

HOWDY,
STRANGERS

THIS HERE IS
THE FANZINE
JURY

WE'LL GIVE YOU
A FAIR TRIAL...



CORFLU

UK

Twentieth First Century Partnership?

by Christina Lake

At this point in the shared histories of the British and American nations, with Bill standing by to help Tony with the Peace Process in Northern Ireland, and Tony backing Bill on the War Process with Iraq, the "special relationship" between the UK and the US has never looked so alive and well. Tony Blair is even prepared to swallow his Catholic principles to overlook Clinton's extra-marital activities. Bill doesn't have to swallow anything - he leaves that to the women in his life - but support, even from a small island on the edge of Europe with only a few pop "celebrities" to keep it in the world news, can be useful when you're battling for survival. And such support is not totally irrelevant when you want to go to war in the name of humanity rather than American imperialism.

But what of fandom? Here we are in 1998 hosting a US fanzine convention in what has been unkindly described as "the Cleveland of the UK", running two TAFF races between the UK and North America and preparing a bulk export of British fans to Baltimore (at least if my social circle is anything to go by). On the surface, ties between British and US fandom have never been stronger. But, as Corflu UK approaches, it seems to be increasingly difficult to tell whether the convention is bringing British and North American fandom closer together or pulling us further apart. Perhaps we'll have to leave that one to the judgement of the fan historians of the future? All I can say is that what started out as one of those wild and whacky ideas that sounds good over a few pints down the pub, has proved to be far more complicated and politically explosive than I, for one, ever imagined.

For me it began at Ditto, a small fanzine fan convention in Toronto in 1988. It was the first Ditto, and Mike Glicksohn was looking to perpetuate the series. Gary Mattingly had put in a bid to hold

the next one in San Francisco. "Any alternative bids?" Glicksohn asked. "Bristol, maybe, Christina?" I liked the idea immediately. After six weeks in the US, I was - somewhat to my surprise - in the grip of my first bout of Americanophilia. I wanted to build on the good times I'd been having and the friendships I'd made. Why not run a Ditto?

Back home, the idea was soon relegated to the category of "improbable concepts that would be really cool if they came off." I didn't return to the USA till 1993. The Madison Corflu rekindled my love affair with American fandom, and also resulted in 18 pages of con report, nestled among which I find mention of a conversation on the possibility of a British Corflu. Clearly the idea just would not go away. In fact, that particular idea was the seedbed for Precursor, the fanzine convention run the weekend before Intersection. In true Corflu style it featured excess heat, softball in the park and a not inconsiderable number of US attendees. The only thing wrong with it was the imminence of the Worldcon. Either people could not attend due to lack of time or money, or Intersection was lurking in their minds, casting its shadow of worry, anticipation or scorn over the proceedings. For a relaxacon, this is not the most relaxing of scenarios. People partied, but there was always a sense - just as the name suggested - that however good it was, this was merely a precursor to some other, more overwhelming event.

Intersection, oddly enough, did prove a fertile ground for Anglo-US relationships. A certain amount of synergy came out of it, that fed into Apparatchik, Steve Green's as yet unrealised plans for a US-oriented fanzine, my decision to spend six months in the States and Lilian and Ian's offer to host the 1997 Corflu. The

reasoning behind Ian and Lilian's bid was quite simple. No-one had come forward to run the 1997 Corflu. We'd all enjoyed each other's company at Intersection. Why go through the hell of a Worldcon to get this mix of people together again?

Naturally, I was dead against the plan. I would be out the country in 1997, and if anyone was finally going to run the British Corflu, then I wanted to be there. How could Lilian, my so-called best friend and long-time collaborator on numerous fanzines and fan programmes, even consider running it without me? Well, she could, but as events turned out, the Americans weren't sure about the idea. A committee to run a Bay Area convention was put together and the idea was shelved for future consideration.

Pam Wells came back from the Nashville Corflu (which I would dearly have loved to attend), buzzing with gossip and enthusiastically relating the discussions there about a British Corflu. It seemed, from what she was saying, that the Americans were prepared to give the idea a go. There was a spirit of "let's do it!" in the air, which for the duration of that Eastercon at least (for Pam had flown back straight into the convention, serendipitously being held at Heathrow airport) made it seem possible that Pam, Lilian, Ian and I could all work together on a 1998 bid for Corflu.

Well, as I said at the beginning, these ideas are never so simple in real life as they are in the alcoholic haze of a convention. Pam's continued discussions with other interested parties in the UK left her uncertain whether she should go ahead. Ian and Lilian didn't see why it was up to Pam to decide. Let the Americans decide. It was their convention. If they didn't want to go to the UK, then they could say so. It seemed fair enough to me.

Then I went to live in America for a few months, and began to hear about the matter from a different point of view. To put yourself in the place of American

fans, just imagine that Novacon couldn't find a hotel to do business with one year, and a group of fans in Birmingham, Alabama, who in this hypothetical universe have always had a strong relationship with the British Brum group offered to host it. How would you feel? Excited at the excuse to go to the States rather than boring old Birmingham? Resentful of the bid, because you probably wouldn't be able to afford the time or money to go? Worried because it wouldn't be like a normal Novacon, would be full of these strangers from Birmingham, Alabama, and not serve any decent beer at the bar? Concerned that the Novas would be hijacked, and all go to Andy Hooper? Well, the answer, of course, would depend on who you were and the state of your finances. For the majority of people it would not be a clear cut yes or no. Most might give it the benefit of the doubt. Novacon can get boring, so why not hold it in the States for a change? November will be strange without Novacon, but what the hell, you can always have a party instead?

But some people, inevitably, will be resentful of the very concept. And that's where the naive enthusiasm of those people in the bar in Birmingham, Alabama comes unstuck. Not only have they earned the undying hatred of, say, Mike Siddall but some of their mates in Birmingham, Alabama don't see what's so brilliant about the idea of running a convention for a bunch of Brits, just because their city happens to have the same name. Oddly enough, all this controversy leads to a convention with a most un-Novacon-like-edge to it, its hugely successful, and for years after there are groups of fans from Birmingham, Alabama, snogging British women at Novacon, trying to rekindle the passion they felt during a brief but vivid clinch in the fanroom after too many sidebars. The other odd thing is that no-one in Birmingham Alabama ever volunteers to run a Novacon again.

Another great concept, propounded by Irwin Hirsh, was that my fanzine *Never Quite Arriving*, should be eligible for a

Ditmar. Great idea, I think. I may never have won a Nova, but imagine how smug I can be around all those Nova Award winners. Hey, guys, who needs a poxy Nova. I've got a Ditmar! Of course, as soon as anyone begins to take it seriously, it all falls apart. Maybe there's some rule in the constitution that says I have to be an Australian citizen. Or maybe people resent the idea that some foreigner's fanzine could be considered better than the home-grown product. It doesn't matter. The point is that once you start messing with other people's institutions, glorious concept turns quickly to muddy minefields.

So, if Corflu UK has been far more controversial than I'd imagined, now is the time to see what the pay-back's like. What will arise from this experimental mixing of cultures? Will British and American fandoms learn anything about each other that they don't already get from Worldcons, fanzines and TAFF visits? Will the

convention generate the kind of energy that spawns new fanzines, even a new convention series? Will it contain any of those moments of concentrated inspiration where something in your worldview changes and you understand some new possibility from life? Or will we all just get drunk and spend lots of money?

But whatever comes out of it, one thing that's clear, is that this "special relationship", if it exists, is something that has to be created not given. We may not ever understand each other completely, we may never untangle all the preconceptions, favourable or otherwise, that surround our shared but not so common cultures, but it can be a hell of an interesting and mind-expanding experience to try. This programme book offers a few thoughts on the subject. A mosaic of experiences to ponder when someone comes up to you in the bar with their latest ideas for mixing, matching and changing our mutual horizons.

"There's nothing wrong with a desire for transcendence," Teddy tells us at breakfast, "especially if you're American. Transcendence is what made this country great in the first place, because it's the dream of better places to go than anybody's ever been before. Wider horizons, bigger shopping malls, more sex, fatter steaks, warmer beaches, better jobs and higher pay. What American want is what they haven't already got."

Scott Bradfield. What's Wrong with America, Picador 1994.

CORFLU U.K — BRITISH ENTHUSIASM IN ACTION

YES, WHAT I LIKE
IS THE VARIETY,
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CONVENTIONS
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Pickersgill in Buckyland

by Jeanne Gomoll (1987)

It's only after having met a couple Brits that I've decided what makes the first meeting them rather disconcerting.

"Hello," I said to Greg Pickersgill, after having been introduced by Patrick Nielsen Hayden.

"Well then, why do you want to come to England?"

Greg may very well have said hello first, but I can't remember for sure now. I was so flabbergasted at the time by the sudden realization that I was being called upon to make a thoughtful, meaningful reply to an important, possibly earnest question, that I faltered, and after a moment, said something flippant. There goes any chance of winning many British votes for TAFF. Greg will go back to England and tell them all I'm an airhead, I thought.

Luckily our conversation styles connected up a bit better later on. The thing that makes first meetings with Brits so disconcerting (I've decided) is that they are very direct, right away. And that made me realize something about Americans. We tend to hide behind a blizzard of innocuous chatter at first meeting to check one another out before going on to more serious conversation. We ask each other silly questions about the weather, travel methods or the quality of each other's sleep. These generic questions can with very little conscious effort be answered with generic responses. Meanwhile, from behind the generic curtains, we're taking a peek at the new person. Does she have a sense of humor? Is he intelligent? We look for clues in the way those generic questions are answered. We observe how the other person interacts in a larger group of people before we finally jump in and really start talking.

About a month after I met Greg at the Atlanta worldcon, he stopped by in Madison, Wisconsin. He and I had long gotten over that first awkward introductory bit of conversation by then, and we were lounging around in my living room, looking at photographs and gossiping. I told him about those first disconcerting moments (from my point of view) and about the insights that had occurred to me about American conversational habits.

"Whew!" said Greg. "Well, that's a relief." Apparently he'd been going around greeting Americans in his typically direct, British manner, and had been feeling a bit paranoid about the typically startled, American silences prompted by his words.

The other day I heard that Greg had safely made it back home to London. That was a relief to me because I'd secretly been worrying that some sort of awful transportation-related disaster would befall him in his American travels.

My suspicion that "getting there" might become a problem for Greg started when I kept getting the two of us lost in Atlanta.

"Are we in the Hilton or the Marriott?"

The closed hotel door in front of us should have been open. Or at least we should have been able to hear the sounds of a loud party from within.

"The Hilton . . . no, the Marriott. I think"

Both hotels had a central cavity ringed with balconies and hotel doors, ribbed with elevator tracks. But one hotel -- the Hilton, I think -- broke up the central core at 10-floor intervals with interim lobbies. The other hotel's central core was open all the way up to the roof, the dizzying space broken up only by textile

sculptures. I got mixed up sometimes between the two hotels.

"No, it's the Hilton."

"Oh shit." So then we had to wait ten minutes for the elevator ride that would take forever to get us to the ground floor of the wrong hotel and then we had to cross the street to get to the right hotel and wait for another elevator, etc. By the time we got to the right room of the right hotel, we discovered that the party we'd come to visit was in the process of moving *en masse* to a party in the hotel we'd just left.

"Oh, that party's died," we assured Ted and the crowd of fans that followed him. "The only party left is the alcove party. We were just there."

"Where is it?" asked Ted.

"We'll show you," I said. "What floor was it on again?" I asked Greg.

"24th wasn't it?"

"I thought it was on the 18th."

Well we got there eventually.

Then Greg called from San Francisco to say that he'd be taking a train from Seattle to Madison and to ask if Spike or I could pick him up at the Columbus train depot. (The train doesn't go through Madison on its way to Chicago. The nearest stop is about 15 miles north, in the little town of Columbus, after all what American would take a train when they can *drive*.) "Sure," I said, but decided not to tell him about the recent train disaster that had happened near that very station not long before his call. For some unknown reason a train had overturned close to the Columbus train depot. Several people had been killed in the accident.

We were also very careful about not showing Greg the headlines of the previous day's Madison newspaper.

"KILLER HIGHWAY 151 TAKES ANOTHER VICTIM" said the *Capital Times*, about a road much in need of repairs that connects Madison with Columbus.

I worked hard and used several colors of felt tip pens to draw a clear easy-to-read map for Greg so he could ride the bus downtown and find his way back to my apartment while I was working. Luckily, he preferred walking tours to get acquainted with a new city, and so I never tested out my ability to get a TAFF winner lost in my own hometown.

But both Spike and I worried when Greg told us that his schedule required that he spend a whole night's wait between trains in Chicago.

"What are you going to do?"

"Oh, I'll just find a hotel once I'm down there and get a good night's sleep."

Spike tried to get a reservation for him at a hotel at which she used to stay, but it turned out that it had gone out of business. I suggested he ask a taxi driver to take him to a moderately-priced, nearby hotel, and gave him Ross Pavlac's phone number for emergencies, but Greg seemed determined to play it by ear.

The outfit Greg wore when he wanted to look spiffy (as opposed to laid back and comfortable) was a white pants and red, long-sleeved shirt combo. The only problem with that particular combination is that red and white are the school colors of the University of Wisconsin and were very much in evidence on Saturday mornings when there is a in-town football game scheduled at the UW stadium. As there was the Saturday Greg visited Madison.

Greg wondered why so many glassy-eyed coeds and preppy, acned college kids kept trying to drag him along with them and swished "badger" flags in his face as they passed. He didn't quite

believe our story that the news of his TAFF victory had preceded him and so we had to tell him about the football Saturday phenomenon. We had a little more difficulty explaining the "Bucky Badger" phenomenon.

The badger is Wisconsin's state totem. This dates back from a period in the state's history (mid 1800s) during which mining was a principal economic activity. And since miners -- like badgers -- are tough creatures who burrow into the ground, they prevailed upon the frontier legislature to adopt the badger as the state's symbol. Since that time, the fierce, really very *unsociable* badger has been transformed by the state's boosters into a ridiculously cutesified cartoon image that is reproduced on t-shirts, retail business signs and everything related to UW sports programs. Greg found more signs than I've ever noticed with the badger cartoon: Badger Office Supplies, Badger Bowl, Badger & Quick Clean Laundry, Badger Tailor, Badger Concrete Construction, Badger Weed Control, Badger Key & Security... Greg didn't quite appreciate the rationale for the current use of the symbol and the more I tried to explain, the less I understood it. It's just too bad that we didn't encounter the football team's mascot along the way: the person-sized, acrobatic "Bucky" who can be seen prancing and jumping in the sidelines of a Badger game, leading the crowd's cheers.

Greg and I both talked about the fact that the badger was a particularly mean and unsociable sort of animal -- not a bad sort of symbol for a Neanderthal football team that "buries," "crushes," "demolishes," and otherwise "destroys" its rivals, according to sportscasters, and not at all like the cute, grinning, *perky* little animal called "Bucky" here in Madison. Usually Bucky wears a cute little sweater with a big, red "W" emblazoned on its front, and though I've recently seen a "Bonny Badger," too, wearing bows and ruffles, it's generally a sort of emasculated "he." (Bucky wears a sweater but no pants.)

But anyway, after Greg asked about Bucky that first time, we started seeing him everywhere. On a big clock facing University Avenue, like a giant, architectural Mickey Mouse watch. On a sign for a medical supplies store, right above the window with the skeleton display. Everywhere. And I've been seeing Bucky ever since. It feels rather like a grade B science fiction movie in which the hero escapes the clutches of the alien, mind control ray, and suddenly starts seeing aliens all over the place wherever she goes. Greg left and here I am living in a town controlled by grotesque, alien Buckies

Greg stayed in Madison for a week, half the time with me and half with Spike. We took him to some of our favorite restaurants, and Spike demonstrated the phenomenon of American "ambient food." At 3 a.m. she took Greg to the International House of Pancakes, or IHop, as it's affectionately known to munchie-afflicted night owls. Enthusiastically and ambiently, Greg ordered a full-course meal. Spike thinks that American fans attending worldcon will have a difficult time adjusting to the lack of ambient food in England. Myself, I think American fans will be more likely to be taken aback by the lack of showers. Greg was exclaiming a lot about the wonderfulness of showers here (except for the weird levers he sometimes found in place of ordinary knobs), and it took me a while before I realized that he was referring to the simple fact that showers *existed*. I kept thinking he must mean the warm temperatures or water pressure.

We took him to a radio show called *What D'You Know*, hosted by a locally famous radio personality, Michael Feldman. I usually listen to its radio broadcast when I'm home Saturday mornings, but it's a fun thing to do with out-of-town visitors if we can get started early enough and get down to the studio for the taping. *What D'You*

Know is a sort of combination vaudeville, stand-up comedy, and game show program, which mostly relies upon the sarcastic wit and stage presence of its star (although the piano player and bass violinist play wonderful jazz in the intervals). With only a little encouragement from Spike and I, Feldman was attracted to our seats in the audience to talk to Greg. (We'd merely hooted in a restrained, quiet way, and decorously pointed and winked in Greg's direction, to get Feldman's attention.) When Feldman asked why he would want to talk with Greg, we explained that Greg had an Interesting Accent. Modestly, Greg protested as he'd been doing all along. ("Stop waving your fucking arms. Damn it. STOP IT! He's going to see you! STOP! . . . aargh . . .")

"No, no really I don't," at which point Feldman swooped down on poor, shy Greg.

"You're British!" Greg was doomed. Feldman then asked Greg if he was part of a famous rock group, and both Spike and Greg broke up laughing. The audience seemed to enjoy the joke too. Later I had to have the joke explained to me since I don't keep up much on contemporary music, and it was a pretty funny joke, let me assure you, something to do with Greg's long hair, I think, and his resemblance to a musician. You'll have to ask Greg or Spike about it though, since the rock group's name didn't stick in my memory.

Still crimson in the face, clashing somewhat with the color of his shirt, Greg was forced to read a page of announcements so that the studio and radio audience could enjoy a genuine Welsh accent and he did just fine. Everyone applauded.

(The next time I went to the show it was with my brother, who was visiting from San Francisco. Feldman invited Rick to join him on stage and take his chance in the quiz. I'm thinking of signing on as an agent for anyone who

wants to go to the show for their Big Chance.)

The next day, to introduce him to other members of Madison fandom, we rented a picnic shelter at Garfield Park. My friend, Scott and I went early to the park to reserve the best shelter, while Spike took Greg to the Mifflin Street Block Party -- which is sort of a temporary theme park celebrating the days of hippie, anti-war Madison of the 1960s. The weather forecasts had not been optimistic; rain was probable that afternoon and so we figured we'd better move the picnic under the shelter's roof, and began grilling bratwurst in a giant, old fireplace. And indeed it was a wet day. By two or three o'clock in the afternoon the rain was pouring down. We watched the storm come in from under the dramatic arch of the brick and wood cathedral ceiling of the picnic shelter, and still enjoy a large, warm and very dry room inside. Besides the huge fireplace, there were picnic tables and lots of food and beer. But the main attraction was the storm. It was one of the summer's most spectacular and Greg seemed to enjoy it as much or more than anyone. He kept saying that England just didn't have storms like this and gulping down more Augsberger beer, the beer of choice for his stay.

Everyone seemed to enjoy meeting Greg, and Greg in turn, was devastatingly charming.

Spike kept wanting to go out and show Greg another sight or go to another show. I tended to want to sit around and gossip. And between the two of us, Greg appeared to have fun while he was here. Almost as much fun as we had hosting him.

Don't Mention the War

by Alison Freebairn

I have moments when I feel Americans hate me. It's as though they are trying to piss me off on every level - their generic rawk bands, their insultingly bouncy sitcoms, their interminable, nullifying Seattle fanzines.

This could be oversensitivity on my part. After all, for every Hootie and The Blowfish there is a Sonic Youth. For every Friends there is a Frasier. For every Andy Hooper, there is a... Jeez, there's a bloody Andy Hooper, isn't there? Bastards.

All this hostility stems from Intersection. While Lilian and Christina were having wonderful times with lovely Americans in the Central Hotel, I was stumbling through horrific experiences within the SECC. CC. Thing. Ah, the Glaswegian sense of humour. We call it the Big Red Shed, or latterly the Armadillo, or other such hilarious Wegie nicknames.

Intersection was a personal mistake - I'll put my hand up and take the blame for my own involvement. I've been punished more thoroughly than you can imagine (or could possibly dish out) so I'll try to give you something of the flavour.

I was helping my colleague perform mouth-to-mouth on the morning fan programme when Margaret Austin informed me of a problem with the press room (yeh - I was there as well, crazy, mad, but with youth and pliability firmly on my side). There was no room for argument, so I stepped aside and followed Margaret across the cavernous expanse of Hall 4 and into the rooms reserved for press and security.

Margaret deposited me in front of the fearfully competent Claire Brialey - now looking tearfully apologetic. It seemed that my immediate boss and her immediate boss were too busy to cope with problem. It was up to me.

The problem in question was in the

expansive form of two American men who wished to complain about Intersection press policy. I had nothing to do with setting up the arrangements or formulating the policy - I was just trying to hold it together on a daily basis.

I looked at them with suspicion. One was tall and very bulky, with a terrifyingly large moustache and one of those sad satchels yanks feel compelled to sling sash-like across their quivering midriffs. The other was small and rat-like, with pointy teeth and a greasy-looking wispy moustache.

At this point I was almost past caring what they said or did - I could feel breakfast on the move. Anyway, a lot of the non-fanzine US fans had gone out of their way to be loud, irritating or aggravating toward me over the previous days, so I wasn't expecting much else from this pair.

I listened to what they had to say, agreed with a lot of it, disagreed with more, asked why they hadn't stepped forward two days ago when we had practically begged for volunteers if they were so sure that they could do better, and considered breaking my no-alcohol-till-after-five rule. The bar beckoned.

I was imagining the sleek lines of a pint of 70', picturing how it would fill my right hand just so, visualising the silken trickle of condensation, when the killer line was spoken.

Rat Tash: "Let me tell you about the Vietnam War."

(idontbelievehejustsaidthat)

Huge Tash: "Yeah, the Vietnam War is an important example of the dynamic we are experiencing here."

I ask you, how great am I for not killing these arseholes? For not removing their horrid facial hair with tweezers, throwing the contents of my hip flask at

their chins, and finishing the job with my trusty Zippo? I am ashamed to admit that I did nothing - bar sliding half way down the wall and waiting for the inevitable. Slumped so, I listened to the hairy men from hell tell me of the press liaison difficulties suffered by their countrymen during Vietnam.

The actual conflict wasn't as bad as most non-Americans believed, they said. All the horror stories, and the myth that the USA had had its arse kicked, came about purely because the press liaison facilities weren't up to scratch. Those who handled the media in a negative way were to blame.

"And Oliver Stone," hissed Huge Tash. "He didn't help matters."

Rat Tash: "It's no big deal to you, I can see that. But we know your name and you will be held responsible for every piece of bad press American worldcons get for the next 15 years."

Huge Tash: "That's true. It will be your fault, because you didn't handle the media correctly during Intersection, and that bad feeling will spill over into worldcons for the next decade."

At that point I got a bit annoyed, so to speak. The sheer brutish ignorance of these people, their ability to stand and watch people sink without a trace, never offering a hand to help, just criticism... The whole thing struck me as funny and pathetic and pointless all at once. I had walked into intersection with the best of intentions, and this was my reward. Stupid girl.

That was the opinion I carried into the press office proper, having walked away with my jingo-jangled nerves thrumming and a renewed suspicion of all things American.

Inside, Heather Petty was struggling womanfully with a mountain of memos. The phone was ringing, a bloke in a bad coat was shuffling sideways toward the door, and a nice extra-large American couple had popped in to check on our state of mind.

I was a bit weepy at this stage (note: I cry when I'm angry or frustrated, rarely when I'm hurt) and the American lady misinterpreted my mood with wonderful generosity - ie enveloping me in her Zeppelinesque bosom while instructing her husband to hunt and collect ice cubes for her. Hey! I might pull here!

Correctly spotting an uncomfortable tension level, the US con-goer gave me an incredible scalp, neck and shoulder massage with the newly-purloined ice cubes to prevent the possibly-flattening migraine that threatened to materialise. Then she patted me on the back, hugged Heather and took her husband back for some aimless wandering around Hall 4.

It was only then that I realised I had spent the best part of half an hour bitching to that kind, patient American woman. I'd called Americans for everything I could think of, and then started on the repeats. The allegories I constructed do not bear repetition. I was rude, vicious and mean, and she just kept on saying: "Sure, honey, now just relax." And relax I did. I was soaked, ragged and my hair was a damp mess, but I was relaxed and migraine-free. And just a little bit ashamed of myself, thanks to Heather.

"I don't believe she didn't snap your neck when you said that about American arses," she hissed, appalled.

After that, I tried and failed to withhold my generalised fury at all those born in the USA. There was a totally cute young blond from Serbia prowling about, interested, *and I was too busy dealing with the Americans to do anything about it*. If you can think of anything sadder, please get in touch. I could do with a good laugh.

At several points during the coming days, Dave Kyle would appear to waggle bushy ashen eyebrows at my bushed, ashen face and remind me of his imminent availability for interview as a First Fandom chap. "This isn't my problem," he would tell me with a hint of smugness, "but that won't stop me joining in." What a sweetheart.

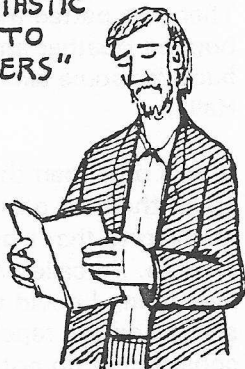
At 4am in the Central Hotel I was past caring - drinking and laughing with fans from both sides of the Atlantic. If the Americans hated me then, they didn't

show it. Or I didn't notice.

My fandom can be like that and that's how I like it.

CORFLU U.K.- CONFRONTING CRITICAL DIFFERENCES

ACCORDING TO ANDY HOOPER,
"...MANY AMERICAN FANZINES
SEEM AS STUPID AND
SLOBBERINGLY ENTHUSIASTIC
AS A BIG WET DOG TO
MANY BRITISH READERS"



QUITE

DO YOU THINK YOU
COULD GET THIS
EDITOR OFF MY LEG?



PANT
PANT
PANT
GASP
SQUISH

Porcelain Nightmares

It was whilst waiting in this final lounge that I began to worry about how different things might be in the States. Well, to be more precise it was whilst I was visiting the toilet. I was standing in front of a washbasin, about to wash my hands, when an American gentleman came in, wished me a good morning, and prepared to urinate in the basin to my immediate right. This presented me with my first problem in international etiquette, protocol and diplomacy. How do you say to someone, a guest in your country, "Excuse me, but you're pissing in the sink"? Or is it considered gauche to even mention it? Perhaps seasoned international travellers have long since given up trying to fathom the intricacies of foreign bathroom fittings, and have taken to relieving themselves in the first piece of porcelain upon which their glance falls. I mean this guy's on his way home, for Christ's sake! What's to be gained by putting him right now? How embarrassed he's going to be when advised belatedly that he's been relieving himself in sinks for the past fortnight, that entire hotel chains are even now being demolished and rebuilt on health grounds. What to do? The problem solved itself as he realised his error before, as it were, coming under starters orders, and shuffled across to the urinals. I figured it was a good job he'd spotted his mistake before going over there and washing his hands.

When I rejoined Cas in the lounge though I realised that I'd been vouchsafed a significant warning. What sort of country am I visiting, where the washbasins masquerade as urinals, and possibly vice-versa? Would I have to be constantly alert every time I visited a restroom? Would I have to gaze intently and dubiously at the various fittings every time I entered such a place, doubtless resulting in my receiving equally dubious looks from the patrons already using said facilities? "It's alright," I'd reassure them, with my gaze fixed intently at approximately groin-height, "I'm English."

(Skel, *Alyson Wonderland*, 1990)

Deja Vu All Over Again

by Ted White

In 1956 the Worldcon was in New York for the second time. I was 18 years old and I had just graduated highschool that spring. I'd been a fan for five years and I was starting to come out of my shell of shyness. The NyCon2 was my second Worldcon -- and, in fact, my second convention ever.

It was a great con for me. I was part of Bob Tucker's Balcony Insurgents (we refused to pay the extortionate price of \$7.00 for the rubber-chicken banquet, and were barred by Chairman Dave Kyle from hearing Al Capp's speech; small loss for us but a \$400 loss for Kyle, who had over-guaranteed the banquet) and got to hang out with my fannish heroes.

One of the strangest threads that ran through that convention was the behind-the-scenes politicking going on over the next Worldcon site.

As a fanzine fan I was well aware of the London bid, which was -- in the fanzines at least -- unopposed. It made a lot of sense from a variety of points of view, not the least of which was the long-heralded South Gate in '58 campaign.

To understand this you have to understand two things: First, Rick Sneary had been using the slogan, "South Gate in '58!" since 1948. Sneary lived in South Gate, a suburb of Los Angeles (almost an oxymoron, that), and had first, facetiously, proposed a South Gate Worldcon for 1948. (That "bid" lost to Toronto, for the first non-U.S. Worldcon.) From that point on, Sneary -- a major letterhack, in the prozines as well as the fanzines of the day -- took to signing off his letters with his slogan, "South Gate in '58!". It was a well-established fannish catch-phrase by the time I became familiar with fandom.

For years it was treated as a familiar joke (in the same boat with Courtney) and little more, but as 1958 got closer people started talking about it more seriously. And the first thing they

mentioned is the second thing you must understand: the Rotation Plan.

The Rotation Plan is so well institutionalized these days that it's hard to believe it was ever new. But it was born in the early fifties after a series of events convinced Worldcon attendees that it was necessary. The basic argument was this: If the membership at large votes on the next Worldcon site, and the majority of the membership is either local or from the generally immediate area, then the bidding site which is closest to hand will get the votes. (This was still a time in which the site being selected was *next year's*) The 1953 site selection process was what tipped it; San Francisco, the odds-on favorite, lost to Philadelphia in what was regarded as a backroom deal of some sort, and there was a lot of indignation.

In those days the Rotation Plan set up three geographical areas of the U.S. -- the West, Midwest, and East -- and allowed out-of-country bids to compete with, *but not replace*, the bids from any area. That had significant ramifications because due to the way the Rotation Plan had evolved, 1957 would normally be the year for a West Coast Worldcon, and in 1958 the bidders would be in the midwest -- shutting out the possibility of an actual South Gate in '58 bid.

But -- and this was the kicker -- if the Worldcon was held outside the U.S. in 1957, then South Gate could bid for 1958. So the London bid for 1957 was serendipitous, a point made by Walt Willis, among others, at that time. And most of fanzine fandom supported it.

But I was startled to discover at the Nycon, there were others who strongly opposed the London bid. Most of these people were unfamiliar to me. One of them was Ed Chamberlaine, a generally obnoxious fellow who turned up at eastern and midwestern cons where he drank too much and was too loud. I indentified him as a spokesman of the anti-London effort, but there were

others as well, whom I came to know as quasi-familiar faces as I attended more eastern conventions in the years that followed. These days they might seek to be known as "Con-runners," but in those days they were known as the backroom-politickers, a smug lot who were convinced that they were the continuing force behind the Worldcons. Even then I was repulsed by their arrogant assumption that they, far more than the rest of fandom (we fanzine fans), were the true movers and shakers of fandom. Their descendants persist in this notion to this very day.

They had two major arguments against the London bid. One so registered on my memory at that time that I can still quote it, verbatim, 42 years later: "There are only about six fans in England."

The other, in contradiction, claimed that if we let the Worldcon out of the U.S. those foreigners would never give it back. (This ignored the fact that it had already left the U.S. once before -- probably because the bigots making this claim didn't fully realize that Canada wasn't another U.S. state.)

These points were argued (and ridiculed by some of us) in the several days that preceded the actual site selection voting, but what bothered many of us was the strength of such a jingoistic appeal to the "walk-in" and fringe-fan attendees at the NyCon. After all, it was exactly this element among voters which had created the need for the Rotation Plan in the first place. And now the backroom boys were going to try to exploit it again.

A San Francisco bid was presented in opposition to the London bid -- despite the fact that San Francisco had just two years earlier hosted the last West Coast Worldcon. Or maybe *because* of that fact. The bid was deliberately weakened by the fact that it was San Francisco's, undercutting the anti-London faction rather cleverly. Tony Boucher tipped his hand when, nominating San Francisco, he said something about wanting to have a choice on the ballot, bupreferring London himself.

London won, of course, and hosted the 1957 Worldcon. It was the only British Worldcon I've missed thus far. And in 1958 the Worldcon returned to the U.S. after all -- to South Gate, fulfilling Rick Sneary's dream.

I was reminded of this during some of the recent debate over holding a U.K. Corflu. Deja Vu all over again. I heard people saying Corflu could be hijacked, never to return to the U.S. (After all, we select our site only one year ahead... although from what I hear Florida already has it bagged for 1999....)

I've gotten the impression that Leeds Corflu is bending over backwards to dispell such fears. Too far backwards, in my opinion. First it was the rumor that a quota system had been established to guarantee a certain percentage of Americans -- effectively limiting British participation. I was glad to see that one dispelled. A more recent rumor has it that only Americans will be eligible to have their names drawn from the hat to be GoH. I trust this too will be proven untrue.

The whole point of Corflu in its founders' minds was that we, as fanzine fans, meet as peers, as equals. *Any one of us* is worthy of being selected Guest of Honor. Thus, the blind drawing for the GoH. I don't think those founders intended any qualifiers, such as "we, as *American* fanzine fans, meet as peers...."

The simple fact that I've observed in my many visits to the U.K. (all of them in a fannish context of one sort or another), as well as from more than fifty years of reading fanzines, is that British fanzine fans, taken as a whole, are *better* than American fanzine fans (taken as a whole). Nicer people, better writers. The *standards* are higher in the U.K. You Brits are, as a society, more literate -- and probably more civilized as well. It appears to reflect in fandom.

I have no problem with this (except for occasional chagrin about my fellow Americans); it makes my visits to the U.K. all the more eagerly anticipated. And I am very much looking forward to this Corflu.

Suffer the Children

by Ros Calverley (1997)

In Britain for the past ten years or so child abuse has been big news. Things which went on in families and children's homes, behind closed doors, things formerly considered unspeakable, have reached the national consciousness and have appeared on the front pages of all the newspapers. In the light of all this there is a new child-centredness visible in many areas of life. Legislation has placed the child's best interests at the centre of divorce settlements, custody battles, decisions on whether or not a child should be taken into care in the face of neglect, ignorance or deliberate cruelty. Many well-publicised civil and criminal cases have kept this sort of consideration in the news, from Fred West and the Welsh childrens' homes scandal to everyday disputes between parents and social services, or between marriage partners themselves. The child, one would have thought, was intended to be the centre of attention every time. And when a child - particularly an infant, a child too young to look after or to defend itself - is hurt or even killed, one is accustomed to hearing in the newspapers of the failings of the social workers, of the heads that must roll, of the criminal prosecutions and imprisonments that must follow. People who perpetrate such crimes, and those who allow them to get away with it, must be subjected to the most severe punishment the law allows.

I thought that was how it was supposed to work. And to all appearances it still does; unless the child doesn't happen to be British. That is easily the impression one could have obtained from the daily newspapers in recent weeks.

I have followed the Louise Woodward case with interest and then with consternation. I don't know whether she did it or not; nor, if she did, have I the faintest notion whether she intended all along to kill Matthew Eappen or whether she simply lost her temper. Really, none

of this is the point. What has been most disturbing (and, in some respects, most threatening) about the way the case has been perceived over here is the twin assumption that firstly, Louise Woodward is a decent British girl and therefore can't have killed a baby, even unintentionally; and secondly, the American justice system stinks.

(Oh, how it stinks... Louise Woodward was tried before a judge and a jury of twelve persons; she had a legal team to put her case, who were allowed to cross-examine prosecution witnesses; she was allowed to speak for herself and to put her side of the story; she was presumed innocent until proven guilty, ie. the burden of proof was on the prosecution, not on the defence as it is in many European countries; the verdict was delivered by unanimous decision of the jury after prolonged discussion... while some details may differ, while the roles of various officials may vary in some respects, I am unable to detect in these basics any difference whatsoever between this or any other jury trial in the USA and the jury trial system of a British Crown Court, but the first apparently stinks while the second does not. Ain't British tabloid journalism wonderful?)

Plenty of irrelevant material has been brought into the argument. There have been pro-Louise demonstrations on both sides of the Atlantic and one of the most commonly-seen placards has read "American Justice: Woodward Jailed, OJ Goes Free" or words to that effect. None of the people involved in this kind of demonstration appears to realise that Louise Woodward and O.J. Simpson were tried for two different crimes, in two different states, before two different judges and two different juries; that the cases have nothing whatsoever to do with each other. Nobody notices that the reason for the acquittal of O.J. Simpson (even assuming this was the

wrong verdict, a subject of which I have no knowledge but of which a lot of people on this and the other side of the Atlantic apparently know the whole truth - in many cases without hearing the evidence) was that the prosecution fucked up, using the testimony of a demonstrably corrupt and racist policeman as a lynchpin of the case and putting forward in evidence exhibits contaminated by their association with the very same policeman. Any system of justice would have found the achievement of a "safe and satisfactory" conviction very difficult given the number of obstacles to such a conclusion that O.J.'s prosecutors placed in their own way. In Louise Woodward's case, in contrast, it appears that it was the defence which fucked up, in refusing to countenance a manslaughter verdict. Though at the time I write this remains mere supposition, the possibility alone differentiates the Woodward case radically from that of O.J. Simpson.

Moreover, speaking only of this side of the pond, I'm sheerly amazed at the number of people who are quite prepared to regard the American justice system as corrupt and riven by prejudices against foreigners and foreign mores (witness the "Louise was too dignified for her own good" school of thought) without giving a thought to the long history of police corruption and miscarriages of justice which have been shown to have taken place in this country during the sixties, seventies and eighties. The wonderful British system of justice has hanged several people who were definitely, or in all probability, wrongly convicted: James Hanratty, Derek Bentley (who was younger when murdered by the State than Louise Woodward is now), and Timothy Evans are merely the best known.

Since the abolition of capital punishment the list of those wrongly convicted has grown ever longer, providing all on its own an irrefutable argument against those who would restore the death penalty for murder. It's an inglorious record; still more inglorious is the fact

that in order to try to put this right, attention has had to be given first of all to the routine abuse of evidence-gathering methods perpetrated by some police forces. Yet when it comes to the treatment of our nationals by the legal systems of other countries (and here one thinks not only of Louise Woodward but of the two nurses on murder charges in Saudi Arabia; here as in the Eappen case, it can be difficult to determine from the way British papers report the case that there was another woman involved, that she was a real human being and that someone killed her) there seems to be only one view permissible: we get it right, we are a shining example of how justice should be done and seen to be done to the entire world. They are foreign, so they simply can't be trusted; that's the message I receive from most media sources I have seen.

On its own, this is disturbing and distressing enough. It could confirm all my innate prejudices about my own countrymen: many Brits really are as xenophobic, as racist, as "little-England" as one had thought. But the trouble is that it goes beyond that. I have referred repeatedly to the role of the media, to the press and to other means of mass communication; and this is the nub of it. I invite you all, if you will, to imagine that the boot was on the other foot. What if a teenage American au pair had been left in sole charge of an eighteen-month-old British toddler and what if, by some deliberate act or some mischance, the toddler had ended up dead while in the teenager's care? Imagine the situation. Now, proceed with the thought experiment: what would have been the Sun headline, the main story in the Daily Mirror, the Star's editor's comment, had this been the case instead? What would they have said about the girl, what would their spin on the story have been? I expect you can all see it. Different from the Eappen case, isn't it? And I have a horrible suspicion that save among Louise Woodward's immediate family and acquaintance, the way the British public perceives her is down almost entirely to

media spin-doctoring.

It would have been terribly, terribly easy to represent Louise Woodward in an entirely different light. Apparently, like most other normal teenagers, Louise loved to party. She had lots of friends of her own age and every chance she got, she was out with them, seeing the sights and hitting the clubs. It's not hard to imagine what the Sun could have done with this, had it wished to do so. Instead of Louise the normal, fun-loving teenager, we could have had Louise the careless, irresponsible party girl whose only desire was to get away from the baby she was supposed to look after and join her friends in the bar or the nightclub. And we all know what goes on at those places; while avoiding specific accusations for fear of the libel laws, any sub-editor worth his salt could have implied plenty about the smoking, the drinking and the sampling of illicit substances to which young people are supposed to be especially partial. To go back to my previous suggestion, the mere hint that our theoretical American au pair in this country was overly fond of rave parties, for example, would have indicated to Mr. and Mrs. Bourgeois-Brit in Cheltenham that the girl regularly drank herself into oblivion on alcopops and used Ecstasy for dessert. All the emotional baggage associated with the ongoing obsession with child abuse would have been brought into play. A headline here ("Baby Death Nanny's Rave Shame", perhaps); a changed stress there, and the great British public would have been baying for the au pair's blood. The verdict of second-degree murder would have been "a travesty of justice" and a fifteen-year sentence would have been "soft on crime". It's terribly, terribly easy to imagine.

Instead, because the girl involved is British, because the crime, if it was a crime, took place in a foreign country with one of those dodgy foreign systems of justice, the papers have chosen to depict her as an innocent wronged, as a decent young woman unfairly treated. Little Matthew, the fact

that this child actually died, is pretty much forgotten. And as for his parents - well, it must be their fault for leaving their infant son in the care of an untrained young woman...as British upper-class parents have done as a matter of routine for centuries. The fact that Louise was called an "au pair" rather than a "nursery-maid", and that no media source has described her as what she was in fact, that is, the Eappens' domestic servant, doesn't change the role she fulfilled.

As I write, the judge in the case is still considering whether or not to uphold the conviction. This is something which could not happen over here. If a defendant wants to appeal against sentence or against conviction itself, in this country it must be done through the appeal court system, which can take many months during which time the person will, save in the most extreme circumstances (as with the Bridgewater Three, earlier in the year), continue to be held in jail. The American system allows for the trial judge to consider other verdicts if he finds that the jury have reached a conclusion he cannot, on the evidence presented, support. Right now the sense from the British media is that they will not be satisfied with less than a dismissal of the case, though it looks more likely from where I'm sitting that the judge will instead pronounce that a manslaughter conviction would be more appropriate - that Matthew Eappen's death was due to a combination of loss of temper and ignorance of the effect that shaking can have on a baby, rather than to any deliberate intent to cause grave harm. Whether such a pronouncement will satisfy the naked xenophobia of the tabloid newspapers remains to be seen, though I suspect it will not. Such occasions must delight the editors of the Sun and the Star: as with international football matches, they have in the Woodward case a perfect excuse for calling all those nasty foreigners rude names; and this is what truly brings joy to their hearts.

My name is Lucy and I am an Anglophile

No twelve-step program exists to help people like me, *confesses Lucy Huntzinger*. Far from it. The tourist industry couldn't exist without us: Brit Twits, the kind of client who snaps up copies of *Majesty* and *Tatler* like they were going out of business. In my case, it's travel guides and picture books, dozens of them. I've been obsessed with the place since I could read. To be honest, I'm most fascinated by England and English history. I've had sporadic fits of interest in Scotland and Wales but I've never mustered any enthusiasm for Ireland. Ironically enough, I'm first-generation Irish-American. But that's the way of obsessions. They're specific as hell. I just can't get enough of England.

I visit as often as possible. My disposable income burns a particular hole in my pocket; let two hundred dollars extra accumulate and I start shopping for plane tickets. I've visited enough times that I get confused over what I saw on which vacation, a perverse source of pride. Although I'm intrepid enough to go alone, I also enjoy traveling with someone. If I go during the school year I miss the crowds of summer; on the other hand, my husband, who is a professor, is unable to go with me. So when Bill Bodden expressed interest in accompanying me to England sometime in the indefinite future I immediately proposed a specific date: April, 1992. I tempted him with cheap airfares. I promised to introduce him to British fandom. Finally, I loaned him my favorite book on castles. When he sent it back thick with post-it notes I knew he was hooked. I booked myself a ticket.

But was Bill ready to deal with Yorkshire?

I tried to prepare Bill for meeting my friends. "Okay," I said and took a deep breath, "here's the deal. The Ashworths are incredibly nice and they won't think

they're doing enough for us. They especially dread Americans not having enough to eat since we're all so enormously overweight," at which point Bill who probably weighs 150 pounds soaking wet started to laugh, "no, honest, so they always make loads of food. It's okay to pig out, it makes them happy." I swerved to avoid a flock of sheep just starting across the road. "There's Don West who is rather diffident and mumbles but he's horrendously sharp-witted and very amusing and is fond of gossip so be sure to tell him all the dirt on anyone you know in fandom. Michael Ashley comes across in print as a sort of Burroughs wannabe but he's fairly quiet in public. I don't know if you'll like him but I do. He's sort of classically underfed and overeducated." Bill looked unconvinced. "Oh, and everyone will think we're sleeping together. Brits always think Americans are sleeping together. They have a weird perspective because they usually only meet us at conventions."

Bill shook his head at my obvious attempt to pull his leg. I smiled knowingly. The diffuse light of the waning day created a lovely palette of greys, blacks and greens. I helpfully pointed out the typical stone walls of Yorkshire, not realizing we were still in Lancashire at that point. We pulled into Hazel and Mal Ashworth's driveway just as Hazel arrived home. She didn't recognise the rental car, naturally, and came over to tell us to shove off. We would have laughed harder at the surprised look on her face if we hadn't been in immediate danger of sliding downhill in the typical Yorkshire mud.

Determined to show us a good time, and apparently convinced we needed superior entertainment beyond that offered by sitting around a cozy house with good friends, they had arranged for us to meet up with Don and Michael in

Keighley. "It's not that nasty old pub near the rail station, is it?" I said suspiciously. I've been to Keighley for a drink before. I was assured it was quite a nice little pub on the other side of the rail station; in fact, far too genteel to appeal to the local fans. They were right. When we walked in Don and Michael were slouched at a corner table, looking like two surly wolves who'd wandered into the sheep pen. Michael, one of my most devoted correspondents whom I had not, you understand, seen in three years, greeted me with a warm and welcoming, "You call those pants?" Apparently the sight of me in floral cotton instead of black leather was jarring. My Cool Quotient plummeted.

"Welcome to Yorkshire," I muttered to Bill who seemed dazed at being in the presence of the venerable astral master and his palely loitering sidekick. He nodded and went off to order drinks all around in preference to formal introductions. He was probably wise. I had a wonderful time insisting we were going to visit Hadrian's Wall in the face of adamant opposition from the natives ("It's just a wall! You don't want to drive 80 miles to see a flippin' wall in the rain, do you?" said Hazel who teaches British history, among other things, at a girl's school). After I'd had about half of my first pint Michael asked me to nominate him for TAFF. I agreed immediately. He seemed relieved. Turned out I was the first one he'd asked so I decided to make it official and scribbled my nomination on the nearest bit of paper. Bill sat quietly and sipped his drink. I was sorry he didn't seem to enjoy himself but then not everyone is destined to appreciate the Leeds fans.

When we returned to the Ashworths that night Mal showed me to the master bedroom. It had a double bed but no other bedding. "Thank you, this is lovely," I said innocently, "but where will Bill sleep?" Mal's face fell and I bit back a sarcastic comment. "Er, we have a lounge chair somewhere," he said and backed out of the room in obvious embarrassment. I shook my head and

tried to look solemn. A high percentage of my friends in Britain assumed Bill and I were having an affair since we were traveling together. I have a theory about this. I've noticed British fans prefer their love affairs to be with other people's spouses. They usually don't have friendships outside their genders, especially after they get married. Thus anyone who spends too much time with someone of the opposite sex is bound to be viewed as conducting an affair. And my, aren't the others jealous? It's sick. It's funny. It's predictable. Bill was genuinely shocked when I repeated my conversation with Mal. I volunteered to take the lounge chair, a chivalrous act I regretted all night long as I tossed and turned. We talked a while about British mores. I smirked and said "I told you so" several times. Then Bill had his revenge.

"Lucy," he said gloatingly, "I've got the Spiderman pillow."

"You cad!" I sat up abruptly. "I only have a Superman pillow." And I bopped him over the head with it, leading to several direct hits by both super heroes and a lot of muffled giggling.

"Woo, what a night of lurve this is," I said as the lounge chair collapsed under me. "Huh," replied Bill from the height of the bed. "British people are much stranger than I thought." And fluffing up the super heroes we fell asleep at last.

Much to the locals' relief and the visitors' disappointment, the following day was so rainy that the trip to Hadrian's Wall was reluctantly given up and a visit to Skipton Castle scheduled instead. It was really great and Bill went all over it with a big grin on his face. We followed the self-guided tour and Bill pointed out many salient features I would have passed by on my own. I purchased a pleasingly gruesome souvenir, a clear pen containing two tiny knights on horseback which could be made to attack each other by tilting the pen back and forth. Since we were in the centre of town we did a bit of shopping and I encountered the

inexplicable British system of not having any mailing supplies available in the post office so that one wastes time standing in line and then has to hotfoot off to the nearest newsagents' to obtain the mailing supplies and stand in line all over again. I never remember this from visit to visit which of course just makes me madder.

The rain lifted for a while and we drove to Keighley to pick up our native guide and make the short journey to Haworth to worship at the shrine of the Brontes. We left Don at a pub as he didn't want to pay the entry fee at the house. It was my second visit and I enjoyed walking through the parsonage again. Although I did not this time experience an overwhelming sense of awe at being in the Bronte's home, I did feel a certain admiration for the kind of people who could be creative in such a place. Haworth is very quaint on a warm spring day but I could easily see how suffocatingly dreary it would be in winter and I knew how primitive the sewage and drainage systems were in their day. The cute little cottages would have been black with soot from the coal everyone burned for fuel, the river would have been choked with wastes from the mills, and the Worth valley would have been filled with a deep haze on days when the wind didn't blow. I looked at a number of items in the bookshop but didn't feel like buying much. I did notice that since my last visit in 1989 signs in Japanese had been added to the bookshelves. I'll bet the Japanese really go in big for Wuthering Heights. I bought the perfect souvenir at last: a membership in the Bronte Society. I had a nice chat with the lady who signed me up. She said I would have to be approved first but they had many American members and I would hear from them once I'd been accepted. I felt like I was joining the Moose Lodge. I wondered if there would be a secret password or handshake. I clutched my receipt gleefully all the way to the pub. I probably looked like Bill did at Skipton Castle.

We spent the rest of the afternoon

gossiping with Don, stopping in at the Black Bull pub so Bill could see Branwell's local and read the plaque about him buying opium within. We pointed out the Heathcliff Cafe and the Jane Eyre Hair Care salon to him as well. I got genuine Bronte mud on my boots when we hiked back to our car and I assured Don I would never wash it off.

Bill and I decided to check into a hotel in Leeds for our second night in town. "That'll really give 'em something to talk about," Bill worried. "Hot water, as much as you want," I crooned, "a bed apiece and a newspaper delivered to our door in the morning." He wavered. "A television," I added and his decision was made. "Fuck 'em if they can't take a joke," he chortled later, watching tv in his fluffy white hotel robe. Only fannish fun could have pried us away. Nigel Richardson met us for dinner at a Thai restaurant and Bill surreptitiously checked out his black Doc Martens, remembering my discovery in Worcester. Nigel didn't suspect a thing. Afterwards we went to the Adelphi pub for the traditional Leeds Group Friday Night meeting.

"I don't see anyone we know, do you?" Nigel said as we stood inside the door. "I can't see anyone, period. It's hideously smoky in here," I replied, coughing violently. Bill was turning green. Music blared and people pushed their way past us. It was very crowded. "There they are," Nigel said and disappeared through the haze. Bill was able to keep him in sight and steered me towards the little clot of fans ensconced at two tables along a wall. I sat between Nigel and Hazel and since I couldn't hear anyone else talked to them all night. I waved at Dave Mooring, Sarah Dibbs and Somebody Else but never actually got to speak to them due to the noise level. "Ugh, what a horrid meeting place. Why don't you find a nice quiet pub," I bellowed at Nigel. "They're all like this on a Friday night," he yelled back. I shook my head and devoted myself to my pint, smiling at the others once in a while to show my

goodwill but unable to hear a thing beyond a four inch range. I vowed never to visit the Leeds Friday meeting again.

The next morning Nigel met us at the hotel so we could drive to Harewood House, a stately home just a few miles north of Leeds which I was anxious to view. But once in the car I could not get out of Leeds. We drove three different wrong directions until in a fit of stubbornness I simply drove west for several miles which meant we drove a long way out of our way. But heck, we did get a nice view of Kirkstall Abbey which we wouldn't have seen if we'd gone the right way so I wasn't too sorry.

Harewood House was not what I expected. Someone took a nice neo-classical Robert Adam house and turned it into a stuffy, overdone tomb. The Victorians were no respecters of previous tastes or styles and the grandiose lines of the architecture were often obscured by the clusters of chairs and armchairs and pictures crammed into each room. A few of the rooms had been preserved in the delicate bright Adam style but I was sadly disappointed. The grounds were fabulous, though, and the former elegance of the place was still evident from the grand sweep of the front lawn and the terraces falling away in the back towards the river. I would have loved to have visited it 200 years ago when it was new.

We met Hazel and Mal in nearby Otley for a farewell lunch. On the way we passed through Pool, the town in which Thomas Chippendale, the famous 18th century furniture maker, was born. It was lagniappe, the little extra which makes a good thing perfect. Lunch was over too soon but Bill and I had to be back in London Saturday night and we had many miles to cover. We dropped Nigel off on one of the major intersections in Leeds which he insisted was where he caught the bus home but which made me feel as if I'd left my child to play in the freeway.

All the way back I kept seeing roadsigns for sights I'd love to visit and experiencing the familiar anguish: not enough time! I could spend years in Britain without exhausting all the interesting things to see. It makes me deliriously happy to walk through the centuries as I identify architectural styles, suddenly recognise the old street patterns under the modern pavement, peel back the layers of time. In Britain I feel both comfortable and perpetually foreign, so that each visit is like coming home after years away. Maybe it's island culture that's so familiar to me; I lived on islands until I was 18. Maybe it's inherited; after all, I'm half Irish. Or maybe it's just that Britain has a special charm that speaks to anyone with an eye for beauty, a taste for tradition, and an appetite for quirkiness. Whatever it is, I'm permanently addicted.

CORFLU U.K. — EVERYTHING YOU ALWAYS WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT FANZINES BUT WERE AFRAID TO ASK

DO YOU THINK THEY'RE TRYING TO HIDE SOMETHING WITH ALL THESE "NO SHAGGING" DISCLAIMERS?



JUST POOR MANAGEMENT

THEY KEEP RUNNING OUT OF SELLOTAPE



In Love with the Internet

A few pages from the on-line diary of Nigel E Richardson

saturday, february 1st 1997

This time next week I shall be elsewhere, on another continent, getting to know my sweetheart. I'm still a bit wary of letting people know I've fallen madly in love over the Internet. Well, I don't mind *you* knowing, dear reader, as you're obviously a hip and wired person to be reading this in the first place. But those off-line folk, the techno-phobes, the ones who take a lumpy delight in not being able to operate their VCR timers... they wouldn't understand. Or they'd jump to conclusions, assuming we're sad geeks who can't relate to people in "real life" and have to search for any kind of companionship through a computer. Or worse still, they'll have read some lurid story in the papers about psychos and liars in AOL chatrooms. So when I do get around to telling people about my girlfriend, and they ask how we met, I'll have to say "It's a long story," and hope they'll leave it at that.

sunday, february 2nd 1997

A GLORIOUS MORNING, mild and clear. A clarity in the air that makes everything appear as it should, as if placed there by divine hands. Even the bags of rubbish and crisp bags and dog turds. Couples out running look photogenic and happy, not the usual sweat-soaked gaspers flailing at the air. The church bells are ringing. If only I had remembered to buy some decent coffee yesterday life would be just fine.

monday, february 3rd 1997

SIXTY NINE hours and counting. I'm saying no more....

tuesday, february 4th 1997

FIRST THING, e-mail from my honey and ex-honey. (I'm so wired, it hurts.) Ex-honey has quit her job and decided things are back on with her new beau after he wrote her a poem. She's an old-fashioned romantic gal at heart; something I failed to realise, assuming New York girls were all tattooed,

pierced and jaded. I hope all goes well for her. I just wish she hadn't quit her job without something else lined up.

As for what my honey had to say... well, use your imagination. 45 hours and counting. (Note: If I wasn't me I'd be insanely jealous.)

BACK TO the cattle truck indignities on the morning train; two small carriages for a service that calls at nine towns and villages and gets into Leeds at 8.52. An innocent in the ways of the world would assume they'd put on half a dozen full-sized carriage for this peak-hour train, but cynics will know better. What profit-hungry bunch of footpads would squander potential directors' dividends on extra carriages for scummy commuters when they know the saps have no choice but to meekly put up with things and shove their way into the mass of bodies? Road traffic has been in gridlock since seven and the next train, which will probably be just as bad, or cancelled, isn't for another half hour. *Let the train take the strain.* Yeah, right. Nothing like having some fat bloke's armpit in your face to ease you into the day.

wednesday, february 5th 1997

WELL NOW; just 8 hours until I get on the plane from Leeds - Bradford Airport and fly Air UK to Amsterdam. Yes, I *know* that's the wrong direction, but when you go for these cheapo deals you have to be flexible. Then I have about two hours to kill at Schiphol Airport and then it's KLM to Boston Logan International Airport. And then...

thursday, february 6th 1997

UP AT FIVE. Potter around as I wait for the taxi to arrive. It doesn't arrive. I phone the cab company to discover the dispatcher had got my address wrong. But they get a taxi to me and I'm at the airport with plenty of time to spare. Even more when it turns out Amsterdam is foggy and flights are backing up all

over the world. Five minutes before we're due to take off the flight is put back first one, then two hours. Gives me time to read the article in the *Guardian* on cyber-relationships, including the dos and don'ts of internet dating. How many will Jennifer and I break before this weekend is through?

When we do take off I'm assured I'll still make my connection. Just means I won't get to spend two hours sitting around Schiphol airport watching meaty businessmen tapping at their laptop computers or checking out the totally obscene (by UK standards, so fairly innocuous really) comics on sale there.

On the transatlantic flight I get five seats to myself; and the obligatory irritating child is far enough away to be ignored. The in-flight movie doesn't star Whoopie Goldberg for a change. It does, however, feature Bill Murray and an elephant, which does not bode well at all, so I catch an hour or so's sleep. The flight still seems to take forever. The main meal is Beef Stroganoff, which I believe was last served on the ground in 1963.

And when the plane arrives in Boston (a mere hour or so late) I discover my bag is still in Amsterdam, so there's the usual malarky with the NWA rep, who seems to need to type half of *War and Peace* into his clunky old terminal before he accepts what I'm telling him.

And then... and then....

Jennifer is waiting for me at the gate; beautiful and smiling, serene even. Later she tells me the hour delay took the edge off her nerves. There isn't even a millisecond of awkwardness as we embrace....

And then....

WHAT CAN I say? I hope you'll excuse me if I draw a veil over the next few days. Let us just say we got to know one another. At some point we went out to eat. We saw Woody Allen's *Everyone Says I Love You*, which was a

hoot. I bought some CDs. And some books. I watched some American TV ; as usual *Fawlty Towers* was on PBS.

tuesday, february 11th 1997

SO THAT'S six hours forward for Amsterdam, then one hour back for Leeds.... Ah-ha. Flight was a mere half hour late out of Boston, or maybe it was an hour. it's already getting blurry. Or maybe it's me that's getting blurry. Another 75% empty DC10, so I was able to sprawl and snooze and generally feel no pain during the flight. The flight from Amsterdam to Leeds was less of a joy as the plane was jammed solid with Dutch businessmen who are even less lovely than their UK counterparts. Of the forty-odd passengers on the plane, only three were women, and two of these were female suits. But I suppose there isn't really any reason for normal, decent folk to be flying into Leeds on a Tuesday morning. God only knows why there were so many suits, all reading the *Financial Times* and being loud and hearty. What is in Leeds for them? What serious, solid, practised handshakes and golfing anecdotes await in offices and hotel lobbies? And who gives a fuck? I've just said "goodbye" to my darling, and the world of these chumps seems a shoddy, androidal existence compared to

But I digress. My luggage awaits at the airport (dirty laundry, glove puppet, stuff, gubbins, unused camera and film) and I'm in a cab within minutes of landing. Home. A mailbox filled with junk and the latest, always wonderful, *Mystery Date*. Oh, and The Rt Hon (*sic*) Dr Brian Mawhinney MP would like some money from me.

England feels less strange, mediocre and piddly than it did after my previous visits to the USA. It's not a jolt anymore to find myself back in a wet, deprived, deluded, tinpot county, just something to be accepted with a sigh. Looks like John Major is still incapable of dressing himself let alone calling an election. (Wonder if he'll be doing debit card commercials on TV in the summer, like Bob Dole is in the states?) I log on,

download about one hundred e-mails and delete 97 of them, all from the Netlink mailing list and all saying how slow the server still is and how they're all as mad as hell *and not gonna take it no more*. There's already one from Jennifer.

wednesday, february 12th 1997

Back to work and the familiar stench hits me as I go up the stairs to the office: the accumulated stink of beer-monsters' armpits, a thousand microwaved meat pies, programmers' feet, halitosis, the whole mephetic gamut of the Universe of Blokes. Cheers!

Work.... still more new people, all male, all about as likely to impinge on my life in any meaningful way as, say, Michael Jackson. Yawn. Feels like a million years since I was sitting in Christina's Ice Cream parlour in Cambridge, MA, slurping a "kiddy-sized" (well, it was the size of a small child) portion of Maple Walnut. Feels like I was with Jen for mere minutes. Can memories of being truly, insanely happy carry me through the next 35 days? I hope so.

It's hard to write about how I feel. In love, obviously. But that's impossible to write about. Or at least it is if you like to write with a zing and a crunch and a cheap existential laugh riot in every convoluted sub clause. Or try to. As I've said half a dozen times before, writing about Bad Stuff is easy. It's knockabout, slapstick, bathos; everyone loves a hapless buffoon, if only to make their own life seem more forgivable. But writing about being in love? Holding hands? Gazing into one another's eyes and quoting John Donne? Those wordless, timeless moments of being so infused with joy and life that you almost forget to breath? It turns to wisps of spun sugar when you try to write about it, either too sickly for general consumption or too delicate to survive the transition to the page.

sunday, february 16th 1997

It's overcast and raining. I could seriously relate to a couple of bottles of

Samuel Adams Honey Porter.... But all Oddbins has is Samuel Adams Boston Lager, which bears very little resemblance to English lager. It's about fifteen orders of magnitude better. It doesn't taste anything like the urine of a diabetic vole. And anything that reminds me of Boston is enough to send me into a joyous woozy daze of fond memories.... It isn't even a week yet since we parted, snatching one last lingering kiss at the airport before me and my jelly beans headed off into the wide blue yonder and onward to the pissy wet slab of grey mediocrity that is England....

(I don't *really* hate this country, I just feel that it is thoroughly hapless and weedy. Once we accept that we're not the greatest nation in the world and that we're not the envy of the world, then maybe things can start getting better. But as long as we go on thinking we're God's people, head and shoulders above a world of greasy subhuman foreigners who don't appreciate warm beer, meatless sausages, unsocial working conditions and archaic systems of privilege, we are fucked.)

LATER: Gone midnight. My neck aches. February is half finished already (just as well, last month's pay cheque went some time in 1995). I feel like I may be coming down with something. Give me chance to try out that Nighttime Wal-Flu I got in the USA. I'm such a sucker for all things American I even spend time in places like Walgreens and Johnny Foodmaster when I'm over there.... I buy stuff like Pez and Junior Mints and.... okay, I draw the line at Slim Jims, Cheese Whiz and Oreos....

wednesday, february 19th 1997

FOUND AN unappetising takeaway menu in my mailbox I don't know if this is a local phenomena, but the menu has sections for pizza, curries, and donner kebabs (with burgers and southern fried chicken for traditionalists). The place calls itself The Pizza Connection and Balti House. I can't imagine any more unlikely and unpalatable combination than Italian and Indian food. Just how

drunk do you have to be to order the Chicken Tandoori Masala Pizza ("Mozzarella cheese, tomato, hot & spicy tandoori chicken and Italian herbs") or the Turkish Delight Pizza (Mozzarella cheese, tomato, chilli sauce, donner meat and Italian herbs)?

sunday, february 23rd 1997

It's been a somewhat nondescript weekend. Stayed in, drank whiskey, read various educational and instructive works, and watched the usual crap on TV. The BBC have stopped showing *The Simpsons* and have put on 25 year old episodes of *Dad's Army* instead. This sucks, but it's obviously cheap TV as only about 3 of the cast of *Dad's Army* are still alive to collect royalties.

ACCORDING TO today's *Independent on Sunday*, I'm unbelievably hip. First of all, there's an article about how "staying in is the new going out". Apparently, having a social life is for losers, and those of us who reject the enticement of friends, pubs, nightclubs and having some drunken thug vomit on

your shoes to the sound of Warren G are the new stylish elite. A quote: "The quintessential modern celeb Sandra Bullock boasted in an interview last week: "At the end of the day I run a huge bath. I go and check my e-mail and respond. All this time the bath is cooling and when it's ready I finish on the computer and go and soak and then go to bed."

That's my life. I'm so cool.

The other article was about how Leeds is the "the North's new style capital". Well, there you go. I thought I was just slobbering about in a non-descript city, but I'm really where it's at, daddy-o. If there had been a third article explaining how web-journals were the epitome of creative self-expression and drop-dead sexuality I'd be too hip to live....

And now it's time for my weekly IRC session with my honey. Don't clog the bandwidth, pals; we've got some lovin' to do....

The Americans are so different from us, there is no question about that. There is a strangeness about America, it is not the pop-art aspect of the place, which of course most British visitors are struck by, and the huge advance that the American standard of living represents over ours, but their strange way of thinking. There is something very odd about the place. Their minds move in ways that one can't fathom all that easily. Whenever I go to the US, I love it, it is a marvellous place, so exhilarating and visually exciting. It is intensely in the present, which is wonderful. We barely touch the present here because of the dead weight of the past, but there the present envelops everything. It is like moving from a small TV screen to a huge cinema screen, you are conscious of a million little details that one can't find in the small-screen world. I am always aware there, after a while, of a missing dimension. I don't know what that missing dimension is - I have thought about it for years - but there is a missing dimension.

J G Ballard in conversation with Will Self. Junk Mail, Penguin Books 1995

Canadians all insist that Canadians have no sense of humour like the British, then spoil this (true) statement by insisting that they personally (a) like the Goons or Hancock's Half Hour, which proves they have a real British sense of irony and all that wacky alternative comedy or (b) insist they're not really Canadian, because they were born in Britain, or worked in Britain for two years, or are American, or Australian, or Kiwi, or anything that isn't Canadian. The only people who strenuously admit to being Canadian are people who are obsessed with skiing, hockey or kayaking.

Lilian Edwards, Odd Things About Life in Canada, TWP 85, 1993

Closing Credits (but no Academy Awards)

This has been the usual Corflu UK attempt to turn a standard publication into a fanzine. Thanks as usual go to D West for speedy supply of artwork, and to Sue Mason for the use of her wonderful Corfluzy on the backcover.

Don't Mention the War by Alison Freebairn came out in a very limited edition of *Pogonophobia* (so limited that my copy has since self-destructed), Suffer the Children by Ros Calverley first appeared in *TWP* Issue 119, My Name is Lucy and I am an Anglophile was once part of *Moo Britannia*, published in the 1996 *Southern Gothic*, and further diary entries by Nigel Richardson can be found at <http://www.impolex.demon.co.uk/diary/index.html>

This programme book was edited by Christina Lake, designed and produced by Christina using ideas nicked from Alison, and baptised by Lilian (and lo, they named the programme book 'Appen; but it came to pass that D would not incorporate the name into his cover artwork, so it fell on barren ground and was forgot). Thanks too to Debbi for creative use of the word "aaaaaaaargh" and Ian for numerous e-mails beginning "And another disaster..."

Take any half-dozen Americans, give them a reasonable living and stick them in the same locale and just guess what the result is: a city of connecting parking lots interrupted by gas stations and fast-food diners.

Sherry Coldsmith. American for Beginners. TWP 32, 1986



Lilian and Debbi sell Mike Siddall on the advantages of joining Corflu.



Simon Ounsley, Linda Strickler, Linda Krawecke, Nigel Richardson, Debbi Kerr & Gypsy pose for an album cover at Kirkstall Abbey.



The Famous Attitude Room Party hosted by Lilian Edwards and Naomi Saunders
From L to R: Mike Abbott, Joseph Nicholas, Judith Hanna, Felix Cohen, Spike Parsons, Anne Wilson, Steve Lawson, Lilian, Naomi, Dave Hicks, Tony Berry and in the foreground, Phil Nansen.

Ian picks his nose with Alison's Nova Award, 1996



D West shares a joke with Simon Ounsley while visiting Gary Farber reads his lap.

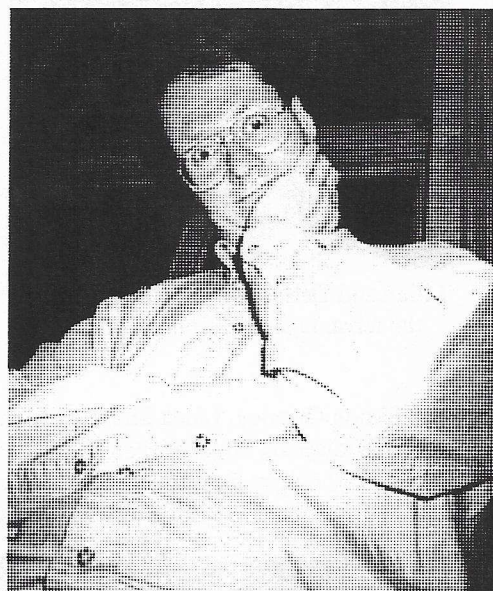


The Corflu UK Committee in 1997
Lilian Edwards, Debbi Kerr, Alison Freebairn, Christina Lake & Ian Sorensen.

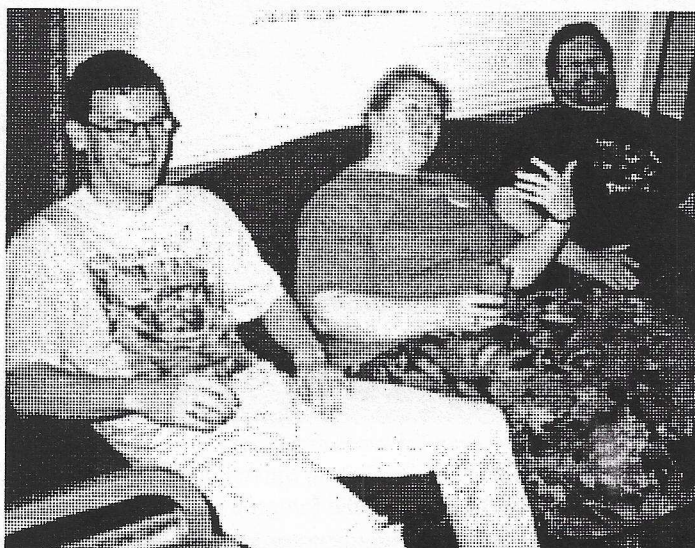
Note the big happy smiles. Look at them now.
Thank you all for supporting the first Corflu UK.
I wonder what we'll do next?



Rob Hansen & Avedon Carol look on as Pam Wells watches Alison Scott test baby food.



"Would you like a nice piece of cheese, Grommit" says Tony "Wallace" Berry



Tommy Ferguson and Jim Barker look embarrassed as Pam Wells plays air orange juice



Dave Langford and a nice pair in 1987



It can't really be Steve Green, John Wilkes, Iain Williams, Steve Lawson and "Slim" Sorensen in 1983, can it?

The fact is that the British have a totally private sense of distance. This is most visibly seen in the shared pretence that Britain is a lonely island in the middle of an empty green sea. Oh, yes, I know you are all aware, in an abstract sort of way, that there is a substantial landmass called Europe near by and that from time to time it is necessary to go over there to give old Jerry a drubbing or have a holiday on the Med, but it's not nearby in any meaningful sense in the way that, say, Disney World is. If your concept of world geography was shaped entirely by what you read in the papers and saw on television, you would have no choice but to conclude that America must be about where Ireland is, that France and Germany lie roughly alongside the Azores, that Australia occupies a hot zone somewhere in the region of the Middle East, and that pretty much all the other sovereign states are either mythical (viz., Burundi, El Salvador, Mongolia and Bhutan) or can only be reached by spaceship. Consider how much news space in Britain is devoted to marginal American figures like Oliver North, Lorena Bobbitt and O.J. Simpson - a man who played a sport that most Britons don't understand and then made commercials for rental cars and that was it - and compare that with *all* the news reported in any year from Scandinavia, Austria, Switzerland, Greece, Portugal and Spain. It's crazy really. If there's a political crisis in Italy or a nuclear spill in Karlsruhe, it gets maybe eight inches on an inside page. But if some woman in Shitkicker, West Virginia, cuts off her husband's dick in a fit of pique, it's second lead on the 9 O'clock News and *The Sunday Times* is mobilizing the 'Insight' team. You figure it.

Bill Bryson. Notes from a Small Island, Doubleday, 1995



Please tick appropriate box

☐ I am a Corfluzy

☐ I aspire to be a Corfluzy

☐ I wish to grovel humbly
at the feet of a Corfluzy

☐ My name is Alison...
Die Worm!