer near Havelock, in

central Victoria about an hour's drive north westish from Ballarat. So far as we could tell he lived a soliatry life on his farm but he emerged from time to time to attend conventions and he produced twenty issues of *Chao*, beginning in December 1970 and ending in 1976. What happened to him after that, I do not know.

This issue is fairly standard for the fanzine that *Chao* had matured into by mid 1973, forty-two pages of generally closely typed text in green ink with a couple of full page illustrations. John wrote most of the editorial content himself which comprised, in this issue, some interesting and fairly informative book reviews, a long article on the improbability of Asimov's 'Foundation' stories, good fanzine reviews - some written by Ian Baine - and a long autobiographical article which concluded with a section on how he discovered fandom through Mervyn Binns, John Bangsund and *Vision of Tomorrow*. The issue concludes with an extensive and rich letter column.

Because of John's isolation in the wilds of Victoria his fanactivity was also somewhat remote from the mainstream of Australian (and international) fandom. He made his own way that was different from what most fans were doing, which made *Chao* also different, creating a a unique place for itself. Not that John did not communicate with fans around the world, his letter column shows that he did, as do the illos provided by Danny Strelkov (probably a relative of the Argentine fan Mae Strelkov).

John's outlook on life was different however, partly due to his celtic heritage which he often celebrated and because of his life on the land - I can't think of any other fans who were farmers for a living. I liked to imagine him sitting on his front verandah listening to the galahs and smelling the scent of the scrub around

his house, cutting his stencils in the afternoon sun. No doubt a very romantic view, but an attractive one.

There were two things that I found difficult about *Chao*, and still find a challenge. The main thing is that John tended to be o n t h e argumentative side - not that he l i k e d b e i n g difficult but he l i k e d discussing

ideas. He was intelligent, curious and widely read but, like many who are widely read and self educated, his arguments tended to lack depth and focus. This comes out in this issue in the long article, 'The FOUNDATION on Sands' which occupies six pages. He points out, quite rightly, the implausibility of the psychohistory that underlies Asimov's entire Foundation series. Fair enough. Then he goes on to argue his point from a number of directions and, while I enjoyed reading all this, I thought he'd made his point



Interior art for *Chao* 13 by Danny Strelkov



on the first page and the rest of the article was like watching him attack the Great Pyramid with a limp lettuce leaf. Interesting but futile.

The highlight of this issue is John's long autobiographical piece, 'My Cat and I' which occupies another six pages. It is perceptive, a little self indulgent (which we are all permitted when writing autobiographically) and quite revealing. I must have read it in 1973 but didn't understand what I was reading as I do now. It explains a lot about what had made John the person he was and tells the story of the life of an intelligent youngster growing up in the banality and isolation of the Australian bush, a common enough story perhaps. I should also add that this piece is very well written.

*Chao* is worth warming up the time machine for, so get going. In many ways it is an oddity, but a very interesting and entertaining oddity. I don't know quite where you will find a copy though; perhaps you can look up Mervyn Binns or John Bangsund and see if they can point you in the right direction.

Oh, and the other thing I found difficult about *Chao* was that bloody green ink. Lightly printed green ink is not easy to read and I've made a booking with the eye doctor to see if she can do something about this temporary - I hope - blindness as a result of eye strain.

### **The photo phile**

Only two photos this time, but rippers, straight out of Doug Nicholson's photo album. The first is of the audience during a session of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Australian Convention (1954) and the other is of the 4<sup>th</sup> Australian Convention (1955). Since I've cropped the second image to include the known names you get two versions,

the full photo and the cropped version with names. There are a few more Doug has from this period, but I'm saving them up for future issues.





## Letters of Comment

Our first letter from overseas. **John Purcell** writes:

I really wish I could impart some knowledge that could help you in your endeavours, but all I can say right now is that I recognize some of the names you have mentioned in this issue, such as Bill Veney, Mervyn Binns, and Robin Johnson, even though I have never personally met them. My knowledge has come from - you guessed it - fanzines. What a surprise, eh? When I started my fannish career in Minneapolis, Minnesota, the Minn-stf and Australia connection was really strong, so once in a while an Aussie fan would find his or her way to a Minicon, which was always fun. Of course, meeting Bill Wright at the San

Antonio, Texas Worldcon in 2013 is a highlight of that convention. Some year my wife and I will wander down to Australia for a vacation. It's on our bucket list.

I'm glad you're enjoying our little effort. Perhaps *iOTA* is doing a little in publicizing Australian fandom to the world. Future historians might write up this little fnz as another of that wave of Australian fanzines that began crossing the Pacific in growing profusion from the 1960s, only fifty years late.

I may have to take the blame for that Australia-Minneapolis connection. There were a lot of Minneapolis fans in APA-45 at its peak - Nate Bucklin and Ken Fletcher come to mind right now - and that led me to Minneapa which led to Valma and I spending a week in Minneapolis in 1974. Very fond memories. If I was forced to live in the United States (heaven forbid!) I'd chose either Minneapolis or Seattle. Does it snow in Seattle? That might be the decider.

And I can give you one piece of advice for your visit to Australia; avoid the Sydney-Melbourne Express like the plague.

**John Bangsund** writes:

I vaguely remember my comic strip, "Nova Espresso", reprinted in *iOTA* from Andy Porter's *Algol*, but I can't help wondering whether it was drawn with a Melbourne fanzine in mind, John Foyster's *Wild Colonial Boy* perhaps, or Lee Harding's *Canto 2* (never published, and I was looking forward so much to reading about his promised rediscovery of Tchaikovsky). Also it's so small I can't read it. Never mind.

If you can get your PDF reader to enlarge your comic stip you'll find that it is readable. That was the plan, anyhow. I would not be surprised if it was drawn for an Australian fanzine, I get the



feeling that there are hidden meanings buried in it which would only have made sense to local fans at that time.

Any time you want to draw another one, be my guest.

**Chris Nelson** wrote in response to an email from me about *Scansion*, but his comments fit in neatly here:

Re: *Scansion*. Yes, I've scanned issues from four sources now and spoke to Doug about them. He (as one of the few surviving creators) said whatever could be found could probably now be made public and Julie at Rare Books said they would be happy to put them online. Some were - one could find them via Trove last I looked, but the metadata had somehow been mixed up with another title. Julie was investigating last time I saw her.

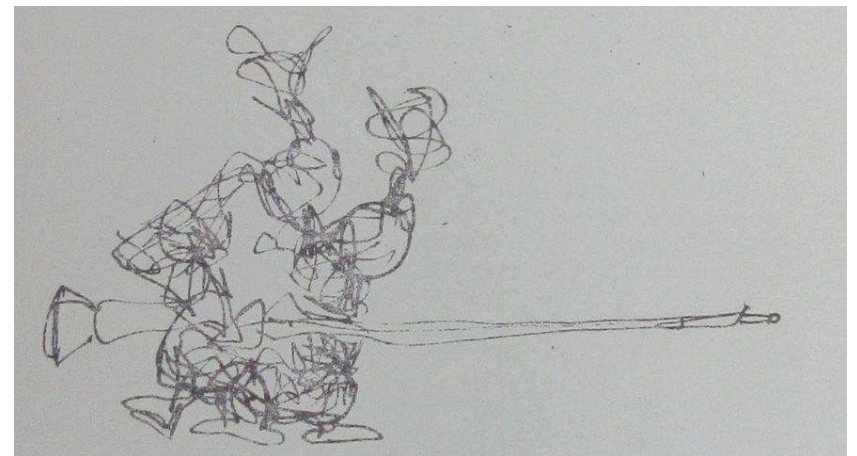
Attached is a scan of *Scansion* #17. I scanned it at Fisher, actually, but it wasn't in the Ron Graham collection. It was included in material cleared from Graham Stone's flat after his death by his children and donated to Fisher. (Still being sorted and organised.) There are a few glitches in the *Scansion* numbering sequence, btw, including two issues numbered 18. The first was edited by Michael Duggan in November 1954; the second, by Doug, the following month. (I haven't tracked down all issues yet, but believe there were also a few numbers that were skipped by mistake.)

The Albury article you introduce by saying "Again, we have an Ian Crozier report, published in Etherline 11, to thank for knowing anything at all about the meeting". I can't agree with you on that. Vol mentions it briefly in his History and two other reports on it were published together in an ASFA Circular soon after the event -- one by Brian Finch; the other, by Loralie Giles

– I find both more entertaining than Ian's account, even if they don't say much about the formal aspects of the gathering. (Circular attached.) I've seen a nice group photograph of most of the attendees, too. I thought this must have been taken by Race Mathews as he and Geraldine are not included in the photo, but he wrote me that he had no recollection of taking it.

The Moon Landing. Graham Stone was another who wrote about this, in his reincarnated *SF News*, living in Canberra at the time. A short, kind of wistful passage from memory. I watched Armstrong's first small step live, in our basement in the States. We made our own giant leap, to Oz, three years later.

We Also Heard From: Bruce Gillespie, Sarah Brown (who tells me that she has been told that the State Library of Victoria has between 15,000 and 20,000 zines, which don't seem to be in the catalogue), Rob Gerrand and Sally Yeoland



anon, *The Marshian Chronicles 1* p.3, 1969



## **1962 - The Melbourne SF Club Finds a New Home**

Since Mervyn Binns' report on the state of the Melbourne SF Club in the previous issue of *iOTA* the problem of a home for the club has been resolved. Mervyn does not disclose what he had to do to get McGills permission to occupy the top level of their warehouse, but whatever it was it was worthwhile. For almost the next decade the club lived there happily with plenty of room for things like film showings, parties, table tennis tournaments and small conventions. The address at 19 Somerset Place became synonymous with fandom in Melbourne and the stability of its location ensure the survival of the group for many years right through until the early 1970s.

Towards the end of this report Mervyn tosses off a comment about criticism he received about the quality of his newsletter, which seems to have annoyed him rather than make him resolve to do better. It doesn't take much imagination to guess that this critique came from Graham Stone who always worked hard to ensure that his publications looked as professional as possible to make stf look good. Merv was a professional at book selling, and the stalwart of the Club, but he didn't care too much about the appearance of his newsletters. Getting them out was his priority, and if Graham thought that Mervyn was lowering the tone of science fiction, that was tough for Graham.

**January 1962**

### **A REPORT FROM THE MELBOURNE SF CLUB**

Since the last newsletter the club has moved into spacious new premises in McGills bulk store, which is situated in

Somerset Place, just off Little Bourne Street at the back of McGills. The area we have at our disposal is approximately 20 feet by 40 feet and gives us plenty of room to increase our activities.

Attendances have already increased and although we have not done much in the way of publicity a number of new members have already joined. Even at this late date we are still getting the place organized but we have installed an electric stove for making coffee and had one film night, which was a big success. An average of 18 people have been turning up each night - about twice the average on any of our previous clubrooms - and 34 people attended the first film night, at which was shown the *Conquest of Space*. We had our anxious moments before things go under way at the film showing, as the film we originally intended to show - *The Day the Earth Stood Still* - was not returned in time from its previous borrower and then the projector would not work. However we eventually got under way even though we were a little late. Dave Robin who has kindly consented to show the films for us, assures us that the projector will be working next time. Let's hope we get *THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL* next time and the film distributors have promised us that we will. The date for the showing will be **FRIDAY the 26<sup>th</sup> of JANUARY**. Tea, coffee, biscuits and sandwiches will be provided but members may bring along other food and refreshments if they wish.

There is plenty of room for all the usual activities of the club including the library, games - chess, darts and as soon as we get the wood for the top we will have a table tennis table

operating. We will keep you posted on further developments in the club in future issues of the Newsletter.

#### NEW TITLES and NEW EDITION POCKET BOOKS:

The majority of the following titles will be eventually, though it may take some months, available from bookshops in Australia. The MSFC Library does get copies of nearly all titles but we cannot guarantee to supply all enquiries. The only ones I can personally guarantee to supply are all those that are available from McGills Newsagency. I am mentioning this as some of you may be wondering why you have not received titles which you have asked for some time back. The point is that I can only obtain a limited number of copies from my friends in the US. Also, where I have to reorder titles or wait for them to come to McGills there is a further delay. Personally I make no profit out of the business at all. What little revenue there is all goes to the benefit of the Club library. My time at the present and in the immediate future is strictly limited so I do not have time to write to all the people I would like to and in many cases explain the situation. The best I can do is put your request down on the list and send same if and when they turn up.

I have received some isolated criticisms of this Newsletter which I intend to ignore. It is done in haste and it is lucky it is not worse than what it is. To my mind it is filling a gap and until such time as somebody produced something to take its place I will try to continue to produce it.

Well, now that I have got that off my chest back to the business in hand.

## **The Long and Winding Road to Aussiecon**

Not everyone thought that Australia bidding to hold the 1975 World SF Convention was a good idea and, just as importantly, did not see the point in holding an American style convention in Australia. John Alderson said as much in the editorial of the 13<sup>th</sup> issue of his fanzine, *Chao*, which was published in September 1973 (never mind the cover date of June). I'm tempted to think that John wrote this to fill up a page for lack of anything else to write about, and although he does not make a strong argument or offer alternatives, he may have been serious and, anyhow, he makes an interesting point.

When Australian fans set out to bid for and hold the World Con in 1975 they did it as conservatively and safely as possible. They realized that most of the people who would make the decision about where the 1975 World SF Convention would be were North Americans and that, although there might be many bright and imaginative fans among that number, most American fans were in fact quite conservative in their habits and thinking. As a result, the bid and the following convention had to be presented to attract the support of that group, or there would be no WorldCon in Australia.

What might have happened had Australian fans put on a bid that was outlandishly Australian and a similarly Australian WorldCon? That's a counterfactual argument what we cannot make here. The point is, I think, that it was a convention hosted by science fiction fans in Australia for fans from around the rest of the world. To do that, the convention had to be run along the established fannish lines and traditions rather than Australian

lines, though fannish with an Australian twist.

John was absolutely right about one thing though, August is a bad time to hold almost any event in Melbourne apart from football matches. It is the depth of winter and the weather can be cold, damp and miserable. Any of those who remember the excursion to Sovereign Hill after Aussiecon will know this with a terrible, bone freezing, certainty. Australians did not traditionally hold conventions at that time of the year but realized that they needed to hold an Australian WorldCon at that time of the year to accommodate fans from the northern hemisphere. The same was the case with the three subsequent Australian WorldCons. As I recall it, Australian fans began holding their national conventions in August to get used to the idea, starting with Syncon 72? It is not something that seems to have stuck and I see that there are four conventions listed on the Australian SF Foundation web site for the coming twelve months. They are being held between November and Easter next year, nothing is scheduled for August because we're not quite that silly.

(By the way, John's use of the word 'dyke' here does not mean what most people would assume it to mean these days. It was a word heard often enough in the other context in 1973 but has now passed out of common usage.)

It is now history that the 1975 World Science Fiction Convention will be held in Australia, Melbourne to be precise. It's all nicely arranged. The Con will enrich the same shareholders of the same international company that owns the hotel that it would have if it had been held in any major city in the States. The carpet will be the same colour and the dykes will be in the same places, and the Con will be the same and

equally forgettable. Just to make certain that everything is run with that essential lack of imagination that is always the main ingredient of World Cons, we have the hardened core of the Committee overseas making sure that they know exactly the drill that a World con requires, and their efforts will insure that nobody's imagination is strained and nobody's intelligence over-loaded. Not only that but the Hugos will be the same farce they are now, bought by the same people by the same means. Overseas visitors will arrive from summer into one of the most miserably cold cities on earth, where the atmosphere is mainly sleet, or smog or both, where most shops and most cafes are unheated, where most bars have only the most minimal heating, where public transport is not only unheated but mostly exposed to the wildest of Melbourne gales, you'll need your winter woollies or you'll die. Icelanders and Canadians freeze in Melbourne, and so do I. You asked for it, will get it, and if you live you will be sorry.

This is a terrible mistake. We could have made this Con the most memorable (I don't say the best) but the most memorable of all time, and perhaps added a life and variety that to me seems so sadly lacking. But no, the Committee are playing safe, they are going to do exactly what everyone else does and will not involve any criticism for departing from the well worn tradition that is actually the death of fandom.

Some of the committee look on the bright side: you won't survive the climate to criticism

John Alderson

Chao 13, 1973



## 1971 - Thirty Years of Reflection

Harry Warner Jr was one of those fans who seemed to have been around forever and, indeed, he had been. He was a journalist from Hagerstown in the United States whose lack of desire to socialize with other fans also saw him dubbed 'The Hermit of Hagerstown'. However, his solitary ways meant he had plenty of time for fanac and there would not have been a fan in Australia who had not received one of his letters, typed on both sides of a sheet of paper and filled with interesting thoughts and commentary. This demonstrated his journalistic skills and wide knowledge; his ability to write at length about almost any topic that came up for discussion in fandom, and many that he initiated.

One of Harry's enduring fannish legacies is his two volumes of fannish history, *All Our Yesterdays* and *A Wealth of Fable*. I get into a lot of trouble for saying that they demonstrate that Harry was a journalist, not a historian, but they are both well worth reading and, although they focus on North American fandom, they also fit Australia into that picture in a way that other histories don't.

Harry is also very important because we owe to him the development of early Australian fandom. As he recounts here, it was a copy of his fanzine, *Spaceways*, sent on spec to a fan in Australia, which ignited the spark which led to so much early Australian fanac. He also wrote an article for the first issue of *Ultra* which was published in October 1939. It is not difficult to imagine the excitement and energy that an article from an American BNF gave Eric Russell and his friends as they began publishing what became Australia's first successful fanzine.

## AN ALTERNATE UNIVERSE

### Scraps & Memories of Fandom in the Antipodes

As you grow older, you pile up a constantly escalating backlog of regrets over things you can't feel nostalgic for. Nostalgia is a bitter-sweet vice that some of us over-indulge in as a more or less legal substitute for the drugs that others prefer. Simultaneously, we feel unhappy because we've never experienced the raw material that would permit us to feel nostalgic for many other things.

So I'll never be able to think back longingly to the evening I saw Julie Andrews turn into a proper young lady under Rex Harrison's tutelage. I can never claim to have wonderful memories of the complete two-hour, 23-mile trip from Hagerstown to Frederick, Maryland, on the last inter-urban trolley system that survived east of Chicago. And I can't recall the faces and gestures of all the hundreds of people who emerged and submerged in Australian fandom over the past one-third of a century. I missed being there in person for all those things, and the best I can do is feel nostalgic over the memories I might have had.

But I'm supposed to write several thousand words about my impressions of Australian fandom. Thinking back, looking through many pages of notes taken for fan history purposes, glancing over a few old Australian fan publications. I find it possible to piece together a quite clear mental illusion about something which I've never experienced in any way more direct than the printed and occasionally the drawn page.

Maybe it's just as well that my personal contacts with

fandom have been confined to North Americans and to the few European fans I've encountered at conventions. If the cast of fannish characters that actually has come before my eyes were expanded to include those from Australia, down-under fandom wouldn't have the special appeal that comes from a milieu which you've read about incessantly but have never experienced personally. Some people get their contact with this appeal by reading about Middle Earth; I find Australian fandom just as delicately balanced between the corporeal and the unreal, and there is the added advantage that it's not necessary to wait years and years for Professor Tolkien to write another volume for additional enjoyment. Besides, I have had a very small role in the creation of Australia's fanzine fandom - even if it was purely accident that this walk-on part fell to me rather than to someone else who was publishing fanzines at the close of the 1930s.

Several pioneer Australian fans have credited a copy of my Spaceways with being the first revelation they had known of what could be done with a mimeograph, stencils and enthusiasm for science fiction. Someone else would have sent a sample copy of his fanzine if I hadn't, and I didn't follow up the accident with a planned campaign to encourage Australian fandom - as Julian Parr did when he created German fandom. But there's still a certain satisfaction in knowing what Spaceways meant in a fandom that had previously been confined to small local clubs and an occasional carbon-copies publication.

What are the things that come to mind most imperiously

as I try to pick details out of the shapeless blob of memories and impressions from all these years of on-again, off-again, contacts with Australian fandom?

Curiously, the thing which impressed me most vividly of all may have been a fake. A long-forgotten Wellington fan named Toni Vondruska distributed in 1959 through an OMPA mailing a fanzine called The Last Splotch. He claimed that page 4 of this had been stenciled on November 29, 1958, the day of his marriage to Lynetta Burfield-Mills. Part of the stencil was cut before the ceremony, part immediately after it, if we may believe Toni. Did any other fan anywhere in the world, since the first real fanzine was published in 1930 up to this very October day on which I'm writing this, ever show equal devotion to his hobby? And did anyone ever interview Lynetta on her reactions to fandom?

I wish I'd known Toni. But he's just one of a multitude of colorful Australian fans whom you'll never read anecdotes about in American fanzines because personal contacts between the two continents have been so rare.\* A much more celebrated Australian fan, Vol Molesworth, holds in my imagination something of the heroic proportions of a Donald A Wollheim or a Sam Moskowitz. I couldn't believe it when I read about his death some years ago. He had become such a legendary factor in my mental concept of Australian fandom that he seemed as unlikely to die as Don Juan or Till Eulenspiegel. I imagine Vol had his weaknesses; I know that he showed a distressing inclination to be a pro at the neglect of his fan activity - and we probably would have fought bitterly if we'd

ever belonged to the same fannish organization or lived in the same city. But everything Vol did was at a great distance from me and he moved about the mental telly screen as a tiny, intense figure as constantly frustrated in his seeking for a moment he could desire to hold onto as Faust was.

I wish he could have finished the OUTLINE HISTORY OF AUSTRALIAN FANDOM which he started to publish in the early 1950s. As far as I know, only the first volume survives, a nicely-printed 26-page booklet bound in purplish-red covers, carrying the narrative only from 1935 to 1940. Sometimes it reads like a chapter from THE IMMORTAL STORM: 'Evans, defeated on the question of Futurian Fantasy, took opportunity of the general feeling of discontent, and offered to "referee" discussions. Innocuous as the suggestion seemed at the time - little more than the appointment of a Chairman of Debates or a Speaker in the House - this marks the beginning of Evan's rise to power.' But it has even more details than Moskowitz volume, and it's a god thing it has, because Sam says nothing about Australian fandom in his book. He just plain forgot about Australia, I understand.

But then there's the Molesworth who had seven novelettes published professionally during World War Two in Australia, when the continent was starving for science fiction and prevented from importing it. And the Molesworth who actually created the Futurian Court of Inquiry as a formal instrument to administer justice in the silly spats involving the teenage youngsters who were Australia's fans during the early part of the war. (He apparently lost interest in the court when

he discovered there had been perjury and couldn't think what to do about it.) The Molesworth who a decade later had become a frequent speaker at Australian sf conventions, on topics like 'the future of culture'. The Molesworth who didn't let diabetes difficulties stop him from rocketry experiments in 1940, almost burning down Maroubra Cliffs in the process. (Australia seems to have had lots of fans around with rockets at that early date. Ralph A Smith is assured of a place in the rocketry hall of fame, for his fire. Everything burnt to a crisp, except the fuel.)

What about the things in Australian fandom which seem irretrievably lost? Somewhere on the continent does a hundred feet or so of tape survive as evidence that Heinlein isn't as hard to interest in fannish affairs as legend paints him? He provided a taped message for the 1954 Easter Convention in Sydney. For that matter, exactly what did Arthur C Clarke say during the 1955 convention? He was in Australia to prepare for research on the Great Barrier Reef, but his statements seem to be as irrevocably lost as the fact about what happened to Childe Harold after he came to the Dark Tower.

Did anyone in Australia ever obtain a government licence to publish a fanzine? Fanzine editors were asked to get them in 1943, and if anyone went through the required red tape, the document might be the only government sanction for a fanzine in the history of civilization.

Then there are the larger problems involving this distant view of Australian fandom. There is the paradox that it seems to have had an inordinately large proportion of fans with



extreme energy and determination who achieved much more than the continent's limited supply of professional publications and its small-in-numbers fandom would seem to allow. In recent years, somewhere in Australia there has always been at least one fanzine appearing regularly and devoted to science fiction itself with a devotion and intelligence that North America hasn't matched. We've had similar fanzines over here but they've come and gone with big gaps between them.

There is the Donald H Tuck phenomenon. Who would have guessed that the most elaborate reference work on professional science fiction would come from a lone researcher in far-off exotic Tasmania?

Until they've burst asunder from internal stress, Australia's local fan clubs seem to have been remarkably successful in the creation of club libraries. I realize that my image of Australian fandom is somewhat distorted because I don't hear much of the counter-balancing teenybopper fans who dart in and out and leave no more trace of their passage through fandom than the exacerbation induced on the nerves of older fans by their quantity and behavior.

But I like to think that there really is a special tendency for Australian fandom to do difficult things. And I wonder if it isn't the result of the very handicaps that have always plagued fans down-under: importation and censorship troubles, long distances between most major fan centers; rarity of personal contact with fans elsewhere in the world; impossibly slow mail service to North America or Europe for anything too heavy to send airmail. Muscles grow harder and calluses form when

people must fend for themselves in an unfriendly environment. If the body reacts this way to survival of the physical self under difficulty, isn't it possible that Australia's conservatism, isolation and other idiosyncracies have done good things to the will-power and persistence of many fans?

Nothing is altogether a blessing in this greyish world. Australian fandom has given me some hard moments. Most of them weren't the faults of the fans there. If I'd come and gone in fandom as almost everyone else has, I wouldn't have been around long enough to feel regrets over the way World War Two eventually tore Australian fandom apart, depriving me of a great many familiar names and publications. So it's partly my fault for hanging around too long. A few people returned from gaffiation, of course. Bill Veney, one of my first Australian contacts, bobbed up again after long absence in the early 1950s. But whatever happened to Bert Castellari, the Russell brothers, David Evans and the rest of the first fanzine fans? Is Marshall McLennan still alive? I used to receive a letter from him each winter, friendly and warm in its spidery handwriting, and I would respond after a couple of months. He would be incredibly old by now, if he is still alive. I can't even remember if it was he or I who failed to answer the other's last letter.

A more recent cause for personal misery involved Australian Science Fiction Review. Somehow I bogged down on the letter-of-comment procedure with this publication. Issues began to pile up and each was finer than the last, and correspondingly, my fury at myself for failing to respond raged more fiercely. It was inconceivable that I should not write

about every issue of this superb fanzine at a period when I was commenting on almost every crudzine's first issue that reached me. But I conceived grandiose schemes for making up for all the missed letters by writing gigantic articles, in the preparation of which I would have to read all the prozines and most of the new books for a year or so, or be preparing a meticulously detailed cross-referenced index to the entire contents of the whole run of issues as a token of gratitude and penance. Of course, those schemes were so time-consuming that nothing ever came of them. Today, I still can't write a letter of comment on an Australian fanzine without feeling a guilty twinge and a half-conscious thought that I should instead be working on the unwritten LoCs for ASFR. And the whole Proustian situation had no real reason for starting in the first place: I just fell behind too far, felt too guilty about it, and can't even take refuge in turning to religion. How would I explain it all to a Salvation Army major or a priest?

Maybe someone will write a really exhaustive history of Australian fandom some day. It would be much more exciting and changeable than the chronicle of fandom in the United States or even the British Isles. For instance, as recently as 1963 John Baxter concluded some historical material he kindly compiled for me with these sentences: 'There are still a few fans scattered around Australia, but most of them are content to be active on an international basis rather than indulge in local fanac. These fans include John Foyster, Bob Smith, Don Tuck (whose second 2-volume edition of the SF HANDBOOK came out in April 1959), ex-New Zealander Mervyn Barrett and myself.

Most are active in one or two overseas apas, write for or subscribe to most fanzines, edit occasional genzines for trade purposes and travel almost continually between their respective cities in a convenient substitute for the more traditional forms of fan activity'. Seven years haven't resulted in such radical changes in any era of American fan history. ... What else do I remember from my long platonic relationship with Australian fandom? Scraps and pieces of memories, rather than complete ones ...

Someone's article describing Rober Mitchum at work on a movie being filmed in Australia.\*\*

My first meeting with Boyd Raeburn, whom I equated with Australian fandom, even though he is alleged to have come originally from New Guinea or New Zealand or some other new found land.

The fun I got out of the convention hoax staged in the early years of Australian fandom, long before a bunch of people here unknowingly imitated it with their InVention.

The photographs of Australian fans which have occasionally appeared in fanzines over the years, causing all of them to appear far more intellectual and mature than fans of similar ages anywhere else in the world.\*\*\*

My amazement in 1948 when several Australian fans discovered the existence of an entirely separate fan group, previously unknown to general fandom, an offshoot of the Book Collectors' Society of Australia which had been holding weekly meetings for years in Sydney.

The deadly disillusioned sensation the first time I received

a communication from Australia bearing a stamp with its value in decimal numerals - awful evidence of the way the American dollar and cent were transforming previously fortunate parts of the world.

The impact that Mike Hinge made on American fandom in 1958 when he became another New Zealander to move permanently to the other side of the Equator.

My bafflement at Graham Stone's reasons for remaining in fandom, when in a single article he denounced US style conventions, most fan publishing, any link between science fiction and fantasy, and ended with that statement that 'fandom is doing more harm than good'. Well, that was nine years ago, and maybe even Graham has changed in that span of time.\*\*\*\*

And I hope that I change enough eventually to become a globetrotter and take a look at Australian fandom amid the billabongs and wombats.

Harry Warner Jnr

*Australian SF Monthly 4, March 1971*

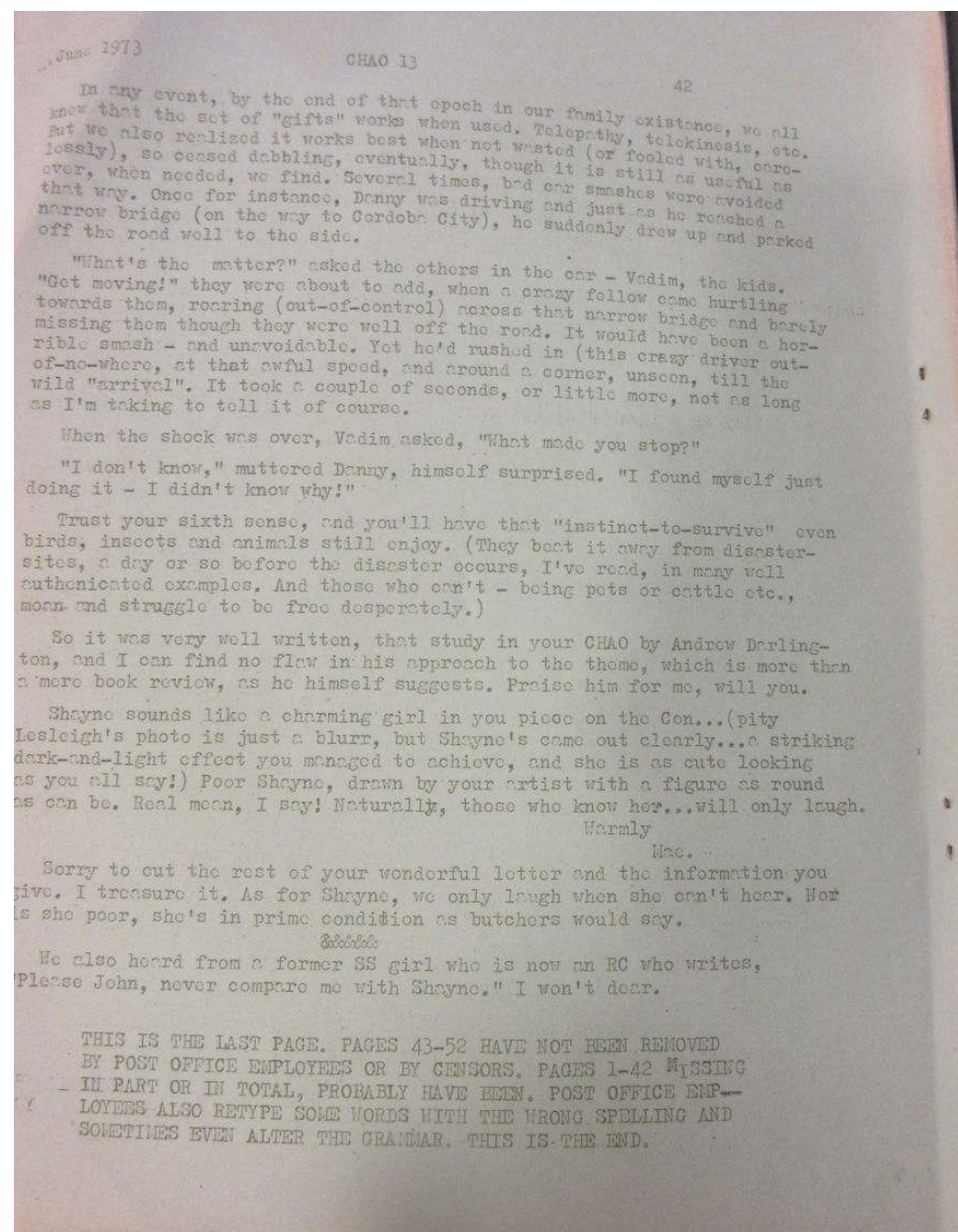
### John Bangsund's editorial footnotes

\* New Zealanders feel a bit strongly about this sort of thing, Harry. Let's say 'Australasian'.

\*\* Article by Lee Harding in John Foyster's The Gryphon (February 1965).

\*\*\* There is a very simple explanation for this.

\*\*\*\* In a changing world, some things yet remain unchanged. It might have something to do with the air in Canberra - a place which has yet to make a reputation for wildly progressive thought or action in just about any sphere.



Back cover of *Chao 13*