

Druncon* 1

25-26 May 2003

20 Bakers Lane, Peterborough,
Cambridgeshire PE2 9QW



Life on the mainland had begun to take its toll.
After three weeks without a haircut, Tobes was badly drawn.

Committee:

Max

Guest of Honour:

Tobes

Staff:

Programme:

Ang

Publications:

Claire & Mark

*Fuckwit

Guest of Honour: Tobes

It was 5:15 on a Tuesday evening and The Cittie of Yorke was a pub with altogether too many vowels although the excess was at least partially balanced by the absence of anything resembling a TAFF delegate. It's an old place, located on Holborn in the heart of London. Its main room is long and narrow: above the bar is a series of enormous barrels, perhaps largely decorative or perhaps filled with calvados 'cos they've heard that TAFF boy is gonna be here; opposite and down one side is a series of booths designed to seat six or so in relative privacy. It is, I always imagine, the kind of place where the gunpowder plot was hatched. Or maybe even the UK05 Worldcon bid.

I'd arrived early for a last-minute send-off for Tobes Valois, 2002 TAFF delegate from Europe to Con José and various other ports of call in the United States and Canada. It was last-minute because whilst it was widely known that the trip would be effectively starting with Max's party on the Saturday before the Worldcon, nobody had much of an idea what Tobes would be doing between then and flying out to America; and having established that he was going to be in London for a couple of days before heading out to 'Airwick Gatport' it was the work of seconds to deduce that going down the pub was the appropriate way to wish him *bon voyage*, and indeed the work of milliseconds for Tobes to acquiesce to the proposal.

Sandra Bond: 'How late will you be staying?'

Tony Keen: 'Tobes, have you ever left a pub while it was still open?'

Tobes: [Meaningful look]

Tony Keen: 'I think we will be staying late.'

But at 5:15 in the evening Tobes was not in the pub, which was unusual because it was open (indeed, legendarily, it wouldn't have necessarily been a deterrent to him even if it had been closed). Still, it was an opportunity to think back to the genesis of this particular TAFF trip, which requires a mental flick back to 1999 and the original, *classic*, Tobes for TAFF campaign which was dreamed up in the Florence Nightingale at the First Thursday London pub meeting at 10 PM on 4 November 1999. Yes, real live fan history!

I can date this with such precision not because I have detailed wall charts recording the thoughts, words and movements of British fandom, all ready to hand over to Rob Hansen when he decides to tackle *Then... #6* (The Nineties), but because I know it was the day before Novacon and we'd had an influx of travelling Swedes. Actually, I'm guessing at the time but it was definitely one of those late evening pub ideas, the sort of thing that comes upon you after you've had a few drinks.

'It's amazing what we can achieve when we put our minds to it,' says Mike Abbott at the dead dog party, noting the numerous Tobes for TAFF badges adorning the lingering remains of the membership. 'Just imagine if we were to decide to... oh, I don't know... put somebody up for Prime Minister or something.' Within mere seconds Tobes's Cabinet is being formed around the table.

—*Parakeet* #7, December 1999

Lennart Uhlin, whose fault it is, was on form that night and Tobes for TAFF was merely the culmination of a thought process that began with an exchange scheme between English and Swedish booksellers, before progressing to a Stockholm bid for the UK Eastercon in 2002. Actually, I can't now remember whether it was me or Lennart who came up with Tobes for TAFF, but I'm pretty sure it must have been Lennart and anyway, I know we agreed that it would be his fault if it all went wrong (Lennart may disagree on this point).

However, despite the way in which it came about, Tobes for TAFF wasn't conceived as a joke. For a start, Lennart (whose fault it is) has this reputation for being the Sensible Swede, somebody who would never engage in anything frivolous. And while it was an idea born of an evening's drinking—in a sensible way of course—it was more that this gave way to a little outside-the-box thinking. Tobes was certainly an unconventional candidate in many respects—but British fandom likes him so why the hell shouldn't US fandom?

And would Tobes change TAFF; or, more importantly, would TAFF change him? I was speculating out loud about this latter point with Jim de Liscard. Jim made that spluttering into his beer noise which means, I think, no.

—*Mark*

Meanwhile, Flick has her own plans for intra-European relationships: since she's not going to be at Novacon, she casts around for a suitable substitute to give Tobes a great big kiss from her. Inevitably, Anders is the lucky winner. *Plokta* immediately stake a claim for exclusive photography rights and seem surprised by the lack of competition. A faintly alarmed Anders, already uncertain about the benefits to him of this commission, has yet to hear that Tobes considers: 'You know it's been a good convention when you have to collect your underwear from Ops.'

—*Parakeet* #7, December 1999

Membership list as at 22 May 2003:

Attending:

Ang Rosin
Flick
(Dr) Pete Coleman
Douglas Spencer
Alison Freebairn
Neil Johnstone
Mark Plummer
Claire Brialey
Noel Collyer
Simon Bradshaw
Bridget Bradshaw
M J 'Simo' Simpson
Hillary Simpson
Rachel Wynne
Richard Stephenson
Jim de Liscard
Meike Benzler
Raz
Dave Hicks
Cat Coast
Jerry Thomas
Tony Keen

Kate Bodley
Liam Proven
Kjersti Thunem
Mike Scott

Supporting members:

James Bacon
Susan Barrette
Rob Miller
Chris O'Shea
Pickledginger
Tommy Ferguson
James Shields
Alison Scott
Steven Cain
Poppy
Ian Brown

Possibly turning up on

Monday:

Pete Young
Heidi Mounsey

The Programme

Programme:

Drink
Drink
Drink

Alternative programme:

Arse
Feck
Girls

What's on outside the Convention

It's called Peterborough, apparently, and here are some of the exciting things we've been able to find out about it:

* The City of Peterborough has passed By-Law 03-085, being a by-law under Section 8(1)(b) of the Municipal Election Act 1996, to approve the submission to its electors, a referendum question, on the ballot of the 2003 Municipal Election.

* Council, at its meeting held 31 March 2003, adopted the 2003 Operating and Capital Budgets for the City of Peterborough. Draft Budget documents were submitted to the Finance Committee on 10 March by the Chairman of Finance, Councillor Ayotte and the Finance Committee reviewed the documents during the evenings of 17 March to 19 March.

* Beginning 1 January, the City/County Household Hazardous Waste Depot will be open from Wednesday to Saturday, 8:00 AM. until 4:00 PM., all year round. Take all your toxic household products to the HHW Depot, located at 400 Pido Road in Peterborough. Call the Waste Management Department for more details: 742-7777 Ext 1657.

* Peterborough is in Ontario.

Strangeness and TAFF #2

A second instalment of the cut-down analogue version of the Tobes for TAFF website (<http://www.lostcarpark.com/tobes/>) which is maintained by James Shields and James Bacon, here enhanced by postings to various weblogs and snippets from personal emails.

Sightings of Tobes: Saturday 31 August 2002

I visited the UK party suite to meet the famous Tobes. He was quite drunk, said, 'I've heard of you!' and promptly walked away. I don't think it was cause and effect.

—Lucy Huntzinger

Sightings of Tobes: Tuesday 3 September 2002

Tobes resurgent

Tobes was sighted last night at the party in the Fan Lounge. As befits his remit, he has attended almost no panels at all but has appeared at every party yet thrown at the Worldcon.

Some American fans struggled with Tobes's accent, but he had an interpreter on hand in the form of Anders Holmström.

—Juliette Woods

Sightings of Tobes: posted Saturday 14 September 2002

Worldcon: Tobes on form

Tobes was like a very drunken ship passing in the night; you would give him an occasional wave on your way through parties, although it would seem that he had sussed the quality booze well before we had a chance to find it.

When it came to performing his formal duties however, he shone. He obviously took it with great seriousness and it seemed as though every person in the audience knew him at that stage and was spurring him on.

—James Peart

Webmail Down/Too Drunk To Post?

Posted Sunday 8 September 2002

People should be sending some Worldcon photos soon.

Webmail was down yesterday, probably won't have time to post till tomorrow, but will send updates then.

David and Kate v. nice people. Leaving for Madison in about 20 mins.

—Tobes

Sightings of Tobes: Sunday 8 September 2002

Tobes in Portland

I feel I need to make it clear from the start that the stripper at last night's party was not arranged expressly for Tobes's benefit.

He quite enjoyed it, of course—"That was lovely. Thank you," said our Tobes; much more aplomb than that Gaiman fellow—but future TAFF delegates passing thru Portland mustn't expect the same experience. Past performances are no guarantee of future results, and so forth. Sheer serendipity.

As was the presence of Jon Singer on our day trip yesterday. He happened to be in town fetching a gamelan he's driving cross-country, and even Mr Singer will probably only do that twice or thrice in a lifetime. (Gamelan: Indonesian percussion orchestra. Unique tone. Lousy mileage.)

I'd suggested some activities to Tobes and he said, 'Yes, all right' and 'Mm, could do that' and 'OOOOH! Really?? Wait till I tell the lads at the Aero Club!!' So we did that one: went to see Howard Hughes's 'Spruce Goose', the largest plane ever built. This thing was intended to transport tanks. Propellers 17 feet long, wingspan wider than a football field is long, etc. *Huge*. We were all duly gobstoppered. Many other keen planes tucked in under its wings.

Came home to a phone message from Jae Leslie Adams: 'Have you a Tobes there? Am I meeting him at the airport tomorrow?' Yes and yes. No worries.

We had eleven fans at dinner last night at a little place with armadillos nailed to the ceiling and buffalo enchiladas on the menu. Tobes continued his research into native styles of Porter. (We hadn't managed to hook up with anyone Thursday, but did do a small brewpub tour and a pilgrimage to Powell's Books, so that's all right then.)

And finally over to Darklady's party... but I'm sure Tobes will tell you all about that.

—Kate Yule

Portland and Madison

Posted Monday 9 September 2002

Hello folks. Yes, Portland was nice; the Spruce Goose is a fucking amazing machine. You can taxi a Dakota under the wing. The tailplane is 80 feet high!

Kate and Dave are very nice people and took me to a polyamory/BDSM party, which was nice—especially the home-made absinthe, and the stripper.

Arrived in Madison yesterday, to coincide with a birthday party of a local fan called Tom. Tom & Jerome are putting me up, which is very nice of them. I have just arranged to meet Nigel Rowe tomorrow, and am currently at a BBQ party at Jae's. Will update again when I get to Chicago.

Love you all dearly (where's my beer?)

(Oh, there it is.)

—*Tobes*

Sightings of Tobes: Monday 9 September 2002

We went to Jae's house to meet Tobes. He was very pleasant indeed, although he did disappear for half an hour to go online. A personable fellow, although I thought I might start to giggle hysterically when he began to explain to friend R why she should consider rubber clothing ('Poseable breasts! Think of it!') Also very amusing to hear him on the phone with Nigel Rowe calling him 'Nige'. I've never heard anyone call Nigel that.

He was only mildly incomprehensible, so I do have some hope for myself at Novacon. I asked him what Novacon was like. 'Fun!' he explained lengthily. Well, OK then.

He also said (if I understood correctly) that it is a very relaxing, laid-back con at which people drink much more beer than the hotel expects; at which the dependably-attended programme item is the one run by Dave Hicks (and somebody); and at which there may be someone dressed in leather pants.

I think.

Sounds pretty nice...

—*Tracy Benton*

When I die, I'm going to leave my body to science fiction.

—*Tobes (frequently)*

Anticipation of Tobes: posted Saturday 7 September 2002

Midwestern rumours

If Tobes makes it to Chicago, there may be something one evening at the bar most accessible to his front door (do not cross the street; do not go 'round the corner). Great planning—v. difficult to lose one's way home after (drink up, Tobes!)

—*Karen Babich*

Windy Guinness

Posted Tuesday 10 September 2002

Hi, there. I'm in Chicago, which is a lovely city.

Some of these buildings are great. I'm staying with Nigel Rowe and his girlfriend Eva. Their apartment is in a building with magnificent architecture. It was built slightly more than a hundred years ago, and was for six months the tallest building in the world.

Went to a blues club last night; music excellent and so was the Guinness.

Fannish get-together tonight.

I am catching a lunchtime flight to Toronto tomorrow; will post when I get there.

—Tobes

Muppets in Canada

Posted Friday 13 September 2002

Hello from Canada.

Have been made very welcome by Mike & Susan. Have just been up the CN tower. It was an incredible experience to go up in the lift at 15 MPH as the city opened up under you. The Skypod is the world's highest observation deck and is 33 stories above the main tower observation deck. The main deck includes a glass floor, which you can stand on and look over 1,000 feet straight down.

Fannish get-together is planned tonight in a pub called Bert & Ernie's.

—Tobes

Flying Home, Drunk, Stoned and Exhausted

Posted Monday 16 September 2002

Hello.

Nic successfully picked me up from the airport (eventually), and we headed to Ted White's where, amongst others, there were Victor Gonzalez, Dan Steffan and Steve Stiles, making a total of four TAFF winners.

I got drunk and stoned which will surprise nobody.

Party/BBQ at Nic's yesterday.

Today I'm resting as I will fly from Washington Dulles at 2 PM, catching a connecting flight at Philadelphia at 6 PM to Gatwick, where I will arrive in the morning of the 17th and a couple of hours later fly home. It's gonna be a tough day.

I will start a proper TAFF report in a few days and will post sections to this site as they are completed. Paper version will then come out as part of my fanzine *Strangeness & Charm* (yeah, I'm doing another).

Cheers.

—Tobes

Druncon 1 Programme Book written and produced by Claire Brialey and Mark Plummer (14 Northway Road, Croydon, Surrey CR0 6JE) with other contributions as noted. Fishlifter Press, 23 May 2003. Was it a good convention? Did you have to collect your underwear from Ops?