

SECRET SECTION 01 OF 04
ROME 20110402

Berlusconi is apparently up to tricks. Although publicly denying attendance at any of the infamous "Plokta parties", he privately invited us to examine his collection of back issues of the infamous "We made our excuses" -

DATELINE PEKING
CLASSIFIED MARCH 2011

1. Conditions are clearly worsening at the Shanghai factory where The Drink Tank is assembled. Sweatshop bosses in discussions with Chinese government sources argued that the installation of James Bacon was "not adequate" as a suicide prevention strategy.
2. The Drink Tank is produced weekly.

Alison revise please

Vince 'joke' too
obscure

?royal wedding
not relevant
to main theme

Ploktaleaks

PLOKTA
EYES ONLY

TOP SECRET LONDON IN 2014
BOARD MINUTES

1. Our last minute bid to take over the Olympic stadium appears to be proceeding well; it comes complete with a further £1.2bn grant which should cover our Reno bidding.

2. Boris will commit to the convention provided members wear blonde wigs

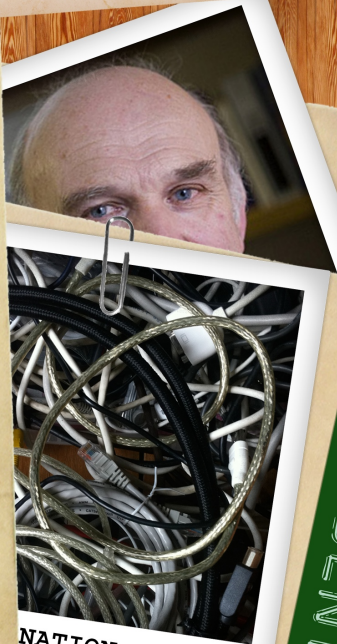
ER

The Lord Chamberlain is commanded by
The Queen to invite

The Plokta Cabal

to the Marriage of
His Royal Highness Prince William of Wales, K.G.
with
Miss Catherine Middleton
at Westminster Abbey
on Friday, 29th April, 2011 at 11.00 a.m.

Dress: Grubby Lab Coat
or Moose Antlers



NATION of this
NT information
ENCOURAGED

CONFIDENTIAL CABLES

EMBASSY LONDON
TOP SECRET CODE "NO FAN"

Plokta announces intention to produce
fanzine "sometime in the next five
years".

Confidential CIA assessment:
Impact: Could destabilise
much of Croydon
Likelihood: no chance, sunshine

Alison Scott 201

Colophon

This is issue 41 of *Plokta*, edited by Steve Davies, Alison Scott and Mike Scott. It is available on paper for letter of comment (one copy to Mike's address is fine), trade (copies to each of our addresses if possible, please), contribution, editorial whim, or for a Twitter-inspired revolution in Walthamstow.

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The cabal also includes Flick, Giulia De Cesare, Sue Mason, and Steven, Marianne & Jonathan Cain.

Art by

Photos provided by Ian Sorensen and Bill Burns for their fannish

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3. Editorial

We're back! Faster than a speeding sloth, more powerful than a Hornby locomotive, able to leap a tall matchbox at a single bound (given a decent run-up), it's the all-new mainly-electronic *Plokta*.

4. iSpy

Apple has been following Dr Plokta around his Fortress of Solitude..

5. The History of Fandom in 37 Objects

By **Ian Sorensen, Jo Walton, Bill Burns, Andy Hooper, Claire Brialey, Chris Garcia, James Bacon, Michael Abbott, Peter Weston, Giulia De Cesare, Steve Davies, Jaine Weddell, Farah Mendlesohn, Dave Langford, John Coxon & Sandra Bond**

We were getting tired of writing most of *Plokta* ourselves. "How can we get some other people to write some stuff for us", we wondered. Then some

nameless caballero had a bright idea. "Well, we could ask them to". Apparently, it worked.

Our original concept was *The History of Fandom in 100 Objects*, but we've had to impose some budget cuts.

23. Collared

By **John Berry**

Double apologies to John Berry, who gave us this article nearly two years ago (and see also the loc column).

25. Lokta Plokta

The latest expedition into the dark heart of Alison's in-tray has returned, after enduring unimaginable hardships in the quest for locs.

26. Olde Plokta's Almanack

Once again, we give you our predictions for the coming year. And once again, we wait until April to do so. We find it makes the predictions for the first quarter more accurate.

Editorial

We're back! Lurching out of the grave and back into the cut and thrust of fandom, with random bits of our bodies falling off, like a bunch of superannuated zombies. But enough about our New Year's Day hangovers. *Plokta* is also back, as we've finally recovered from the strain of <plokta.con> Release 4.0. Which went very well, thanks to the fine weather and our lovely guests of honour (Paul Cornell and the sadly absent-due-to-illness Diana Wynne Jones). But it all seems like a long time ago now, and our memories are far too addled to produce any kind of a coherent con report at this late date. Perhaps our readers could help.

The world of superfluous technology has moved on over the past year and a half. We have iPads! New iPhones! New MacBook Airs! We believe that the Cabal now collectively own nearly thirty Apple computers of various sizes, from

iPhones to 27" iMacs, although Giulia is still holding out. We now have our salaries paid directly to Steve Jobs, as it cuts out the middleman.

We've been checking up on what happened while we were in hibernation. Apparently England have retained the Ashes, which spread from Iceland to the Gulf of Mexico, formed a coalition government, leaked radiation over Tokyo, and have now gone bankrupt. Anything else we need to know?

So, *Plokta* is now an iPad-optimised publication. We're getting tired of printing it and posting it, which is both tedious and unsustainable, so we're going to rely more on electronic circulation in future. Yes, we know that the *Plokta* website says "*Plokta* will always come out in paper form first". We may have changed our minds.

How to Read *Plokta* Or *The Usual, Redefined*

We know that some of you won't want to read *Plokta* electronically. If you would still like *Plokta* on paper, here is how you can get it:

1. If you already send us a **paper** fanzine, then we will continue to trade unless you specifically tell us you'd rather just get the electronic version.

2. If you contribute to the fanzine or send us a substantial letter, by email (preferred) or on paper (legibly), and mention that you would like a paper copy, we will send you one.

3. A paper copy is available on request, provided you make that request by post. A pactsarcid will suffice.

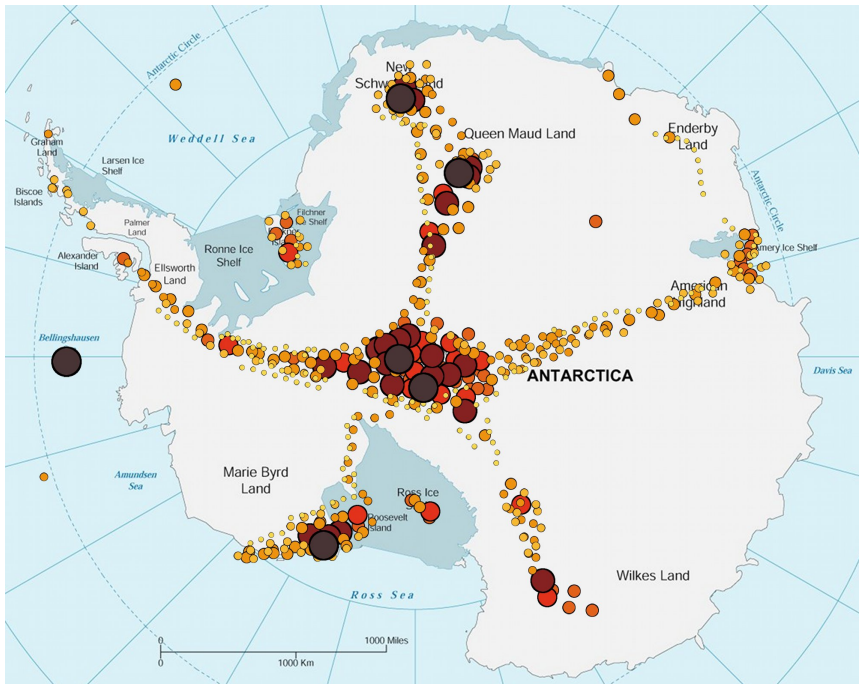
iSpy

Like the rest of us, Dr Plokta was horrified to discover that his new iPhone 4 had been keeping a moment by moment trace of exactly where he'd been since he bought it. It would mean that someone bent on ill-will could identify the location of all his secret bases, the lovely bay where he likes to go sunbathing, and his favourite penguin-spotting hideaways.

Of course, Dr P had the information stored super-securely. But not securely enough! We have managed to extract it

from his backup files, and present it here for your edification and delight. Thanks to the excellent program iPhone Tracker. If you've got an iPhone, it's tracking you too. But don't worry for your civil liberties; the Met already have much better ways to track you.

Fortunately there's no 3G reception in outer space, so the location of the Orbital Mind Control Lasers is safe. When reached for comment an Apple spokesman said "Bwa ha ha ha ha ha ha ha".



The History Of Fandom In 37 Objects

By Ian Sorensen, Jo Walton, Bill Burns, Andy Hooper, Claire Brialey, Chris Garcia, James Bacon, Michael Abbott, Peter Weston, Giulia De Cesare, Steve Davies, Jaine Weddell, Farah Mendlesohn, Dave Langford, John Coxon & Sandra Bond

Convention websites

The first time I attended a convention committee meeting we spent most of the time writing addresses on envelopes and stuffing them with typeset PRs before sticking on stamps and posting them. As the years went by we automated things a bit—mailing labels were printed, envelopes franked, PRs laser printed—but it was still manual labour being done by highly trained committee members who, prior to the convention, lacked gophers to delegate the work to. Now, if a committee wants to inform the members of anything they add it to their website and/or social network page. This ease of communication, however, comes at a price: a very low price. It could be argued that sharing the workload made a committee fuse together better—what it really did was fuse vertebrae doing back breaking work. Thank you Saint Berners-Lee.

—*Ian Sorensen*

My 286

My 286 was made, it says, by Quality Far Eastern Manufacturing. I bought it for £700 in 1992, and it's the kind of off-grey that computers used to be. It has a disk drive, a huge 40MB hard drive, and

it runs DOS. It came with a 2.4 dialup modem, which later got upgraded to 14.4. It has a keyboard with no letters on the keys and it used to have a squat VGA CRT monitor. It's an unlovely object, and it changed the world. Suddenly, being part of fandom wasn't something that could happen only at Easter, fandom was in reach every day. The internet's a thing but it isn't an object. Demon's old instructions for using it explained that it floated in the air just above your left shoulder, and you could reach out to *download* things from it, and *upload* things to it. A ten year old asked me the other day what things were like before we had computers. "Very lonely," I replied. My 286 brought fandom into my living room, and let me talk about books and writing and fandom and nonsense in near real-time. It introduced me to fanzines. It brought me people and conversations I'd never have imagined.

I don't think I'm the only one to have had their life changed by a greyish computer with a slow dialup modem. The immediacy of the internet changed fandom, and fandom help shape the way the internet developed—our gift economy, our geeky obsessions, our love of text.

—*Jo Walton*

The Starship Enterprise

Star Trek, really, but maybe a tv show can't be an object. There are several things it's almost obligatory to mention on an convention programme item about fan history. One is *Star Wars* (very bad, ruined fandom, brought in a load of people with different ideas and expectations, and started science fiction going mainstream) and another is *Star Trek*, which you might think tarred with the same brush but actually in this context features on the positive side of the scorecard because *Star Trek* fans were mostly women.



Of course there had been women in fandom before—I'll pause to recommend Justine Larbalestier's *The Battle of the Sexes in Science Fiction* (Wesleyan University Press, 2002) and *The Secret Feminist Cabal* by Helen Merrick (Aqueduct Press, 2009), partly because they're informative and readable books but also because I'm curious about how serious it's possible to get before *Plokta* turns down a contribution [*it's more how long you get—Ed*]*—*but they were definitely in a minority and quite a few of them already had partners by the time they met many other fans. *Star Trek* brought lots of women into fandom, and although it's true that some of them were rather more interested in the actors or characters in the tv show than they were in your average male science fiction fan, let us not forget that some male fans are more than capable of offering to take a young lady outside to show her the stars with no glimmer of intention or action beyond showing her the stars—so really anything that brought together fans who could even theoretically be attracted to one another at least swung the numbers in favour of opportunity if not motive or means.

—Claire Briailey

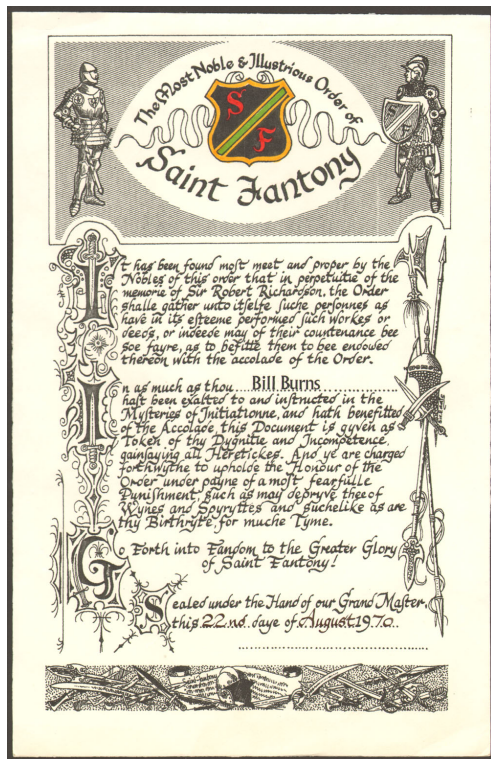
The Knight of St Fantony

In the 1950s British fandom was small and cohesive, and local groups were the centre of fannish activity. The Liverpool Group ("LaSFaS", later "LiG") was particularly lively, with its own clubhouse and regular meetings. At a party in 1956 the group put on a fake medieval

ceremony, and came up with the idea of bestowing the honour of “ex-Chairman of LaSFaS” on worthy fans—without the rigours of first having to perform the duties. The first two fans so honoured were Eric Bentcliffe and Eric Jones, himself the Chairman of the Cheltenham Group.



According to Archie Mercer, “The two initiates were in turn anointed with correcting fluid, bedecked with headbands bearing the Null-A symbol, and finally received the ceremonial accolade, after which they were handed ceremonial scrolls...”



Eric Jones was determined to top the Liverpool Group’s great piece of fun at the upcoming Kettering convention in 1957. Finding the knight in armour illustrated here (actually a cigarette lighter), the Cheltenham group embellished it with “Null-A” on the breastplate and added the commemorative plaque. They then set about creating an entire new fannish mythology around the figure, and St Fantony was born.

The Cheltenham fans put on an elaborate ceremony at the con, and attending members of the Liverpool group were “knighted” after undergoing the initiation ceremony of drinking a shot of high-proof clear alcohol. The statue was presented to Liverpool as a memento of the occasion, and Ina Shorrock kept it safe for the next 47 years, entrusting it in 2004 to Bill Burns.

The full story of the origins of the Order of St Fantony, with photographs from Kettering, may be read in Peter Weston’s *Prolapse* #9 at [efanzines.com](http://efanzines.com/Prolapse/index.htm): <http://efanzines.com/Prolapse/index.htm>

—Bill Burns

Heidi Saha’s vampire bat

One forgotten controversy from fandom’s discovery of sexual politics in the 1970s revolved around Heidi Saha, daughter of editor Art Saha (1923-1999), and an early participant in costume fandom. Heidi began competing in convention masquerades at the age of four, and as she entered adolescence, began to dress as SF heroines, in outfits appropriate for a pin-up photo. In 1971, she appeared at a New York con wearing an extremely brief outfit, perfectly copying the Warren comics character Vampirella. The costume would be considered Not Safe For Anywhere today, but at the time it created controversy because another woman appeared as the same character, and was considered the superior performer. But Heidi won third prize, and the other Vampirella was not recognized. The

crowd reacted so badly that Heidi refused to return.

It was assumed that because of her Dad Art’s connections to Jim Warren and Forry Ackerman, the creator of Vampirella, the fix was in for Heidi. But her costume was not, as supposed, a professional design. It was created by Perdita Boardman, another early costume fan, and a friend of Heidi’s parents.

Heidi was a familiar figure to the judges, and many fans agreed hers was actually the better costume. Observers commented on the beautifully made boots, and polished gold earrings and bracelets, and the fact that the whole thing stayed up in the time before Spandex was a small miracle. But everyone who saw the outfit says that they were most impressed by the huge black vampire bat that Heidi held in her hand. It was made of paper mâché, decorated in gloss black paint, and really looked like a bat on the cover of Vampirella magazine.

The notoriety of this event made a lot of people notice Heidi for the first time, and many of them asked what a 14-year-old girl was doing modeling such revealing outfits. Heidi disappeared into the rest of her life, and Warren quietly dropped the ads for her PG pinup books in the back of *Creepy* and *Eerie* magazines. According to web references, Heidi put the Vampirella costume up for auction in the 1990s, but there is no mention of the vampire bat.

—Andy Hooper

Thunderbird 2

In any list of classic SF vehicles you will no doubt find Capt. Nemo's Nautilus, Luke Skywalker's X-wing and Kirk's Enterprise. But eclipsing them all for sheer fannish wonderment and inspiration is Thunderbird 2. Of all the Thunderbirds, it is the one that fires the imagination. What will be in the pod? Will the hover thrust knock over the building? How come the palm trees don't get scorched? In addition to all this it is simply the most gorgeous object ever to fly, so beautiful that the very air caresses and supports it despite its wings being way too small, not to mention stuck on the wrong way round. Aesthetics aside, the simple fact is that without Thunderbird 2 there would be no International Rescue, and no point in the other craft. (Declaration: I have 5 models of Thunderbird 2 but rarely make engine

noises when moving them from place to place.)

—Ian Sorensen

The Speaking Object

The only actually, officially an "object" object out of the entire thirty-seven, the Speaking Object was invented by Jomsborg, the Cambridge Fantasy Society. Jomsborg is not quite a university society, and it doesn't quite take itself seriously, but it does take fiction very seriously. When I was a student, it would have a Thing every two weeks during term time. This means twenty to forty rowdy people go into a room and discuss Mervyn Peake, or Angela Carter, or Tolkien. This works better if they don't all talk at once, and the Speaking Object is how to make this happen. It's a soft toy, or a rubber ball, or



a scarf with a knot in it—anything throwable. Like a virtuous version of the conch in *The Lord of the Flies*, only the person holding it gets to speak: when they are done speaking, other people wave their hands, and one of them gets the Speaking Object, and the right of reply with it. Add a few checks and balances, and a splendid discussion is

guaranteed. (Checks: the Reeve, who runs the Thing, gets to overrule who gets the Speaking Object next, generally if two people are monopolising it in an argument. Balances: the Ranting Object, placed firmly over the offender's head by the Reeve.)

The Speaking Object was my first introduction to the idea that science fiction and fantasy are worth discussing, and that it is interesting and stimulating to do so. Through it, I made a lot of friends, many of whom I still have today. So even if a lot of fans don't know what the Speaking Object is, it is still central to my Fandom, and I owe it a lot.

The speaking object also works in jury deliberations. I know: I made it happen.

—Michael Abbott

Jetpacks

Where's my jetpack? If ever there was yardstick by which to judge whether the future has arrived, the jetpack is it. The jetpack is not inherently fannish—it comes from the world of comic strip heroes and Saturday morning serials—but it encapsulates the yearning for an exciting future that much SF inspires in young readers; a future where the individual can soar like a bird but really feel like Superman.

—Ian Sorensen



D West's Lean

Famed in conreps, cartoons but rarely captured in photographs, the D West lean was a staple of British fandom for decades. It was usually deployed when D was a little un-sober but wanted to make sure that his viewpoint was being made clear to the hapless victim of a bar room debate. The lean was often combined with the D West sneer. Both are sadly missed.

—*Ian Sorensen*



The pint of beer

This might be more of a British fandom thing. Not that other countries don't produce perfectly good beer, at least nowadays, nor that some fans from other countries don't enjoy drinking it; but it does seem particularly important to us, judging by how much we go on about it. We write fanzine articles about beer, talk about it, rhapsodise or complain about it; sometimes we even get round to drinking it. Never mind the programme or the facilities or the actual science fiction at a science fiction convention: what about the beer? Either the beer is no good, or it's run out, or it's too expensive; or else we've drunk quite a lot of it and done something amusing, or stupid, or otherwise worth retelling at a length which may also be extended by the amount of beer consumed by the participants in the conversation.

It can help us to have conversations, as well. It makes us more sociable, or at least less shy. It gives us something to talk about if we can't think of anything else we might have in common—and a way to include, or exclude, to claim or mock, as well as a point of reference for those non-fans who we want to distinguish as being just like us really and those against whom

we want to stand firm. It provides another topic on which we can be knowledgeable, sometimes also to an excessive degree. And for those who don't drink beer it provides a whole category of other things to moan about. Never mind shaping British fandom, it virtually exemplifies it.

—*Claire Brialety*

Mike Glycer's six-time Hugo loser shirt

There are times when synchronicity happens. These tend to be times when things can be funny. In 2009, I was going to be a six-time Hugo loser. I knew this, everybody knew this. I wasn't John Scalzi, *The Drink Tank* wasn't a literary magazine, so I was screwed. It was an honor just to be nominated, really.

Mike Glycer used to feel the same way. He was a regular nominee for his zine, *File 770*, and as a fan writer. He was nominated six-times leading into a Worldcon in the early 1980s, which was remarkable in and of itself, and Janice Gelb had two shirts made: one that said One Time Hugo Winner and one that said Six-Time Hugo loser. Glycer lost, these were the days before *Locus* was out of the fanzine category, and there were a number of photos taken of Mike wearing it at the Hugo Losers party.

Mike ran a photo of it in *File 770* in early 2009 and I was sure I had an idea. I asked Mike to send it my way. Mike sent it to Montreal with John Hertz, who delivered it to me at the Hugo Losers' party. I slapped it on for about an hour,

got a ton of pictures taken in it, and took it off.

The next day, when Linda and I were supposed to be flying out, a thunderstorm hit and we were held over an extra day. I wore the final shirt I had brought that day while we ran around. The next morning, when we were flying out, I had only one almost unworn shirt: the Six-Time Hugo Loser shirt, which I wore as we flew. When I got to the ID check at the airport, the guy checking looked at me for a while.

"Sorry to hear that," he said.

—*Chris Garcia*

The cat

Whilst not all fans are cat people (some are dog people, hamster people or even budgie people) the cat has a natural affinity for the true fannish nature. Like many fans, cats are not herd animals but tend to prefer solitary pursuits such as reading, eating and sleeping, performing the first via sedentary osmosis (reading through their bottoms by sitting on your preferred book or paper, usually while you are also attempting to read it) and the latter two at pretty much all other times.

Cats tend to be immaculately groomed, and fans can also often be seen washing behind each others' ears with their tongues. Both species' mating rituals have much in common: filking late into the night from the tops of suburban fences and in badly ventilated hotel rooms, and both moving readily from

one mate to another when a more alpha partner appears on the scene.

Cats and fans relish pizza and chocolate although only the latter species takes readily to alcohol or soda based beverages. Cats prefer milk and cream, although fans may occasionally be induced to consume these substances once the raw materials have been subjected to the patented processes of Messrs Ben, Jerry, Häagen and Dazs.

The long-established relationship between cat and fan is truly symbiotic and should continue to bring benefits to both.

—*Giulia De Cesare*

The table

One of the most important objects for the development of fandom is the convention “table”. This seemingly mundane object, seen in other forms at jumble sales, bring and buys, and in the high street, supporting anything from white elephants to political petitions, is for fans the gateway to friendship. Not only does it support tantalizing publications, membership for mysterious events, and the accoutrements of fandom, it stands between the fan and the other fan, creating a formal opportunity for conversation which allows a couple of introverts to relax in each other’s company. Many happy hours can be spent observing the shifting patterns around a “table”.

—*Farah Mendlesohn*

Starship Kazoo

The 2005 Worldcon in Glasgow saw the premiere of the *Star Wars* piss-take *Lucas Back In Anger*. The audience provided part of the sound track for the show themselves, playing the Imperial March on a starship-shaped kazoo every time Darth Vader made an appearance.

Audience participation is a fine fannish tradition, even if it just sounds like a lot of angry bees. We provided 1440 kazoots which meant that the audience of 2200 had around 800 disappointed people in it just blowing raspberries at the Lord of the Sith. Fans love to join in, no matter how. I still have my kazoo, which saves me from accusations of blowing my own trumpet.

—*Ian Sorensen*



Birmingham Corporation bus

How could the Brum group have ever got started without the dear old cream-and-blue Guy Daimler Birmingham Corporation bus? Back in the early sixties Cliff Teague and Charlie Winstone lived

in the north-east, Rog Peyton in the west, and I was in the far south-west of the city. None of us had telephones or cars so we routinely trudged backwards and forwards on hour-long bus journeys to meet and talk SF; the time came in useful for catching-up on the latest issue of *Astounding*.

Every Tuesday night Rog, Dave Casey and I would leave Charlie Winstone's gloomy pile at half-past ten, racing down to the No.65 stop for the last one into town. In the city-centre we'd say our goodbyes and then run like mad through the streets to our respective loading-points. Occasionally I missed the eleven o'clock bus and after that there was only the night-service, once per hour, crammed with chain-smoking drunks and stopping short so that I had to walk the last mile. But thanks to those trusty old buses we always got home, eventually.

We also had Sunday afternoon sessions in Winson Green (restricted service on Sundays), and forays into remote regions like Walsall, Sheldon and Redditch, recruiting or looking for books. Back then I spent a large part of my life sitting on the bus, reading science fiction. Without the Birmingham Corporation bus there would have been no Speculation, no Brum group, no Andromeda bookshop and no Novacon, and British fandom as-we-know-it would be very different.

—Peter Weston

Empty Stroh rum bottle

(Dated to the late 20th century.)

By the time of the Thatcherite depression, fannish drinking habits had changed, largely due to the influence of the party pioneer and incorrigible punster known as 'Half Are'. When in his possession (as most such bottles were at once time), this item would have contained a golden liquid with unusual properties. Originally created in the Alps, 'Stroh' has been put to many uses within the fannish community since its introduction, including cocktail base, aphrodisiac, fruit preservative, alimentary purgative and varnish remover.

Perhaps the most (in)famous usage of Stroh is as a base ingredient in the innocuous—even healthy-sounding—'fruit punch' served at fannish parties. Fruit punch is often the primary libation used to celebrate events such as the upcoming sacrifice of the social lives of a group of willing fans in order to provide future entertainment for other fans ('bid parties') or the tenacity of the surviving members of a weekend long 'convention' ('dead dog parties'—'dog', in this case, is thought to be fannish slang for 'liver').

Interestingly, no full examples of the Stroh Rum Bottle have ever been discovered.

—Jaime Weddell

Kindle

A whole library in your hand—what more could a fan want? OK, maybe an iPad can show movies and an iPhone is better than a Dick Tracy watch, but 3,000 books in the palm of your hand? Wow!

—*Ian Sorensen*

The Astral Pole

When I was a young man, I thought as a young man, I spoke as a young man, I did the Astral Pole as a young man does. Now that I am not a young man, I have put aside a young man's things, because if I try my spine will explode.

—*Michael Abbott*

Incon's Do Not Disturb sign

One of the best conventions ever was 1992's Inconsequential, run in large part by people who had never run a convention before. Part of their marketing strategy involved attending other conventions and, at dead of night, hanging "Do Not Disturb" signs on bedroom doors. If the signs had simply implored hotel staff to let sleeping fans lie while subtly advertising Inconsequential then they would be of little worth. What elevates them from the humdrum was the additional information they contained "Do Not Disturb—because I definitely do not have 14 people crashing on my floor", and other less than helpful messages. A jolly fannish jape, but not necessarily the best marketing ploy. The technique was also used by later conventions such as Damn Fine Con.

—*Ian Sorensen*



The *Plokta* badge machine

Once there was a time before conventions had plastic-coated membership badges and instead used card, or bits of string, or permanent marker. But most of all, we used metal-backed badges of the sort that Americans refer to as buttons. These were not easy to make, and required a large, cumbersome machine that would be borrowed from its owner before Eastercon and returned shortly afterwards. But occasionally, the con would make a profit and we went “we’ll buy a badge machine!” and so we did.

The *Plokta* badge machine came from Enterprise Products, as most of them did, and was a sort of middle-of-the-range machine. It was superior to the basic models in that it had two cups that shuttled back and forth, and a lever arm mechanism that pulled down, enabling a gopher to produce a badge in about 20 seconds. Or, more often, for a gopher to completely screw up the machine in 20 seconds leaving mangled bits of badge wedged into the mechanism. You see, the machine had a certain flaw in that it was designed for sensible business people to produce promotional badges that could be sold at about 900% markup to slaving fans who would love to have an amusing saying stuck to their clothing for the price of a pint. I had lots.

Anyway, the badge machine was not designed for teenagers drunk on their first sight of a real pro writer and

ecstatic at being given the chance to help with the running of the convention.

They saw the BIG lever and something seemed to snap in their tiny minds.

Instead of thinking “this is a big lever, so according to Archimedes I need only pull lightly and the world will move for me” they threw their whole weight (which was often quite considerable) into it, and managed to exert enough force to generate small diamonds in the paper of the badge. One of them managed to bend the lever, which was pretty impressive given that it was solid steel and as thick as your thumb.

Eventually, we wrote up a set of instructions that detailed the 20 or so steps needed to create a badge (cut out the badge design using the cutter, assemble the front piece, back piece, pin, clear cover and paper disc—in the RIGHT order!—and then put some pieces into one cup, other pieces into the other cup, pull down lightly, release the lever, slide the cups across and pull down LIGHTLY! No you idiot! Not like that! Oh give it to me. Somebody fetch me a screwdriver and a pint of Real Ale. I can see we’re going to be here for quite a while).

And after a few years, we went over to plastic coated badges which had more room for a design and less opportunity to screw up. And the badge machine was exiled to the loft where it lies unused to this day [*Actually, it’s in my tat mountain—Alison*]. But we still have the instructions. Just in case.

—Steve Davies

The fanzine

The decline and death of fanzines has been asserted since before I was even in fandom, and yet some of us still stick with them anyway because none of the substitutes available can yet wholly replace whatever it is we get from them. Some fanzines even come back from the dead, claiming that they were only resting all along.

We could pause to argue about what was truly the first fanzine, and certainly which was the first great fanzine or indeed the last great fanzine, or whether it's the fact that we could indeed have an argument about any of this that's actually important; but really it doesn't matter for these purposes. Without fanzines there would still have been fans, and many of them would have continued to write a lot of individual letters and some of them would have met up with one another sometimes; but if they hadn't had the urge to produce fanzines when that was the best available method of community communication, there wouldn't have been the sort of connection and conversation that means there's still a fandom that I want to be part of now—even if I've just spent 1,000 words being a bit grumpy about it.

In fact, by this reckoning all fandom would have been is science fiction and beer and sex, which might sound quite all right except that we would have lacked a way to record and retell all the subsequent stories.

—*Claire Brialety*

iPhone

This is what SF never foresaw: handheld computers that were also communication devices and could play the entire Hawkwind back catalogue. That, my friends, is an object of true fannish desire.

—*Ian Sorensen*



The Big Little Book

Big Little Books were small, illustrated books for children, introduced by Whitman Publishing in 1932, at the height of the Great Depression.

Typically 3½" wide and 4½" high, they ran from 200 to 430 pages, and featured characters from, pulp adventures, radio

and movie serials and comic strips. Although explicitly written for children, they enjoyed an enduring popularity as a kind of proto-fannish collector's item, a guilty pleasure sometimes kept secret by people all-too-happy to display a collection of annotated manuscripts by Olaf Stapledon. Traditionally, two cardboard boxes of Big Little books are found in the effects of First Fandom members when they expire.

—Andy Hooper

1965 Worldcon flyer

In a single page of A4 bedecked with artwork by ATOM you can see how fandom has changed and how it remains true to its roots. The flyer names individual fans attending from the USA, Europe and the UK, giving them equal prominence to the GoH Brian Aldiss. The programme offers a fancy dress parade and (as a novelty) an art show. So far, so familiar, but what of the Ceremony of St Fantony? Members are

offered a Star Auction and a Bargain Basement auction as well as Retail Exhibits. Who could resist? And all for a mere 21 shillings or \$3. And with rooms at 3 quid a night, I think I'd splash out on a single. The banquet mentioned in the flyer menu offered such delights as Crottled Greeps. Who wouldn't want some?

—Ian Sorensen

The 23rd World SF Convention
Invites You
to come along and join us at
The Mount Royal Hotel, Marble Arch, London. August 27th-30th, 1965.

SEE: The "Elta Group's Film "BREATHWORLD".
The Ceremony of St Fantony—9 new Knights to be installed
The Fancy Dress Parade—a Saturday night.
Project Archtop—first time in Britain—artwork from many countries
Star Auction—advance catalogue to members.
Bargain Basement Auction—rockbottom prices.
Transatlantic Quiz—US versus The Rest
F.J. Akerman meets the Monster Fan
The ATOM Space backdrop.
The Retail exhibits room—Display and sales.

HEAR: The Guest of Honour—Brian Aldiss
"How to get high without going into orbit" by John Brunner
Paul Anderson, Harry Harrison, Bob Silverberg, Terry Carr, Ted White, Don Williams and many others from the US
George Smith, Walter Ernsting, Thomas Schluck, Dr. Josef Nesvadba, from all over Europe and behind the Iron Curtain.
Bruce Montgomery, Geoff Bocharty, E. Clubb, and many other friends from the British scene.

JOIN IN: The Fancy Dress Party
The Banquet—Sunday lunchtime
The Business Meeting—Monday morning
Panels and Discussions.
Room parties.
Talk! Talk! Talk!

Membership Fees: 15/- or \$2 for non-attending members
21/- or \$3 for attending members. Money to:-
James Groves, 29 Latham Rd, London, E6. Payable to: "23rd World SF Convention"

Hotel Rates:
Double Room: 30/- per person (77.25)
Twin Room: 55/- per person (77.96)
Single Room: 60/- per person (84.66)
This includes bed and continental breakfast.
DO NOT DELAY BOOKING YOUR ROOM. THESE PRICES ARE A REDUCED RATE FOR CON ATTENDEES. THEY CANNOT BE HELD IN EXCHANGE. WHY NOT SHARE A TWIN ROOM?

LONDON '65
Ethel Lindsay, Secretary.
Courage House 6 Langley Ave
Surrey, Surrey.

Load of balls

The fannish object that I fondled most repeatedly in the glory years from 1978 to 1985 was that miracle of rare device, the IBM Selectric II typeball. Not just one, of course—I ended up with twenty-four.

Tell young fans the Selectric procedure, and they won't believe you. One typed along merrily in Courier 12,

good for cutting stencils (don't even try to tell young fans about stencils) until some emphasis was needed, and with a deft flip Courier 12 was whipped out of the machine and Courier 12 Italic clipped into place. When thinking big, I could switch from elite to pica pitch with Courier 10, though there was no Courier 10 Italic ball. A handy stopgap called Light Italic worked at either pitch, and went with more or less anything.

Ansible moved from stencils to litho (which it may still be possible to tell young fans about): Delegate and Light Italic with occasional Symbol 12 smartarsery when I felt typographically exotic, or mathematical, or Greek. Did I really do headlines in the dread Script face, the moral equivalent of Comic Sans?

It seemed like betrayal when after years of dextrous ball-fingering I moved to a daisywheel (tell young fans...) and then a laser printer. The golfballs still gaze reproachfully from their case. Orator—that was the huge tall one that wouldn't cut stencils properly. Adjutant, Artisan, Diplomat, Dual Gothic, Letter Gothic, Manifold, Polygo, Prestige: I don't even remember what all these looked like. A nostalgic favourite is Olde English, acquired on my 1980 TAFF trip and used approximately once a year to type things like Merry Christmas.

All useless now, without a Selectric to put them in. But I can't bear to throw them away.

—Dave Langford

The Filth-o-Phone

Erwin “Filthy Pierre” Strauss is by any standard a big name fan. Also respected as a Libertarian editor and publisher, he has chaired many conventions, maintains the SF Convention Calendar for *Asimov's*, and is credited with inventing the “Voodoo message board” system. He is also a member of the Filk Hall of Fame, and can still be found singing and playing his unique keyboards after more than 30 years in fandom. The sound produced by the “Filth-o-Phone” happily defies description, but its component include a portable organ and a plastic ventilator tube with which Strauss provides pneumatic power. His repertoire, traditionally dominated by processional marches, seems like the ideal accompaniment to watching Mike Resnick win a Hugo Award.

—Andy Hooper

The Toaster of Power

At the 1995 Worldcon the Friday night fan programme saw the first ever Reductio Ad Absurdum epic: *Dune, or, the Sand of Music*. In it Paul Atreides had to suffer the test of the Gom Jabbar, for which we employed an old toaster. Phil Raines brilliantly ad-libbed being unable to remove his hand after the test and played the next 3 scenes with the toaster attached. Thus was born the tradition of using the toaster in all our shows. In *Bladerunner, or, Carry on Replicating* it was the Voight-Kampff device used to interrogate replicants. In *A Complete Waste of Time* it was a time machine. In Tolkien's spaghetti western *A Fistful of*

Hobbits it was the Toaster of Power, the one Toaster to rule them all (though it has to be said a stunt toaster was used in the climactic scene when actual toast was required). Sadly, the Toaster of Power has no power lead...

—*Ian Sorensen*



The Beeblebear

The object that I think is important to the history of fandom is the Beeblebear. I started out in fandom, along with many other fans (including Flick, unless I'm very much mistaken!) by joining ZZ9 Plural Z Alpha, and the humble Beeblebear has become one of the most recognisable aspects of ZZ9. The Beeblebears' Picnic at Eastercon is always a good time, and really, who can say the Dealers' Room would be quite as good without the familiar two-headed, three-armed bears on the ZZ9 table? So, yes. The Beeblebear definitely gets my vote!

—*John Coxon*

Duplicator

Plokta is, of course, the Journal of Superfluous Technology. Without breaking into the editorial team's homes and ransacking them, I can't be certain, but I suspect there is one item of superfluous technology that none of them possesses.

It's superfluous nowadays, because it's outmoded. But once, fanzine editors relied upon it absolutely. I refer to the stencil duplicator, or as it was also known in the USA, the mimeograph. It lies dead now, struck down by the hands of the photocopier—hands which are suspiciously clean, as opposed to the inky paws which using a duplicator tended to leave you with.

It was a simple principle; a continuous silk screen was wrapped around rollers. Words were cut on a wax stencil by a typewriter. The rollers were set in motion—by a motor, or in cheaper models, by cranking a handle akin to the starting handle on a vintage car—and paper went through between the rollers and the stencil, which process squeezed ink through the silk screen and the stencil, and onto the paper.

Sounds complex? In reality it was very simple, and much easier to fix when things went wrong than a photocopier. One celebrated British fan was able to make his own duplicator with a paint can, a face flannel, half an old pram...

The comparison to a vintage car is deliberate; a duplicator has a similar air of slightly eccentric outmodedness. In

operation, all the wheels and rollers go round and round under your very eyes, as though Heath Robinson had a hand in the design. The ink had a faint but pleasant smell. Like a vintage car, it made a regular clunk-a-clunk-a sound. All rather wonderful.

The duplicator was overwhelmingly the most common means of fanzine production for fifty years, from 1940 to 1990. In Britain, the most popular brand was the wonderfully-named Gestetner, manufactured in a factory at Tottenham Hale, a stone's throw from *Plokta's* Walthamstow offices.

Wikipedia notes that "There are still diehard mimeography enthusiasts in the United States and Canada, and mimeo technology is still in everyday use in the Third World." But as far as I know, no SF fanzine is produced on a duplicator any more, anywhere. I'd welcome proof to the contrary.

—*Sandra Bond*

The John Clute suit

A regular feature at award ceremonies and publisher parties in the 1990s, John Clute's deceptively casual jacket was the color of shallots caramelized in butter, with lapels faintly smelling of freshly-ground cinnamon. People viewing it found themselves sinking into a profoundly literate self-satisfaction, congratulating themselves for having the good judgment to sit down near such a handsome, well-modulated sport coat. In reality, Clute's jacket was an insidious extraterrestrial parasite that sustained

itself on incomprehensible pretension. Having overfed at a David Wingrove release party, the jacket was forced to expand into the shape of a down-filled anorak, and accidentally abandoned by the puzzled Clute, who wondered who had nicked his jacket. Theories diverge as to its eventual fate; but many contend that it has been seen draped around Neil Gaiman's shoulders, dappled in loden and feldgrau and so utterly, achingly soft....

—*Andy Hooper*

The Folly

The origins of the Folly are shrouded in myth and legend. Some say it was the Wilmslow's egg; others that it is a Heechee ice cream maker; others again that it was an early Krell Ktistec machine. (A few deluded fools even think Richard Rampant and friends built it in a garden shed over a few weekends.) It seems to be older than our universe, but it is almost certainly a lot smaller. It is not full of stars. Its first reliably documented sighting was on Earth in Birmingham, at the Becon 87 Eastercon. It was such a success there that it was invited to appear at the Brighton Worldcon. But the strain of transportation away from the Worldcon was too much for it, and its manifestation in our reality broke up soon afterwards.

It was about seven feet high, three feet across at the base, and it looked kind of like a crashed satellite. Half way up it was a television screen, which repeatedly

played a short video programme, explaining the history of Follycon: a bid for the 1988 Eastercon, to be held in Liverpool, in somewhere called the Adelphi Hotel (which fandom had never heard of at the time). It claimed that the bid had been planned for over a thousand years. It introduced the committee. It was silly. And at a time when fandom was very divided, everybody loved it. It was a hit. People stood and watched it again and again, and some of them were even sober.

Follycon won the bid. The Folly, I like to think, is somewhere between the stars, tidying up the Sevagram, and preparing for the coming of the Instrumentality.

—*Michael Abbott*



The Shaft

There has always been a certain tension between the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society and the New England Science Fiction Association. The reasons for this tension are lost to the mists of history, but I'll blame it on Elmer Perdue. When NESFA bought their clubhouse in Somerville, Massachusetts, there was an unexpected find: a large washer shaft.

You see, the clubhouse had previously been a dry cleaners, and so this shaft used to drive the machines. It was huge, very large, and it required an extra big shaft. Six feet long, with a gear that would have made any Steampunk blush with inadequacy. NESFA had a smart idea—Give LASFS the Shaft! Don Eastlake crated up the shaft and shipped it off to the good people at LASFS.

There are many myths involved with the shaft. Some say that it was shipped back and forth, and each time it changed hands it gained a certain amount of fannish energy. Some believe that when Fandom is in its darkest days, the shaft will rise up and smite the wicked leaving the just free to repopulate!

—*Chris Garcia*

Mac laptop with Bonjour technology

Doing a fanzine or a convention newsletter usually involves a lot of work, both creative and back-breaking. Writing or drawing material, editing it and composing it on pages was an artform in the days of stencils and ink duplication. Photocopying made layouts easier and

printing less messy, but creating and editing text was still quite tedious. Until the *Plokta* Cabal discovered the joys of Apple's Bonjour technology—a local network that allowed multiple users to edit the same document simultaneously. This meant that the Corflu '98 newsletter was created, edited and laid out by half a dozen people sitting in the bar, chatting and drinking. What could be more fannish than that? Publishing and pints, thanks to the Apple Mac laptop and Bonjour.

—*Ian Sorensen*

The enormous science fiction novel

One of the other things you hear on fanhistorical programme items is that back in the day it used to be possible to keep up with all the science fiction that existed. We can't do it now, not just because we can't catch up with everything that exists already but also because so much science fiction is produced these days. And so we don't all have a common grounding in sf, and we don't have to read or watch the same things even when they're new because we've got so much choice, so we haven't got a shared experience any more. While we could again blame *Star Wars* it seems lazy to throw all our eggs at one medium, so let's reflect on publishing.

There's a lot of very good science fiction around these days, and it's good by the standards on which we judge any literature: plot, characters, setting, ideas, structure and writing. And while some science fiction has always been good in at least some of these ways, some of that

seemed to be unnecessary frippery when it was all more... brisk. Whereas more than once in the past decade, reading just the six titles that comprise the shortlist for the Arthur C Clarke Award has involved around 3,500 pages, and some of them could barely be picked up, never mind carried about.

And so we've ended up in the position that science fiction fans are reading fewer and fewer separate titles, or just less sf overall, and have even less in common, and the ones with e-book readers are even more smug than you'd expect—and we're able to blame it all on someone else.

—*Claire Briailey*

The 1942 Plymouth four door sedan

In 1940 and 1941, Plymouth was the second most popular automotive brand in America; by 1942, wartime shortages had begun to affect the quality of the vehicles coming off the assembly line. With rubber needed for the war effort, tires also became difficult to replace, and motorists had to patch them rather than buy replacements.

This situation created one of the epic journeys in fandom's early history, the migration of the residents of the original "Slam Shack," from Battle Creek, Michigan to Los Angeles, California in 1945. Al and Abby Lu Ashley, Walter Liebscher and Jack Wiedenbeck made the trip in a Plymouth with tires so bad they had to be patched every 75 miles, all the way to California. But the car held

together, and did not maroon the group in Kansas or Arizona. Without this standard of superior reliability, Al Ashley might never have met Charles Burbee; and would most likely be forgotten by everyone but Robert Lichtman. But because of his transformation into a famously windy dunce at Burbee's hands, Ashley has achieved a kind of immortality, the perpetual victim of a particularly well-told joke. And all because this ugly, poorly-built car held together all the way to the edge of the Pacific ocean.

—Andy Hooper

A Fanzine that is Ginormous

It is only when you are handed *Warboon* 28, and you get to see its wonderful green leather-bound boards, its individually printed pages on heavy paper, and its colourful illustrations, that you truly realise that, for some people, Fanzines are more than just ephemera.

At 614 pages, it's like a veritable holy book, and within its covers are collected the fan writings of Irish Fan Walt Willis. The tome was published in 1978, some thirty three years ago, by Richard Bergeron. The pages are mimeographed, the reader's version of an artists lithograph. Still for sale at \$30, it's something that never ceases to amaze, but the real payoff is the writing, Willis was a master of the Pun, and an observer with high intelligence, who vividly gets across to

the readers his thoughts and activities, and most importantly the antics of fans.

—James Bacon

The Fanny Ashes

The El Presidente of ZZ9 and Leader for life of Sproutlore James Bacon were drinking heavily at Dangercon in Croydon. Might have been 007.

They disappeared late in the day into the toilets, emerging with cuts, blood-soaked *Hitch Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy* and *Antipope* and also other special items.

Elvis helped by grinding down the paperbacks, El Presidente grinding them as Elvis held.

Allegedly a Chung Kuo book was destroyed at these things—do we mean David Wingrove's series.

The books were burned. Fire breathing with absinthe burned the books and this and alcohol and all the bits and blood soaked pages were eventually bunged into a bottle.

The bottle subsequently turned up all dressed in leather courtesy of Flick, but some later abuse ended up with that off and other decorations adorning the ashes.

Infrequently the clubs would have quizzes despite the leaders' desire for a knife fight—for the Ashes.

—James Bacon

Collared

By John Berry

Early summer; I sit in the garden, trying to forget my serious health problems; however, being elderly, I have to accept the status quo.

My wife and I daily scatter bread crumbs on a corner of the lawn, attracting a wide variety of bird life: sparrows (not so many as of yore), starlings, magpies, jackdaws, blackbirds, robins, pigeons, and two quite tame collared doves.

Last summer I tamed a robin. I uttered a clicking noise, it flew from the hedge to my feet, and I scattered crumbs all around it.

One day, I was attempting a crossword puzzle in the lounge, when my wife came in. "Don't move", she whispered. "The robin has flown in and he's on the window sill".

I turned around, and there it was, my friend. I slowly crossed to it, muttering soothing birdie noises. I gently lifted the venetian blind and opened the window, and quite unconcerned it hopped away, no sign of panic at all.

On another occasion, it was raining quite heavily, and we hadn't crumbed the lawn. I looked out the french windows and there, on the patio, quite bedraggled, rain spattering all around it, was my robin, looking at me, head slightly on one side.

I got a slice of bread, but when I returned it had disappeared.

Unhappily, one day it didn't turn up and respond to my tongue-clicking signal; that was the last I saw of my robin.

~~~~~

One afternoon I was sitting in the lounge and heard a heavy bang on the window pane. This sometimes happens; birds, probably frightened, disperse quickly, occasionally hitting the window. Usually they fly away, but not this time. A young yellow-beaked male blackbird lay upside-down, claws clenched, inert on the patio.

I picked it up and breathed on it, muttering birdie supplications as it lay in my hand. Occasionally an eye half-opened, but otherwise there was no movement.

After half an hour, the claws unclenched. I lay it on the lawn face-down. Suddenly it opened its eyes, did an experimental shuffle, flapped its wings and flew away in a somewhat ungainly manner.

What I am now going to relate happened half a dozen times at least in the next month or so. On one occasion, my wife was a surprised witness. I was sitting on the patio and suddenly, from the garden

## Diana Wynne Jones

We were greatly saddened by the death of Diana Wynne Jones on 26 March. She was one of our Guests of Honour for the most recent <plokta.con>, and while she was unable to attend due to the onset of her long illness, we were delighted that she'd agreed to be a guest, as we are all great fans of her writing.

Our thoughts are with her family and friends.

hedge, a male blackbird flew directly at me, zooming just over my head.

It is my presumption that it was the blackbird I had rescued, but were the charges towards me appreciation, or did it blame me for its unconscious state on the lawn?

~~~~~

Collared doves... two were quite tame, approaching to within a yard of me, appreciating the bread crumbs I threw at them.

After some experimentation, I was able to mimic their call. I filled my mouth with warm spittle and performed a throaty gurgle.

I realised my amateur status as a collared dove mimic moved into the professional frame when two neighbours were talking, and I heard one shout, "I can't hear you because of that blasted bird!"

I discovered that collared doves, after sending their message, signed off with

an individual squawk; one, two, three, sometimes four repetitions.

So having nothing better to do, I emitted a superb collared dove gurgling call, and signed off with a triple squawk ending.

A moment later, I heard a response, a double-ending squawk.

I repeated my call, pause, a reply, and so on until my mouth became dry.

This became a daily occurrence. One day I decided to go for a slow walk in the direction of the collared dove caller.

Because of my ailments I walked slowly, stopping occasionally to send my signal, always an immediate response.

I stood at the corner of a tree-lined avenue, collected a mouthful of spittle and gave a superb rendition of my signal... crikey, the response was quite close.

I staggered down the avenue looking at the trees and rooftops, hoping to spy my feathered contact.

I passed a front garden in which a stout gentleman was sitting, florid of visage, a white handkerchief knotted at the four corners on his balding head.

Even as I looked, he took a deep pop-eyed breath, and emitted the special collared dove call.

I limped past him, tears in my eyes.

He called several times as I walked home, but I didn't respond.

—John Berry

Lokta Plokta

[The locs are all rather old, and this loccol is brief. But the first one is even older. We've been spelunking in Alison's study and in the stratum corresponding to the Ploktariferous era we discovered the following, from January 2003, unopened. Our apologies to John Berry.]

John Berry

I expect my observation herewith is apocryphal, and you've probably heard it before, but I understand a pile of debris was on the pavement outside the Tate Modern, after refurbishment, awaiting removal, and a passing American art dealer, presuming it to be an exhibit, offered £100,000 for it. After reading Steve Davies, I believe it to be true!

Eric Lindsay

I must confess to initially being amused by the Facebook cover of *Plokta* 38. However about a month ago I joined Facebook (and promptly lost internet access). Now I think the cover is wonderful! I am also sure I am missing some of the subtle bits.

Robert Jackson

I could get semi-serious about spy-in-the-sky photos, but the phenomenon is not exactly new. It was over 20 years ago that a door-to-door salesman knocked on our door and told us that he had an aerial photo of our house and did we want to buy one for only £75? The only difference is that now it's universal, free

and compulsory, courtesy of Microsoft and Google.

Dave Clements

Finally the first green shoot of recovery—*Plokta* back to full size! A miracle! Thanks be to St. Gordon!

John Dallman

Plokta only really needed some more endorphin sources to blossom into a full-grown cult, and yoga and TM provided them for the Maharishi and his ilk. You've already got the leadership, the weird vocabulary and the space opera, and now you've picked a long-time residential training centre for an ostensible fun weekend, that's probably actually going to be the first-round indoctrination. I'd call it a masterly plot except that it isn't exactly subtle.

There's going to be some kind of weird combination of debauchery, the SEALS "Hell week", and a subliminal suggestions of a hidden meaning behind it all. It sounds terrifying.

I'll take photographs.

We also heard from: Susan Francis

("The TranSylvanian Families are awfully cute"), **Pamela Boal** ("Watch out Alison, the running lark can become addictive") and **Lloyd Penney** ("I see Marianne has gone from zygote to tall brat in no time flat")

Olde Plokta's Almanack for 2011

January: The Internet runs out of IP addresses. Dr Plokta sells his secret hoard on eBay. Look out for new addresses like $\pi.76.2i.165$. More snow than ever before. Revolution in Tunisia.

February: Snow still falling. Now up to the eaves. Flick sends Mike out for gin—he says he may be some time. Revolution in Libya. Dr Plokta recommends investment in potassium iodide futures. Now, don't you wish we'd got this issue out more promptly?

March: NASA announces the discovery of a new alcohol-based life-form. In Walthamstow.

April: Marriage of Prince Thingummy and Whatshername. Eastercon. SMS prepares for revolution by assembling fannish New Model Army.



May: Fannish revolution fails when Sergeant-Major Bradshaw tells the assembled ranks to get down and give him two press-ups. Margarita season begins. *Plokta* fruit consumption increases drastically. Revolution in Wisconsin.

June: Sun finally comes out. Sun disappears behind a cloud and isn't seen again until 2013. Revolution in $\Phi \times \blacksquare \gamma_0 \pm \blacksquare \gamma_0 \times \infty$.

July: Oh, God, it's only a year until the Olympics. Anyone want to rent our house?

August: Great Dragon Ploktaroth, currently napping under Eyjafjallajökull, rolls over in his sleep again. So you can forget about that summer holiday. Worldcon in Reno, Nevada. Dr Plokta carries out nuclear test but only scores 98%. No desert for you, Dr P. Revolution in WSFS business meeting.

September: 2011 visits the doctor to ask for a prescription for Ritalin.

October: Plokta Cabal release their first motion picture, *The Antisocial Network*.

November: Divorce of Princess Whatchamacallher and Prince Doobry. Yay! Another public holiday.

December: Christmas—Alison strangles her family. Again. Revolution in Tooting.