

Progress Report 1

Bugger Me, It's A Progress Report

Fed up with cosy little anecdotes of home furnishing mishaps? Needed beyond endurance by accounts of lives not worth living, let alone reading about? Sick of wading your way through reams of identical progress reports that even fail to inspire those involved?

Relax. This is not fannish junk mail.

We've decided to give you a little treat. Oh yes we have.

The Corflu UK committee - an interesting mix of glamour and git - really can't be arsed with the accepted way of plugging conventions. We are all writers and fanzine publishers, so why should we limit ourselves to four pages of A5 and a badly-copied booking form?

We'd much rather give you the kind of fanzine you all dream of receiving - *one you don't have to LoC.*

No pressure. No guilt. No amusing tickboxes, cats or cuddly toys either, but that goes without saying.

Go ahead, just enjoy it.

When you find it under A Sideboard Called Daniel in six months time, you can toss it aside and go to the pub safe in the knowledge that I don't loathe and despise you for not responding. I may have other reasons.

If you would like to give us a little treat in return, your path is clear.

Come to Corflu UK.

A few seconds' thought should throw up any number of reasons for joining us in Leeds next Spring.

Follow your instincts... I know you want to.

Corflu UK Progress Report #1

**The Greatest Show On Earth
The Land Of Do-As-You-Please
Why I Want To Fuck Hillary Clinton
Some Velvet Morning
Departmental Meeemo
Travel in Britain**

Christina Lake
Debbi Kerr
Lilian Edwards
Christina Lake
Alison Freebairn
Christina Lake

We'd like to embarrass Leeds' Mr Modest - **Dave Mooring** - by thanking him profusely for the cartoons. Copious praise is heaped on **Lucy Huntzinger**, for the groovy logo that graces the cover. I - that's Alison, for those who are unfamiliar with my prose - would also like to thank Mystery Drinker, for ensuring that the spilled alcohol soaked me to the skin but missed Dave's artwork (11pm Skirt Sucking - a great way to get chucked out of a rural pub). This has been Corflu UK Progress Report #1. It was compiled by Christina Lake. It was designed and laid-out by Alison Freebairn. It was 'copied by Lilian Edwards. Ian Sorensen was out of the country, but none of us noticed till the postcard arrived.

The Greatest Show On Earth

by christina lake

Corflu is a convention for fanzine fans which is being held for the first time ever in its history outside North America.

Yes, this peripatetic annual event has become so grown up that it's been issued with its own passport and booked onto a flight to the UK where it will spend a long weekend in the middle of March at a hotel in Leeds, making new friends and having a damn good time.

Who's responsible?

If you think that the convention is being run by Ian Sorensen with four of his Corfloozies, then think again.

Now Ian has secured the bid for a British Corflu by his heroic weekend dash to San Francisco, we've sent him back to school to get on with subverting the Scottish education system into a giant fanzine factory while we decide what we want to do with this here convention. Well, we might let him play around with a few financial spreadsheets and keep the membership list up to date if he's really good, and of course, he is still co-chair with Lilian Edwards.

Why have co-chairs? Basically because it was Ian and Lilian's idea to bid for Corflu in the first place, so they get to run it. Just to spread the load around a bit, the team also includes Alison Freebairn (top UK fanwriter, Arnie-Katz-lust-object and all round cool person), Debbie Kerr (social dynamo of the Leeds group despite being married to the pathetically hermit-like Simon Polley) and Christina Lake (world traveller extraordinaire, with special interest in Americans).

Between us we hope to put on a convention which offers the best of traditions from both sides, and (this is where you come into it) a sparkling mix of the most interesting people from British and North American fandom.

We've got a convention and we're gonna use it.

The team is even now working on a variety of ideas for Corflu.

After a hectic weekend in Leeds where half the committee (along with some of the Leeds group) stayed up till four in the morning testing out the hotel's viability for room parties, and the other half went wild shopping in the Corn Exchange, we can confidently report that you don't need a programme to have a good time in Leeds.

But what's the point of dragging people half way round the world (or even all the way from Croydon), if you're not going to plan a few extra special events for them.

So here's a few ideas we've been tossing around: a "meet the Leeds group"-cum-pub crawl of all the historic venues in which the group has drunk, sneered and masterminded the Nova results (a must for all drinkers and fan historians. Yes, that means you, Rob Hansen); the premier of the first TAFF trip report to be written as a rock opera (or maybe the first fannish play not to be written by Andy Hooper); the infamous "Bugger Me, It's A Fanzine" panel; day trips to Haworth featuring the D West Wuthering Heights tour; a mixed ability pub quiz specially designed so that Greg Pickersgill or Dave Langford don't automatically win; an auction where fans part with money for fanzines not condoms; Christina "I can't be that old!" Lake's 40th birthday party; a serious and controversial debate on the relationship between British and US fandom (whoever wins gets to keep Corflu?) and of course the traditional Corflu banquet, where the lucky winner of our GoH ballot proves his or her worth as an after-dinner speaker.

The banquet will be held at lunchtime, seeing as breakfast is already included in the hotel room rates. The committee is currently working on the neighbouring Pierre Victoire wine bar in the hope it will open up to do a very special banquet for the convention.

What else are we doing?

Harnessing the energies of web diarist Nigel Richardson to set up our web site, (<http://www.imi.gla.ac.uk/corflu/>), commissioning designs for a special Corflu UK t-shirt and working on new slants on the traditional fanthology idea, including a pic'n'mix fanthology of favourite articles from the last ten years and a theme anthology on the subject of US/UK relationships. All that and we still get to hold down our day jobs. Can it be possible!

The Hotel

The Griffin at Leeds is a small friendly hotel, right in the centre of Leeds, about two minutes walk from the railway station.

For those coming by car we will be negotiating a weekend rate for parking space. The hotel has a nice bar area, just right for the relaxed intimate atmosphere of a Corflu as well as enough function space for panels, special events, hospitality area and repro room.

The bedrooms are of normal UK hotel standard, which means Americans will probably find them small. For anyone yearning for more upmarket comfort, Christina can recommend the Marriott where she spent a comfortable weekend in a room with triple bed, bath robes and palatial bath room.

It's only a five minute stroll from The Griffin, but room rates start from £57 for a single and £64 for a twin/ double, compared to £35 for a single and £25 per person for a twin room (containing 2 single beds) or a double (containing one double bed) at The Griffin. The enclosed booking form is for the Griffin, but if anyone is interested in the Marriott, contact us at the convention address.

Room bookings made at the Griffin do not require any advance deposit or credit card information.

Travel advice for Americans

Leeds doesn't have its own international airport, but there is a fast train link from Manchester airport running every half hour (approximate journey time one hour 20 minutes). If you're flying into London Heathrow, there is an hourly train service

up to Leeds from Kings Cross (approximate journey time two hours twenty minutes).

Sadly we can't hope to equal the hospitality of the Las Vegas group for Toner and pick everyone up from the airport, but Christina has volunteered to act as a travel liaison point for the UK. If you have any questions about your travel plans within the UK, contact her at the convention address and she will do her best to help.

How do I join this wondrous event?

Simple, just pay £25 to the ever avid Mr Sorensen (cheques made out to Corflu, please. No, of course it's not that we don't trust Ian) or US\$40 to our North American agents Karen Babich and Nigel Rowe (cheques payable to Karen Babich).

Attending membership includes the cost of the banquet.

CORFLU UK is to be held on the weekend of March 13-16th at The Griffin Hotel, Boar Lane, Leeds LS1 5OA.

Committee: Lilian Edwards and Ian Sorensen (co-chairs), Alison Freebairn, Debbi Kerr and Christina Lake.

Membership rates: UK £25 attending, £5.00 supporting (cheques payable to Corflu) US \$40 attending, \$10 supporting (cheques payable to Karen Babich).

Convention address for membership and all queries: Ian Sorensen, 7 Woodside Walk, Hamilton ML3 7HY.
(Email: corflu@soren.demon.co.uk).

North American agents: Karen Babich and Nigel Rowe, 5224 N Glenwood Ave. #3, Chicago IL 60640.
(Email: karenb@well.com).

Web site: <http://www.imi.gla.ac.uk/corflu/>

The Land Of Do-As-You-Please

by debra kerr

Whether you want round-the-clock dining, shopping, sightseeing or even sleeping, Leeds can provide the perfect solution.

There is an appetising choice of international cuisine, even so-called American style restaurants (I don't mean Macdonalds), continental cafe bars, traditional pubs and nightclubs to shake yer bootee in - all based around the waterfront and city centre.

The pedestrianised centre is compact with only ten minutes gentle stroll, or three minutes fast power walking if you're me, between the wide range of amenities.

Shopping in Leeds is absolutely fabulous with Harvey Nicholls, Vivienne Westwood and the resplendent Victorian Quarter which is oozing with haute cuisine and haute couture.

For those with a more alternative outlook on life the Corn Exchange has plenty of shops and stalls selling executive lizards, tarot readings for fannish forecastings (the card of the reversed duplicator?) outrageous jewellery, gothic mirrors and condoms to suit every size or shape and in any flavour. You can even get a henna tattoo.

The Granary Wharf or, as more commonly known, the Dark Arches, area is an eclectic mixture of books, antiques, hand made clothing, jewellery and ethnic musical instrument shop - you know you really wanted to have a go on a digiredoo -

and beer emporium.

But a weekend in Leeds does not revolve solely around shopping.

There is plenty of sightseeing. Twenty minutes along the river is Tetley's Brewery Wharf - a museum devoted to the history of beer with a series of taverns, hostelryes and pubs throughout the ages. Ten minutes along from there is the Royal Armouries, the new home of arms and armour originally based in the Tower of London.

This is not a static museum - there are plenty of re-enactments, Elizabethan men-at-arms duelling, a soldier of the English Civil war recounting real histories and a nurse from the Crimean war. Outside there are also the stables and falconry.

For those more culturally inclined the City Art Gallery holds the best collection of 20th century British art outside London. If you fancy striking out a bit, Haworth, the home of the Bronte family, is within easy distance by travelling on a steam train from the fabled Keighley, home of D West (though there isn't a commemorative blue plaque on the house yet).

Saltaire is also worth visiting. Built by the Victorian entrepreneur, Sir Titus Salt, the town and mill is a perfect setting for browsing amongst books and lusting after expensive impractical pieces of furniture which you could never get onto the plane anyway.

And finally, not far from the madding crowd, some solitude when you visit the 12th century Kirkstall Abbey which is only 10 minutes from the city centre. Just the place to take a brisk walk that will blow any fannish cobwebs away.

These are just a few of the highlights that Leeds can offer visitors. I hope I've whetted your appetite. A full list of restaurants and eating places will be provided after having been given the Corflu seal of approval - I've gained weight by testing them regularly.

A pub crawl of the ancient and noble pubs used by the Leeds group in the past will also be itemized for those who have the stomach and the legs to try it!



Why I Want to Fuck Hillary Clinton or One Woman's Pursuit of the Perfect Bagel

by lilian edwards

The most interesting truth about the difference between British and American fandoms is not, as you might think, that British fans like drinking pints while Americans like smoking dope, or even that British fans go to conventions in search of gossip, chocolate and a three day hangover, while American fans are more into old fanzines, cakes and casual sex, but that Americans visit Britain in search of the past, while True Brits look to the western seaboard in pursuit of the future.

For generations of Brits, America has been the personification of the Land of Fantasy. The TV programmes of our childhood and adolescence all spoke with an American accent.

So, with the odd exception, did films. Buzz Aldrin, Ben Hur, Starsky and Hutch and Superman all spoke with the familiar drawl of Yankee-land as they saved their different terrains for truth, justice and (in essence, if not explicitly) the American way, while even home-grown heroes, like Virgil in Thunderbird 2, had to have a pre-fabbed TransAtlantic twang if they were to be taken seriously.

When I wrote my first, appalling, SF short stories at school it didn't even occur to me not to set them in the US. The future was American; so was outer space (just ask Captain Kirk. And if you think we've moved on from those patriotically toupeed days, who's betting that Sojourner the Rover currently trundling round Mars wouldn't speak with an American accent if he had speech-synthesised vocal chords?).

Was it any wonder then that for decades a visit to the US seemed like the nearest thing to a visit to another world that a British science fiction fan could possibly imagine? These, predictably, were not my dominant thoughts when I first visited

America with Christina in 1988 courtesy of the then still rosily optimistic Transatlantic Fan Fund (TAFF). I was more concerned (in strict order) with how to survive my first long distance air flight, how on earth Andy Porter would ever find us to greet us at over-run and excruciatingly hot JFK airport, or looking slightly further forward, where and when I would find the perfect American bagel and lox of my dreams.

Philosophy could wait (and did) while Christina and I had a wonderful time touring the fannish residences and kitsch cultural reference points of San Francisco, Seattle and New York, not to mention the jazz clubs and daiquiri bars of N' Orleans.

As has been chronicled elsewhere, somewhere between the dreamy heat and cooling lakes of an unprecedentedly warm Seattle summer, and the Zinfandel, Hunan cuisine and night spots of San Francisco, I fell in love with the West Coast of America, a relationship which has continued teasingly on both sides ever since, but has not yet achieved a satisfactory level of commitment for permanent fulfillment.

In 1992, I came back for my second hit of Americana, still sponsored to the hilt, but this time by my University employers, courtesy of a computers and law conference in Chicago, rather than as an unemployed fanzine fan attending the Worldcon. In America, though, the kind of country where legal academics can make a career out of deconstructing the complete works of John Grisham and call it Law and Popular Culture Studies, the difference wasn't that noticeable.

As I wrote at the time: *"This is the only legal computing conference I have ever been to where the first thing they do is give you a t-shirt. I learn quickly that the Americans are cliqueish and the Australians are good fun. The Brits and the Aussies stake out the blues clubs and the bars and sneak off during programme items. Yes, it is really very like an sf convention. Even down to the traumas: the*

day I don't get to show off my software to anyone, I break down and sob on the steps outside, overwhelmed with inadequacy, too much small talk and not enough sleep."

No, not much change there.

Of course, I'd arranged a few fannish side trips to make the most of my juridical junketing, so I found my way to Austin, Texas to hang out with the recently repatriated Sherry Coldsmith and Mike Christie, doffing my nonexistent cap to the Alamo, collapsing with heat stroke outside that site of future Worldcons, the San Antonio Hyatt (which is still the only hotel I've ever seen with a river running through it) and learning the right way to pronounce pe-CAN.

Finally I zipped up to Madison for a last blast of hardcore fanzine culture, to be overwhelmed by hospitality, strange domestic cattle motifs and Steve Swartz, before sadly I was packed back in my box and returned to 27a Frozen Tundra North, otherwise known as Bonny Scotland.

By now though my appetite had been whetted for something more than the touristic equivalent of the one-night (well, two-week) stand.

In 1993, after seemingly endless scheming and wheedling, I got what I wanted; a chance to live in North America for a reasonable period of time as a local not a tourist, in the shape of a six month sabbatical as a visiting academic at the University of British Columbia. Vancouver, as I put it in *The Wrong Leggings*, was ever so slightly transcendent; the West Coast dream I had glimpsed in Seattle and SF fleshed out to reality, but with hallucinogenic doses of the work on feminist legal theory I was exploring at the time thrown in for good measure.

I even really did find the perfect bagel - a three cheese melt at Benny's Bagels, cool local hang out of little known SF author W. Gibson.

It wasn't all plain sailing, absorbing the nuances of what seemed at times an extravagantly alien culture, though, as can be seen from this analysis I wrote at the time of Vancouver as an evening ("night school") class:

"How to Survive in Vancouver: 10 weeks, \$99/class plus PST plus GST plus

something variable and spontaneous towards improving the airport facilities. This environmentally conscious, postmodernistically aware course for immigrants, visitors and the socially inept will concentrate on typical conversational venues of Pacific North West culture. Early sessions will focus on recycling, environmental and fitness strategies: how to tell your Blue Box from your Blue Bag, how to stop the chipmunks at the bottom of the garden from settling in your recycled soup cans, how to avoid being strafed by passing hikers, joggers, kayakers, roller bladers, seniors etc while trying to get to the bus stop, knowing when to say no to your third offer of "just an easy hike", racquetball game, softball game, badminton game, looneyball game etc."

Just a hint of sour grapes there perhaps! (I probably wrote this just after the local feminists made me hike up a mountain pursued by a bear. No, really.)

But certainly not enough in the way of tribulations to stop me relying on the same strategy, four years later, when my second sabbatical came around: ostensibly back to Chicago for four months to hang out with the big boys of academe studying Internet law and artificial intelligence, but in reality spending altogether too many evenings with Nigel Rowe and Karen Babich setting the fannish world to rights, eating peking duck pizza at the top of WaterTower Mall, and combing the cool cigar-cum-soft-porn shops of Belmont for leather attire with which to torment the young bucks of Illinois fandom, or at least, Neil Rest. (Well, the alternative to all that activity would have been freezing to death: it was minus eighteen when I arrived in Chicago, cold enough to snap off the hairs in your nostrils.)

It was indeed during those fun-packed fannish evenings, that Karen, the bright young tyro, Nigel, the battlescarred veteran of every Corflu ever thought of, and I, began to finalise the details of our machiavellian plot to bring Corflu to Britain... (see above, below and passim).

That was last year and I still miss living in America. There's an indefinable something about the place that makes me feel bushier

and brighter and puts more hair on my chest. (No, scratch that last.)

However if there's one thing almost as good as going to America, it's having Americans to visit.

This as much as anything is why I think running a Corflu in the UK can only be good for British fandom.

We Brits need a periodic infusion of American fans, with their charm, optimism and skill at back rubs to counteract our natural tendency to be miserable bastards.

Americans on the other hand can only gain from first hand experience of real UK irony, which is rather different from the type found in Alanis Morissette songs, and some may even master the delicate art of Mean Bastard-ness after personal tuition from the Zen Master D.

To be fractionally serious for a minute, one of the things that made running the Intersection fanroom in 1995 worthwhile for Christina and I was a genuine sense that US and UK fanzine fandoms, different as they are, really have things to say to each other at this juncture in time; that US

fandom with its congeniality and sense of community can show UK fandom how to find strength rather than empty ritual and fetish in fan-history and tradition; while UK fandom, with its characteristic acerbicity and current fanzine revival can perhaps provide both the guts and the literary firepower to fight off the greying of fandom and the lure of the Internet.

It just seemed a shame that some poor bastards had to put on an entire three ring circus Worldcon just so my US and UK fan communities could have a good time in the Central Hotel, in a galaxy far far away from the unamplified horrors of Hall 4 and the SECC.

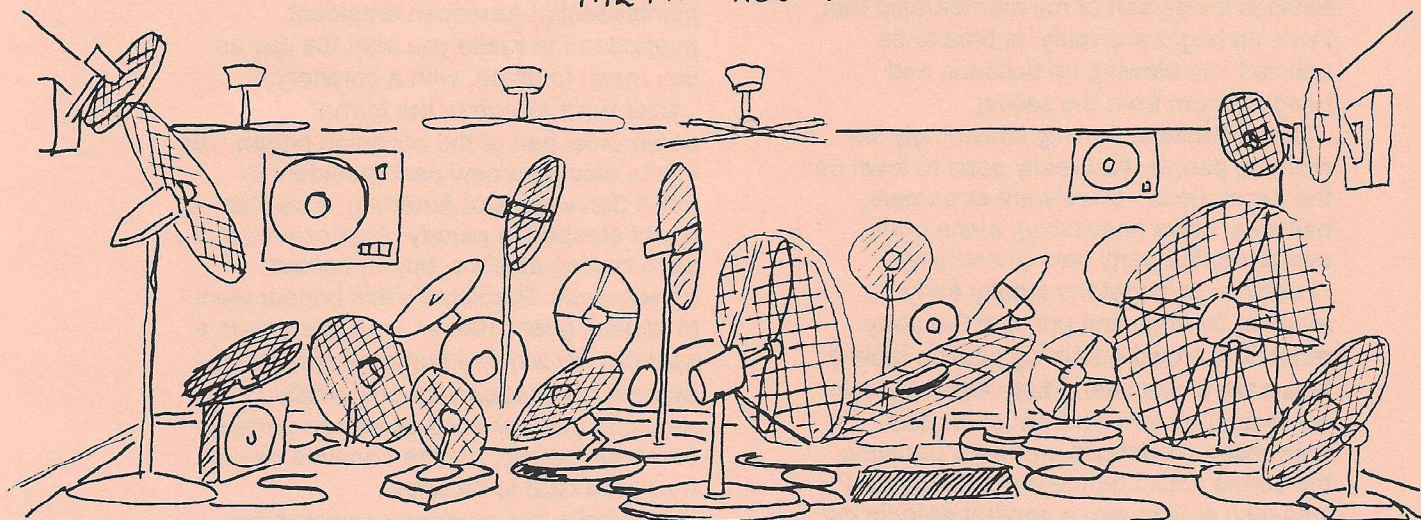
Why not give us guys another chance to get together, without the need to spend all day hanging round in an aircraft hangar with bad beer?

Hence Corflu.

All the fun of the Intersection fanroom but with Vince Docherty removed.

I hope you agree too and will join us in Leeds in 98 for a celebration and perpetration of US/UK connections.

'THE FAN ROOM'



Some Velvet Morning

by christina lake

The convention banquet remains more a concept than a reality in my world of fandom.

Back when they still seriously did banquets, I had no money. Now that I have just as little money but less sense about what I spend it on, conventions don't seem to have banquets any more, just accidental simultaneous invasions of the same restaurant.

But in America, as with almost any tradition that we have managed to ditch with a sneer over here, the banquet is still going strong, and Corflu's version of it was the Sunday brunch. No kidding. We were meant to crawl out of bed with whatever level of hangover the microbrewery beers might have given us and indulge in festivities at eleven in the morning.

Didn't the Americans invent the phrase "I'm not a morning person"? Or was that Lilian Edwards? Either way, I didn't fancy the chances of a socially dynamic occasion manifesting itself at that hour of convention Sunday.

Still, ever willing to try a new thing in the cause of transatlantic relations (and besides it was part of my membership fee), I was up bright and early, in time to be enlisted into blowing up balloons and hanging them from the ceiling.

The committee, looking sickeningly like morning people, had really gone to town on the decorations - there were streamers, balloons, cows (inevitably), place mats - everything but party hats (mercifully).

I decided to forget my creaky early morning feelings and get in to the party mood. The crowd gathering outside looked less easy to win over. There was a certain zomboidal air familiar from countless convention breakfasts, normally denoting the coffee addict before his morning fix. I was also able to make another entry in my clothing etiquette book (female TAFF winners, for the use of) to the effect that the

appropriate female attire for Sunday brunch was pretty frock or skirt (needless to say I was in leggings as usual, but of a concessionary pink colour to mark day-time wear).

Eventually the committee declared the brunch room sufficiently decorated for official consumption and let in the crowds. I sat down at one of the tables near the front with Lorelei and Spike and the person who does fanzine reviews for Spent Brass.

As the tables began to fill, people milled round looking for seats with all the organisation of a herd of cows, while spaces were fiercely guarded for absent, presumed oversleeping, friends.

My front table turned out to be not as tactically sound for getting hold of food quickly as one might have hoped, as the order for going to the breakfast buffet was the table next to us (committee & guest table) first, then all tables behind before coming back to us. Thankfully the food didn't run out, and the only problem was the usual how to fit it all on the plate (actually, as I recall, we were allowed two plates, but that didn't entirely solve the problem). There were various salads, ham, pancakes, eggs, pastries - in fact the quintessential American breakfast, guaranteed to make you start the day as you mean to go on, with a coronary.

After we'd all eaten, the formal ceremonial part of the occasion began. Ted White elected a new past president to FWA (fan writers of America), a tradition no doubt steeped in parody of proceedings of such bodies as sfwa, but an honour nonetheless. Predictably this honour went to special guest Tucker, who then made a speech. For a noted humorist of fandom, I thought his speech was only mildly amusing (his unforced asides on panels had been better), maybe because he was trying too hard to be funny.

Jae Leslie, the randomly selected fan guest of honour, was very effective. As she explained afterwards, she's a lecturer so

when they picked her name out of the hat, she simply thought, that's all right, I can do this.

And so she could.

Standing at the podium with the big cheese hat on her head, Jae Leslie spoke engagingly about her contact with science fiction fandom, side-stepping any of the stereotypes to get to the essence, which for her was people who would engage in written debate as eagerly as she.

Also in an instinctively fannish way she managed to bring her son and mother into the narrative so that by the end of the speech you had an impression of who Jae Leslie was as a person as well as her views on science fiction and fandom. I heard afterward that Andy Hooper had snapped up a transcript of the speech for

Spent Brass, and wasn't a bit surprised.

The grand finale to the brunch which I had temporarily forgotten in the rush of blood to my stomach until Lorelei turned up in the team jersey (the Corflu sweatshirt, featuring an ATom cartoon) was Spike's pyramid.

Suddenly it was happening. Each team member ran in, announcing a number, then the location of the corresponding Corflu, then knelt in position, back steady to receive the weight of the next layer.

All cameras were poised as Lorelei scrambled nimbly on to the very top of the pyramid and for a moment it all held.

I realised that as usual I hadn't pulled back the lens cap on Peter Fred's camera, so my picture shows only the disintegrating pyramid, Lorelei already gone from the top.

.....
LILIAN

LET'S TRY TO CUT THE CON BADGE
CRAP OFF AT THE PASS... CALL ME!

ALICE
X

There's something we all have to do now, but I'm not gonna do it.

I'm sorry. I've got far better things to do than debate what colour the fucking con badges are gonna be. Okay? I know you feel the same about this. So I have a suggestion.

Screw the con badges. Let's take everybody to the Corn Exchange and give 'em a Henna Tattoo with 'Corflu UK' and their name on it. I know, I know. List of pros and cons follows...

PROS

It's a bit of Olde English Heritage, isn't it? The Yanks'll lap it up. Trust me.

We can personalise them. A quick Polaroid and it's instant memorabilia.

They fade within a week - less, if you really scrub 'em with soap.

They are FUN. I think tattooed breasts would be an interesting ice-breaker.

It's a bit of skiffy - the ol' Illustrated Man link.

CONS

Health fascists may balk at the thought of Henna. Especially when they see our hair.

Going into work the next day with 'I've been Corfluuked' on your wrist.

They may not fade and the litigious bastards will sue us.

We will never find enough space on Dan and Lynn Steffan.

Skiffy has no place in fandom.

Travelling in Britain

by christina lake

Britain is in some ways a traveller's paradise.

Unlike Australia where it takes you a good part of the day to get anywhere or America where a trip from LA to Washington can last long enough to lose two bus drivers, talk through the entirety of the civil rights movement and die before you make it (assuming you're in a Spike Lee movie), Britain offers bite-sized journeys and a plethora of destinations - historic, scenic or post-modern - all accessible from most parts of the country. Which of course is precisely what makes it so difficult.

You only have to have a short conversation with Leeds fan and walking timetable Mike Ford to realise the confusion of routes you can choose to travel round Britain. Of course it helps if you know where you're going. My boss at work has obviously mistaken me for the next best alternative to Mike Ford and keeps making me look up train times for him. But there's not much even I can do if he sets out for Shrewsbury only to discover that the meeting's on in Lichfield.

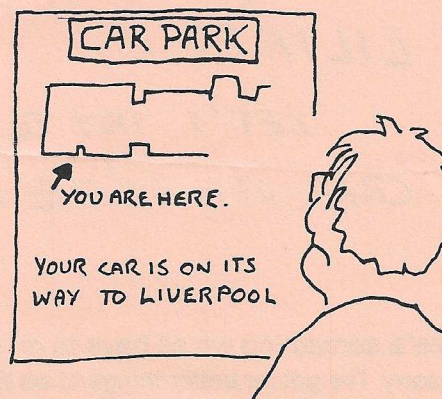
Then there's always the problem of misleading information from those that should know better.

Apparently Uckfield station in East Sussex is plastered with posters saying 'Go to Brighton by Rail!'. In fact, to get from Uckfield to Brighton, you have to change at Oxted, East Croydon and Redhill, giving you a round trip of 90 miles or more, taking over three hours. Not very good, considering that Uckfield is actually 15 miles from Brighton and you can drive there in 20 minutes!

The other fun aspect of the British railway system in these closing years of the 20th century is the fare structure. I used to have a handle on it back before I took off to become a world traveller, but in my absence, the government of the day sold off the national railway system to a handful of companies with weird names like Virgin

Trains and Connex and now I'm not so sure what's going on.

The net effect of privatisation seems to be that it's impossible to get a complete timetable for the railway system and that the new companies are busily repainting their trains. It also means that if you need to complain, you have to get a complaints form for the right company, and indeed work out which the right company is. (I thought I was travelling Virgin from Leeds to Bristol till a power outage round Chesterfield left me held up for an hour and a half on the London-bound train, which apparently is run by Midlands. I suppose that's why they're so busy repainting the trains.)



Ticket prices vary according to which company it is, which day of the week you're travelling and whether you've had the chance to purchase in advance. The best deals seem to run on the London to North of England and Scotland lines. They have tickets known as super-apexes, purchasable at a pittance providing you can plan your life well enough to know exactly which train you will wish to be taking two weeks in advance.

Since most of us can't even work out whether we'll still be alive in two weeks time, this isn't always very practical.

After that bargain cheapie, the tickets run through the gamut of Apex, Super

Advance, SuperSavers and Savers, getting progressively more expensive.

The best rule of thumb, it seems to me, is don't travel on a Friday and don't advance book yourself on any train you're not likely to get. If you stick to that and keep Mike Ford at your elbow, then train travel in Britain is a doddle.

As for travel by road, there's always the joys of navigation.

Britain is full of quaintly named places like Nempnett Thrubwell and Chipping Sodbury, but the excitement soon wears off after a few hours of being lost en route from one to the other. Also it has to be borne in mind that roads in Britain are busy. Especially around bank holidays. In fact that's another rule of thumb - don't travel by road on a bank holiday. It will only end in tears. Tears of frustration that is, as you sit in a traffic jam on a motorway (British term for the Interstate) that's suddenly turned into a giant car park. Fortunately, we're not holding Corflu on a bank holiday weekend.

Another strange characteristic of British roads is that they're not particularly straight. Motorways are, apart from the M25 which, as is well known, is just one huge roundabout circling London, and to be avoided at all costs.

But the average British country road bends and dips and is populated by wideboys powering round the corners in their BMWs, interspersed with tractors, muck rakers and little old ladies out for their weekend drive at 20 mph.

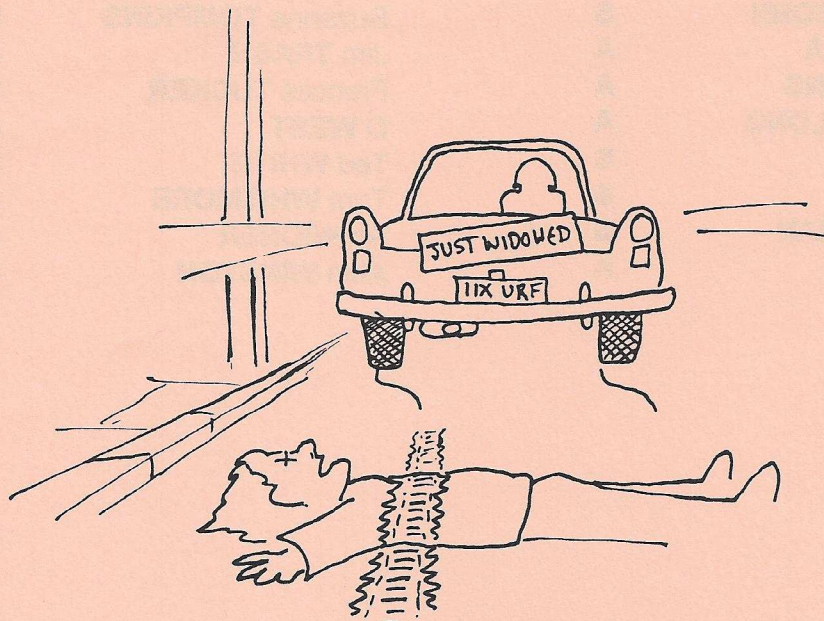
If you can handle that you will probably see some of the most beautiful countryside in Britain. Just bear in mind that this countryside would be even more beautiful if it wasn't full of visitors in their cars wrecking the peace of the rural existence.

Still, since most country people are blood-thirsty foxhunting fanatics, judging by the recent pro-hunting rallies in London, why should we care?

No, when all's said and done, the main drawback to travelling round Britain by road is remembering to drive on the right side - that is to say the left. Even after several months of driving in America, and constant vigilance, I still found myself one night pulling out from a taco shop and heading the wrong way down a busy road.

Fortunately I noticed just in time to get away, moments before the cars stopped at the previous traffic light roared down upon me to end me, my world tour and my taco in spectacular fashion.

Now you wouldn't like that to happen to you in Britain, would you?

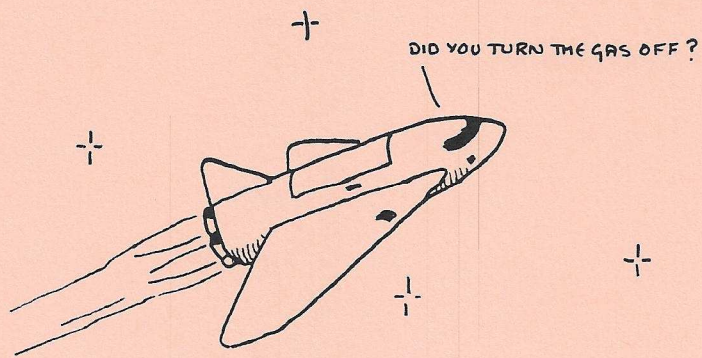


Corflu UK

Membership List as of 31/7/97

A = Attending; S = Supporting

Michael ABBOTT	A	Paul KINCAID	A
Alyson L. ABRAMOWITZ	A	Christina LAKE	A
Harry ANDRUSCHAK	S	David LANGFORD	A
Shirley ATKINS	A	Hope LEIBOWITZ	A
Tom BECKER	A	Robert LICHTMAN	A
Alan BOSTICK	A	Pete LYON	A
Richard BRANDT	A	Michelle LYONS	A
Claire BRIALEY	A	Catherine McAULEY	A
Linda BUSHYAGER	S	Evelyn MURRAY	A
Ron BUSHYAGER	S	Joseph NICHOLAS	A
Steven CAIN	A	Debbie NOTKIN	A
Jane CARNALL	A	Spike PARSONS	A
Vincent CLARKE	A	Pat McMURRAY	A
John DALLMAN	A	Hilary PERRY	S
Lilian EDWARDS	A	Greg PICKERSGILL	A
Lise EISENBERG	A	Mark PLUMMER	A
Doug FAUNT	A	Simon POLLEY	A
Moshe FEDER	S	Vanessa SCHNATMEIER	S
Tommy FERGUSON	A	Alison SCOTT	A
George FLYNN	A	Ian SORENSEN	A
Alison FREEBAIRN	A	Maureen SPELLER-KINCAID	A
Mike GLICKSOHN	S	Suzanne TOMPKINS	S
Judith HANNA	A	Jim TRASH	A
Jane HAWKINS	A	Frances TUCKER	S
Julian HEADLONG	A	D WEST	A
Arnie KATZ	S	Ted WHITE	A
Joyce KATZ	S	Tom WHITMORE	S
Jerry KAUFMAN	S	Art WIDNER	A
Debbi KERR	A	Alan WINSTON	S



**parting is such sweet sorrow
so can i please see you tomorrow**