



*THINK BLUE, COUNT TWO*

**Corflu Cobalt: Progress Report 3,**

**March 2010**

# *THINK* **BLUE, COUNT TWO**

Beep beep beep, get on your feet! Here comes the third and last progress report for CORFLU COBALT, which we hope you'll know by now is a convention for SF fanzine fans, to be held from Friday 19th to Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> March 2010, at the Winchester Hotel, Winchester, Hampshire, England. PR editor is Sandra Bond, assisted as ever by DOBBIROIDS, the magical horse rejuvenator. Front cover specially drawn by Jim Barker.

Less than a month to go, now, before the convention, and fanzine fans from San Francisco to Spondon are packing their bags, pubbing their shes, and putting on the style. Are you one of them? Have you signed up to be part of the extravaganza?

You haven't? Well, it's late... but not quite too late yet to jump in and join us. Advance bookings close on **Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> March 2010**, although you would greatly assist your hard-working committee if you booked now and didn't leave it till the last moment. Convention membership will cost you **£50 sterling** or **\$75 American**, which as well as the usual SF convention goodies will give you a ticket to the Sunday lunch which is being organised... more on this item later in the PR. A very few hotel rooms may still also remain – see our chairman's report for more on this. But again, you'll need to be quick!

As well as more traditional means of payment, we can accept Paypal. Full instructions may be found at our website:

[www.corflu.org](http://www.corflu.org)

Also available are supporting memberships at £10 or \$15, which we think is a fairly decent price given that it'll bring you our programme book, copies of the at-con newsletter, the special DVD (more on this later, too), *and* the Corflu Cobalt Fanthology, a showpiece of the best of British fanwriting since the previous British fanthology appeared for the 1995 worldcon. Edited by Claire Brialey and Mark Plummer, this promises to be a very juicy item indeed which no fan will want to miss, and we cannot guarantee that any stocks will remain after the convention! A supporting membership will ensure you don't miss out even if you can't make it to Winchester.

Postally we may be contacted at these addresses:

**Corflu Cobalt, 45 Kimberley Gardens, London N4 1LD**

Or in the US: Corflu Cobalt, 11037 Broadway Terrace, Oakland, CA 94611-1948

But this is, after all, 2010, and so we strongly recommend email as a way of getting in touch with us instead:

- \* Rob Jackson, chair: [cobalt@corflu.org](mailto:cobalt@corflu.org)
- \* Graham Charnock, programming: [cobaltprogram@corflu.org](mailto:cobaltprogram@corflu.org)
- \* John N. Hall, treasurer: [cobaltreg@corflu.org](mailto:cobaltreg@corflu.org)
- \* Pat Charnock, memberships: [cobaltmemb@corflu.org](mailto:cobaltmemb@corflu.org)
- \* Sandra Bond, publications: [cobaltPR@corflu.org](mailto:cobaltPR@corflu.org)
- \* Robert Lichtman (US Agent): [cobaltusa@corflu.org](mailto:cobaltusa@corflu.org)
- \* Ian Maule, Corflu Cobalt web pages, virtual consuite: [webcobalt@corflu.org](mailto:webcobalt@corflu.org)
- \* Mike Meara, FAAN awards: [cobaltfaan@corflu.org](mailto:cobaltfaan@corflu.org)

# ***FINISHING TOUCHES***

*BY ROB JACKSON*

Only a couple of weeks to go to the con!

I keep being amazed at the work everybody in the organising group has been, and still is, doing to make sure everyone who comes to Corflu Cobalt has a really good time. Someone made the observation the other day that our committee is considerably larger than that which organised the 1965 London Worldcon... that may be so, but we're still all working awfully hard.

Let's see what's been keeping us so busy – there's lots of it:

- Claire Brialey, Mark Plummer and Randy Byers have been putting together a fanthology with the very best of the past 15 years' worth of British fanzine writing. They have had a completely free hand to do what they think best, to the point where even I don't know what it's going to be called or whose art is to adorn the front cover. What I do know, though, is that it will be massive (close to 100 pages, A4), perfect-bound, and available free to Corflu Cobalt members. Spare copies – if any -- will be available for sale after the con, proceeds to fan charities including the Corflu Fifty. Thanks go to Claire and Mark – and also to Randy who has been doing lots of work with Claire and Mark even though he's not able to be at the con. Keep in touch via the Virtual Consuite, though, won't you, Randy?
- Also in your pack when you arrive, you will find a DVD of 90 minutes of video material from Conspiracy '87, the last Worldcon to be held in England to date. Made available through hard work by Greg Pickersgill (original video material and conversion to DVD format), Rob Hansen (editing and compilation), and Ian Maule (copying individual DVDs), we hope you enjoy it. (When you get home again, of course.) Details of the compilation will be in the Programme Book, and are available at <http://www.fiawol.org.uk/FanStuff/dvd.htm> --please see Greg's note of explanation in particular.
- We are very pleased to say the Winchester Hotel have agreed to buy in a substantial quantity of real ale, the award-winning Hampshire Rose, for use in our own bar and sell it at the very decent price of £3.00 a pint. Our thanks to the management of the hotel for supporting us in this way.
- As we write, the hotel is fully booked – nearly all with our own membership, but with a few non-convention members who booked once the hotel was reopened to the general public. There may though, if you are lucky, be one or two cancellations – so if you want to stay overnight do still give the hotel a try, to use the con's very favourable rates if you are a member and can quote our secret access code. Otherwise, book via the Winchester Tourist Board: <http://www.visitwinchester.co.uk/site/where-to-stay/make-a-booking> . Don't forget, though, that advance membership closes on Saturday March 13<sup>th</sup>, as the hotel needs to know how many of us there will be at the Buffet.
- The programme is so full of good ideas, both to review thoughtfully the past and future of fanzines and to have fun, that the main problem has been what to leave out. But you will just have to wait and find out what there is lined up.....

- The FAAn Awards this year are rather nice things, well worth having. (I'm not telling you what they are – you will find out at the Buffet on Sunday.) So make sure they go to whoever you think deserves them – and VOTE!
- For the quiz, you will need to form yourselves into teams of four. (Polymaths such as Sandra Bond, Ted White, Peter Weston and Julian Headlong may need to be seeded separately.) Get ready to pick your partners!
- The other crucial programme item needing advance preparation is the Auction. Please bring your fanzines, other memorabilia and other historical items – anything someone else might want to pay Good Money for! Sandra Bond is to be in charge of the Auction, with help, I am sure, from the experienced auctioneers who are going to be around. Proceeds go to future Corflus, the Corflu Fifty, or other fan charities – your choice.
- The Corflu Fifty is crucial – without it, we wouldn't have Earl Kemp at the con!
- The Virtual Consuite under the guidance of Dr. Technical is all ready to go.
- Be ready for a Group Shoot on Sunday morning – John Dallman has agreed to take a communal photoshoot of the con membership before the Buffet.
- And talking of the Buffet, don't forget that as breakfast is included, we have timed the Buffet (Banquet) to be more of an early lunch, so you don't need to starve yourself on Sunday morning if you don't want to.
- You will already have seen the lovely illo by Jim Barker that adorns the front of this PR, which is also going to be used on our badge. Hopefully the link between Winchester and fandom should be self-evident. (Graham Charnock's badge design using the illo, and Pat's actual badge construction, are I think, really neat.)
- What you won't yet have seen, though (we haven't seen it yet, but it's on the way!), is Harry Bell's illo for the T-shirt and the cover of the Programme Book. The T-shirt will be available though, and on a nifty cobalt blue background colour; for a little variety we're hoping to be able to offer both long-sleeved and short-sleeved versions. Expect to pay £10.00 for the latter, and make sure the rest of your outfit tones with blue....
- The Programme Book itself is also cooking away merrily under the guidance of our gastronome, Sandra Bond, and will come to the boil in good time. Naturally, it also contains some thoughts about fanzines and fanhistory. Some of you have contributed – thanks!
- And finally – we are very impressed indeed by the great bunch of people who are coming along! The Membership List you will find elsewhere in this PR is its own recommendation, everybody.

-- Rob Jackson, February 2010

## ***TRAVEL TIPS***

**Arrival:** If you arrive at Winchester train or bus station and would like a taxi, there is a very good chance one will be there at the rank waiting. The hotel is only four minutes' walk from the railway station and you may think a taxi unnecessary. But if you have mobility issues or a load of unwheeled luggage, or are at the bus station and do need a taxi, two firms to ring are: Wessex Cars 01962 877749/866208, or Wintax 01962 878727/878737. Both firms have taxis adapted for wheelchairs.

**Parking:** There is a large public car park outside the front of the hotel. This costs £8/day. **Drive through this - do not park in it unless the hotel's own car park is full.** The entrance to the hotel's own 57-space car park is to the left-hand side of the hotel itself. There is a barrier which will let you in as you approach. **The hotel's car park is free to use**, but you will need a token from Reception or from the Health Club reception desk to raise the barrier on exit. In the unlikely event that the hotel car park is full, use the public car park briefly (and do remember to buy a short-term ticket – we can't guarantee the traffic wardens will stay away!), then get your car into the hotel car park at the first opportunity.

**Hotel information:** Check in at the Winchester Hotel is any time after 2 pm, and check-out is by 11 am. As is standard hotel practice, they will be able to store luggage for you if you are leaving in the afternoon and have no car in which to store your stuff.

If you find before the con that you are going to be unable to make it to Winchester, do please let the hotel know as soon as possible, at least a week ahead – standard UK practice is for seven days' notice to be required of cancelled bookings, or you may be liable for charges incurred.

The hotel has agreed to keep serving breakfast till 10.30 am on Saturday and Sunday mornings. This will mostly be served in the hotel's restaurant, Hutton's Brasserie, but some overflow breakfast dining may be provided in the Malory Suite (which is our main convention hall).

The hotel has a license to serve non-residents till midnight. After that time drinks are available to residents only, so drinks can be bought at the bar via your room key card. If you aren't a resident, you will by then have befriended someone with a wallet or purse that contains a room key card.....

Non-UK residents will find that British hotels are a lot less relaxed than American ones about people bringing food in from outside. It is normal in the UK for hotels to dislike the bringing in of food purchased elsewhere for consumption in the hotel. So please avoid it!

There is also smoking – or rather there isn't, inside the hotel at least. Please? Those of you who were at Corflu Zed in Seattle last year will know that the Hotel Deca charged room cleaning fees when a resident's bedroom was polluted by smoke, and UK hotels are now doing the same. The Winchester's fee for deep-cleaning of a smoke-infested room is £75. There are tables with parasols on the hotel's front veranda where you can smoke.

And while we are talking about health, on a more positive note – can I remind you to bring your swimwear if you want a swim, as the hotel has a rather interestingly shaped indoor leisure pool as part of its fitness suite, which is open to all of us as residents.

**Where things are in the hotel:** Our main convention hall is the Malory Suite. This splits into two if required, and one half of it will be given over to theatre-style seating for the programme on Friday evening and Saturday, and the other half will have displays, auction material on tables, notice boards with Bonnie Bairns, restaurant comments and quiz team lists, and most importantly our own private bar. On Sunday the whole suite will be set out for the Buffet.

The other room we have available is the Chaucer Suite. This will be set up for Wi-Fi internet access from tables round the side, coffee tables and a coffee lounge. There will be regular supplies of coffee and tea here during the programme, which the con has paid for, but for which we encourage you to make a donation of £1 a cup to support future Corflus.

**Winchester:** There is far too much information about Winchester for me to reprint here. Can I suggest you visit this website, and find out everything you need to know before you arrive? <http://www.visitwinchester.co.uk/> This is a remarkably thorough and informative website. You can even check the locations and opening times of all the public toilets. (Seven in the city itself, and four in nearby towns and villages. Too Much Information?)

Seriously, there are some fascinating places to visit, some of which may be worth fitting into your time in the city; such as all these, which are over and above the tours and attractions we suggested in PR2. Though it is 4 miles out of the city, the Intech Planetarium looks particularly stfnal. As well as the Arthurian legend, there is real literary interest in Winchester Cathedral – Jane Austen’s grave:

<http://www.intech-uk.com/folders/planetarium/>

<http://www.winchester-cathedral.org.uk/>

<http://www.travelblog.org/Photos/2292944>

<http://www.hants.gov.uk/greathall/>

<http://www.marwell.org.uk/>

<http://www.visitsouthdowns.com/>

**Friday afternoon trip:** We are delighted that Friday afternoon’s tour of historic Winchester is to be led by Tony Keen, a fan whose knowledge of Roman and mediaeval Britain is so impressive that even such an erudite person as Sandra Bond reports that she was fascinated by a walking tour he previously led. (Not strictly part of the con, I know, but many of you will be here on Friday, and it’s all part of the fun.)

**Shop prices:** If you are coming from overseas, you may be pleasantly surprised that the prices you see on tickets in shops include VAT (Value Added Tax, our sales tax) and so are actually what you will pay. WYSIWYG and all that. The American practice of adding sales tax after you arrive at the counter is Just Not Done in the UK retail sector. (It sometimes happens in business or wholesale transactions where the purchaser can sometimes get their VAT back again, but not in any shops or other outlets open to the general public. Just as well, as VAT is back up to 17.5% after spending a year at 15% to stimulate the economy. They have obviously decided the economy is stimulated enough. Could have fooled me.)

**Restaurant details:** We have compiled a detailed but concise list of most of the restaurants within walking distance of the Winchester Hotel. There is an amazing range of restaurants close by, so when you arrive you should know where to go for all kinds of decent dining. Regrettably your committee have not tried all of them, or we would by now be even more barrel-shaped than some of us already are; however, we have sampled some of them, and have used Other Sources for our research – our thanks to Lilian Edwards and Kevin Williams in particular for personal info. We have also scoured the Internet inasmuch

as it relates to Winchester, and cased the joints to check that somewhere mentioned on a website has not reverted to pure vapourware.

And don't forget the hotel's own restaurant – we have tried this and it is superb!

**And finally....** If there is anything at the con you want to talk to the committee about, you will be able to recognise us not by our wearing of fezzes or anything as daft as that lot in Seattle, but by Different Colour Badges. Committee members' badges will be orange, or gold, or something like that – so if you want to know where something is, or get us to do something differently, or (hopefully rarely) have a good moan about something, ask someone with a coloured badge!

- Rob Jackson, February/March 2010

## ***DON'T FORGET!***

A Useful List of DON'Ts for attendees to read, mark and inwardly digest.

- **Don't** forget to vote in the FAAn Awards. The ballot is available on our website, [www.corflu.org](http://www.corflu.org), and Mike Meara is sitting by his computer awaiting your votes: [cobaltfaan@corflu.org](mailto:cobaltfaan@corflu.org). Need we point out that the more people who vote in an award such as this, the more meaningful the award becomes, and the greater the honour to those who top the poll? Deadline: 13 March.
- **Don't** forget that if you are an attending member but are unable to come, it would be incredibly helpful to know so that we can calculate Buffet numbers accurately. Please email us and let us know – and our thanks to those who already have.
- If you want to be excluded from the draw for the Guest of Honour role, **don't** omit to let us know in advance, or at the convention by the time of the Opening Ceremony at the latest (Friday 8.30 pm). In the past, this request has been granted on payment of a suggested donation to the funds of future Corflus.
- Bring your auction material and give it to Sandra Bond as soon as possible during the con. The intention is to produce a catalogue so that prospective bidders can be made aware of the highlights of items in the auction, but if you **don't** drop it off in advance we can't put it in the catalogue!
- Though the programme will be pretty relaxed, we hope people will observe standard mobile/cellphone etiquette – off, or at best silent, is good! If you **don't** comply with this, Ian Maule will loom at you...
- Bring a photo of yourself as a baby, or at least a youngster; we are sure you **don't** want to be left out of the Bonny Bairns competition.
- Think about forming a possible team of up to four for the quiz on Saturday afternoon. **Don't** let Sandra Bond and Peter Weston prance off with all the prizes. ((Oy! – editor.))
- Visitors from other shores: If your credit cards **don't** have chip and pin capability, as is often the case with cards issued in the USA, you may find

that here in the UK, where such cards are now all but universal, people are baffled when presented with such a card. It may be easier to have cash on hand instead, if possible.

- Another thing we generally **don't** have is the American-style con suite; British hotels (and corkage schemes) just aren't set up to allow such a thing. We will, however, be making tea and coffee available for our members during the day (monetary contributions welcome!)
- One more difference between the UK and US: we **don't** automatically tip servers at 15%. Tipping to reward good and prompt service is still to be encouraged, but Britons tend to do so on an ad-hoc basis and pull a suitable figure out of the air, rather than performing frantic mental arithmetic at the end of a meal. The same applies to cab drivers, bag carriers and the like.
- **Don't** forget to print out this PR and its predecessors, and bring them with you; or at the very least, reread them before you leave. The information in all three is meant to be an easy reference for you before and at the con. In particular, the details in THINK BLUE, COUNT ONE on how to reach Winchester and the convention hotel from almost anywhere in the world will ensure you don't wind up in Winchester, Massachusetts instead (or Winchester, Ontario or Winchester, New Zealand, or...)
- And finally, to repeat a point already made, if you see somebody wearing a Corflu name badge printed on a different coloured background to everyone else's, this means that they are a committee member. (Other people get white badges). **Don't** forget to offer to buy this person a drink, give them fanzines, offer them your firstborn, and in general make sure you do everything they tell you!

■ Sandra Bond, March 2010

## *WINCHESTER AND CORFLU QUOTES*

"Each year Corflu seems to get better and better, which is pretty amazing since I thought the first one was great." – Gary Mattingly

"I was never very enthusiastic about the idea of taking Corflu to England" – Andy Hooper

"Winchester Cathedral is audible at five miles, painful at three, and lethal at one." – Anon

"Corflu is the Worldcon of fanzine fandom" – Ted White

"How did Corflu get started, anyway? The official story, as I heard it, credits an excessive number of margaritas consumed one night." – Terry Floyd

"Take care. Go to mum's. Kill Phil. Grab Liz, go to Winchester, have a nice cold pint, and wait for all of this to blow over. How's that for a slice of fried gold?" – Shaun of the Dead

## ***MEMBERSHIP LIST***

- \* Jay Kinney (A)
- \* Ted White (A)
- \* Frank Lunney (A)
- \* Elinor Busby (A)
- \* Claire Brialey (A)
- \* Mark Plummer (A)
- \* James Bacon (A)
- \* Pat Virzi (A)
- \* Geri Sullivan (A)
- \* Allyn Cadogan (A)
- \* Hope Leibowitz (S)
- \* Murray Moore (A)
- \* Mary Ellen Moore(A)
- \* Jerry Kaufman (A)
- \* Suzle Tompkins (A)
- \* Art Widner (A)
- \* Nic Farey (A)
- \* Bobbie Farey (A)
- \* Ian Maule (A)
- \* Janice Maule (A)
- \* Marion Linwood (A)
- \* Jim Linwood (A)
- \* Steve Green (A)
- \* Graham Charnock (A)
- \* Pat Charnock (A)
- \* John Hall (A)
- \* Audrey Hall (A)
- \* Rob Jackson (A)
- \* Dave Langford (A)
- \* Harry Bell (A)
- \* Robert Lichtman (S)
- \* Bruce Townley (A)
- \* Peter Sullivan (A)
- \* A. Sullivan (A)
- \* Pat Mailer (A)
- \* Jeanne Bowman (A)
- \* Alan Rosenthal (A)
- \* Tracy Benton (A)
- \* Bill Bodden (A)
- \* Sneerpout (A)
- \* Ang Rosin (A)
- \* John Coxon (A)
- \* Wendy Freeman (A)
- \* Keith Freeman (A)
- \* Brian Parker (A)
- \* Bridget Bradshaw(A)
- \* Elaine Stiles (A)
- \* Steve Stiles (A)
- \* Earl Kemp (A)
- \* Mike Meara (A)
- \* Pat Meara (A)
- \* Joseph Nicholas (A)
- \* Judith Hanna (A)
- \* Rich Coad (A)
- \* Stacy Scott (A)
- \* Randy Byers (S)
- \* Michael Scott (A)
- \* Flick (A)
- \* Sandra Bond (A)
- \* Jim Caughran (A)
- \* Janet Carrington (A)
- \* Alison Scott (A)
- \* Steven Cain (A)
- \* Marianne Cain (A)
- \* Jonathan Cain (A)
- \* John Dallman (A)
- \* Steve Davies (A)
- \* Giulia De Cesare (A)
- \* Tony Berry (A)
- \* Julian Headlong (A)
- \* Ian Sorensen (A)
- \* Yvonne Rowse (A)
- \* Doug Bell (A)
- \* Christina Lake(A)
- \* Bill Burns (A)
- \* Mary Burns (A)
- \* Dixie Tracy-Kinney(A)
- \* Steve Jeffery (A)
- \* Vikki Lee France (A)
- \* Caroline Mullan (A)
- \* David Redd (S)
- \* Ritchie Smith (A)
- \* Jim Mowatt (A)
- \* Carrie Mowatt (A)
- \* Katrina Templeton(S)
- \* John Purcell (S)
- \* Martin Easterbrook (A)
- \* Margaret Austin (A)
- \* Vincent Docherty (S)
- \* Peter Weston (A)
- \* Eileen Weston (A)
- \* Linda Krawecke (A)
- \* Roy Kettle (A)
- \* Keith Walker (S)
- \* Linda Deneroff (A)
- \* Teresa Cochran (A)
- \* James Taylor (A)
- \* Jack Calvert (S)
- \* Curt Phillips (S)
- \* Martin Hoare (A)
- \* Rob Hansen (A)
- \* Avedon Carol (A)
- \* Paul Skelton (A)
- \* Cas Skelton (A)
- \* Clarrie O'Callaghan (A)
- \* Timothy Maguire (A)
- \* R-Laurraine Tutihasi (S)
- \* Jeff Schalles (S)
- \* Anne KG Murphy (A)
- \* Brian M. Gray (A)
- \* Lilian Edwards (A)
- \* Julia Daly(A)
- \* Douglas Spencer (A)
- \* Sue Mason (A)
- \* Dave Hicks (A)
- \* David Haddock (A)
- \* Alan Dorey (A)
- \* Rochelle Dorey (A)
- \* John D. Berry (A)
- \* David Bratman (S)
- \* Hazel Ashworth (A)
- \* D West (A)
- \* Colin Hinz (A)
- \* Catherine Crockett (A)
- \* Tony Keen (A)
- \* Karen Babich (S)
- \* Mary K Kare (A)
- \* John Hertz (S)
- \* Tobes Valois (A)

List accurate as of 8<sup>th</sup> March 2010.

“You won’t find a bigger collection of knaves, villains, and criminals this side of the Orion nebula... My advice to you is to tread carefully, be alert, and keep your laser handy.”

## *THE VIRTUAL CONVENTION* WITH **IAN MAULE**



The Corflu Cobalt Virtual Con-Suite is located at <http://www.ustream.tv/channel/ukcorflu>.

Broadcasts will start on the Friday evening of the convention with the Opening Ceremony (Ghu willing).

*Joining the Virtual Con-Suite:* On the left hand side of the page is the live video feed – replaced by a slide show when there isn't anything happening. On the right is the text chat-room. You can see what everyone else is typing in the top window, and add your own contribution in the smaller box at the bottom.

You will be assigned an initial user name in the format "ustreamer-12345." If you'd rather change this – to your real name, livejournal name, or whatever – you can do this by clicking the "Sign Up" link at the top to register for free. Some people have been slightly put off by the amount of information that the registration form asks for, which I can empathize with. But registration is entirely optional – you can simply stay as "ustreamer-12345" if you prefer.

Alternatively, we have discovered another way of changing your screen name without having to register. Simply type in the chat window "/nick your\_chosen\_name".

The main constraints on this seem to be that: a) Your chosen name must be one word (i.e. including hyphens or underlines, but not spaces) b) If your chosen name is already in use somewhere else on ustream, it will assume that you are trying to log in as this user, and you'll get a login box asking for your password. We've found from experience that an amazing number of unlikely user names appear to have already been registered. Try adding a random number to the end of your chosen name to make it unique.

*Technical gubbins:* You will probably need at least a low-spec broadband connection to watch the video stream. (Dial-up users in the past have reported that the video gets very choppy without a broadband connection – but the text chat room still works.)

If the feed goes down, this can either be a problem at your end, a problem at our end, or (much rarer) a problem with ustream. The first thing to try is to click the refresh button on the screen. If this doesn't work, let us know in the text chat. If several people tell us this all at once, we'll deduce that the problem is likely at our end, and see if we can restart the feed. We know how frustrating this can be, so rest assured we'll do all we can to fix it.

If you are using an internet connection at work or college, be aware that the chat room uses port 6667, which is often blocked by work or college firewalls. Mainly because systems administrators know that it is used by chat room software – so asking them to unblock it is unlikely to be successful! Home users should usually have no problem, however.

*Chatroom Netiquette:* Like most text chat on the internet, the pace in the chat room can be fairly fast and furious. But remember this is a semi-public forum, and please play nice. We do have the power to ban users, but I'm pleased to say that we have never had to use it.

*Written by Peter Sullivan and originally published in The Virtual Tucker Hotel. Used with permission.*

To most fans of a Certain Age or older, Bob Shaw needs no introduction. He wrote sf with some Big Ideas – “slow glass” as in *Other Days, Other Eyes*, and the Dyson sphere of the *Orbitsville* series; but more importantly with a warmth and humanity in his characters that reflected Bob the man.

But before – and while – he was a writer, he was also an sf fan. And it is for his fannish writings that we in fanzine fandom remember him especially. He won two Hugos for his fan writings, but deserved more – not only the “Serious Scientific Talks”, delivered to convention audiences in an utterly deadpan way with a hurt look whenever the audience creased themselves laughing, but also his many, many funny and insightful writings direct for fanzines.

I asked Sandra if I could write this introduction myself, as I feel an especial warmth and gratitude to Bob and remember him with particular fondness. Not only did he give me the chance to publish no less than seven of his fanzine articles in *Maya* and *Inca* in the 1970s (two Scientific Talks and five other pieces, including one of the first conreps ever written by a Guest of Honour), but he also let me collect some of his works into two fanthologies, *The Best of the Bushel* and *The Eastercon Speeches*.

On top of that, we in Gannetfandom feel we had special links with him. In the late 70s Bob and Sadie invited a group of Gannets including me to their house in Ulverston. Bob and Sadie were quite amazingly generous and kind to us, and I remember Sadie cooked some wonderful food including a quite delicious seafood dip of some sort (30+ years later I can't remember exactly what, but it made quite an impression at the time).

A few years later, Bob wrote a very insightful piece called "When Fandoms Collide" about the way the sf fan community had evolved during his life to date. This was in 1982, and was first published in *The Zine That Has No Name* 3, edited by Paul and Cas Skelton. Though this has already been reprinted once in a fanthology for *Conspiracy*, the 1987 UK Worldcon, it has so much to say about the evolution of fandom that it deserves a new audience. So with the kind permission of his son Ian, we are reprinting it here. Ian has asked us to clarify that his musical enthusiasm as a young man was for rockabilly rather than country and western, but otherwise stands by what his father wrote!

So here you are. Enjoy.

■ Rob Jackson, March 2010



## *WHEN FANDOMS COLLIDE: BOB SHAW*

When I entered fandom around the beginning of the 1950s a bottle of Guinness cost 5p; portable radios looked like small suitcases and operated on glass valves; some food was still rationed; the movie-going public believed to a man that Robert Mitchum's eyelids had got that way because he had once smoked some marijuana at a Hollywood party; dirty dishes were washed with soda crystals, detergents being unheard of; gay meant cheerful; cigarettes didn't give you lung cancer and butter didn't give you arteries like pipestems; you could always recognise

an engineer by the slide rule sticking out of his breast pocket; a loaf of bread placed at the bottom of a shopping bag could withstand a stone of potatoes on top of it and not get squashed.....

The main reason for the above list being... er... above, is that I enjoy compiling such things, but it does illustrate how the world has changed in the last thirty years or so, and it leads to an important point.

Fandom has changed as much, or even more.

What, you might say, is so important about that? Well, I'll tell you – otherwise it would have been a waste of time to bring the matter up in the first place.

Fans act, react and interact in a manner *appropriate to the fandom of their time*.

The fact is worth emphasising because it's at the heart of some current widespread dissension, also because it's one which cannot be appreciated too well without a time base spanning decades. I notice a parallel in my 20-year-old son (I'm enjoying this Wise Old Fan act) who is a country-and-western fanatic. Occasionally he tells me how lucky I was to be a teenager in the 1940s when I could have bought certain records for just a few bob. What I can't get *him* to appreciate is that I wasn't *able* to raise a few bob for records, and even if I had it wouldn't have helped because I had no record player and didn't even know anybody who owned one. He has trouble absorbing that message because he simply can't visualise my life in the 1940s.

Returning to fandom, the dissension mentioned centres around fannish tradition, especially in fan writing and fanzine publishing. The argument is familiar to most of us. One side believes that in the old days the fanzines and writers were better; BNFs were more worthy of the title; the customs and prevalent attitudes were pleasanter and more civilised; and that in general fandom was a more enjoyable place. The other side holds that most of the old fanzine output is over-praised; that the long-established BNFs who haven't totally gaffiated tremble in their shoes at the thought of youthful, vigorous and innovative competition; that old-style fandom was a boring mutual admiration society which just *had* to have a few hornet nests thrown into it.

To know all is to irritate all, so I'm going to admit up front that my grip of fan history isn't good enough to enable me to analyse and explain fully the two positions outlined above – but I have a personal opinion on how many of the differences arose.

Oddly enough, science fiction has a lot to do with it.

The list of quaint or nostalgic items in the first paragraph of this article is a reminder of how much things have changed in thirty years, but the really big differences are in science fiction and its relationships to society. On one occasion in about 1951, which it embarrasses me to recall, I actually said to Walt Willis, "Fanzines don't print enough about SF, which is what brought us all together in the first place." He gave a tolerant smile and handed me a plate of egg-and-onion sandwiches, knowing that my aberration would be short-lived. And he was right. My fannish sanity soon returned and I reverted to my comfortable insular belief that fandom, although engendered by SF, is a thing apart – in much the same way that alcoholic drinks contain no yeast although it is yeast which makes them what they are.

That idea is partially correct. It springs from a well-known phenomenon. A bunch of fans can have a long get-together with lots of conversation in which SF isn't mentioned at all, but one leaves it feeling that any hunger to discuss SF has been satisfied. Communication has

taken place on a second level, because everything that was said was filtered through minds whose attitudes have been shaped by a liking for and a knowledge of SF. I'm claiming that the SF element is still there, still vital – so let's compare what the term "SF element" meant at the beginning of the 1950s with what it means today.

*Destination Moon* appeared on movie screens in 1950 to initiate the SF film boom of the ensuing decade and to give us a tantalising hint of the comparative respectability that SF would one day achieve, but for the average fan it was very much a false dawn. I remember sitting in the Classic cinema in Belfast, with four pints of XX Guinness in my stomach, as the credits for *Destination Moon* appeared. When Robert Heinlein's name came up I glanced around in the darkness, smug as hell because it was almost certain that not one other person in the cinema had any inkling of what it stood for. In the case of Chesley Bonestell it was *definite* – nobody else in that large, crowded picture house could feel the magic of the name, could appreciate the sheer wonder of that unique set of letters being miraculously transposed from the pages of ASTOUNDING to an ordinary movie screen on which for years crowds of mundanes had been content to gawp at the likes of Nelson Eddy and Joan Crawford.

I was one of the star-begotten, you see. A slant. One of the secret elite who had to keep their superiority hidden lest they be overwhelmed by outraged, uncomprehending masses. I was a *fan* – one of the five known to exist in the whole of Ireland, one of the few tens known to exist in the whole of the UK.

Does the above paragraph seem overwritten? Exaggerated for literary effect?

Not to an old-time fan, it doesn't. We had grown up in an era in which professing a liking for science fiction brought automatic derision, even hostility, from all around. We had had magazines torn up by parents because some had Bergey covers which were sure to inflame unhealthy yearnings. We had gone through World War 2 on one BRE ASTOUNDING (64pp) every second month – an exquisite form of drip torture which in some ways was worse than having no SF at all. We were universally scorned because we believed that men would one day fly to the moon, that radios would one day be small enough to be worn on the wrist, that computers would one day be able to play chess.

I, personally, had been forced by a physics teacher to stand up in front of the class and explain just how I thought a rocket could get to the moon, and the class had gone into hysterics while the teacher had sarcastically and "scientifically" demolished every one of my half-articulated notions. I had been victimised by school bullies for having been seen carrying SF magazines. In the first place I worked there was an illiterate, innumerate moron called Bertie, employed as a charity to a friend of a director, who was the butt of a lot of unfeeling humour. Bertie resented that a lot, but there was one bright spot in his life, he was able to poke fun at me because my liking for SF demonstrated that my mental deficiencies were greater than his!

Are you getting the general picture? I know I'm going on and on about this, but it's important to an understanding of what fandom was like in those days and what it meant to people. If, after a few years of the treatment described above, a lone proto-fan was lucky enough to meet others of like persuasion it was a near-religious experience. Actually to meet somebody who knew John W Campbell was! Who had a collection of pulps and was prepared to lend the ones you had missed! Who had read all the stories you had and was prepared to spend hours discussing them! Who was willing to put hard-earned money into buying a duplicator and learn how to use it and publish a magazine of sorts!

An encounter like that gave rise to powerful emotions – joy, relief, security and... let's make no bones about it... love. When you met somebody who'd been through what you had been through, somebody who was committed to standing by you and wearing the label "SF FAN", you felt a surge of brotherly affection of an intensity which fully justifies the use of the word love. When I entered Irish Fandom as it was in those days I looked on all its members with love. When I began to venture into England and meet other fans – Vince Clarke, Chuck Harris, Ted Tubb, Ken Slater, Eric Bentcliffe, Alan Hunter, Terry Jeeves, Bob Foster, Sid Birchby, Ron Bennett, etc – my feelings were the same, and they persist to this day although time and the inevitable ablation of ideals have taken their effect.

This brings us to the comments about old-time fandom being a mutual admiration society, far too cosy and stiflingly polite. I can see why new-generation fans react that way, but old habits die hard. When it has taken you years to find your soul mates, and there are no other likely prospects in the whole wide world, you tend to cherish and nurture the relationship, and to work at keeping it going. Oscar Wilde, trying to be clever, said each man kills the thing he loves. What crap! Most of us have too much sense for that. It is a sad fact that at some time everybody has to forgive each of his friends for causing him pain, but there is an overriding gladness in the realisation that friendship is worth it.

Bearing all the above in mind, one can see why there was little in the way of feuding and needling – jokey or otherwise – in the old fanzines. When a new fan editor showed up on the scene and began publishing he was something to be treasured. He was one of us, one of the beleaguered few, and he had to do something really drastic before we would consider pushing him out through the airlock of Spaceship Fandom. Defects like having no eye for page layout, being unable to spell properly, having a poor literary style, or even being a fugghead were regarded with tolerance and often with indulgent affection as indicators of a quirky fannish personality. We made the mumpsimus an art form.

Fanac was less wearing in those days. For the new fan publisher, it was enough to have wrought the miracle of bringing a fanzine into existence in a universe where such things had been unknown since the beginning of time. Fan writers, with no tradition to uphold, wrote unselfconsciously in any vein on any subject in fanzines like Vince Clarke's SCIENCE FANTASY NEWS, Walt Willis's SLANT and HYPHEN, and Ken Bulmer's NIRVANA. The emphasis was on SF-related topics, but there was room for general commentary and whimsy.

A very common, very popular type of article was one in which a fan gave a blow-by-blow account of a skirmish with the inhabitants and/or machinery of the mundane world. Sometimes the fan would triumph by virtue of his null-A thinking but more often than not he would go down with a humorous bleat of despair beneath the Juggernaut of the Ordinary. Either way we were in there rooting for him, laughing at all his in-jokes, cringing at the unimaginative crassness of his enemies, bonded by the warm realisation that we were brothers, the only few people in the cosmos who could understand terms like BEM, gafiate, egoboo and annish.

The years, as is their habit, went by. So did the decades. The galactic wheel turned through a tiny fraction of a degree, a fraction so small that no astronomer could have detected it, but events on Earth were moving faster....

Science fiction experienced a series of booms, building on the near-respectability which began with the advent of the sputniks. The number of readers and actifans increased. Major and minor SF films were produced, and SF series appeared on radio and television. Kingsley Amis gave the field the Good Intellectual's Seal of Approval and brought it to the attention of academics. The number of readers and actifans increased faster. Flying saucers decanted

a new mythology. Universities – yes, *universities!*, dear Jophan – began to have SF clubs. Conventions proliferated, bringing in new kinds of fans. Neil Armstrong made his giant leap for fandom. Science fiction became so trendy that public figures, who probably didn't know Orson from H.G., claimed to be devotees of sci-fi. SF publishing trebled, then tribbled. The man in the street learned to declaim the names of the BACH Quartet — Bradbury, Asimov, Clarke, Heinlein. The number of readers and actifans increased faster and faster, CE3K was chosen for the Royal Film Premiere; half the commercials on TV became micro SF movies.

The word fanzine was accepted in larger dictionaries...

The old UK fandom didn't pass away, but discerning it became a somewhat tricky job. These were new times with new attitudes and new ways of doing things.

And three important changes had occurred. (i) SF was now plentiful, not only easy to obtain but almost unavoidable; (ii) SF was now acceptable in the eyes of society; (iii) fandom was large, easy to find, easy to get into.

(Everything I have written thus far refers to UK fandom, but in the old days we were aware of US fandom. To us it was a strange, exotic place because, from the start, there had been quite large numbers of fans – probably due to the fact America was a younger and more informal and flexible society. In America fan groups were so large that if a disagreement arose the chief contenders could split off and take their supporters with them, and the result was two viable clubs in place of one. Members of a typical four-strong UK group would have felt themselves to be right berks for splitting into two pairs gazing glumly over lonely pints.)

Harking back to my opening statements, the changes in the times produced inevitable changes in fandom and its inhabitants.

There is nothing wrong with this – it's part of a natural process. Nowadays if I'm meeting a new fan I will probably like him, I will possibly get to like him a lot, but I'm not predisposed to love him – and that's because I know he didn't go through what I went through to get into fandom, didn't pay the same dues. To my eyes he has come into fandom as easily and casually as someone popping into Boots to buy a toothbrush, which is his right, and he is liable to leave at any time in the same fashion, which is also his right. Therefore, whether I like it or not, my relationship with him is not going to be the same as if we had met thirty years earlier. But that's fair enough. Something has been lost, something has been gained.

I have changed, and intend to go on changing, so I was saddened recently by a remark made by a prominent senior fan. We were discussing one of the most likeable, intelligent, humorous, talented and energetic fans to appear in the last five years or so. (I'm not going to quote his name – feel free to treat the description like one of those life-sized fairground paintings of a human figure and smile coyly through the hole where the face ought to be.) I was busy extolling this BNF's virtues when my friend abruptly shook his head and said, "I'm sorry — he hasn't proved himself to me." And I was saddened. I felt my friend was reinforcing the very barriers that I strive to tear down, that he was not accepting the new ground rules.

The newish BNF had done all that was necessary to earn his laurel wreath but the proving that my older friend demanded of him would have involved building a time machine and going back three decades. Mission impossible. The message is that we have all got to be shock wave riders, skimming along on the crest of the present, letting the past drop cleanly away behind us. Fans are the same kind of people they always were – they simply react in a manner appropriate to the changes in fandom itself. And understanding that has to be a two-

way thing. New fans should appreciate that there is nothing alien about another fan because he was around before the Brighton worldcon, or the demise of NEW WORLDS, or the adoption of the A4 sheet, or any other temporal landmark.

A thing I hate to see – and I've witnessed it many times over the years – is gafiation through fixation. It happens simultaneously in every branch of fanac, but perhaps it is most visible in the context of conventions.

Typical case history: A fan becomes a BNF, swimming strongly and joyfully in the river that is the fandom of the day. He/she becomes a key figure at conventions, working purposefully, on the platform a lot, always in the centre of the action, surrounded by friends, having a good time. And then because, as the Chinese sage observed, you can't step twice into the same river, things begin to change. Our BNF ceases to be a key figure at conventions, and tends to react by gathering together as many as possible of the "old gang" and spending a lot of time with them at closed room parties, re-creating and reliving his or her heyday.

That phase may last quite a few years, and in an odd way become more enjoyable than the original golden era. But eventually there comes a time when there aren't enough members of the old gang about or, even worse, the few that are available have changed in such a way that they are no longer eligible. Next, our BNF can be seen putting in shorter and shorter appearances at conventions, complaining that he/she no longer knows anybody, refusing to accept new faces in place of the old. Finally, our BNF lapses into permanent gafiation – and I really *hate* that. We have lost too many that way.

We've all got to adapt to each other and make room for each other – the old for the new, and the new for the old.

Fandom is big nowadays, easy to find, easy to enter – but that doesn't mean that it's easier to exist in it. A fanzine is no longer a kind of revered immaculate conception. There is now a long tradition of fanzine publishing, and new faneds are aware of it and some are genuinely nervous about how their first efforts will be received. They are justified in being nervous, because fandom being big means that fans are expendable, and anybody who doesn't like a fanzine may have no compunction about giving its editor a scrotum-enlarging kick. And if the editor is a sensitive type he may drop out of fandom as quickly as he came in and take up hang-gliding or video games. The Glades of Gafia are full of wondrous diversions these days – which is another factor in the change of attitude.

Writers are in the same position as faneds – nobody is unduly worried about hurting their feelings. The same applies to convention organisers, artists, society officers, you name it... It's all part of the new game, and in many ways the new game is faster, more dangerous and more exciting than the old one.

Fandom used to be a village.

Now it's a city, with all the attendant advantages and disadvantages.

I reckon it's still a good place to live.

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