



iOTA 15

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Art credits: Daryl Lindquist, p.5; Terry Jeeves, p.12.

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.

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* or an update in *iOTA* 13.

iOTA is more or less available from me for 'the usual' or issues of *iOTA* are put up on *efanzines.com* fairly soon after I've completed them.

Thisish's Cover

A little up market from the fanzine cover on the cover of the previous issue of *iOTA* is this Virgin Finlay loaned by Ron Graham to Ron and Sue Clarke for their joint fanzine, *Ark*. This looks as though they went down to the local print shop (if there was such a thing in those days) and got it specially printed off to retain the quality. The rest of the issue is the usual mimeo work - actually very good work too.

Editorial - part the first Stuff on the interweb

Ditmar nomination eligibility, again

Interested to see how the Ditmar nomination eligibility list was going, I dropped in on the site again to see what was what. The list is long and, I suspect, arduous. We now find listed 168 novels, 109

Novellas or Novellets, 352 short stories and 58 collections. I haven't bothered to do the sums to see how much reading you'd need to do to keep up with this torrent, but there is at least one short story a day with only a handful of days off during the year. By my rough calculation (50,000 words for each novel, 20,000 words for each novella or novelette and 5,000 words for each short story) that means that Australian writers published around 12.34 million words in 2017 which works out to over 34,600 words a day. What a stupendous figure! I wonder, is this sustainable or is it a bubble? Is there some kind of virus or bacteria infecting Australians that they feel the need to pound out so many words? There must be a factory somewhere in China struggling to keep up with the demand for replacement keyboards because they are being worn out so rapidly.

There is so much activity in writing fiction that there seems to be little energy left over for other kinds of Ditmar winning activity. There are 51 items eligible for nominations in the Artwork category, 6 in the Fan Writer, 6 in the Fan Artist, 17 in the Fan Publication, 7 in the New Talent and 27 in the William Atheling category.

There are four new suggestions in the Fan Publication category that might warrant a small comment. The first, '2016 Australian SF Snapshot' doesn't appear to have seen any activity in 2017, judging by what the front page of the site has to say; the 'Earl Grey Editing Service' appears to be an editing service with an attached blog promoting recently published books, 'Galactic Suburbia' is a podcast site and 'Treasure' is an old style fanzine published by Bruce Gillespie who doesn't seem to have heard that paper fanzines (even as pdfs) are unfashionable these days.

I see that nominations for the Ditmars closes in early March. It will be extremely interesting to see what the nominations are in the fiction categories; in other words, what the readers out there make of the deluge that is upon them.

Fan history on the interweb, at last

You will recall, I hope, that there was a panel session on the history of Australian fandom held at Continuum 13 last year in which Lee Harding, Dick Jenssen and Rob Gerrand responded to my probing questions about what happened in the dim dark past. Although the convention committee suggested that a video of the session might be made available on You Tube this does not seem to have happened so, left to our own devices, a sound recording has finally found its way onto the interweb. The recording has been turned into something you can actually listen to by the wonderful Roman Orszanski and you can hear it on his website at: <https://doxa.podbean.com/e/msfc-fan-history-panel-continuum-13/>. Happy listening.

John Brosnan anthology

Kim Huett has been beaver away on an anthology of the fan writing of John Brosnan, originally an Australian fan who made his way to Britain in 1970 and forgot to return home. Some of it is quite fabulous stuff. You can find it on the TransAtlantic Fan Fund Free Ebooks page at: <https://taff.org.uk/ebooks.php?x=Brosnan>. It is free, a pretty decent read and too cheap at that price.

Editorial, part the second

Conventions, what are they good for?

Face book is a bit like that joke about ice hockey, when a game breaks out during all the fighting. You're drowsing your way on Face book down the page and suddenly somebody says something interesting and everyone piles in with their comments and a fairly rational discussion breaks out. How did that happen, one wonders.

Back at the end of January - ancient history on Face book - Julian Warner made the innocent comment:

Looking at going to Swancon 43 but *urk* they are selling

'tickets' rather than memberships I see. And they have been rude enough (on a one-and-a-half string program) to put program items up against GOH speeches.

After several comments of little import here, Grant Watson replied:

Of course they should counter-program against a GOH speech. A properly half-decent con should counter-program against everything. Not everyone goes to hear an author speak, or dress up for a masquerade dance party.

Several lines of discussion sprouted from this comment. One was that fandom is so much more diverse than it once was and so there needs to be more diversity in convention programming too, to provide for all the interests.

David Cake, for example, wrote:

Not everyone is interested in every guest, and Swancon has been a 'broad church' multi-fandom convention for well over 20 years at this point. Counter programming against almost everything makes sense.

Gary Farber got out his irony pen and replied:

Good to know that the first thirty years of science fiction conventions got it wrong, then, from 1936 through about 1966, when sf conventions, from largest Worldcon, to smallest local convention, were universally single track unless they were relaxacons with zero track.

Damn those thirty years of doing it all wrong and being nothing but crap conventions!

David Cake responded that conventions back then weren't crap;

... they were appropriate to their time. But expectations of

conventions have changed. A lot of the interests and activities literally didn't exist then, and the genre is vast and complicated compared to then. Are you upset that the world changed? Or do you think conventions shouldn't have changed with it?

And things went on from there in a number of different directions. The one that interests me here is this; what was the purpose of conventions back in the day when they had one strand programming and what is the purpose of them now? I'd be interested to know what others think, but this is what occurs to me.

Conventions began as a way of fans getting together to meet one another and to discuss the fiction that they enjoyed reading. Even in the 1960s long distance travel was either difficult or expensive, or both, so there was not much chance for fans to get together. This was exacerbated by the other modes of communication that were not available at the time - such as the interweb - so fans had to write to each other, which can be a rather impersonal way of communication under most circumstances. (There were experiments with tape recordings in the 1950s which gave communication a more personal touch (a form of podcasting?) which shows that fans were always early adopters of new technologies.)

Convention programming was necessary from the beginning as a way of hearing what the big name writers, editors and fans had to say and this, and fanzines, was then the only way of the pros and BNFs communicating with the rest of fandom. It is, also, the traditional way in which humans have conducted themselves for thousands of years with the more influential among a group tell the rest what to think and do. However, at some time in the 1950s fans in the United States and Britain discovered that you could have a very decent convention experience and entirely ignore the

programming. For this generation of fans the point of a convention was in making them the opportunity for fannish friends to hang out together. This came a little later to Australian fans because they didn't have any conventions between 1958 and 1966. But as soon as they started having conventions in venues where it was not necessary to all be in the same space at the same time, fans began finding other things to do rather than sit through all the programming.

There were, and are, however, a whole bunch of (what they call in fandom studies) 'non-productive fans'. They are those who are interested in a topic like stf but lack either the interest or ability to make a contribution to fannish activities and, instead, take what is offered to them. These 'non-productive' fans are necessary to most fannish activities because their presence creates an audience for those who feel inclined to creativity and their money makes it possible to do things like hold conventions. However, the problem seem to be in how to entertain these people and to maintain their interest so that they keep coming to conventions. In other words, conventions need two ingredients; the fans who want to organize them and the fans who only want to go to them.

Lynelle Howell explained the current situation fairly concisely:

As a chair of two cons I can tell you modern fans expect choice, multiple streams and multi-disciplinary programmes. Too much of one style (say author-oriented or literary criticism) and you have other fans up in arms. Modern fandom expects certain things like quality facilities, multiple streams and the like.

In a sense there's a desire to be entertained rather than engaging in discourse .

I'm not sure that things were much different in the past except that non-productive fans had not experienced multi strand

programming or plush hotel conditions and, thus, were not discontent with sitting in scout halls and putting up with whatever was presented to them. The word 'entertainment' may also have a lot to do with this; in the 1960s and 1970s there were not yet generations of people who had been enculturated into sitting in front of a screen and taking in whatever it offered them without the need to provide any feedback, so they were prepared to accept different standards of content and performance. (I wonder what the reaction would be to modern day performances of the Norma Hemming plays put on at Australian conventions in the 1950s, or Joe Phaust in the 1970s?)

So, has the purpose of conventions changed in Australia between 1966 and now? That is, of course, an irrelevant question. The question that is relevant now is, 'what is the point of a convention held in 2018?'. It is a relevant question for me because, by looking at conventions and convention practice these days, I have something with which to better explore conventions in earlier times. It should be relevant to convention organizers these days because the issues they face in running conventions and their responses to them depend on their rationale for organizing conventions.

Are conventions, as they used to be, still a gathering of the clan? An opportunity to mingle with friends made through fandom and to discuss the things that they like in common? Or are they now semi-commercial events held to bring in and exploit the wider public? There is, of course, nothing wrong about this latter position, the astounding sf and fantasy industry in Australia has to draw its audience from somewhere and have a venue to promote itself. Were things really much different in the past when one of the purposes of holding conventions was to promote the genre to the general public, with fans and their fannish ways as a kind of byproduct?

I'm ending at this point because there was no rounding up summary to the Face book discussion which died away, as these

things tend to do. I don't know if there are any useful answers to these questions, I do know that the fandom I'm researching and writing about for this project learned that there was more to conventions than the program items and I wonder if this has been unlearned by many current day convention attendees. The changes that have occurred to make fandom what it is today seem to have given it a much more commercial focus and thus it might be that the point of conventions now is as a marketing device for a local sf and fantasy industry.



Daryl Lindquist, *Chao 8*, 1972

1939 - Early days of collecting American stf in Australia

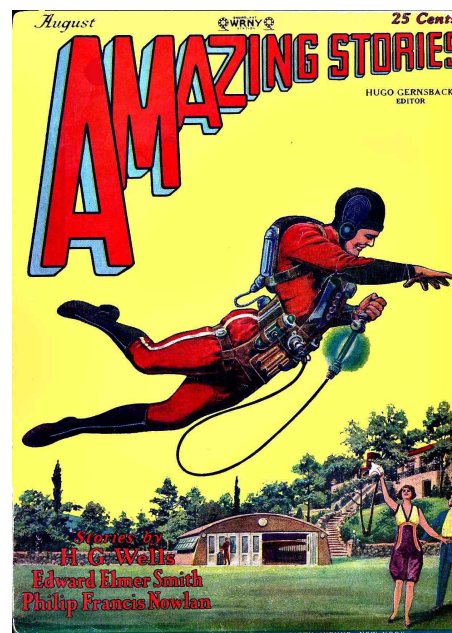
Kim Huett has sent me the following item, for which I am most grateful.

On page 30 of *iOTA* 13 Marshall McLennan mentioned that he had written a short article called 'Life Of a Scientifictionist From Down Under' for Sam Moskowitz which was published in his fanzine, *New Fandom*. Kim has located a copy of that item, and here it is. It paints a picture of the life of a dedicated stf reader and collector in Australia in the late 1930s. It was a time when stf was available in Australia but not, so it seems, in any systematic way. If you knew where and how to look for it, it was plentiful enough, but if one caught the collecting bug there was a lot of work involved.

This article helps us understand some of the features that made fandom in Australia different from that in North America or Britain. Even before the bans that began before the war, and the embargo that followed, collecting stf was a difficult challenge but it was also the only way in which early Australian fans could make sure that they had access to the good stuff. This helps to explain why collection was such a important feature of early Australian fandom.

Life Of a Scientifictionist From 'Down Under' by Marshall L McLennan

Early in my reading while a little 'nip', I feasted on good science fiction in such English publications as *Nelson Lee Library*, *Puck*, *Pluck*, *Champion*, and hosts of 2d weeklies of such kind from England. One day I chanced to see a magazine portraying a man flying with the aid of some sort of harness, and smiling at two or three people who were waving at him from the ground. Needless to say it was the August 1928 *Amazing* with the first of 'Skylark',



and of course it was something I had wanted for years, since I was getting too old for the kid science fiction in the comics. I was lucky to get more issues two days later when I rushed back to the shop which had a large number of Aug & Sept, 1928 issues, but the only odd issues I received were the 'one and onlies' he had sent to him. I found out later when scouring a bit that there were plenty of Aug and Sept issues to sell but none of any others. Of course, I am referring to back numbers, or remainders as they are now called. Soon after I found a large news agency shop in Melbourne city that had dealt with all sorts of publications from all over the world - that is, 'til recently. Here one could get anything in the newspaper, magazine, or book line that was published currently, and until recently was exclusive in that sphere. Well, *Amazings* could be bought in Melbourne at 1/9 each, and the early 1929 and quarterlies at 2/6; later on in 1930 it was a 1/9 for the monthlies and 3/- (\$.75) for the quarterlies. Now it's 1/- (25 cents) for *Astoundings* (used to be 1/6). *Wonder* 9d (18 cents) and *Amazing* 1/6.

Always a lone hand, as it were, I steadily collected all but a few early monthlies and quarterlies, and when *Science and Air Wonder Stories* came out I could start from the beginning. I still think the best covers were the *Air Wonders* for colour and imagination, it's certainly grand to roam thru the early large size

mags.

In 1934, about March, I had stolen from me, except for a handful in a drawer, all my science fiction collection, as well as sets of stamps, tools and a whole host of other things. It was a great blow and even now when I think it makes me go hot under the collar and wish I had the skunk in a dark alley, for just a very few minutes. Be that as it may, after three or four months of mooning I hopped in and scoured the city and suburbs, gathering duplicates for a second collection, some of which I recognized as my own by their newness and cleanness. I just about wore myself and a motor bike out in the year following, gathering one or two, sometimes more, but often none after a regular round of each shop, about 115 to 120 being visited in a fortnight. I had a regular routine of north, south-east and west, and the time I had would fill a book with experiences.

By June, 1935, I was back almost to where I was before the old set was stolen. Fortunately for me as soon after all science fiction mags seemed to disappear, because others were on the same hunt.

Before 1933, however, it was not until the small size appeared that back or remainder issues appeared regularly in the 115 or so 'Book Exchange' shops, and even now small size science fiction can be obtained quite easily, with the sole exception of Street and Smith's *Astoundings*. They have never come out as back numbers (although I have heard that they will be out shortly for the first time as such).

Well, before 1933, some issues of *Amazing Stories* would come out in hundreds like Nov 1931 and Dec 1931, but from 1932 I've only seen three copies in Melbourne and then a few of the

following months and then June, July in hundreds and the same with the other science fiction.

Why *Amazing* Aug & Sept, 1931 came out in countless back numbers, before the idea of sending old unsold mags to Australia was established, I don't know. Perhaps it was a backfire from an English scheme?

Some time ago a back-numbers, bookstore dealer, who was also an avid science fiction fan, told me of a magazine called *Future Fiction*, printed in Canada (in Montreal I believe he said); size like two *Astoundings* bound together, issued quarterly, had reprints, and about five issues up to last Sept were published. I never saw a copy to my disappointment, all efforts have met with failure as only this particular shop had three or four odd copies as back-numbers among the hundreds of America's large list of mags imported. Has anyone any knowledge of such a Canadian publication?

How would an Australian science fiction magazine take in the United States? I am thinking of approaching a firm in Australia which has shown a decided leaning toward this type of fiction with a little pushing, be able to convince him to do something like what *Tales Of Wonder* has done. It could be sold at six pence (12 cents) to compete with the remainder magazine problem.

I might mention here that last year there were drastic cuts in the magazine lists by the government. Out of 130 American magazines, about 70 to 80 names were forbidden to come into the country. *Weird Tales* was one of those banned because of the illustrations. May, 1938 was the last issue.

Marshall L. McLennen

New Fandom 5, July, 1939

1953 - The North Shore Futurians

Is it Sydney in general, or just Sydney fandom, that seems to generate a greater degree of excitement and dashing about than happened in Melbourne. In the southern city, while the few fans there were forming the local sf group and stuck together, fans in Sydney were already beginning to disorganize themselves.

It is not clear from this article why a discussion held at the first convention led to the creation of a second club in Sydney though the implication is that it is partly geographic and partly a matter of age - a club for those over 20 - The Futurian Society of Sydney - and those under 20 - The North Shore Futurian Society. This age difference probably was part of the reason for the disagreements that developed in Sydney fandom; between pre-war and post-war views about what fandom was for and how it should be conducted.

There were, of course, many similarities between the two clubs, in particular the name and the creation of a library for the benefit of members and to help bring in new members. The other activity, the publication of a newsletter, is something which most clubs (not just stf clubs) did at that time. Like many fan clubs that did not have members who were fanzine editors, however, there is little now surviving that tells of the activities of the club's members. This short report gives at least some hints, however.

(The illo following this report is the first issue of the North Shore Futurians newsletter, from October 1952. Most of the page is taken up with trivia about astronomy, which was probably a major interest of one of the club members.)

THE NORTH SHORE FUTURIAN SOCIETY

The NSFS was started by M A Bos and J C Crawford. They had seen a circular on the 1st Australian Science Fiction Convention, and, after a talk with W D Veney, who was chairman of the

Convention, it was decided to start a club.

The official commencement of the club was on the 1st April, 1952. A library was formed at the same time, with donations from Crawford and Bos. This library grew rapidly, and by the end of 1952, had 67 members and over 300 items in it. Most of the early members were pupils of such schools as Sydney Grammar, Sydney Church of England Grammar, Knox, North Sydney Girls High, and others.

The age of the library members varies from 11 to 50, but the majority of members are under 20. Today the club has gone into Limbo until 1954, when it will be revived as a club for people under 20 years. The library has 64 members, some in England, America and in most states of Australia. The drop in membership was caused by exams amongst members still at school.

The library produced a Notesheet, SONIC, which appears once a month. This publication first appeared in October, 1952, then there was a gap until March 1953, after which it has run on schedule.

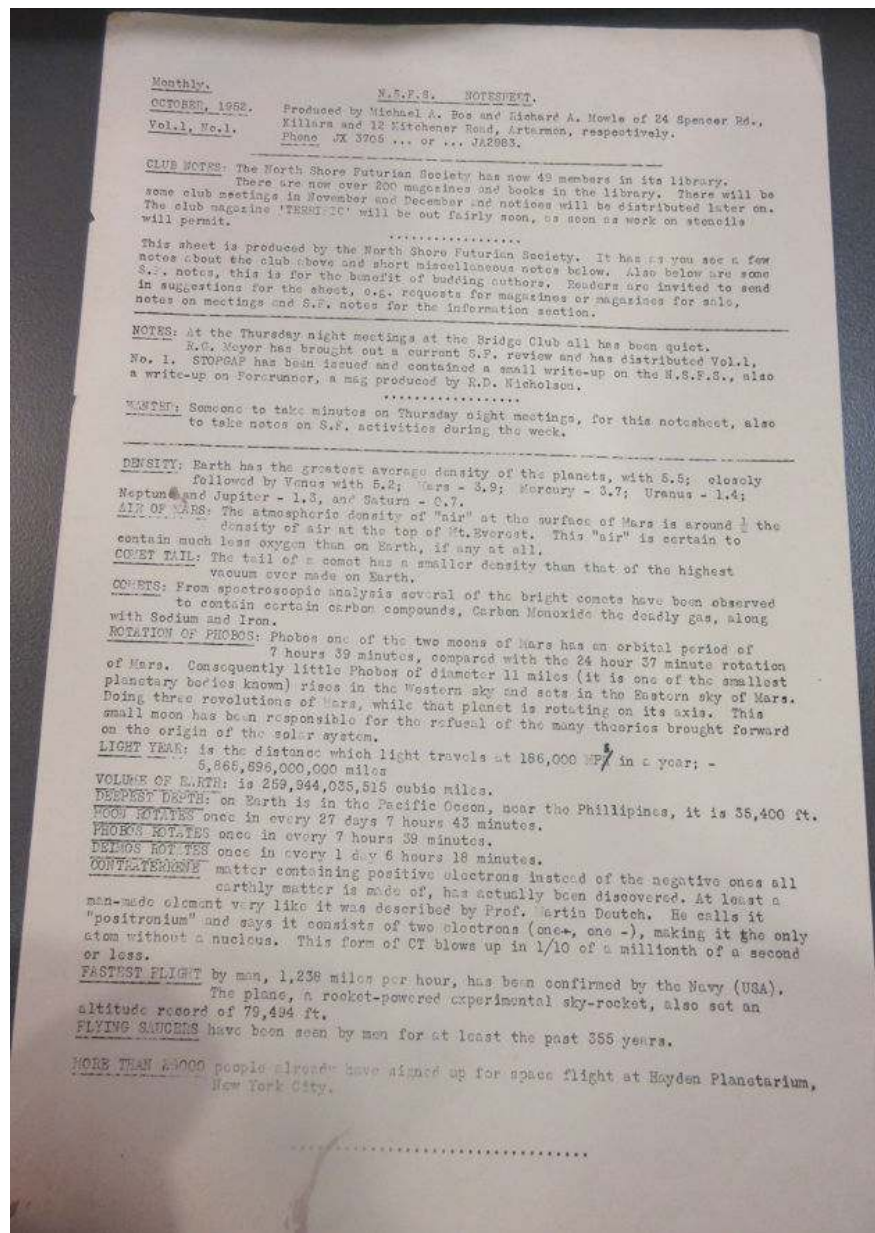
The library was well represented at the 1953 Convention, a large display being prominent. A speech on its activities was given by W D Veney, and a postal system for interstate members was announced.

Regular correspondence is carried out with younger fans all over the world. Fan mags and promags are exchange, and ideas and opinions are expressed. From this, it can be seen that the activities of the North Shore Futurian Society are many and varied. It has had some film nights and an official meeting, as well as many unofficial meetings. It is a club for the younger and enthusiastic fans, and it is part of the ever-growing ranks of

fandom that it rearing its head today.

M A Bos

Etherline 20, 24 December 1953



1954 - The Sydney Split

Personalities and philosophies -about stf and life in general - had led to the development of factions in Sydney fandom in the early 1950s, but the actual split took place when one group decided to no longer meet in the new club room that the Futurian Society of Sysney had made for itself at Taylor Square, Sydney. It is interesting to read two stories about what happened, one of them from the time written by Doug Nicholson and published in *Etherline* 31, June 1954, and the other, written by Vol Molesworth, well after the event as part of Chapter 5 of his 'A History of Australian Fandom' which was published in Ron Clarke's *The Mentor* of April 1995.

Neither of these items disagrees on the facts of what happened but the difference arises from the motivations between the two groups. The Sydney SF Group (if we may call it that) that went back to holding its Thursday night meetings at the Bridge Club, did so because of waning attendance at the Taylor Square room and because of difficulties with the Futurian leadership. The Futurians, on the other hand, had depended upon attendance at all weekly meetings to make renting the Taylor Square room financially viable.

The interesting question is; could the two groups have found a way to mend their differences? If so, what would those conditions have been and what would have been the outcome? I know, this is a counterfactual question, which was to be avoided when I was studying at the ANU, but I understand that they are becoming quite fashionable these days.

1954 SYDNEY SCIENCE FICTION GROUP

Report to Thursday, 3rd June, 1954

At the beginning of April this year, the Sydney Science Fiction Thursday Night Group moved back to their old club-room in the Sydney Bridge Club rooms, Post Office Chambers, near

Wynyard station. This room has seen the most successful fan meetings, and will be remembered by visitors to the 1953 Convention as the site of the displays and the business session.

For some months previously the group had been meeting in the club-rooms of the Futurian Society of Sydney, but these were small and not in the city proper, and activities not emanating from the Futurian Society met with continual obstruction there, so it was decided to move the social group back to the city room.

The move has had a beneficial effect on the group as a whole, which previously had been losing both members and enthusiasm. Since returning to 333 George St, David Cohen's BLUE CENTAUR BOOKSHOP and the library of the NORTH SHORE FUTURIAN SOCIETY (the holders of the 1955 Convention) have been doing a roaring trade, and a fabulous display of science fiction art work featuring several hundred items was arranged one night. Newcomers are not infrequent, and are always welcome. Attendances have varied between fifteen and thirty, and a number of veteran readers of science fiction who had drifted out of contact previously, have put in appearances.

The office bearers so far elected for the 1955 Con are: W Hubble, Organizer; A Haddon, Secretary; P Burke, Chairman; M Bos, Local Publicity; D Cohen, Treasurer.

D Nicholson

Etherline 31 June 1954.

Vol Molesworth's version

In the last section it was mentioned that a former FSS member, David Cohen, had set up an Australian agency for an international commercial science fiction organisation, 'Operation Fantast'. This organisation bought and sold books and magazines,

and arranged subscriptions to periodicals. For some months Cohen had carried on his business at the Society's Thursday Night gatherings. Cohen was approached by several dissatisfied fans, including Nicholson, and agreed to pay the rent for a revived Thursday Night gathering at the Sydney Bridge Club. The breakaway group held its first meeting on April 1, 1954, and continued to meet on Thursday Nights.

At the 203rd meeting of the Futurian Society, held on April 5, Purdy moved, seconded Stone, that 'the organisers of the recent walkout be banned from the FSS clubroom.'

Nicholson, who had allowed himself to become unfinancial, attended the meeting as a visitor. He claimed that six fans had formed the breakaway group because one of them had been repeatedly insulted at Taylor Square, and because the North Shore Futurian Society had 'met with every possible hindrance.'

The North Shore Futurian Society had been set up to service fans on the north side of the harbour: later it had changed this policy and had gone into open competition with the Futurian Society as a library operator. It had set up its library in the FSS clubroom, and had traded in competition with its host's library only a few feet away. The clubroom manager had asked the North Shore Librarian to take down a large advertising sign and to occupy a position less central in the clubroom. The North Shore members then decided to join Cohen's gathering.

After nearly every member of the Futurian Society had spoken against Purdy's motion to ban the breakaway group leaders, the motion was defeated by 10 votes to 2, with three abstentions.

Whatever the justice or injustice of the matter, the fact of

the breakaway movement sounded the death-knell of the Futurian Society's new clubroom. It had been opened in the expectancy that at least 60 people would visit it each week, the breakeven cost being 61 visitors at 2/- per head to meet the weekly rental of six guineas. Even before the breakaway, the average weekly attendance had been only 50, the breakdown being nine on Mondays, 32 on Thursdays, and nine on Saturdays. Visits to the clubroom by Dr Blatt, from the University of Sydney on February 25, and by US author Robert A Heinlein on February 25, had attracted 37 and 58 fans, respectively,¹ but it was obvious the Society could not continue to run the clubroom without a subsidy from its annual subscriptions, library income, and other revenue. With a rival clubroom operating elsewhere in the city, the breakdown requirement of 61 visitors per week was most unlikely.

Vol Molesworth

'A History of Australian Fandom', Chapter 5.

Fanzine Review

Ark 1, December 1974, Ronl & Suep Clarke, 2/159 Herring Road, North Ryde, NSW, 2113. 75¢ per copy, 3 @ \$2 (from Overseas please send cash (notes)).

This is pretty good for a first issue with some splendid writing and excellent reproduction. The co-editors of this fanzine knew what they were doing because they had both had plenty of prior experience and it shows in the writers they lined up, including Bert Chandler, Jack Wodhams and Del & Dennis Stocks, and in their own brief writing. There is also a Virgil Finlay cover, not the kind of thing to

appear on every Australian fanzine.

The issue begins with a long article by Del & Dennis Stocks about Gordon R Dickson's Dorsai stories, so long in fact that the second part of it was to appear in the second issue. If you don't know anything about the Dorsai and the universe they inhabit this is definitely the article for you because it goes into strenuous detail. There is also a detailed synopsis of the novel *Dorsai*, which tells you just about everything that happens in the story. This is as detailed and methodical as their writing usually was.

Talking about detailed and methodical, Jack Wodhams spend four or five pages explaining how to construct an interesting limerick and concludes with the following:

A cartwheeling harlot in Cairo,

Loved most to play 'autogyro',

To go for a spin,

On a nicely stiff pin,

Which was rarely supplied by a tyro.

The fun of this article is in Jack's description of how he got to this finishing point, and some of the options he considered along the way.

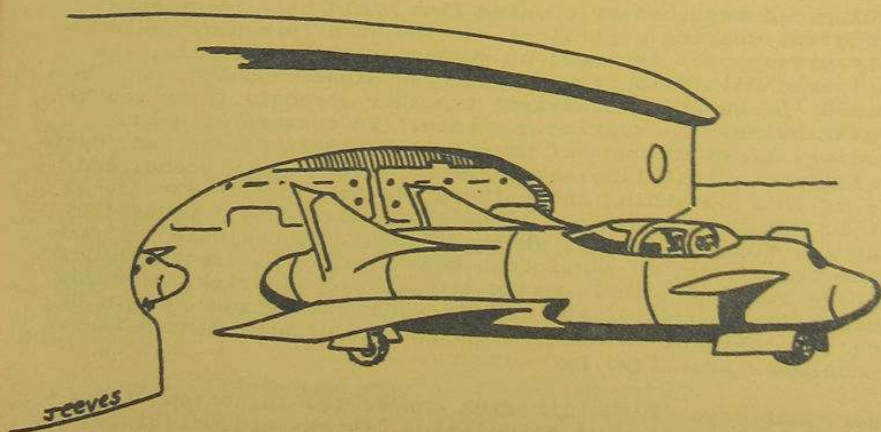
Perhaps the highlight of the issue is Bert Chandler's item about how he liked to structure his life and how a maritime strike saw him lodged in a motel in Newcastle (NSW) where he happened to watch an episode of *Lost in Space*. His description of what transpired in that episode is certainly more entertaining than the episode itself.

There are also some reviews by Max Taylor on what would have been called, at the time, 'counter culture' books, a piece of poetry, and the first part of Vol Molesworth's 'Australian Fan History'. This is an important document in recording the history of

¹ According to the text in *The Mentor* both meetings happened on the same day. This is unlikely.

its fullest extent - and the whole thing would've been improved by expanding the story somewhat. This is not to say that it doesn't stand well now; but sometimes I felt a little cheated when he built up a fascinating idea only to drop it for the sake of keeping the action flowing. And action you get. Donal rolls from one conflict to another with the reader left breathless trying to catch up. For example, I found the Exotic culture needed a definite expansion in consideration, since, after all, they seem to be the moving force behind whatever goes on in Dickson's universe. The character of William was never really enlarged upon to give you a greater idea of William as the villain of the piece. William, perhaps, could have been more blatantly "evil". In saying this, I suppose one should keep in mind that DORSAL! was a book of its time. I was somewhat spoilt in reading *Dune* by Frank Herbert first. I feel that the Exotics were the forerunners of the Bene Gesserit. I agree with Dennis concerning the romantic content of DORSAL! In the closing stages of the book, when Sayona The Bond is revealing all to Anea, the reader is left with an unsatisfying resolution to Donal's romantic life. I've just remembered Lee Tago - self-confessed psychopath. Here is a character who goes into a long explanation of how he is a borderline psycho who will do anything Donal tells him to, including cutting the throat of all the children under five he meets, or cutting off his left hand... You think, "Ah, ha... this character is due for great things." But you hear next to nothing about him in the remainder of the story. Ah well - on to SOLDIER, ASK NOT.

- Continued Next Issue.



fandom in Australia and worth reading. You need to bear in mind Molesworth's particular biases but it is still interesting and worth reading.

Despite the excellent and worthy nature of the writing in this issue it seems somehow rather formal, not in the more relaxed style of many Australian fanzines of this period. From this perspective the part of this issue that I enjoyed the most was Sue's introductory editorial which was more like a chat than a formal piece of writing. In it we got a guided tour of their lounge room and its contents in the period leading up to Christmas, which I found very reassuring as it was pretty much like any other fannish home you were likely to visit during this period. For example:

This year there's no Christmas Tree for us, since there is no room in this flat for one of the size we could fit on top of the TV that Sue's parents gave us for a Christmas present (the rest of the space is taken up with the typer-desk, the settee and two arm chars, the six-foot bookcase, the TV, the two 1.5 cubic foot speakers, the buttet cabinet on which is perched the Sony 1010 ampliyer, the Dual 1218 turntable and the Sony 266 Tape Deck. The birdcage takes up the rest of the space along the wall, and the kitchen table, four chars and the coffee table in the middle of the room. This doesn't mean there's no visible signs of Christams - there's 'Merry Christmas' in gold and red on the walls, our Santa Claus table cloth and then all our Christmas cards. This year we couldn't put up a string along the walls (against the tenant's lease - but then, so are our pets, and we've got two budgies now, Chippy and Jimmy as well as our two goldfish) so there's one across the french windows and a long one tied to the hooks of the curtains at the french windows and across the room diagonally and onto the wall near the door. They are both full and we've

started putting them on the TV and cupboards.

I'm in two minds about whether or not to suggest going back to 1974 to pick up a copy of this fanzine. It is full of excellent writing and that should be enough to make it worth spending the money necessary to get those circuits warmed up, but I felt that this issue of *Ark* was more like a good quality magazine, better than what you might pick up in a dentist's waiting room, but lacking, for the most part, the personality of its editors. Perhaps this sense of something missing is the result of it being a first issue and therefore lacking a letter column, which would make the issue feel more personable.

Thinking about it again - with the other of my two minds - it would be worth trying to pick up a copy of *Ark* 1, not just for the writing but because this represents the kind of fanzine that Ron and Sue, together and separately, published successfully for quite a few years. In a way it is a memento of the times in which it was produced and the talent that was contributing to Australian fanzines at that time.

Letters of Comment

Let's start this column with some interesting and useful comments from Kim Huett on *iOTA* 13

Page 14 – When writing about potential markets for the fantastic in Australia it's worth remembering that once upon a time newspapers published quite a bit of fiction. I know authors such as Erle Cox and David Evans had short stories published in Australian newspapers. This is a largely unexplored area by modern researchers from what I can tell.

You might also like to skim through this link which leads to a list of the fantastic published in England, Ireland, Australia and Canada from 1929 to 1966 (this list doesn't include hardcovers

though as that that information is easily available elsewhere). You will note there was more published in Australia during the 40s and 50s than your comment implies.

<http://www.darkfantasy.org/spectre/ImageGuide.html>

In particular you will see that during 1943/44 Vol Molesworth had no less than 9 pamphlets (nothing the Australian publishers were putting out then was anywhere near bulky enough to be deemed paperbacks) released by various publishers. I don't recall seeing any explanation as to why Vol Molesworth was so prolific for a short period and then disappeared (unless he was being published under a pseudonym but if so I've seen no evidence of that either). It's possible his journalistic career and/or health issues limited his ability to write fiction (which seems a bit unlikely if he had the time and energy to start Futurian Press). However as far as I'm aware Futurian Press was the end of his career as an author of fiction. He certainly doesn't seem to have had anything published after Futurian Press released *Let There Be Monsters!* In 1952.

Oh, and by the way, according to Ken Slater Vol never forgave him for being so negative about the Futurian Press. As well as the Steve Gilroy review Ken himself echoed Gilroy's complaints in an article about SF publishing in Australia which appeared in New Futurian #4 (published by Mike Rosenblum in the spring of 1955). Can't remember where I read Ken's comment about Vol though.

There's a lot of interesting information here Kim, I'll need to mull it over. Any further comments on this particular aspect of Australia's sf and fandom history would be welcome.

Page – 19 Am I to surmise by your claim that *New Forerunner*

was 'almost certainly the best fanzine of news and comment on Australian fandom published locally in decades' that you consider it superior to John Foyster's concurrent *Norstrilian News*?

Looking at dates, I see that Gary's energetic period in publishing *New Forerunner* seems to have come to an end around the time of Syncon 70 and *Norstrilian News* seems to have started not long after that convention. I wouldn't be surprised if it was part of John Foyster's cunning way of getting Australian fandom all marching in the same direction so we could put on a Worldcon bid. But, to answer your question, Gary's effort has a lot more detail in it than John's but it probably cost Gary a lot more effort to publish than it did John. Besides which, John cut the stencils and I ran them off on the AFPA duplicator in the MSFC and posted them out, making the whole project less energy sapping, which is probably why *NN* ran longer than *NF*.

That Lee Harding article first appeared in *The Wild Colonial Boy Combined With The Gryphon* which was published by John Foyster in October 1966.

Thanks for pointing that out Kim. I'm always keen for people to let me know when I've got something wrong. Along with all this Kim also sent me the Marshall McLennan item I've reprinted earlier in this issue.

Following this Kim sent me another email which I'm including here because it raises a couple of interesting points that I was not aware of and had not thought about. The first, about the American sf ban, was written before Kim had seen *iOTA* 14 in which we went on at some length about this matter. I'm including it here because it adds a little to overall picture about what fans knew about what was happening at the time.

In regards to the restrictions on importing magazines into

Australia as mentioned in *iOTA* #13 I just remembered I sent the attached scan to Chris Nelson some time back. As you can see this extract from a 1953 Sydney fanzine doesn't agree with the idea that US science fiction magazines didn't appear on Sydney newsstands till 1959. You will note that according to this report Australia's major distributor, Gordon & Gotch, was involved. If so then this was in no way a case of limited importing. Gordon & Gotch were only going to get involve if they could make some real money.

I think the fact that nearly all the various science fiction magazines and pamphlets published after 1953 were reprinting US stories ties in with this.

You'll also note the list of stories by well known science fiction authors which had recently appeared in the *Sunday Sun* (I check for a couple of these on Trove and found that yes they had appeared, labelled as science fiction and everything). Rather reinforces my point about fiction in the newspapers I think.

The Sydney fans were very keen to read locally produced science fiction when they couldn't easily obtain the US magazines. You will even find in the *Science & Fantasy Fan Reporter* a description of some of them visiting the offices of Currawong Publishing in 1940,

More interesting and thought provoking information here, thanks Kim.

The quote from the *Newsletter* reads: 'Galaxy, Nebula, Amazing and a host of other US Magazines will soon be on sale in Australia in local bookstalls. They are being handled by Gordon & Gotch.'

What does this mean? You will of course recall reading, on

page 27 of *iOTA* 14, that Australia's improving overseas financial situation meant that the government began relaxing its import licensing regulations so that almost anything could be imported, including, so it seems, American magazines in the period leading up to March 1953. It is interesting to learn that Gordon & Gotch had plans to start importing again, which would have meant Australian fans could have enjoyed (if that's the word I'm searching for) the 'Golden Age' of sf as it happened. However, the government changed its mind about imports from America in March 1953 so the ban was reinstated and, I assume, Gordon & Gotch dropped their plans to import American magazines. That, at least, is my reading of the historical evidence. Any other suggestions?

Moving on to *iOTA* 14, I begin by admitting another mistake. Gary Mason and I have communicated about the item in *iOTA* 14 which I attributed to John Brosnan. Gary wrote saying that he thought it read more like his writing than John's, I sent him an image of the page I'd copied from and he replied:

Now I **am** claiming it! That's definitely my typing and my typewriter. I think I was in a transitional phase at about the time of Syncon '70 -- as well as using the Ryan Ditto machine, I was sometimes using a Roneo or Gestetner machine that had somehow materialised in the Darling garage, underneath the front of the house in Epping. In fact, I see my first Roneo ANZAPA contribution was in October 1969, so that fits well.

The format suggests the heavy influence of Peter Darling. I usually managed to sneak a colophon or indicia in somewhere, with a date and a number, whereas this is set out more like a letter. But I don't think Peter was the author. Gosh, I wish he was still around to ask! There was no mystery about where the machine had "materialised" from; I just don't remember. Peter

would. Could it have had something to do with Pat Terry? No, I'm just guessing. Yes, I think I can claim authorship of the flyer. It definitely wasn't John Brosnan. He was just listed as the contact person for the auction.

Well, it looks like I fell into the ancient historian's mistake of making a quick assumption without thinking it through. One of the reasons this little piece interested me was because it seemed to show a level of organization that didn't seem to be John Brosnan. That, and some of the Mosonic words in the piece make me think you're right. Just as well I put it here first, there's another endnote mistake cleared up before it happened.

Dick Jenssen adds some interesting comments to a couple of things in *iOTA* 14.

Unfortunately, reading the lengthy article on censorship/imported magazines was depressing in the extreme, but it does show [a] how mind-controlled Australia was in the 1940s, [b] how religion was still regarded as overwhelming important in determining Australian societal values and behaviour, and [c] how far we have moved towards a more reasonable society. Still an immense distance to go yet, though.

I'm glad you picked up those points Dick. The fuss that went on about banning magazines on moral grounds said a lot about the what Australia was like and how Australians used to live up into the 1970s. As you say, we've come a long way but we're still far from reasonable. No wonder fans huddled together in clubs just to find some comfort from the icy blasts of wowserism that swept across the land.

A comment regarding the MSFG film shows: the most memorable film -- well, apart from some stag movies (Merv Binns seemed to be the only male who was willing to stand up

immediately after the showing) – was “The Green Slime”. This is a major contender for ‘worst film’, but is redeemed by it’s very naiveté. It’s available on blu-ray now which shows just how ‘cultish’ it is. It’s like looking at a 10-year old’s just-created comic strip; silly, totally without believable characters, logically indefensible, yet with an over-riding air of innocence and, well, likeability. I mean, how can you resist a film using a theme song with lyrics:

What can it be?

What is the reason?

Is this the end to all the breathin’?

Or is it something in your head?

Would you believe it when you’re dead?

GREEN SLIME! GREEN SLIME! GREEN SLIME!

Strange, I was thinking about this movie just the other day and wondering why I hadn’t seen it since that showing. It must have been remarkable if I paused to think about it again after all these years but, after your description, I think I’ll let it rest as a memory.

A comment on page 19. The photos would have been taken late 1965 or early 1966. I was in the USA in 1965, and returned about October of that year...

Thanks for the dates, another historical fact nailed down.

We Also Heard From: Jenny Bryce, Bruce Gillespie, John Bangsund, Gary Mason, Roman Orszanski.

The Long and Winding Road to Aussiecon arrives at the Photo Page

You should see the state of my computer’s hard drive, total chaos! In an attempt to make some sense of it I did some tidying the other day and came across these pictures, from a source that I don’t

remember. So if you are the person who gave them to me please let me know because there are enough of them for the next couple of issues and I’d like to credit them if I can.

They were taken at Aussiecon, as will be obvious from some of the people appearing in these photos. We’ll begin with some photos taken at the convention banquet:

Of these four I recognize the woman sitting next to Paul Stevens but cannot now remember her name. She may have worked at Space Age.



I remember none of these names though I do remember playing poker with the big fellow at earlier conventions.

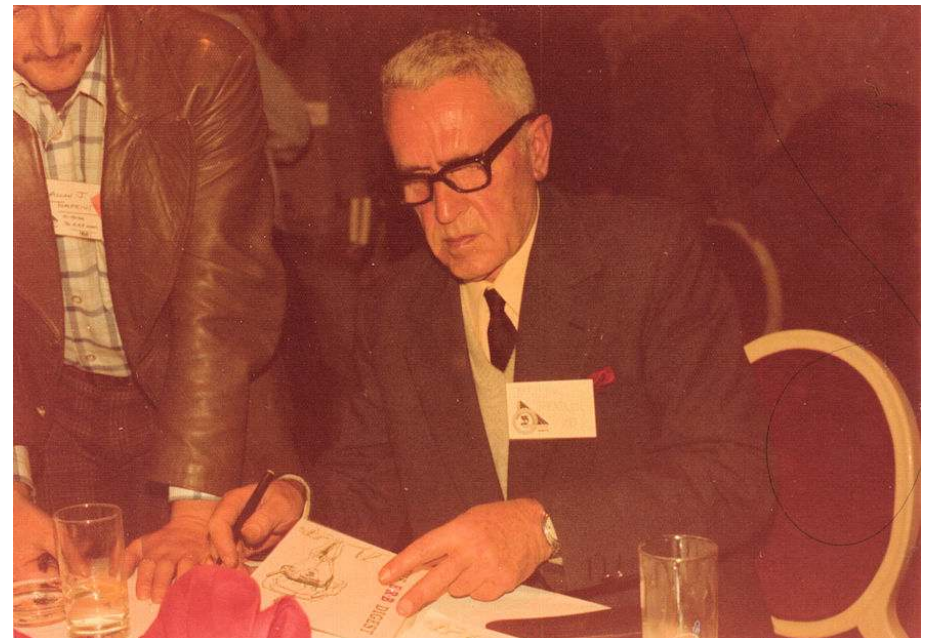


Above, I recognize Bruce Barnes, who is still to be seen around the place, and Ken Ford, who sadly isn't. I don't recognize the two women. Below, Ernie and Merv Binns



The names of these famous people entirely evades me. They must have been very important, judging by the number of Hugos they bear.

Below, Bert Chandler looks as if his is doing what authors do for Alan Tompkins



1963 - The Melbourne SF Club battles on

Life had its ups and downs for Mervyn Binns and the Melbourne SF Club. Now settled in its new home in Somerset Place, the club kept going because Merv was at the helm and simply keeps on keeping on.

Although this issue of the *Australian SF Newsletter* was dated December 1963 Merv mentions club meetings that happened in the new year, which just proves that you can't trust everything you read in fanzines, even the publication dates.

December 1963

Well I will not have much to say this time. This issue will be devoted mainly to lists. What a terrible blow to the world was the death of President Kennedy. Not only for what he has done but what he could do in the future. From our point of view he must be remembered [for] his part in the organization of the US space program. It is doubtful whether the US would be as far as they are now without his insistence that they bridge the gap with the Russians.

February or March next year will see the end of a long run of publishing for NEW WORLDS and SCIENCE FANTASY. Editor John Carnell will be editing a series of PB collections for Corgi books using all new material, so any of you budding authors can still send your work to Carnell.

The MSFC has not been going so well of late. Attendances at the meetings have been the worst ever. We have arranged for an advert for the club in two issues of New Worlds before it folds up in December and January issues probably. We intend to feature the club library and calculate all charges in future to favor

readers of library books. Any non-members reading this and who are interested in joining the club can write to me at the above address for an information sheet on the club.

More ramblings....

The first two MSFC Meetings of the new year were much more encouraging. Some members on holiday were visitor Bob Smith and others. Dick Jenssen is in the USA at Wisconsin University, that is Dr Jenssen, is now, it appears, well settled. Latest reports are he has won his first game of table tennis in the US. Hooray for Dick. Did I hear some faint boos here in the empty club room. Stay with it Dick.

The date and the programs for the Melbourne Fantasy Film group shows this year are not yet worked out, but we hope to have our first meeting on the first Friday in February

HELP STAMP OUT THE BEATLES IN 1964

1969 - The 8th Australian SF Convention

There no convention in Australia in 1967 and the one held in Melbourne in 1968 was called a 'conference', so the second convention held in Australia after the 1966 revival was not until 1969. By that time fandom had begun to expand and been joined by comic fans, who made a unique and valuable contribution. Noel Kerr was one whose enthusiasm and contacts in Melbourne's cartooning community were highly visible and an appreciated addition to this convention.

This report comes from Noel Kerr's ANZAPA contribution, *Sweet Nothings* 4 of April 1969.

AFTER THE CON IS OVER!

Well MELCON 69 is over! ('And thank Christ!', says Mervyn Binns)

Three days of speeches, food, (grog), discussions, films, conic art show, auction, party (?) and the meeting of old and new comic and sf fans, ground to a halt with the showing of 2001 (hummm) at the Capri theater on Sunday evening. Was it successful? Only the ninety odd fans in attendance could answer that. I myself felt that it, sure was, but still left a lot of room for improvement, especially in the entertainment field (right Mr Harding and Foyster?). If the plans that are now being discussed are carried through, we will see this at 'All Fans Festival 70' (well, it may be called something like that) next year.

One couldn't go much further without a mention of Mr sf himself, Mervyn Binns. I'm sure that everyone would agree that without Mervyn's devotion to the convention, we may not have had one, at least, in the form that we now know it. I know for a fact, he spent more time in the preparation of this convention (not to mention his club work) than he could afford with the result that a lot of his work at home had to be neglected. Not only did he organize everything from the ordering of chars, pie heater, drinks, glasses, to the 'new look' clubrooms, but he even turned his hand to cooking and preparing food for the hungry fan. (Some of his specials were really 'out of this world').

Paul Stevens was another person who must be thanked for the time and effort he spent on the film programmes. I think it was a real scoop, obtaining the 'Planet of Storms' and '2001' films. (Pity his tape recorder came public address system, let him down).

There are a lot of other people who could be thanked for

the work they have put into the club for the convention, and these would include J Breden, B Wright, J Bangsund, D Jensen, Mr & Mrs T Thomas, J Foyster, L Edmonds (well???) etc, but I would like to make a special mention of four personal friends of mine, who, though they are in no way connected with the MSFC or any other sf clubs, gave their time and help without a suggestion of a grumble, when I asked it of them. I would have liked to have been able to say that there were five, but one let me down completely.

SPECIAL THANKS TO:

Noel Summers, who worked back at his place of employment to make a metal can punch and the metal bracket and fittings for the club signboard. (Even made a special trip to deliver them)

Max Sutch, who made some of the posters and the 'Welcome to Melcon' sign.

Jack Korput, who made the MSFC sign which is hanging (I hope!) outside the entrance to the club.

Weg, who sent us the 'Best Wishes for Melcon' cartoon.

Thanks a lot fellows, I'm proud to have you as my friends. (I wish some of the club members would take a leaf out of their books, and help their own club a bit more ... right Merv?)

OUR MEETING

During the con', we managed our little ANZAPA meeting ... didn't we Ron, Gary, John, Peter, Leigh ... etc, etc? Did anyone take a check on how many members were in attendance? I counted roughly about eleven, not a bad roll-up // It would be great if this could eventuate into a yearly event, held, at the same time as the convention. What say you fellows? At least it would be a great chance to howl at Leigh in person.

THANKS ALSO TO ...

Alf Brown of the Herald was another person I must thank for making it possible for the club to obtain a reconditioned refrigerator at a very low price. Thanks Alf!

HEARD AT THE CON'

Who was the comic fan that said, 'The type of girls that I would marry, would be a 40"x25"x36" rich nymphomaniac, with a complete collection of Buck Rogers and Spirit comics' ...?

What did that Melbourne fan mean by saying, 'I've gone to pot'?

Who was the comic fan that said, 'The type of girls that I would marry, would be a 40"x25"x36" rich nymphomaniac, with a complete collection of Buck Rogers and Spirit comics' ...?

What did that Melbourne fan mean by saying, 'I've gone to pot'?

Who was the announcer that gave that wonderful full length translation of the 'Planet of Storms' film?

How many times did Mervyn Binns say, 'This is the last convention I'll run'?

Did you notice that chap who woke John Breden up during the auction, by saying, 'It's a marvel how you can sleep?' And did you hear his reply? 'That must be an early issue ... I'll bid two dollars'.

One can't say that the panel discussions aren't consistent. They managed to come up with the same reasons again this year, in why one shouldn't read science fiction.

AYRES ROCK IN 70!

Noel Kerr

Sweet Nothings 2, ANZAPA 4, April 1969

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