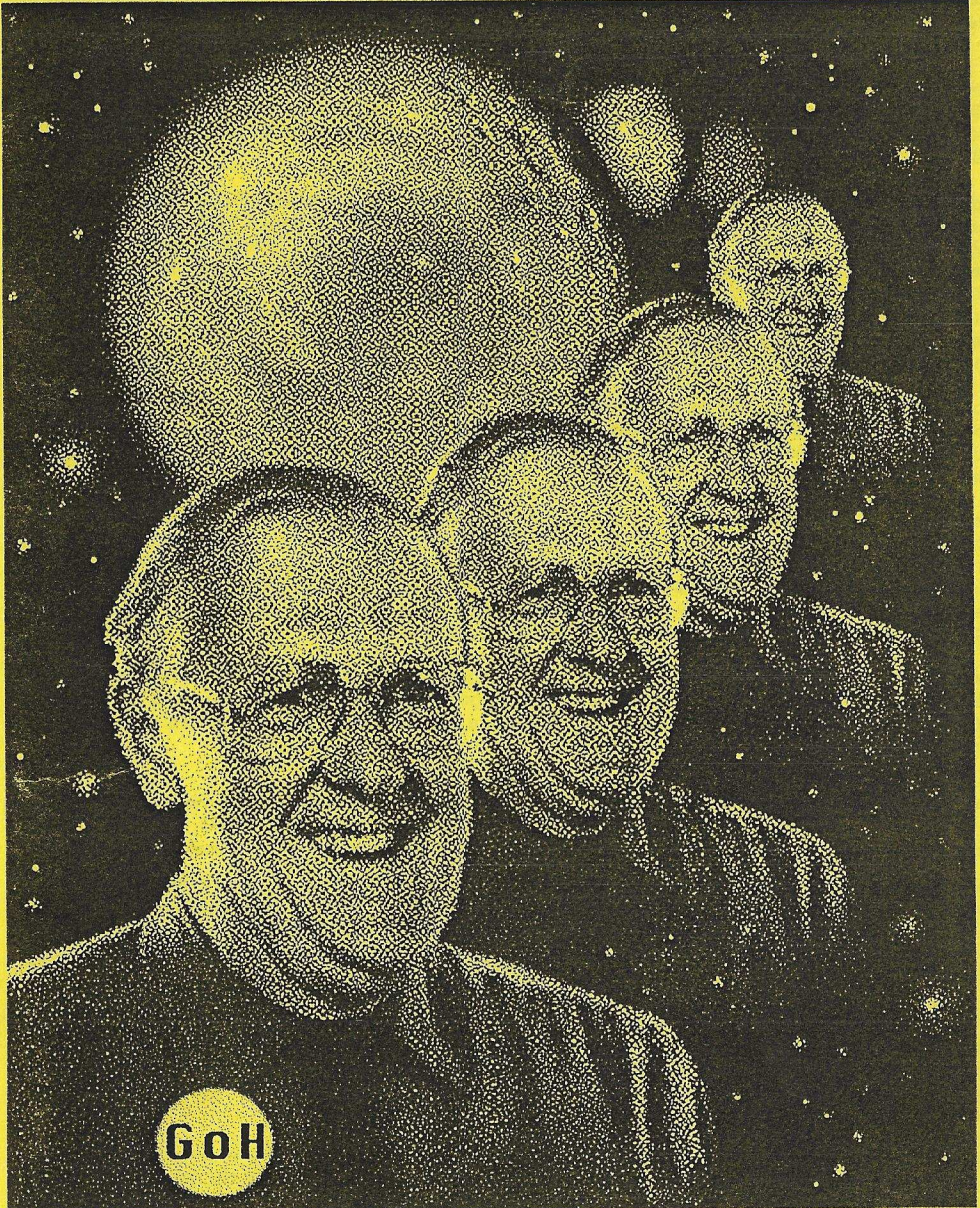


NOVASON

Progress Report Two



"They said they wanted four guests. . ."

**Novacon 25: Chamberlain Hotel, Birmingham, B12 0PJ.
3-5 November 1995. Guests of Honour: Brian W Aldiss,
Harry Harrison and Bob Shaw, Special Guest Iain M Banks.**

Membership & Enquiries: Attending membership costs £25.00 until the 18th April 1995 (Easter) after which it will possibly increase. Supporting membership costs £8.50. Cheques should be made payable to "Novacon 25" and sent to Carol Morton at 14 Park Street, Lye, Stourbridge, West Midlands, DY9 8SS. General enquiries should be sent to Tony Morton at the same address or you can call him or Carol on 01384 825386 (before 9pm).

Room Rates: £17.50 per person per night for people sharing a twin, double or triple room and £35.00 per person per night for single rooms, all inclusive of full English breakfast. *(Please note that Hotel booking forms and deposits must be received by Carol Morton no later than 20th July 1995.)*

Advertising Rates: Advertising is welcome for both the next two Progress Reports and for the Programme Book. The rates are as follows (fan rates in brackets): **Progress Reports** - Full-page £20.00 (£12.50), half-page £12.50 (£7.00), quarter-page £7.50 (£4.00). **Programme Book** - Full-page £40.00 (£22.50), half-page £25.00 (£12.50), quarter-page £15.00 (£7.50). Anyone interested in advertising should contact Martin Tudor at 845 Alum Rock Road Ward End, Birmingham, B8 2AG. **Deadlines** for camera-ready advertising copy are: Progress Report #3: 7th June 1995, to be mailed early July 1995. Progress Report #4: 9th August 1995, to be mailed September 1995. Programme Book: 27th September 1995, distributed at Novacon 25.

Bookroom Rates: Tables will cost £15.00 for a six foot table for the whole weekend, however if you are allocated a smaller (four foot) table the cost will be £10.00. To book a table (or tables) you must be a member of the convention and complete and return the booking form enclosed with this Progress Report.

Committee: Tony Morton, Chair, and Carol Morton, Registrations, 14 Park Street, Lye, Stourbridge, West Midlands, DY9 8SS. Richard Standage, Treasurer, 116 Shireland Road, Smethwick, Warley, West Midlands, B66 4QJ. Chris Murphy, Programme, 7 Mullion Drive, Timperley, Nr Altrincham, Cheshire, WA15 6SL, (please note COA). Tony Berry, Operations, 55 Seymour Road, Oldbury, Warley, West Midlands, B69 4EP. Martin Tudor, Publications/Hotel Liaison, 845 Alum Rock Road, Ward End, Birmingham, B8 2AG.

Acknowledgements: David A Hardy for the cover, Paul Kincaid, Carol Morton, Tony Morton, Chris Murphy and Tony Berry for their articles. This Progress Report was printed on the CRITICAL WAVE photocopier, contact Martin Tudor at the above address for details of WAVE's competitive prices.

The Chairman's Observations by Tony Morton

Welcome to the second Progress Report. Everything continues to progress well (touch wood). The hotel function space has been paid for. The hotel decided after...erm 'liaison', not to increase their room prices until after the convention, so you can have your bedroom for even less! More on this and other hotel information can be found in Carol's bit below.

The programme is beginning to shape up - see Chris' piece, but any ideas from you would be welcomed. Our 'theme' is 'Humour in SF'. Any thoughts? The committee continues to work endlessly to make sure that Novacon 25 will be a con to remember. Special thanks to Brian, Harry, Bob and Iain, our intrepid guests, for their 'behind the scenes' help and ideas. Keep it up guys!

It is of course *you*, the members, that make it all work. The more the merrier. So if you know of anyone who intends to come along but hasn't joined yet, get them to drop us a line NOW (and a cheque for twenty five quid wouldn't go amiss). Enough of this! On to the important stuff....

Registrations by Carol Morton

It isn't often that you can announce that a hotel has reduced the price of convention hotel rooms, but this, in effect, is what has happened. The Chamberlain have decided not to increase the price of their hotel rooms to £40 per room, per night until after the convention. So the net effect is that you will now pay £17.50 per person, per night for sharers and £35 per person, per night for singles. Good news eh?

One of the other features that attracted us to the Chamberlain was that it had a secure undercover car park. The cost of which is £2.00 per car for a 24 hour period and £3.50 for a van for the same period. Once again the lowest prices we could find. Just what arrangements will be for the parking of vehicles, ie. vouchers etc., I will let you know at a later date.

A number of you have sent in your hotel forms and by the time you read this they will have all been passed on to the hotel, who will acknowledge your reservations. However quite a few members haven't sent their forms in yet; please send them in as soon as possible or you may find yourself in the overflow hotel. If you are not sure whether you have sent your form in just look in the envelope - if there is a hotel form there I have not yet received one from you.

Programme by Chris Murphy

At present we have ideas for the programme but no firm timetable. Last year the Committee boldly went where no Novacon committee had gone before (as far as I can remember) and published a running order for the whole weekend in Progress Report #2; we're not prepared to offer such a hostage to fortune, but we *will* tell you what we have planned for the Friday of the convention.

Although the main programme in the Rowton Suite won't begin until the mid-evening, Dave Lally will endeavour to entertain earlier arrivals in the Baskerville Suite. The convention will 'officially' start at 8pm with the New Improved Opening Ceremony. This is where we introduce the *guilty* committee and our four guests - in order that you can more easily identify everyone when you want to buy them lotsa drinks.

This will be followed at 8.30pm by Iain M Banks' Special Guest of Honour speech. We recommend you get to the Rowton early to ensure you get a seat for this item, as past experience shows that Iain's items are *quite* popular!

After a break to allow you to refresh your glass and change into your party clothes, the next item features a live band. At this stage we are unable to confirm *which* band - competition is, of course, fierce but the auditions are underway and as soon as we have decided we will let you know. However we are still interested in hearing your suggestions, so if you know of a suitable band please send me details (along with a sample tape if possible) at the address below. Obviously our budget is unlikely to stretch to chart-toppers or super groups, but please do let us know if you have any *realistic* ideas!

As far as the rest of the weekend's programme goes, much is already in hand, although we are, as ever, open to terrific new ideas; again contact me at the address below. We are also *very* interested in hearing from volunteers willing to take part in the two following items: A silly game - needing eager *victims* participants to undergo a series of gruelling tests, proving their intelligence, versatility and ability to withstand public humiliation. And a version of *MASTERMIND* - anyone who fancies their chances should notify me of their specialist subject as soon as possible at the address below.

If you have any suggestions or offers of help regarding the programme please contact me at 7 Mullion Drive, Timperley, Nr Altrincham, Cheshire, WA15 6SL. (Please note this is different from the address given in the first Progress Report as the demands of the mundane world have driven me to Manchester.)

Humour in SF: An article in four fits by Paul Kincaid

Fit the First: Familiarity

I have a confession to make. The first time I read Harry Harrison's *BILL THE GALACTIC HERO* I didn't realise it was supposed to be funny.

Now you have to remember I was a teenager at the time, new to science fiction, and I'd still not read Robert Heinlein's *STARSHIP TROOPERS*, so I had no real notion of what Harrison was lampooning. Let's face it, there are enough sf authors who have told roistering, swash-buckling tales of interstellar adventure, space battles, and lone heroes who save the galaxy, and done so with an absolutely straight face. No matter how silly, there is no reason to suppose they are not serious. Besides, I was pretty serious about my sf myself, it didn't occur to me that someone might actually poke fun at the genre.

When I came to *TECHNICOLOR TIME MACHINE* some time later, however, I had no difficulty recognising it as comedy. If I say it was the first sf novel I laughed at, this is only partly a measure of how few sf comedies there were then. (In these days of Douglas Adams and Terry Pratchett, when every new writer imagines the way to fame and fortune is through comic fantasy and every publisher is looking for yet another excuse for a Josh Kirby cover it is hard to recall a time when humour was the exception not the rule. In the prehistoric era BA (before Adams) you could count the humorists on the fingers of one hand: Kuttner, Tenn, Sheckley, Dick, Bester... Harry Harrison was one of the brashest, most blatant and often best of them.) It was also a measure of the fact that I recognised his targets.

I knew time travel stories, I understood their conventions, so I could relish the way Harrison drove a coach and horses through every little rule and regulation. When a future Barney passes the present Barney a slip of paper which reveals how the film can actually be delivered on time we are presented with a classic time travel paradox:

"Then think. I was handed this paper on Monday morning in front of L.M.'s office. I show it to you now. Then I'm going to put it in my wallet and carry it around until the picture is finished. Then I'll travel back in time to deliver the picture to L.M. I meet the old me in front of the office, take the diagram out of my wallet and hand it over to myself to be put back into the wallet and so forth. Now does that make sense to you?"

"Yes. I see nothing to get disturbed about."

"You don't. If that is the way it is going to happen, then no one ever *drew* this diagram. It just travels around in this wallet and I hand it to myself. Explain that one," he added triumphantly.

"There is no need to, it explains itself. The piece of paper consists of a self-sufficient loop in time. No one ever drew it. It exists because it is, which is adequate explanation..."

You can't do that. At least, you couldn't in time travel stories of that era. Working around a time paradox like that would have been the main plot device of any other time travel story, the climax would have been some twist to allow it to happen. Harrison's cavalier dismissal of the paradox is not only refreshing, it is shocking. And of course, one of the ways humour works is through shock.

To be shocked, the reader needs to have pre-conceived expectations which are overturned. Which is why *BILL THE GALACTIC HERO* wasn't funny for me, at the time I read it I didn't know what to expect. Pratchett is so successful because he is not satirising fantasy but rather using fantasy to satirise a whole raft of familiar tropes (Shakespeare, ancient Egypt, etc). You don't need to understand fantasy to understand the joke. In *TECHNICOLOR TIME MACHINE* Harrison wasn't just satirising time travel, he was satirising Hollywood; not Hollywood as it was, but Hollywood as everyone imagined it to be from books and films. When a minor character is introduced:

Ivan Grissini, who despite the fact that his lank hair, hawk nose and rumpled, dandruff-speckled suit made him look like a crooked agent, was a crooked agent.

It isn't just a neat literary inversion, it also runs counter to the usual cinematic convention that characters (other than heroes) never are what they appear to be.

It is in the nature of the way that humour plays with the familiar, that the novel is composed of cliches. There is the film company about to go under unless a blockbuster money-spinner can be made in just one week, the hack director who turns in the epic of all time, the sexy brainless starlet who falls for the simple life, the troublesome star who breaks a leg and is replaced by an untried actor who makes good. These are staples. That the film is made within the impossible deadline using a time machine, that the epic features real Vikings, that the starlet falls for a drunken Viking and that the same Viking is the unlikely film star is just what makes it science fiction. All of this is broad stuff, Harrison hacks at his Hollywood targets with an axe rather than a scalpel. But his humorous play with the conventions of time travel is subtler, less farcical stuff.

Once the assumption of a time machine is accepted (and Harrison is making an understated satirical point in suggesting that only a film company would bother to put money behind such an invention, an analogous point to the one Terry Bisson made in *VOYAGE TO THE RED PLANET*) it is natural that the machine would be used to cut corners. A script writer is sent off to Catalina Island in the Cambrian period for six months, returning with the complete script in what appears to be the blink of an eye. But the novel uses its basic assumptions more cleverly than that (cleverly enough for me to think it deserves better than being listed among the also-rans of Harrison's output, which is its usual fate). It is a carefully structured book (as farce has to be) which uses time not only as a plot device but also as what drives the plot. The film makers have all the time they need back in the 11th century, but a series of accidents and interruptions are eating into their available time in the present. The way time travel is used to juggle with these problems (and the running joke about the crew's time sheets) subverts time travel from a device of wonder into an instrument of farce.

If humour works best when it deals with the familiar, then how does Harrison deal with the less familiar? The answer is: more seriously than you might expect. His 10th century Vikings are not accurate in every detail, but they are a lot more than the hack and slay merchants we, or the film makers, anticipate. (There is, of course, a good joke in this.) In fact Harrison, as might be expected, displays a good knowledge of old Norse and the Viking sagas. He builds in some simple but important facts about their lifestyle (though he does tend to concentrate on Vikings as heavy drinkers and fighters) and then allows this knowledge to point up a few extra time paradoxes. Most notably, the film is about the establishment of the Viking colony in Vinland, but it turns out that the Vikings only go there because of the film crew, the location (on Newfoundland) is chosen because of archaeological finds which turn out to be the remains of the set the film crew built, and the film crew themselves are found to feature in the sagas.

These revelations of film as a self-fulfilling prophecy set up the final joke in the book, when L.M. starts planning his next film, a sure fire religious picture. And if this joke seems to fall a little flat it may be simply that we have since seen this joke played out by Michael Moorcock ("Behold the Man"), Robert Silverberg (*UP THE LINE*), Garry Kilworth ("Let's Go to Golgotha") and a cast of thousands. Maybe if we could travel back to when *TECHNICOLOR TIME MACHINE* was written, it would seem more original....

THE NOVA AWARDS by Tony Berry

As the first progress report came out at Novacon, I didn't list in it any fanzines received. So here are the triff publications which have passed before my badly focussed eyes since last October.

ANSIBLE #87-91, Dave Langford, 94 London Road, Reading, RG1 5AU. ATTITUDE #3, 4, Mike Abbott, 102 William Smith Close, Cambridge, CB1 3QF. BALLOONS OVER BRISTOL #5, Christina Lake, 12 Heatherly Road, Bishopston, Bristol, BS7 8QA. BASILISK #3, Steve Green, 33 Scott Road, Olton, Solihull, B92 7LQ. BEER CAT SCRATCHINGS #15-21, Alasdair Hepburn, 123c Chobham Road, Stratford, London, E15 1LX. BOB #7, Ian Sorensen, 7 Woodside Walk, Hamilton, ML3 7HY. COMFORTABLY NUMB #1, Phil Greenaway, 76 Mill Gardens, Blackpill, Swansea, West Glamorgan, SA3 5AY.

CYBERSPACE #30, Keith Cosslett, 12 Crowsbury Close, Emsworth, Hampshire, PO10 7TS. CYBRER BUNNY #2-4, Tara and Robert Glover, 16 Aviary Place, Leeds, LS12 2NP. DRAGONS BREATH #11-14, Zine Kat c/o SA Publishing, 13 Hazely Combe, Arreton, Isle of Wight, PO30 3AJ. DREAMBERRY WINE, Mike Don, 233 Maine Road, Manchester, M14 7WG. EMPTIES #14, Martin Tudor, 845 Alum Rock Road, Ward End, Birmingham, B8 2AG. ERG #127, Terry Jeeves, 66 Red Scar Drive, Scarborough, North Yorkshire, YO12 6RQ. FANS ACROSS THE WORLD #40-45, Bridget Wilkinson, 17 Mimosas, 29 Avenue Road, Tottenham, N15 5JF. FTT #16, Judith Hanna & Joseph Nicholas, 15 Jansons Road, South Tottenham, London, N15 4JU. LAGOON #6, Simon Ounsley, 25 Park Villa Court, Leeds, LS8 1EB. MAVERICK, Jenny Glover, 16 Aviary Place, Leeds, LS12 2NP. NEVER QUITE ARRIVING #3, Christina Lake, 12 Hatherley Road, Bishopston, Bristol, BS7 8QA. OOSOOM, Jim Barker, 26 Campfield Street, Falkirk, Stirlingshire, FK2 7DN. RASTUS JOHNSONS CAKEWALK #7, Greg Pickersgill, 3 Bethany Row, Narberth Road, Haverfordwest, Pembrokeshire, SA61 2XG. THE REGISTER #2, Steve Green, address as above. SOMETHING FOR THE WEEKEND #1, Steve Green, address as above. THINGUMYBOB #13, Chuck Connor, Sildan House, Chediston Road, Wissett, Suffolk, IP19 0NF. THE WRONG LEGGINGS #2, Lilian Edwards, 39 Viewforth, Edinburgh, EH10 4JE.

All of the above are available for "the usual" which means in return for letter of comment, trade, article, or a large SAE. Enquiries about the Awards or a copy of the Rules (50p to cover copying and postage), contact Tony Berry at 55 Seymour Road, Oldbury, West Midlands, B69 4EP.

NOVACON 24: THE NOVA AWARD RESULTS

Greg Pickersgill picked up the award for best fan writer and his RASTUS JOHNSON'S CAKEWALK for best fanzine at Novacon 24, with the award for fan artist going to D West. More than 50 ballots were cast; the full breakdown follows, figures in brackets indicating total points scored.

BEST FANZINE: 1, RASTUS JOHNSON'S CAKEWALK, edited by Greg Pickersgill (137); 2, MORIARTY'S REVENGE, edited by Dave Hicks (44); 3, ATTITUDE, edited by Pam Wells, Michael Abbott, John Dallman (42); 4=, DRIVEL & DROOL, edited by Mike D Siddall, EMPTIES, edited by Martin Tudor (31 each); 6, PLATYPUS, edited by Simon Ounsley (23); 7, ANSIBLE, edited by Dave Langford (21); 8, BOB, edited by Ian Sorensen (18); 9, ETRANGER, edited by Steve Glover (14); THINGUMYBOB, edited by Chuck Connor (11); 11, NEVER QUITE ARRIVING, edited by Christina Lake (10); 12=, THE STARTLED BUNNY, edited by Jackie McRobert, OBSESSIONS, edited by Bridget Hardcastle (9 each); 14, THE OLAF ALTERNATIVE / OUTHOUSE, edited by Ken Cheslin (8); 15, THE WRONG LEGGINGS, edited by Lilian Edwards (7); 16=, SLUBBERDEGULLION, edited by Nigel E Richardson, READING MATTERS, edited by Tibs (6 each); 18=, EYEBALLS IN THE SKY, edited by Tony Berry, ORMOLU, edited by Ann Green, CYBERSPACE, edited by Keith Cosslett, CYBRER BUNNY, edited by Tara and Robert Glover (5 each); 22=, DREAMBERRY WINE, edited by Mike Don, FTT, edited by Joseph Nicholas and Judith Hanna (4 each); 24=, GAJJIN, edited by Steve Green, FANS ACROSS THE WORLD NEWSLETTER, edited by Bridget Wilkinson (3 each); 26=, TASH, edited by Tommy Ferguson, ERG, edited by Terry Jeeves (1 each).

BEST FANWRITER: 1, Greg Pickersgill (104); 2, Dave Langford (52); 3, Mike D Siddall (45); 4, Simon Ounsley (40); 5, Ian Sorensen (28); 6, Dave Hicks (26); 7, Christina Lake (24); 8=, Martin Tudor, Nigel E Richardson (19 each); 10, Steve Glover (13); 11, Jackie McRobert (12); 12, Ann Green (11); 13=, Tara and Robert Glover, "Bug" (Bridget Hardcastle), Lilian Edwards (6 each); 16=, Mike Abbott, David Redd (5 each); 18=, John Richards, Mike Dunn, D West, D M Sherwood (3 each); 22=, Steve Green, Tony Berry, Joseph Nicholas, Tibs, Catherine McAulay, Jenny Glover, Judith Hanna, Graham Joyce, Chris Bell (1 each).

BEST FANARTIST: 1, D West (125); 2, David "Shep" Kirkbride (86); 3, Dave Mooring (56); 4, Tim Groome (32); 5, Dave Hicks (18); 6, Sue Mason (15); 7=, Jim Barker and Steve Jeffery (7 each); 9, Jackie Duckworth (6); 10, Tom Abba (5); 11=, Ann Green, Bridget Hardcastle, Harry Bell, Terry Jeeves, Dave Harwood (3 each); 16=, Alan Hunter, Teddy, Coreldraw (1 each).

Novacon 25 Membership as of 15 March 1995

GOH Brian Aldiss	051 Steve Mowbray	105 Moira Shearman
GOH Harry Harrison	052 Vikki Lee France	106 Mike Llewellyn
GOH Bob Shaw	053 Steve Jeffery	107 Freda Warrington
SGOH Iain Banks	054 Chris Stocks	108 Sherrie Powell
001 Tony Morton	055 Martin Hoare	109 Martin McCallion
002 Carol Morton	056 Al Johnson	110 Graham Joyce
003 Richard Standage	057 Ian Stewart	111 John D Rickett
004 Chris Murphy	058 Chris Morgan	112 Paul Oldroyd
005 Tony Berry	059 Pauline Morgan	113 Chris Donaldson
006 Martin Tudor	060 Vernon Brown	114 Sam Bennett
007 Dave Hardy	061 Pat Brown	115 Jack Cohen
008 Margaret Aldiss	062 Sue Harrison	116 Mark Stevens
009 Joan Harrison	063 Robert Day	117 Tom Abba
010 Ann Blackburn	064 Janet Wilkins	118 Steve Brewster
011 Jilly Reed	065 Mary Branscombe	119 Ben Brown
012 Stan Eling	066 Simon Bisson	120 Mike Ford
013 Helen Eling	067 Neil Tomkinson	121 Simon A Howell
014 Mike Stone	068 Alison Tomkinson	122 Steve Jones
015 Caroline Mullen	069 Tim Stannard	123 Phil Rogers
016 Brian Ameringen	070 Steve Green	124 Marcus Rowland
017 Paul Allwood	071 Ann Green	125 Sue Jones
018 Mick Evans	072 Niall M Gordon	126 Lynn Edwards
019 Bernie Evans	073 Tony Rogers	127 John L McNorine
020 Pam Wells	074 Susan Francis	128 Roger Earnshaw
021 John Harold	075 Paul Dormer	129 David Redd
022 Peter Mabey	076 Kevin Anderson	130 David Symes
023 Chris O'Shea	077 Rod Milner	131 Fay Symes
024 Richard James	078 Rog Peyton	132 David V Barrett
025 Roger Robinson	079 Alison Weston	133 Karen Usher
026 Adrian Snowdon	080 Steve Davies	134 Lynne Emmerson
027 Chris Bell	081 Giulia De Cesare	135 Nigel Robson
028 1/2r	082 Dee Anne Farey	136 Patrick Curzon
029 John Dallman	083 Nic Farey	137 Phillip Nye
030 Bridget Hardcastle	084 Malcolm Davies	138 Ros Calverley
031 John Harvey	085 Kate Solomon	139 Chris Walton
032 Eve Harvey	086 Dave French	140 Ethel Lindsay
033 Mike Abbott	087 Shirley French	141 Shep Kirkbride
034 Dorothy Kurtz	088 Alice Lawson	142 Colin Langeveld
035 Julian Headlong	089 Steve Lawson	143 Doreen Rogers
036 Dave Cox	090 Sarah Dibb	144 Catie Cary
037 C N Gilmore	091 Dave Mooring	145 John Meaney
038 Alison Cook	092 Brian Stovold	146 Yvonne Meaney
039 Ina Shorrock	093 Fiona Stovold	147 Doug Brown
040 Norman Shorrock	094 Pete Weston	148 David Angus
041 Simon Ounsley	095 Eileen Weston	149 Claire Brialey
042 Mike D Siddall	096 Paul Kincaid	150 Noel Collier
043 Chris Baker	097 Maureen Speller	151 Peter Hamilton
044 Rachel Baker	098 George Ternent	
045 Peter Dunn	099 Linda Ternent	
046 Dave Thomas	100 Ian Sorensen	
047 Anne Woodford	101 Jackie McRobert	
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