

CORFJU CRAIC

PROGRAMME
BOOK



BELFAST, 31 MARCH - 2 APRIL 2023

23



CORFLU CRAIC

Corflu 40

31st March – 2nd April, 2023

The Malone Hotel, Belfast, UK

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CORFLU CRAIC

Celebrating Irish Fandom and Corflu

Welcome to Belfast and Corflu Craic — a celebration of Irish fandom and a party on Corflu's 40th birthday.

Ever since I heard of Corflus I've always wanted to host one in Belfast. One of reasons is that I genuinely think of Belfast as the home of fannish fandom — where the magazine and story driven fandom of the 40s and 50s turned into the self-referential musings that is typical of our fandom. The triumvirate of Walt Willis, Bob Shaw and James White turned fanzines on their head with stories of fun and frolics, and drafted others in to create their own mythology — Oblique House, Ghoddminton and scurrilous reporting and references to other groups of fans. It was fun.

That was also a key driver — the best conventions happen in the bar, or the lift or the stairs. Not because these are great locations in hotels, but it is where the people congregate, where location and circumstances mean you are stalled for a few moments and have a chat. One thing leads onto another and a group has formed in the kitchen and you're all having a great time. So, it's not the location; it's the people coming together in that location.

Corflu could have had its fortieth birthday anywhere; but what is going to make it a great party is you, the people who attend. My fandom is not necessarily about fanzines — reading, writing or commentating upon them, or even conventions organising, attending and then writing about them too. My fandom is about the people I know and meet — even many years after I first met them. For example, Nigel Rowe and I rock up to a con after decades apart and then start chatting, having a drink and it's as if we're meeting up every week.

Another example is Jeanne Bowman who, until Corflu Heatwave I'd never met before — yet a few minutes in the con suite, and her wicked sense of humour and my not-so-subtle understatement meant we clicked. Just a look from her at one point had me in stitches of laughter. These connections between people are what make me overjoyed to be back in fandom after a while out doing boring (but very important) adult things — career, house and family.

So, if each Corflu is a reflection on its chair and its location, I want to drive home the importance of celebrating Irish Fandom, and celebrating Corflu — but having a party. The committee and myself aim to not get in the way of you all having a good time — together or roving off on your own. We'll aim to put together the opportunities to help you, but a lot of the onus will be on you to make the most of them. You may not like whiskey, but as we saw at Pangloss that's no reason not to come to the party. You may not like wine, or public bars or indeed socialising for too long in public spaces, but don't worry; we can enable small breakout sessions in the foyer of the hotel, there are plenty of cafes at the end of the street and Botanic Park and Ulster Museum will give you the space to decompress for however long you want to.

A lot of the convention will be self-service — myself and the committee are facilitators to help you enjoy yourself. We'll set things up to get you going, but we've all been on this rodeo before. You know how it goes; whatever your ambition for attending this con is, it will only happen if you help make it happen. That is what will make the craic ninety!

— Tommy Ferguson



CORFLU CRAIC

Members as of 2 March 2023

Hazel Ashworth West (47 A)	John Hertz (65 S)	Murray Moore (56 A)
James Bacon (73 A)	Dave Hicks (62 A)	Joseph Nicholas (67 A)
Tom Becker (8 A)	David Hodson (6 A)	John Nielsen Hall (58 A)
Doug Bell (17 A)	Lucy Huntzinger (22 A)	Mark Plummer (30 A)
Harry Bell (32 A)	Malcolm Hutchinson (20 A)	Alan Rosenthal (35 A)
Pat Bell (33 A)	Rob Jackson (13 A)	Heath Row (54 S)
John Berry (53 A)	Steve Jeffery (68 A)	Nigel Rowe (12 A)
Tony Berry (48 A)	Rowan Jenkins (75 A)	Yvonne Rowse (42 A)
Sandra Bond (40 A)	Jerry Kaufman (23 A)	Alison Scott (50 A)
Jeanne Bowman (36 A)	Roy Kettle (45 A)	Stacy Scott (5 A)
Claire Brialey (29 A)	Marcin "Alqua" Klak (21 A)	Joyce Scrivner (76 S)
Bill Burns (38 A)	Linda Krawecka (70 A)	Joe Siclari (59 A)
Mary Burns (39 A)	Christina Lake (16 A)	Ian Sorensen (41 A)
Steven Cain (51 A)	Dave Langford (66 A)	Spike (7 A)
Rich Coad (4 A)	Robert Lichtman (3 S)	Edie Stern (60 A)
Cat Coast (61 A)	Sue Mason (49 A)	Geri Sullivan (11 A)
Vincent Docherty (72 A)	Gary Mattingly (19 A)	Peter Sullivan (24 S)
Eugene Doherty (31 A)	Lin McAllister (64 A)	Pascal Thomas (52 A)
Jen Farey (27 S)	Rich McAllister (63 A)	Suzle Tompkins (25 A)
Nic Farey (26 S)	Mark McCann (18 A)	Heloise Tudor (15 A)
Moshe Feder (37 A)	Ian McDonald (71 A)	Martin Tudor (14 A)
Tommy Ferguson (2 A)	Mike Meara (43 A)	Dennis Virzi (10 A)
Vikki Lee France (69 A)	Pat Meara (44 A)	Pat Virzi (9 A)
Keith Freeman (28 A)	Perry Middlemiss (55 S)	Ted White (1 S)
Ron Gemmell (34 A)	Kathleen Mitchell (46 A)	
Zi Graves (74 A)	Mary Ellen Moore (57 A)	

Corflus Past

(with Guests of Honour and other Fans of Note)

1	Corflu 1 – Berkeley (1984) GoH: Pascal Thomas	23	Corflu Toronto – Toronto (2006) GoH: Hope Leibowitz
2	Corflu 2 – Napa (1985) GoH: Allen Baum	24	Corflu Quire – Austin (2007) GoH: Colin Hinz
3	Corflu 3 – Tysons Corner (1986) GoH: Teresa Nielsen Hayden	25	Corflu Silver – Las Vegas (2008) GoH: Andrew P. Hooper
4	Corflu 4 – Cincinnati (1987) GoH: Joel Zakem	26	Corflu Zed – Seattle (2009) GoH: Elinor Busby
5	Corflu 5 – Seattle (1988) GoH: Gary Farber	27	Corflu Cobalt – Winchester (2010) GoH: Mary Kay Kare Lifetime Achievement: Ted White
6	Corflu 6 – Minneapolis (1989) GoH: Stu Shiffman	28	E Corflu Vitus – Sunnyvale (2011) GoH: Carrie Root Lifetime Achievement: Art Widner
7	Corflu 7 – New York (1990) GoH: Barnaby Rapoport	29	Corflu Glitter – Las Vegas (2012) GoH: Claire Brialey Lifetime Achievement: Earl Kemp & Shelby Vick
8	Corflu Ocho – El Paso (1991) GoH: Dick Smith	30	Corflu XXX – Portland (2013) GoH: Lucy Huntzinger Lifetime Achievement: Elinor Busby
9	Corflu 9 – Los Angeles (1992) GoH: Linda Bushyager	31	Cor31u – Richmond (2014) GoH: Gregg Trend Lifetime Achievement: Ray Nelson
10	Corflu 10 – Madison (1993) GoH: Jae Leslie Adams	32	Tynecon 3 – The Corflu – Newcastle (2015) GoH: Avedon Carol Lifetime Achievement: Peter Weston
11	Corflu Nova – Crystal City (1994) GoH: John Bartelt	33	Corflu Chiflu – Chicago (2016) GoH: Nigel Rowe Lifetime Achievement: John Bangsund
12	Corflu Vegas – Las Vegas (1995) GoH: Gary Hubbard	34	Corflu 34 – Woodland Hills (2017) GoH: Randy Byers Lifetime Achievement: No award
13	Corflu Nashville – Nashville (1996) GoH: Gary Hunnewell	35	Dark Matter in a Bottle – Toronto (2018) GoH: Alan Rosenthal Lifetime Achievement: Bruce R. Gillespie
14	Corflu Wave – Walnut Creek (1997) GoH: Victor Gonzalez	36	Corflu 36 – Rockville (2019) GoH: Jim Benford Lifetime Achievement: Paul Skelton
15	Corflu UK – Leeds (1998) GoH: John D. Rickett	37	Corflu Heatwave – College Station (2020) GoH: Bill Burns Lifetime Achievement: Robert Lichtman
16	Corflu Sunsplash – Panama City (1999) GoH: Art Widner	38	Corflu Cobalt – Bristol, UK (2021) GoH: Sandra Bond Lifetime Achievement: David Langford
17	Corflatch – Seattle (2000) GoH: Ken Forman	39	Corflu Pangloss – Vancouver (2022) GoH: Garth Spencer Lifetime Achievement: Geri Sullivan
18	Corflu in New England – Boston (2001) GoH: Nic Farey		
19	Corflu Valentine – Annapolis (2002) GoH: Moshe Feder		
20	Corflu Badger – Madison (2003) GoH: Dan Steffan		
21	Corflu Blackjack – Las Vegas (2004) GoH: Ted White		
22	Corflu Titanium – San Francisco (2005) GoH: Murray Moore		

CORFLU MEMORIES

Belfast 1906

John D. Berry: **THE RAIN OF INK**

Who can forget that first of the Irish Corflus, held in Oblique House itself by special arrangement with its future tenants? Stately, plump Bob Shaw coming down the stairs from the attic, bump bump bump, fresh from a game of ghoddminton, carrying in his hands a bowl of freshly steaming mimeo ink. When James White plonked him on his exposed heel (the only part of his body that James Joyce had not dipped into the protective waters of the

Slough of Despite), a rain of ink would have soaked the ground floor, if not for the protective stencils covering all the furniture. As some of these stencils had already been cut, many people claim that this pattern created the first antimacassar.

Another unfortunate spill occasioned Bernard Shaw's famous quip, "The malt, dear Brutus, lies not in the bar but on our shelves."

Berkeley 1984

Pascal Thomas: **MY MEMORIES OF THE FIRST CORFLU**

...are lost in the mists of time, or was it fog coming up from the San Francisco Bay? At any rate, I have had to undertake some restoration, reading up on Corflu (a big thank you to <https://corflu.org/history/>!). I hope the modern additions won't show too much.

In August of 1983, I moved to Los Angeles to start on my PhD. I must have heard about Corflu through the fannish grapevine. I know that I'd met Shay Barsabe and Jim Khennedy earlier, in some house they shared with Tim

Kyger in the Bay Area, and that I'd known Cheryl Cline and Lynn Kuehl since Iguanacon in 1978. But I mostly associate Corflu with Lucy Huntzinger. Did she come to meet me at the airport? She must have, some other time if not that one.

Be it as may, I was staying with Lynn & Cheryl (wonderful people). This would prove important later. I mostly remember conversations about music with them — Lynn's "one song theory", for instance, that most bands

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only have one good song in them, one potential hit, a theory justifying a simple technical proposal: “regrooving” of records, the forcible engraving of new groove in the vinyl allowing the needle to skip right to the desired unique song.

On the first day of the proceedings in the fabulous Claremont, when they started to draw names out of a hat to determine the GoH, I was idly thinking about how extraordinary and funny it would be to be chosen by chance (or fate). A faint relief tinged with disappointment crept over me as the first unfamiliar name was called out. Out-of-towner, couldn't make it, or some such story. A new name had to be drawn, and anticipation rose again. Again some unfamiliar name, again a no-show. At the third try, I was totally relaxed and out of it, and then I heard my name. I knew it'd be no use buying another lottery

ticket for the rest of my life, my fifteen minutes of fame were upon me.

Later, back at Cheryl and Lynn's, we had dinner and chatted about my new duties. Nonexistent, of course, but wouldn't it be nice if they weren't? Shouldn't a GoH give a speech? Never mind that he hasn't got anything to say. Speeches can be spun out of whole cloth. Lynn was amused by the idea, proved quite ready to help me. We threw together a few ideas, recycled a few old jokes. I'd be goofing off, Lynn would play the straight man, under the guise of being my translator (that shtick I stole from *Doonesbury*), I'd bang my cheap blue sneaker (“smurf-skin shoe”) on the lectern, and that'd be a speech. I can't remember whether I overdid my French accent or whether it came out of its own accord, Lynn was perfect, and at least some people laughed. Terry Carr was bemused. Ted White was Not Amused, and he

~ ~ ~

We come now to the time when I introduce the Guest of Honor for Corflu. As you know, we chose the Guest of Honor by picking a name out of a hat last night, and the winner was Pascal Thomas. I think he's the perfect Guest of Honor for this convention, because I'd never met him before last night. That typifies Corflu for me, because I've met so many fans here I hadn't known before. Do you realize that there are probably a dozen fans here for whom Corflu is their first convention? I can't imagine how weird this weekend must have been for them . . . but everyone I met was having a good time. It's proven to me something I've often written about in fanzines even when I didn't really believe it, that the hardcore of fandom is made up of a lot of fascinating people who have nothing in common but the fact that they read. (Some of them still read science fiction, but that's not something you should automatically assume.) Surely I don't need to belabor the point -- you've been meeting whacko people all weekend, so you know that even a convention as specialized as this one attracts a wide variety of personalities.

Pascal Thomas is one of that weird variety, and God knows what he's thought up to say to you since last night. I'm too curious to wait any longer, so let me now introduce to you the Guest of Honor of this convention, Pascal Thomas.

[Pascal, who is originally from France and has a fairly strong accent, employed a translator at first, but after a few minutes Pascal dismissed him. I don't understand enough French to know just what the problem was, but after Pascal shouted and banged his fist on the podium, his translator explained, "Mr. Thomas brings greetings from the friendly people of France, who admire the United States and especially its foreign policy."

[A little later, he translated "merde" as "best-seller.]

Excerpt from Terry Carr's Toastmaster speech at Corflu 1, from Hobgoblin #17, April 1985, produced by Terry for the Spectator Amateur Press Society "and maybe a few intimate friends and likable strangers". (Scan by Andy Hooper, from corflu.org)

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had a right to be: my GoH speech being totally impromptu, it hadn't been fitted into the schedule, Terry Carr's address was delayed, and the auction for the benefit of TAFF (or was it DUFF?) that followed probably had to be somewhat shortened. Corflu wasn't *that* free-form!

Luckily for me, people didn't seem to mind too much, and the next year, the randomly

chosen GoH had to do a speech (if memory serves), and the tradition seems to have endured*. My dad used to say that the best jokes were the shortest. Well, who knows.

* After writing all this, I just read David Bratman's "The True History of the Corflu Guest of Honor" on <https://efanzines.com/Apparatchik/78-goh.html>. Lots of things there I wasn't aware of (or had forgotten, like the fact that the same name came out twice).

Tyson's Corner 1986

Gerri Sullivan: CORFLU CONNECTIONS, PART 1

Fred (pre-Levy) Haskell encouraged me to come along to Corflu 3 in Tyson's Corner, VA. I did. Fred introduced me to Pat Mueller (now Virzi) when we wound up on the same shuttle coming in from the airport. I also met Patrick and Teresa Nielsen Hayden, and was staggered to learn that not only was Walt

Willis still alive, P&T had stayed with him and Madeleine on their TAFF trip the previous year. This proved to be life-changing information and led directly to dear friendships and several visits with Walter and Madeleine, Chuch and Sue Harris, James White, and Vinç Clarke in the 1990s.

Rob Hansen: THE BLOODY MARY EXPERIENCE

Though the con was already thinning out due to the departure of those who had to be at work tomorrow, Corflu still had enough people left for the dead dog party to go well. Trips to the US usually meant me going teetotal for the duration since the beer over there is so godawful undrinkable but on the final night, though not usually a spirits drinker, I succumbed to the attractions of a rather delicious Bloody Mary and got through rather more of them than was perhaps wise.

Somehow the committee had managed to acquire a bottle of Russian vodka flavoured with red peppers, and Dan Steffan — acting as bartender at that particular con suite



party — discovered that you could make these truly delightful Bloody Marys with the stuff. So truly delightful were they in fact that it was impossible to stop after only one. Or after only five or six.

The problem with this is that while I've been a beer-drinker long enough to be able to accurately gauge its effects on me, and to modify my intake accordingly as an evening progresses, I have no such ability when it comes to wines and spirits.

You can well imagine the rest of this sorry tale. There I was, an innocent young fan in a faraway land, somehow fallen in with drug-fiends and degenerates and plied with drink to excess. I woke up the next day in the basement of Avedon's parents' house with no

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memory of how I got there from the convention hotel, stared down at myself, and discovered to my horror that... but no, that revelation must wait.

“It was really amusing to watch you in that state,” Patrick later told me.

“You were standing at the bar, arguing in a friendly but very loud fashion with Ted White. Every time he came up with a logically irrefutable reply to one of your points you’d blithely ignore it and — metaphorically speaking — sort of circle around behind Ted and hit him over the head with a response that left him nonplussed.”

Sounds good; what a shame I don’t remember a thing about it. The barman did, however, and was deeply moved by my performance.

“I’m glad I saw you get drunk,” said Dan, “I feel like I’ve shared in a quintessentially Britfannish experience.”

It feels good to have helped in my small way to promote cross-cultural understanding but there was one point where I wondered if it hadn’t all gone too far. When I woke in the basement that morning and gazed down at myself I was shocked to discover that diverse hands had scrawled all over my forearms.

Look guys, I know you want to try out some of the fun traditions we’ve established at British conventions, but you got this one a little wrong. It’s only truly fannish when done to Joseph Nicholas. And if he ever gets over there I’m sure he’ll look forward to having you do it to him almost as much as you will.

Minneapolis 1989

Nigel Rowe: THEM CORFLU BLUES

My first Corflu was a contrived happenstance, occurring en route during my trip home to New Zealand after living in the UK. The plan was to spend a month traveling across North America by Greyhound bus, starting in Toronto, down to Chicago and Wisconsin, across the tundra to Minneapolis and Corflu, then off to Seattle and Vancouver. My travels would end after heading down the West Coast to Los Angeles. Trip planning was laborious in those pre-Internet and Google Maps days, involving writing and sending letters, ascertaining people’s availability as hosts and recommended sights, as well as library and travel agent visits to work out itinerary options. Compared with today’s convenience of planning ambitious trips, I’m still amazed how we all used to manage such activities.

In a pull-out-the-stops zine I published for Corflu 2012 (*The Ink Machine Colour Supplement #5*), I talked about what brought me to Corflu in the first place. I blamed Pat Virzi mostly, after having read her exciting report circa

1985 of the first few Corflus. The idea of a con for fanzine fans sounded intoxicating, especially living as I did in far-away New Zealand where one annual con of any description was the norm. But it started me thinking and this directly led to organizing Norcon III in late 1986. However my knowledge of what actually transpired at the first few Corflus was nebulous to say the least and I eagerly awaited zines with Corflu reports. During the period leading up to Aussiecon II the previous year, I attached myself to Ted White during his visit to New Zealand. Obviously all my pent up Corflu questions came out in a continuous barrage that lasted three or so days, until Ted fled for the peace and quiet of being the Worldcon fan guest of honour in Melbourne.

But this left me with a clearer idea of what a pseudo Corflu should be like, and the Norcon III planning took shape and ultimately shared many Corflu characteristics. Light programming, lots of social activities, a one-shot, and audience participatory light entertainment.

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A consuite never happened, but this was due to hotel restrictions rather than a desire not to replicate this experience.

However, in 1989 I was excited to finally attend Corflu along with the chance to visit Minneapolis. I came armed with a zine (*From Scratch #1*), thrown together as I was packing up my London bedsit. Vinç Clarke was my Amstrad PCW word processor advisor and mimeograph printer, and with his help *FS #1* came to life very quickly. Thus I arrived in Minneapolis on a Friday, with only a quick visit to Kinko's necessary to whack together some US letter-sized photocopies (making these stand out from the rare A5 sized mimeo'd first edition). As these things go, being halfway through my trip, fatigue was having an outsized impact and I wasn't really in a con mood, despite my pleasure in finally attending a Corflu and meeting many attendees known previously only as names in the fannish ether. Also making me weary was the knowledge of the next leg of 40+ continuous hours of bus travel to reach Seattle.

After the con, I remember walking to the Greyhound bus station, standing around

chewing gum and looking edgy in the waiting room. I'd heard many stories of how such places called for being on your guard and not to look vulnerable. It worked and I summoned the strength to drag my unmolested self aboard the bus hoping other Corflus beckoned in my future. Later, several days of recuperation in the warm companionship of Seattle fans made up for what I missed at the con. Besides, several others still on their post-Corflu plans were also visiting the city during this time including Chuch (and Sue) Harris with whom I swapped fatigue stories and went out on beer replenishment runs. "What's good American beer? Coors or Budweiser?" we nervously asked each other. "Will the Vanguardians let us back into the party if we bring the wrong kind?"

For me, the penultimate Corflu experience was my second Corflu, the 1992 edition in Los Angeles. Several others have come close, but Corflu 9 in LA was what I was after all along. Many years later in 2016, I was fortunate enough to be host of my own "real-live" Corflu in Chicago, and it's fair to say I have not looked back.

El Paso 1991

Tom Becker: **SOFTBALL**

My first Corflu was Corflu Ocho (1991) in El Paso, Texas. Spike had been to Corflus before and wanted me to meet her friends. I have many vivid memories. Richard Brandt was congenial and apparently tireless as the chair. Michelle Lyon was not a fan, but she sure knew how to throw a party. I don't know how many pitchers of margaritas she made for the consuite, but it was many.

The softball game was epic. It was played on a tiny sandlot field at a nearby girls' school. There was no grass. The sand and dirt was hard-packed and baked by the sun. Ground balls bounced and skittered through the infield at high speed. Andy Hooper and Bill Bodden, on opposing teams, conducted a

home run derby. Bill Bodden hit one towering home run that almost went over the Rio Grande into Mexico. I was catching for ace pitcher Art Widner. I had to catch Art bare-handed because we were short on gloves. Spike came up to bat for the opposing team and hit a line drive that went right to Art's knee. Spike was full of remorse. Art was gracious and stoic about it. After the game, Art took whisky for his injury, and regaled us with stories about his growing up poor in South Boston and riding to Boston Braves games for free by clinging onto the back of the streetcar. I'd briefly met Art before, but Corflu was when I got to know him. I was fortunate to enjoy his friendship for the next twenty-four years.

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Walnut Creek 1997

Ian Sorensen: CORFLU HOTEL CALIFORNIA

OK, so the plan wasn't perfect, but it was workable. Fly Glasgow to Amsterdam then on to San Francisco on Friday, attend Corflu 14 and present our bid to hold it in the UK next year, fly home on Sunday, arriving Monday lunchtime. The hard part would be getting someone at work to ask me what I'd done over the weekend. I mean, "Not much. I just went to California" is a truly epic line. Though it meant 28 hours travelling for 50 hours in the USA.

I was a computing teacher at that time and had to figure out a way to get the Friday and Monday off work. I knew the headteacher wouldn't let me off for an SF con, but he seemed open to me speaking at a desktop publishing conference. And when I revealed it was in California he seemed unfazed, so off I went.

This was my first ever trip to America and it was amazing. Did you know they drive on the right-hand side of the road there? In a Buddhist Chinese restaurant the owner will happily explain that nearly all the dishes are tasteless vegetarian imitations of meat dishes, and in a brew pub you can order a plate of

fries that would feed a small African nation for £3.99? It's like another world.

The convention in Walnut Creek was a chance to put faces to names only read in zines bought at fanzine auctions in the UK. Who knew that Victor Gonzalez was a real person, and not an invention of Andy Hooper? (Who was also not only real, but larger than life.) Ulrika was also real, as were rich brown and Ted White. Jerry Kaufman's reality status remains moot. As you might expect, Spike took me under her wing and guided me through the social niceties of Corflu: drink beer from the bathtub, eat pizza when it magically appears, stay awake for 30 hours to achieve a truly zen state and don't ask Art Widner his age. All in all, I did quite well and only offended about 30% of the attendees.

After the Sunday banquet (which was, by UK standards, amazing) I presented our bid for the first ever UK Corflu. I promised warm beer, spotted dick and soccer riots. They held out for a better offer, so I suggested a cricket match as a replacement for the traditional softball game and the deal was done. Corflu Leeds was officially ON. I immediately headed

WELL, IT'S AN
UNDENIABLE FACT
THAT IAN SORENSEN
IS A REAL hardcore
FANZINE FAN



IT'S ALSO AN
UNDENIABLE FACT
THAT IAN SORENSEN
IS SCOTTISH



TWO STAPLES
FOR HIS FANZINE,
THREE STAPLES
FOR HIS WALLET

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for the hotel foyer to catch the shuttle to the airport while Spike handed out membership forms and took money.

On the flight home I replayed the weekend in my mind and wondered was it worth it? Would people fly from the States to Leeds

for a Corflu? I looked out the window at the Northern Lights and Comet Hale-Bopp and decided they were omens of great portent and that Leeds Corflu would work out just fine. The heavens foretold it. I relaxed and slept for the first time ever on a plane.

Leeds 1998

Dave Langford: CORFLU NOTES, ANSIBLE 129

Would this British incarnation of the great US fanzine convention be a completely alien gene injected into our fannish biosphere? (*Mot juste* © Steve Green 1997: do not impinge copyright or the Astral League will take MEASURES.) No, it seemed just like any small and ostentatiously ill-organized UK event, except for the welcome US presence — official count 23 of 102 members — and, possibly to make visitors feel at home, lack of real beer. *Many British Fans*: ‘What’s on that real-ale tap?’ *Strainedly Smiling Barman*: ‘It’s a dummy...’ *John D. Rickett* had his name plucked from the hat and so became the most popular Guest of Honour in the history of UK Corflus.

FAAn Awards were presented and runners-up later detailed at length: herewith the top 5 for each. **FANZINE Idea**, 105 votes (*Attitude* 63, *Trap Door* 51, *Apparatchik* 39, *Banana Wings* 34). **FANWRITER** Christina Lake, 64 (G. Sullivan 56, D. Langford 31, V. Gonzalez 24, M. Plummer 23). **FAN ARTIST** D. West, 94 (I. Gunn 70, B. Rotsler 55, S. Stiles 54, Sue Mason 30). **LETTERHACK** Harry Warner, 71 (L. Penney 42, V. Rosenzweig 37, R. Lichtman 35, S. Jeffery 20). **NEW FANZINE FAN** Lesley Reece, 71 (Ulrika O’Brien 47, Claire Brialey 23, Aileen Forman 21, Tom Springer 21). **#1 FAN FACE**, totalling votes over all above categories: Geri Sullivan, 161 (D. West 104, Robert Lichtman 92, Christina Lake 88, Mike Abbott 83, Lesley Reece 83). [*Andy Hooper*] The FAAn trophies were too tasteful ever to make the grade as Nova Awards, being certificates with nifty calligraphy by Jae Leslie

Adams: Geri Sullivan modestly showed us her two awards only a few score times.

The banquet, in a restaurant into which the entire con *almost* fitted, seemed OK despite alarmingly ichorous paté (‘It wasn’t killed, just frightened to death on the plate’) and house wines whose quality faithfully echoed the hotel beer. I failed to hear rich brown’s presentation of Corflu 1999 in Panama City; apparently fandom was nearly plunged into war by a false announcement of the date as March rather than ‘late April/early May’.

Strange sights of Corflu included Martin Smith’s prolonged collapse in the bar, suitably placarded (I DIED IN THE WAR FOR PEOPLE LIKE YOU. PLEASE GIVE GENEROUSLY), Greg Pickersgill gulping an appalling lumpy soft drink resembling a lava lamp charged with bubble-gum, and Joseph Nicholas’s fascinating range of mini-skirts. ‘Joseph Tunicata?’ asked Hazel afterwards, in her classical way. We realized with alarm that since they were such little skirts, it would be more like ‘Joseph Tuniculus’. Something in the fannish air must have been conducive to this kind of thing: at one point I found myself arguing that following Maureen K. Speller’s fanzine *Snufkin’s Bum* and TAFF compilation *Bumper Snufkin*, it was now necessary that she produce a zine crammed with gory colour photos of beheaded and eviscerated country yokels, thereby justifying the title *Bumpkin Snuff*. A great silence followed.

With a TAFF delegate (Ulrika O’Brien, slightly traumatized from being showered with broken

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glass when a train window burst inward), current contenders and several past winners present, it seemed ironic that one of the latter cancelled the Transatlantic Relationships panel as not half so interesting as a postponed discussion on ‘Milk and Alcohol’. Bossman *Ian Sorensen*, having basked in praise from drunken attendees at Corflu itself, was bemused to find Usenet rec.arts.sf.fandom discussion dominated by whinges about the droll newsletter *The Debauched Sloth* (too hastily placed on the web by the hard-pressed *Plokta* team): ‘If ever there was an argument for eugenics, rasff is it.’

Can I really not have mentioned Ted White? Or Victor Gonzalez and Vicki Rosenzweig (whose presence inspired idle thoughts of sending the SAS to kidnap Tom Sadler so we’d have the entire 1997 US TAFF slate)? Or Christina Lake’s Incredibly Alcoholic 40th Birthday Party, with the whole con invited? Or

the tale of Lilian Edwards pouring a full pint of wine over Eugene Doherty’s head just as though he were a Scientologist, later claiming amnesia just like me in 1987? Or the awesome confrontation of Mike Ford and Mike Ford?

Special bonus points for con badges which shrank the Corflu Corporate Image to a small but perfectly formed Sue Mason logo, leaving room for **READABLE NAMES IN HUGE LETTERS**. Everyone please copy.

On the long rail journey home, I slowly realized my awful fate — following an incautious TAFF auction bid — of having nothing to read but *Flight* by Vanna Bonta. Surely one random peep would do no harm ... ‘In the Lauryad’s control chamber, the victor was Understanding and it prevailed, buffing the environ with mollifying ease.’ Buffing the environ? Beam me up, Thog.

Claire Brialey: **FITTING IN**

My first Corflu was not like other Corflus, because it was also the first Corflu in the UK. I didn’t entirely know how they were meant to work, and in 1998, having been at this fanzine lark for only a few years, wasn’t sure how that was meant to work either. It all seemed like fun except that the cool kids in both the US and the UK were doing it differently and

I didn’t feel that I fitted in. I’m still not sure whether that sense of slight dislocation over the next few years is what ultimately prevented me from attending the first Corflu in Seattle (2000), whether it was reinforced by not attending that, or whether it was an indication of my overall impostor syndrome for which fanzine fandom was simply one arena.

Mark McCann: **MY FIRST CORFLU**

James (McKee — *Gotterdammerung* co-editor) and I arrived at Gatwick on the Thursday of Corflu 15 — the first UK Corflu — after a twelve hour flight from Havana.

The first thing we noticed on arrival was that the bastards had changed the name of Opal Fruits while we were away.

“That’s the last time I go away for so long,” James exclaimed. “God knows what they’ll do next time.”

We spent the day trying to get some clothes washed and then getting some calories back

into our bodies (pints of strawberry milkshakes from McDonald’s and Mars Bars from the local newsagents) before crashing for the night on the floor of a friend’s living room in south Croydon. I got caught up in a fit of exhaustion-induced hysterical giggling as James warned me that he would “probably be tossing all night as the floor was so hard”. (fnarr, fnarr).

We made our way to Leeds on Friday afternoon — almost missing the train as James was trawling music shops in central London looking for some obscure Aphex Twin remixes of

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‘Elvis Goes All Country & Western’. (I still think someone was taking the piss.)

I slept for much of the journey half-listening to Mark and Lard on the personal stereo. They played the Manic Street Preachers’ *A Design for Life* which, for some kind of messed up Jungian reason, I was fated to hear everywhere I went when I got to Leeds. The spectre of Tommy at the feast perhaps? I kept drifting in and out of sleep and each time I woke I expected to find myself somewhere over the mid-Atlantic. Gazing blearily and uncomprehendingly out at Peterborough station I mentioned to James that I thought the plane was flying awfully low. “You can almost see the people’s faces.” James looked at me as if I was mad.

We got to Leeds at about 4.30 pm to find the receptionist in the Griffin Hotel tittering over our booking forms. It had probably been unwise of James to mention under ‘Special Requirements’ in his form that he wanted mounting brackets fitted in his room for his S&M equipment.

“It was only a joke, you know,” he kept saying — meekly.

The lobby of the hotel had various American-style fans milling about but, never having been to a con before, we weren’t too sure who anyone was. Registration still had not taken place and no one was wearing an ID badge. And, anyway, I had other things on my mind at this point. After so long without food the strawberry milkshakes and Mars Bars were having an unfortunate effect on my alimentary canal and I was in serious need of a toilet.

After an hour in the loo I realised I was also in serious need of a half-litre of Kaolin and Morphine mixture and decided to make a dash across the road to Boots. The young woman in the queue in front of me was, strangely, also requesting Kaolin and Morphine. I prayed she wasn’t going to buy up the last of their stock.

“Are you an adult?” the counter assistant asked me.

“Ehh?” I said, thinking I’d misheard.

“You’re an adult, right?”

“Well, I suppose so...” I said carefully — honestly not sure if this was some kind of trick question. “What do you mean exactly by... adult?”

Seemingly unwilling to take the conversation in a philosophical direction he sold me my bottle of K&M without further comment. I refrained from drinking the stuff on the spot. My fellow diarrhoea sufferer gave me an encouraging smile as she left. While in Boots I left my Cuba photos in to be developed.

Back at the con James and I sampled a shot of our secret Con weapon — several bottles of 40% proof Havana Club. The stuff was dangerously smooth so we had to hide the bottles in the wardrobe to keep it out of harm’s way. On our way to the hotel bar I wondered to myself how the K&M would interact with the rum.

“We’ve got to pace ourselves,” James warned. “We’re still jet-lagged.”

Downstairs things were pretty much as before — Americans milling about in the lobby but few people in the bar. We ordered pints of Beamish Black and fell into conversation with Steve Swartz and Jae Leslie Adams. There were other people about who I suspected I might well know by name but whose faces were a mystery. James and I tried to guess who was who (and failed miserably — we had Greg Pickersgill down as a definite American).

Falling in behind Jae we ventured up to the registration room where Nigel Rowe informed us that he had heard by email that my lodger, Tommy Ferguson, had just started a new job back home in Belfast.

“The jammy bastard.” James and I both exclaimed simultaneously. If I was disorientated before then you must understand that this news really cut me loose. Tommy in a job! Jesus, it seemed totally unfeasible. What next? Alison Freebairn not turning up for the con?

“Alison Freebairn’s not turning up for the con,” Ian Sorensen told us as we got our ID badges. Oh dear.

At this point we met up with Eugene Doherty — also from Belfast — who was doing Corflu on the cheap and was planning on

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crashing in our bedroom. I showed him to the room and presented him with the \$1,200 worth of Cohiba cigars that I'd successfully smuggled out of Havana for him (incidentally risking ten years in a Cuban prison).

"Cheers, Mark," said an underwhelmed Eugene. "I'll get you a pint later."

We got a sudden craving for Mexican food at this point and shouted at Ian Sorensen and Linda Krawecka (among others) for directions to the nearest Mexican restaurant.

"Ask Debbi Kerr," they all said but she was bugged-all use. (And she calls herself a Leeds Tourism officer! — I ask you.)

We found the Mexican place by ourselves — we sort of just wandered up the street and there it was. On the way we made a point of stopping to harangue Alison Freebairn on the telephone for not attending the con. She was polite about it.

The Mexican place was excellent. We were treated to the spectacle of four Leeds girls in tiny (I mean *tiny*) dresses engaged in a cat-fight with three waitresses. The girls were eventually ejected after some impressive pushing and cursing, with the waitresses whooping and giving each other high fives when the battle was won.

"Cool!" said Eugene. "All this free entertainment and we haven't even ordered yet!"

"Remember folks — we're in Nigel E. Richardson country now," said James in a hushed voice. "Things are different here."

Eugene and I gazed reverentially around at young women in knee-length boots and sexy nerd glasses. "My God you're right. We *are* in Nigel E. Richardson country."

Things got even better when we were presented with pitchers of what looked like window cleaning fluid mashed up with ice. "They're called Margaritas, Mark," Eugene told me. "Try a glass."

(Reader, the following twelve hours are a total Martin Smith-esque blank.)

The next morning Eugene managed to wrangle a breakfast from the hotel kitchen staff despite not being a guest. I was feeling

very, very sick and promised myself I'd not drink again unless it was absolutely necessary. I was kind of upset with myself for having carelessly lost the first night of Corflu. I had even slept through the wacky quiz.

We met Sheila Lightsey and Victor Gonzalez at this point (although James informed me I'd already met Victor the previous night when he gave me his fanzine, *Squib*.)

I was then told I was on a panel talking about Drugs and Fandom — specifically I was to talk about the 'British and Drugs'. (This is despite the fact that I don't really do drugs and don't really consider myself British... much — but whatever.)

While waiting for the panel discussion to begin I went to collect my photos from Boots. I sat in the bar with a Diet Coke and looked through them. This was a bad idea. I'd been feeling really fed-up since leaving Havana and these photos suddenly confirmed by deep suspicions that instead of feeling 'fed-up' I should instead be feeling deeply, deeply depressed that I wasn't back there. I have never before been so disconsolate that a holiday was over and knew I'd have to make a big effort if I was to cheer up again before the weekend was over.

I rambled a bit in my first ever panel discussion but luckily Ted White and Sheila Lightsey were there to tell lots of funny anecdotes. And I got a free pint of Fosters for my mild effort.

Back in the bar I met Nigel Richardson, Alun Harries and Nigel Rowe and we all tried to be extremely cool with each other. After failing to do so successfully I instead took out my holiday photos and showed off lots of shots of myself with beautiful Cuban women. I tried not to cry.

Later Nigel took us to a traditional Leeds Curry House where we continued to be extremely offhand with each other and didn't even fight over the final bill. It was an enjoyable way to spend the Saturday evening although Eugene burned his face on a particularly hot chilli.

The 'Getting Laid at a Con' panel discussion was a bit cringe-making (but not enough

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to drive me back to drink). I sat in my new Che Guevara tee-shirt, sipping yet another Diet Coke and hoping someone would get their breasts out to liven the proceedings up. Happily, someone did.

Saturday night only became fun when Christina Lake's party began (despite her immediately spilling red wine over my new Che Guevara tee-shirt). Her punch was a killer combination of fruit juice and tequila made all the more dangerous by the addition of our Havana Club.

At most parties I've ever gone to there are usually two types of people — those who stay in the main room and dance all night and those who slunk about in the kitchen or in hallways and have drunken conversations about relationships and stuff. It seems everybody in fandom falls into this second category — which is all right by me because I suppose I'm one of those people too (I've a thing about hotel corridors).

The party was fun but I think I was maybe boorish to Linda Krawecke.

By about midnight the party moved downstairs to the bar where I can remember sneaking off to a corner to have tequila slammers with Christina.

Come about 4.00 am and natural attrition had reduced the number of con-goers to almost single figures. All the Americans had gone to bed and the bar staff kept looking at their watches.

By 6.00 am the numbers could be counted on one hand but there was a steely determination among those remaining to claim the title of being the Last Person to Leave the Bar. I think it was at this point that Lilian Edwards and myself started a rousing rendition of 'Design for Life', although the only lyrics either of us could remember were "A design for life, A design for life, A design for life, A design for life..." Everyone else looked on in horror.

By 7.30 am the cleaners had arrived and were Hoovering the lobby. The sun was coming up and I found myself in the position of being the Last Person to Leave the Bar (even the

barman had long since vanished). The weight of my achievement hit me — I had drunk the entire Corflu Convention under the table and could still see! I had fulfilled, to the letter, my duties as the stereotypical drunken Irishman abroad and what's more I didn't feel ill. In fact, I thought to myself, I'll just grab a few minutes sleep, have a shower and then have an early breakfast. These Brits and Americans just can't handle their drink. I felt wonderful! I felt great!

Needless to say, the next thing I remembered was waking a few minutes before the Corflu banquet was due to take place (1 pm) and feeling less than great. In fact I felt terrible. The meal itself was an ordeal — the paté in particular was horrifying. To keep from falling over I held on to the table and tried to make some kind of conversation with Steve Green, Evelyn Murray and Greg Pickersgill. I failed miserably — I think I talked about bed-sheets. Even Tara Dowling-Hussey pouring a jug of water over me failed to bring me round. A phrase kept going through my head on some kind of endless loop: "*No habla Español!*" God only knows why...

After an hour and a half of terrible pain James took pity on me and guided us to the train station. I was too sick to say goodbye to anyone. On the way James discovered a second-hand oscilloscope shop with an oscilloscope in the window that he'd always wanted to own. Fortunately they weren't open on Sundays (which was a good thing because I didn't fancy carrying an oscilloscope through Customs on the way back to Belfast: "No, officer, it's not for the manufacture of electronic timers for bombs, honest.") Instead we left Leeds empty-handed and went back to London. I vaguely remember meeting Alun Harries in the men's toilets at King's Cross but I could have been hallucinating.

So, I missed John D. Rickett's banquet speech, I missed the Awards ceremony, I missed the Sunday night wind-down session. In fact, come to think of it, I missed almost all of the Corflu programming. I didn't meet

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that many people — certainly not many Americans; didn't receive very many fanzines; never saw a copy of the Plokta Crew's daily newsletter; never met Ulrika. It was just a mind-destroying round of drinking and

alternatively feeling great or feeling terrible. It may make for a crap con report but, I have to admit, I really enjoyed myself.

(But on the whole I'd still rather be back in Havana.)

Seattle 2000

Ken Forman: THE SECRET

The first full day of Corflatch (Potflu?), Seattle 2000 finished with the usual game of “who's joining whom for dinner?” A group of us, upon leaving the hotel were stopped by a woman coming in the doors. It was clear she knew there was *something* unusual happening at the hotel, but wasn't sure of any details. I took the time to engage with her and the conversation went something like this (please assume quasiquotes):

“Excuse me, what kind of event is going on?”

“Oh, hi — it's a gathering of people from around the country and a few folks from around the world.”

“Hmm, is this a *public* event?” she asked.

“Sort of — although the people attending are all connected through...” and here I was at a loss for an easy, short explanation.

“Ahhhh”, she said, exaggerating the amount of awareness she actually felt. “It's a *secret* society.” At this point the rest of the party whisked me away to dinner.

I've always hoped she lives the rest of her life being proud of her brief brush with the secret masters of the world (but not fandom — that's a different group).

Tom Becker: IRON FANED

The craziest thing I did was organizing the Iron Faned panel for the Seattle Corflatch (2000). I'd been watching the original *Iron Chef*, in Japanese with English subtitles, on a local UHF station in the Bay Area. I thought it would be fun to do a fanzine take-off, with the best fan editors in the world competing to create a fanzine in an hour. The fanzine would have to include a secret ingredient, announced at the beginning of the panel.

It was an insane idea. Watching people write is about as exciting as watching paint dry. But I reached out to my friends, and they were game, even before they had seen *Iron Chef* or knew what it was like. David D. Levine agreed to be the MC. He kept the audience entertained for an hour while the faneds wrote and put their zines together.

After the panel was over, I ran off copies of the zines for the whole convention. Both were great. *Steelhead* was more polished, *WABE* was more fresh. The next day we counted the votes and *Steelhead* was the winner. After the convention, the *Steelhead* team went on to win Hugo, Nova, and Rotsler awards. The *WABE* team hosted a Corflu, and published six issues of *WABE* as a regular fanzine, with excellent writing and beautiful art and production.

I'm very happy with how it worked out. But don't try this at home. It was a bad idea that succeeded in spite of itself, only because of the people that were on it.

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Boston 2001

Nic Farey: **MY FIRST CORFLU...**

...should have been Nashville in 1996, but my then wife Dee Ann's cancer kiboshed that, so the loss of my virginity didn't occur until Boston five years later. I'd decided to bid for 2002 in Annapolis (which I knew Ted White would like since he could drive there in an hour). Bobbie and I took a pleasant detour on the way, flying to Providence, RI to have a nice visit (and lunch) with Paul Di Filippo and Deborah Newton, including a stroll to Lovecraft's grave, perhaps appropriately in the absolute pissing rain. Thence we bussed it to Boston to find some welcoming familiar faces, and other less familiar ones to associate with names I knew.

My first suspicion that the fix might be in was when my name was drawn as Guest of Honor. Talk about deep end. The problem was (apart from the obvious one of me being as lingered as possible throughout, despite efforts by Lenny Bailes to place beer out of my reach) was that, this being my first Corflu, I had *not the foggiest idea* what a GoH speech was expected to be like, and so predictably mine ended up being *exactly* what you'd expect from someone with no previous to go on, although the phrase "It's all about the 'Boo" did end up oft-repeated by many.

Top moment, and indeed an early cause of mass chair-plummeting, was the panel of spouses/partners "Life with Faned", onto



Nic Farey, GoH (Photo by Robin Webber)

which Bobbie was shanghaied, and answered the obvious question with "It's not the horror show everyone might imagine"... (even though it arguably was).

So what's the Irish connection, then? I was drunk the whole time, and it was Boston. Good enough?

Annapolis 2002

Claire Brialey: **THE REAL THING**

My first Corflu in the USA (2002) was Nic Farey's fault. Corflu is a convention for fanzine fans. Nic is a fanzine fan who knows how to run good conventions. Mark Plummer and I are fanzine fans who wanted to meet a lot of the fanzine fans in person who we previously knew only in print, and who couldn't justify

missing Nic's Corflu as well as his (then) most recent wedding. The con website had included an article by Ted White in which he commented: 'Writing or telling someone about Corflu is only a pale reflection of the actual experience.' So there we were, for the actual experience.

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Toronto 2006

Claire Brialey: MISSING OUT

In retrospect I'm glad we didn't go to the first Toronto Corflu in 2006. At the time we rather regretted not being able to be there, and the FAAn awards — where, among other results, *Banana Wings* won Best Fanzine for the first time — gave us another little pang. When we found out several days later that there had been a counting error and we hadn't won after all, it seemed better not to have been there. We both voted for *Chunga* and our grief at losing to them again was entirely controllable, but if we'd been at the con we would inevitably have had a number

of conversations about it, what with it being our first time and the first British fanzine to have won since *Maya* in 1978 and all, and it would have seemed kind of embarrassing afterwards when that proved not to be the case. As it was, no one in this country had any idea that we'd won another award until we hadn't, or possibly until just now; and the splendidly CANCELLED certificate sent to us by honest awards administrator Murray Moore is on the wall with the ones we really won.

Pat Virzi: CONSEQUENCES

Progress reports and publicity for Corflu 23 had been sparse, which meant the 2006 attendance was rather cozy. I should have realized that Contingency Plans For 2007 Were Afoot, when I was invited to a Ted White and Frank Lunney dinner expedition.

In that mad egoboo rush of Feeling Included, I had totally forgotten that Ted and Frank were

the *de facto* Godfathers of Corflu, and they were about to make me an offer I couldn't refuse.

And that, my friends, is how someone who hadn't yet learned the fine art of delegation, ended up putting on Corflu Quire the following year.

Austin 2007

Rob Jackson: THE RETURN OF THE NATIVE

... was the subtitle I gave to my first fanzine in 28 years, *Inca 2*, inspired by Corflu Quire which was the first con I had been to in 18 years. My love of fandom had been there all that time but submerged under a combination of overwork, family responsibilities and post-Conspiracy disenchantment. For a few years I'd been paddling in the fannish relative shallows of e-lists — Greg Pickersgill's MemoryHole then Harry Bell's IntheBar, and the fun was coming back.

IntheBar featured in a big way before and during the con. Members of the list were the main drivers of the successful Get Harry Fund which brought Harry Bell to the con. As a fundraiser I edited and printed *Bellissimo!*, an anthology of Harry's art. I produced the 122-page zine at home, and it looked good with duck-tape binding on the spine — but it had to take second place to Robert Lichtman and Pat Virzi's brilliant *Ah! Sweet Laney*, also published for the con.

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Graham Charnock and I successfully battled the snow to reach Gatwick for our flight, and at Houston we met Pete Weston, Claire Brialey and Mark Plummer. As a fannish revenant, that was my historic first meeting with Claire and Mark. But the snow delayed Harry and Pat Mailer (who accompanied Harry on her own shilling) at Newcastle for 24 hours, and I had to get the hotel to reopen their room booking as they had been put down as no-shows. Bringing Harry to the con sparked the Corflu Fifty, which has been bringing much-admired fanzine fans to Corflus ever since (apart from one COVID-related hiatus).

I had brought last-minute scripts for a live recital of some of IntheBar's more surreal threads. This went down well on the programme, but I got flak later for not having obtained consent in advance from the writers. My excuse was that it was all at such short notice, but the lesson was learnt. Pat Virzi (who seemed to be absolutely everywhere during the con, making the whole thing happen) must have provided a guitar for Graham from somewhere, as on the Saturday evening he did stellar performances of classics from



ABOVE: Pat Virzi (having not yet learned how to delegate), in the throes of setting up the Corflu Quire con suite. John D. Berry's superb poster is in the background.

BELOW: The infamous arm-wrestling match at Corflu Quire, Ted White vs. Graham Charnock.

(Photos by Rob Jackson)



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ABOVE: Bill Burns, Earl Kemp, Michael Moorcock, and Peter Weston, after the Corflu Quire banquet.

BELOW: Britfen meetup at the Houston airport.

(Clockwise from lower left) Graham Charnock, Claire Brialey, Mark Plummer, Peter Weston.)

(Photos by Rob Jackson)



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the Astral League songbook and Michael Moorcock's Deep Fix. Graham was also in an arm-wrestling match with Ted White, who later took on Pete Weston; John D. Berry had billed Graham's bout in advance as "The Great Unwashed vs. Tidy Ted."

There were also some memorable conversations, such as Lilian Edwards getting on her

high horse about e-lists, which she didn't think ought to be private. And I knew that my tendency to Organise Stuff was well remembered as soon as I heard that Pete Weston thought that everyone ought to get me to run another British Corflu. I did as I was told, three years later.

Seattle 2009

Rob Jackson: **WRASSLIN'**

Another wrestling match featured at Corflu Zed, where the vote for the past presidency of fwa was a near-tie and had to be decided via a wrestling match between Andy Hooper and Jerry Kaufman. The whole crowd at the

Banquet watched. They are of course mismatched in weight divisions, so as you would expect, Andy won. I got a blurry photo of the killer throw (or perhaps where the Killer was thrown).

Claire Brialey: **SEVEN CONTINENTS**

We had a small knitted penguin at the Corflu brunch in 2009 — the explanation is longer than you'll want and already available in a fanzine anyway — and it was still in my bag at the Dead Zed party where Juliette Woods was having her birthday. At home in Australia it had been Juliette's birthday since the day before, and she had thus been receiving birthday messages for many, many hours from around the world. Having both Australians and Brits at a North American Corflu meant that it was relatively easy to find yourself in a conversation spanning three continents, and as we stood talking to Juliette, Damien Warman, Randy Byers and Carl Juarez, we decided that we needed to expand our transcontinental ambitions. Tobes Valois arrived, which enhanced our international credibility in some small way since Jersey is not part of the UK. Andy Hooper, stopping by during a prolonged circuit of the party to say goodbye to many people before going home to reconnect with us over the internet, was allotted South America. Catherine Crockett elected to represent Asia,

and after some negotiation delegated the Indian sub-continent to Ian Sorensen. Yvonne Rowse made a phone-in vote for Madagascar. Spike, temporarily under the impression that the main purpose of the exercise was to wish



*Randy Byers with The Penguin.
(Photo by Rob Jackson)*

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Andy Hooper takes down Jerry Kaufman at the Corflu Zed banquet. (Photo by Rob Jackson)

Juliette happy birthday from as many parts of the world as possible, chose Antarctica.

Spike famously has Views on the subject of having her photo taken, and so I can't share with you an actual image of a penguin sitting

on Spike's head to lend verisimilitude to her territorial claims. The only proof I have that there was a penguin in Seattle at all was supplied by your editor, Rob Jackson.

Winchester 2010

Dave Langford: CORFLU NOTES, ANSIBLE 273

Corflu UK. This March fanzine event was great fun. Official guest of honour was Mary Kay Kare, whose name emerged from the traditional hat; unofficial guest Earl Kemp (1961 Hugo winner for *Who Killed Science Fiction?*) was brought over by the informal Corflu Fifty fan fund. Group photos taken included a unique assembly of 15 TAFF winners from 13 races, 1968 (Steve Stiles) to 2010.

FAAn Awards. Fanzine: *Banana Wings*. Fan Writer: Claire Brialey. Fan Artist: Steve Stiles. Letterhack: Robert Lichtman. Website:

eFanzines.com. New Fanzine Fan: Jacqueline Monahan. Life Achievement: Ted White. #1 Fan Face: Robert Lichtman. The coveted past presidency of the Fan Writers of America was voted *nem. con.* to D. West.

Further nameless rites and ceremonies were too alcohol-ridden to be revealed, and luckily we have no room for Graham Charnock's keynote speech about impacted faeces.

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Hazel Ashworth West: CORFLU PERDU

The surprise was that it was all so much better than expected.

I can thank Linda Krawecka: I hadn't been to a convention for many years and was so rusty I might never have attended anything again. But it sounded like fun, and I thought that even if I saw no-one else she'd be there. Then Don decided at the very last minute that he'd go too despite even more rustiness. There was the feeling that he might miss something. But he didn't want to stay overlong, so we organised a rather convoluted plan which entailed staying at my sister's in Somerset and then going along to Winchester and back the following day. (Horrible mistake — for me at least, driving back past Stonehenge with a hangover, plucked untimely from the jollifications). Despite D's insistence that his social stamina would only last for one night it turned out to be both memorable and precious.

We arrived after a slightly frazzled unscheduled tour of Winchester's one way system. I hadn't driven there before and found it tricky. Don, who didn't drive, always had the wisdom to keep silent. There was no "What you should have done there was..." or mansplaining of any sort. The stresses of the journey ended abruptly as soon as we entered the hotel, the transition as sudden as if we'd jumped into a swimming pool (which I did later with Christina Lake, and a lot of fun it was too: I mention this as the one healthy thing I did while there).

I managed to attend one of the panels where Pete Weston was speaking and had the briefest of chats with Jerry Kaufman. I breakfasted with Rochelle Dorey, chatted with Christina and Jimmy Robertson (a rare appearance) and

Alun Harries. Looking at the list of attendees now, I am saddened by the fact that I missed friends that I would never see again. But the main event was seeing Art Widner again after many years. I'd met him for the first time in the 80s. Malcolm Ashworth and I had taken him around York for the day. It dawned on me then that he wasn't your standard US tourist when he admitted to being "castled and cathedraled out" and could we go to the pub!

We ended up spending hours in the bar catching up with what had been going on in each other's lives. Fans came and went; I felt I ought to shift and let someone else sit with him, but that didn't work for very long. It was as though we were more aware than usual that time was limited and it seemed important to get through as much stuff as we could. We talked and drank steadily as the hours passed. Art congratulated me on choosing Pinot Grigio instead of the ubiquitous Chardonnay that he said was becoming all too universal in California and elsewhere. At one point he

suggested a sandwich as we'd forgotten to eat. In the distance I could spot Don surrounded by people. He seemed to be enjoying himself enormously. At odd moments when we connected it appeared he was well pleased with things because 1) everyone was buying him drinks and 2) he'd talked to Earl Kemp. Earl had been complimentary about his work and he was elated by this. He was also amused by the fact that Art and I had been so pleased to see one another: later he drew a cartoon on the back of an envelope (of course) about our meeting, with a little speech bubble saying that when he got to be as old, suave, debonair



*Jimmy Robertson & Alun Harries
(Photo by Hazel Ashworth West)*

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and charming as Art — who was in his 90s at the time — he too would be greeted with ecstatic cries.

“You’re so *intense*,” Linda commented at one point. I was surprised to realise that this was so. But despite not being able to see into the future I am at least able to extrapolate, and friends are not immortal, despite the sense I have that people will go on forever or at least have the grace to survive me. At the same time I have this daft conviction that conventions go on continually and that if I went back there now everyone would still be there. A bit like Hesse’s *Journey To The East*. If only.

That was indeed the last time I saw Art. He outlasted me at the bar, and the following morning we were off back to Somerset. Don wouldn’t wait for the group photo. We drove slowly past as it was being taken. I drove away accompanied by my thumping hangover and that emotional fragility that sometimes comes after a convention. I was encouraged by the



ABOVE: Peter Weston. BELOW: D. West and Alun Harries.
(Photos by Hazel Ashworth West)



In The Bar. Clockwise from front left: Frank Lunney, a mostly-obscured Pat Mailer (later Bell), Linda Krawecka, Ted White, Roy Kettle, Pat Charnock, Harry Bell, Earl Kemp, Bill Burns, and Graham Charnock.
(Photo by Rob Jackson)

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thought that if Art could grab a hire car and drive it straight out of Heathrow without mishap my trip should be a doddle, though he did say he'd forgotten to drive on the left for a little while.

A few days later I sent Art a message asking him how things had gone after we'd left. He had a typically fannish tale about a rather frustrating hunt to find a restaurant the following day, which had entailed a lot of walking, unsuccessful attempts to find anywhere open until the eleventh hour, and him finally falling and busting his arm. I believe Rob Jackson came to the rescue: all this related in a very matter of fact way as though it wasn't a big deal.

The following year, December 2011, we were corresponding as usual. I had hoped to meet him in Australia: he was off to see

his family, including two great grandchildren, and I was off to see my relatives too. "Damn! Missed you by 2 months!" he said. Then I had this in response to my enquiries after his health:

"I'm ok. Now 94, still going, not 'strong' but 'going'. Plan A calls for me to go til I drop, with my boots (Wellies) on, wearing the old skool tie, muddlin thru, carryin on — tally ho!"

I missed Art's fabled 90th birthday celebrations in Gualala (which he called heaven), missed seeing his wonderful house with its giant bookcases, missed seeing the fabulous decorated car but was confidently looking forward to attending his 100th. He couldn't wait around that long. I can't blame him. He crammed so much into his life it was like several lifetimes rolled into one. Just glad I stayed put in the bar at Winchester.

Sunnyvale 2011

Claire Brialey: **HAMMERED**

Because we know Spike, many Corflus tend to begin with some preloading in the form of a wine tasting excursion. 2011 surpassed everything because, in advance of several days of wine tasting with other fans arriving early for this opportunity, Spike and Tom Becker took us to Yosemite (we stopped on the way for a couple of days, of course, for wine. And cheese). I wrote half a fanzine about it later, but that too could only be a pale reflection of the experience.

Also on the way Tom was able to show us a stone that shed light on the convention souvenir. Chris Garcia had been determined that his Corflu, the twenty-eighth con of that name, should be known as E Corflu Vitus; this had already provoked some confusion back home from those who were concerned that it was a potentially tasteless reference to *e. coli*, and although we'd managed to establish that it's a California thing we were really none the wiser by the time we arrived back there.

Tom told us about — although even he was not wholly able to explain — the Ancient and Honorable Order of E Clampus Vitus, or the Clampers as they put it themselves.

I still failed to make a connection to what Tom was doing in his garage. Spike was administering the FAAn awards that year, and Tom was contributing the physical awards, which meant that on most evenings at their place before the con he vanished into the garage, from which pounding noises would then issue forth. We were unsuccessful at envisaging what the awards were going to look like, or indeed what precisely it was that Tom was pounding. At the banquet, after Carrie Root gave an excellent guest of honour speech in fine Clamper apparel, the results of Tom's pounding in the garage were revealed to be Clamper-style plaques for the FAAn award winners.

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Las Vegas 2012

Claire Brialey: **BEATING THE ODDS**

I really like the way Corflu selects a Guest of Honour; I buy into the message it conveys that anyone attending the convention is equally deserving of having their contribution to the community recognised — but also that no one forces us to do anything here, so you can opt out.

I used to do that; at my first few Corflus I didn't feel at all confident either that I could make a speech that did justice to fanzine fandom or that many people there would want to hear anything I had to say about it. Then I realised that, even when former GoHs and those opting out were removed, the odds against any particular person being selected were pretty good, and decided I was happy to take

my chances. Some years I even had an idea in advance about what I might say.

In 2012 Jerry Kaufman's name was pulled out of the hat, which I thought was a great outcome. I really looked forward to hearing whatever Jerry wanted to say in his speech; indeed, I looked forward to talking to him personally in the course of the convention. Unfortunately Jerry wasn't actually there and so they had to draw again.

Never rely on beating the odds in Las Vegas.

*[[You can guess where the roulette ball landed... Claire's brilliantly affectionate GoH speech can be found in Pat Charnock's *Raucous Caucus 2*. This is not currently available online. — Ed.]]*

Portland 2013

Rob Hansen: **RESTRAINT**



*Dan Steffan steps into the con suite closet, making a quick call to iron a few things out.
(Photo by Pat Virzi)*

The plan had been that after I dropped off my bags and had a wash and brush-up we would head out to The Elliott Bay, a nearby brewpub where we would meet up with a bunch of local fans. Jerry and Suzle had gone on ahead and when we arrived they were there with Ulrika O'Brien and Randy Byers, waiting for a large enough table to come free. The bar was surprisingly popular. It was only 7 pm local time yet it was already packed. It helped that as well as carrying 36 (!) listed beers, many of them brewed on the premises, they also served food. As the evening wore on we were joined by John D. Berry, Jack whose name I've forgotten, Sandra Bond, and — surprisingly — by Vicki Rosenzweig and Andy Hickmott, who had just moved to the area and were still unpacking.

This being my first meal in America I opted for that signature American dish, the bacon cheeseburger. When it arrived it was at

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least twice the size of its British counterpart and accompanied by a plate piled high with chips — sorry, fries. I eyed these with great trepidation. “You should all dive in and help yourselves to the fries,” I said. Afterwards, staring in dismay at my empty plate, I expressed my disappointment in Seattle fandom. “I told you to help yourselves,” I said, reproachfully. “You were supposed to prevent me from eating them all myself.” Clearly, I was going to get no help on the self-control front. This could be a problem.

Walking Distance

Rob Jackson handed out the latest issue of his fanzine *Inca*, which included photos he had taken during SunCon, the 1977 Worldcon. One guy in particular stood out in these, what with his luxuriant 1970s porno moustache, the disco-era pimpish strutwalk, and the laid back attitude that said “why yes, baby, I am wearing a medallion under my silk shirt. Why don’t you come over here and unbutton that shirt down to my belly-button for all the ladies to see?”

Yes, it was Jerry Kaufman.



Today was Free Comic Book Day. I only knew this because someone had asked about it during yesterday’s opening session. I’d been intending to check out a local store anyway and pick up this week’s arrivals, hence yesterday’s abortive search, so I resolved to do so now while it was still early in the morning. Ulrika decided to join me so that we could each catch up with what the other had been up to lately. My calf was still throbbing so I figured the walk could only do me good. Based on Dan Steffan’s description of the comics store as being within walking distance I also figured it couldn’t be too far away. I figured wrong. As we trekked through mile after endless mile of insufficiently shaded street, a ferocious sun beating down on us, I started to feel really guilty about Ulrika being along with me. I’d promised her a brief

walk and this was turning into anything but. It wasn’t “walking distance” as that phrase is generally understood by most people. Indeed it was “walking distance” only in the sense of containing both “walking” and “distance”, lots and lots of “walking” and “distance”. Many and colourful were the muttered imprecations I heaped on the hairy head of Daniel J. Steffan.

Eventually we reached the comics store — Thing From Another World. We could tell we’d reached it even before we saw it. This was because of the pirates.

Standing outside the store, enthusiastically “arrrhing” and “shiver me timbering” away were several large men dressed as pirates and waving cutlasses around. There were still more inside the store. I have no idea what this had to do with Free Comic Book Day, or indeed things from another world, but who am I to deny others their simple pleasures? The shop was packed, with a long queue snaking around to the cash register. I picked up the couple of comics I’d actually come for and again felt guilty. This was going to take a while which meant Ulrika would have to hang around waiting for me.

I briefly looked at the shelves of action figures, but as usual they never have what you want. In my case this was “Seventies Disco Pimp-Strut Jerry Kaufman! Now With Kung-Fu Grip!” I would even have settled for the version that comes without the space hopper.

The Knowledge Which Travels

“We’ve all met people whose work we admire,” I said, “but those meetings don’t always work out quite how we might’ve hoped. Alasdair Gray was GoH at the first Mexican, a writer whose work I greatly admired. Included in the con’s registration pack was a fanthology that reprinted an infamous, scurrilous, libellous conreport by Leroy Kettle. He read this. Which is why when highly-respected literary figure Alasdair Gray met me he peered at my name badge and said, ‘Oh, you’re the one who farts!’”

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Famous Names

It was now time for dinner and I found myself heading out to a pie shop with the Harveys, Nigel Rowe, and Nigel's niece Calyx (pronounced "kaylix"), who was passing through. Getting there was a bit of a trek, though nowhere near as long and convoluted as last night's epic journey to the Japanese restaurant. When we entered the pie shop it became clear why Nigel had chosen it. There on the back wall were a New Zealand flag and an Aussie one.

"I see the Australian flag is bigger," I said to Nigel, "which is only right."

I wasn't actually certain which is which — they both look like Britain after dark to me — but since Nigel didn't correct me I obviously

got it right. He didn't rise to the bait, which impressed me. Back when he lived in London it was easy to wind him up.

"Hey Nigel," I remember saying to him on one occasion, "what's the world's shortest book?"

"I don't know," he'd replied, "what is the world's shortest book?"

"Who's Who in New Zealand."

"That's not true, there are loads of world famous people who come from New Zealand," he said, obviously stung. He then reeled off a list of names, each of which Martin Smith and I responded to with a shake of the head or a puzzled frown, which got Nigel more and more worked up. Ah, happy times!



Art Widner and his "Original (1941) Enchanted Duplicator!" (Photo by Pat Virzi)

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Richmond 2014



LEFT and BELOW:
Sticky notes proliferate as everyone works on
The Wall of Fannish Connections.

BOTTOM: Fast times in the con suite.
Clockwise from lower left: Michael Dobson, Bill Burns,
Hope Leibowitz, Mary Ellen Moore, Murray Moore,
Ken Forman, Frank Lunney, and Jeanne Bowman.

(Photos by Pat Virzi)



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Newcastle on Tyne 2015

Claire Brialey: SUBCOMMITTEES

Perhaps because Corflus are usually lightly programmed and that allows a lot of time for talking to people in a relatively small group, each one seems to provide a pretty intense dip into the fannish experience. Sometimes running a Corflu can be intense too, whether your committee consists of one person or a dozen, and the busiest people usually end up volunteering to take on even more of the work.

For Newcastle in 2015 Mark and I worked with Christina Lake and Doug Bell to put the programme together, and although it was a lot of work (hence having a programme sub-committee larger than some Corflu committees) it was also a lot of fun (hence having

a programme sub-committee that meant we could spend time hanging out with Doug and Christina). It's perhaps a valid criticism that our programme didn't leave as much time as usual for chatting in the bar, but I'm still pleased with what we put together — not just the individual items, most of which worked as we'd hoped and generated some interesting discussion, but with the way things happened in practice. The programme booklet is a genuine document of record in a way that doesn't usually happen at conventions: all the items started and finished on time, with all the listed participants.

Immediately after that I gave up conrunning. Again.

Toronto 2018



TOP LEFT: Skel is utterly stunned by the program.
LEFT: Rob Jackson livecasts Kurt Erichsen's mimeo demonstration.
ABOVE: Claire Brialey and Geri Sullivan raise their glasses at the Bheer Tasting.
(Photos by Pat Virzi)

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College Station 2020

Tommy Ferguson: MY FIRST CORFLU

Reading about these memories online and hearing from Rob Jackson I'm constantly surprised by famous fanzine fans that I know of — who've never been to Corflu. Or those who've been to only one...

I was supposed to go to Corflu 15 — in Leeds in 1998 with the rest of the Belfast fanzine crew, Eugene Doherty, Mark McCann and James McKee. In fact, I think the only reason they were going was me browbeating them into it. I was staying with Mark as I was unemployed and was going to do Corflu on the cheap — in fact I think Eugene and I were going to bus it from Belfast to Leeds. I'm reliably informed, after all these years, that I'd just got a new job and couldn't get the time off to go — or something silly like that. And as we hit Corflu 40 in Belfast, I'll be 2 weeks into another new job; what goes around.

So, my first Corflu was Heatwave, in College Station in 2020 where I was a Corflu 50 guest along with Howard Waldrop — now there's a mismatch. I used to think that Novacon was where 'my people' gathered but I quickly realised on the Thursday night when I met with Valerie & John Purcell and Pat Virzi in a local craft ale pub. Pints and burgers and great craic — it was like we all knew each other forever.

And that just continued throughout the con — Rob introducing me to people whose names I only recognised from fanzines, re-connected with Nigel Rowe and Andy Hooper and being feted throughout for no obvious reason. I did a discussion on Northern Ireland



TOP: John Purcell pushes Tommy Ferguson towards chairing his own Corflu. ABOVE: Howard Waldrop and Murray Moore.

(Photos by Pat Virzi)

fandom, wasn't Guest of Honour, drank a bit too much and just fell in love with my hobby all over again.

Since hearing about Leeds and reading Mark's con report — see 1998 in this section — I've always blathered on about hosting a Corflu in Belfast, the home of fandom. It has taken a while — but you're all here and the Craic is going to be ninety!

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Bristol 2021

Claire Brialey: **THE BELLS**

It was particularly fitting for a Corflu that I should be awakened one morning in Bristol (2021) being reminded of an Arthur Thomson cartoon.

There's a grand church near the Mercure Holland House hotel. St Mary Redcliffe, apparently. It's been there for over 800 years. I thought nothing of it other than as a landmark for navigation until Sunday morning, when I was summoned by bells. Church bells, I'm informed by the St Mary Redcliffe website, are the largest and loudest musical instrument. The bells at this particular church are

renowned, moreover, for being one of the finest rings of twelve bells in the country: 'the fifth heaviest ring after Liverpool Cathedral, Exeter Cathedral, St Paul's Cathedral in London and York Minster'.

In this respect only it seemed unfortunate that I'd had a particularly enjoyable evening in the hotel bar until about 4 am, among other things pondering the semantic difference between a butt dial and a booty call (winky face).

Eventually Mark woke up too. 'What bells?' he said.

Dave Langford: **THANKS IN ABSENTIA**

One of my happiest Corflu memories is from one I didn't even attend. I was stunned, gobsmacked and even crogged by the 2021 announcement of the FAAn Life Achievement Award — particularly unexpected since I spend so much time these days on the

irremediably sercon *SF Encyclopedia* and on *Ansible* with its cargo of death, death and more death (Greg Pickersgill would recognize that line). I should have come to the delayed Bristol Corflu that year to say thanks all round, but haven't been able to face conventions



Corflu Concorde group photo. FRONT ROW: Brian Ameringen, España Sheriff, John Coxon, Keith Freeman, Alison Scott, Steven Cain. MIDDLE ROW: Ian Sorensen, Rob Jackson, Peter Sullivan, Bill Burns, Mary Burns, John Nielsen Hall, Yvonne Rowse, Hazel Ashworth West, Sandra Bond. BACK ROW: Mark Plummer, Rich Coad, Victor Gonzalez, Tom Becker, Steve Jeffery, Vikki Lee France, Doug Bell, Christina Lake, Claire Brialey, Caroline Mullan, Tommy Ferguson. Also at Corflu Concorde: James Bacon, Ian Millsted, Nigel Rowe, Spike, Pete Young. (Photo by John Coxon)

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since realizing at the 2019 Eastercon that I was having a bad time owing to my personal cargo of deaf, deaf and more deaf (Greg Pickersgill would frown at that line). Thank you all!

I used to joke about the deaf twit thing, which reminds me of a pointless and annoying anecdote. Back in 1983 when invited to write a funny column for an ensmalled fanzine, I lazily fell back on the Ed McBain title

“Let’s Hear It for the Deaf Man”. But the editor objected, saying it made him wince and others would surely find it painful too. Thus it was that I learned of the deep sensitivity and concern for fannish feelings embodied in Richard Bergeron.

Thanks again for the award. I was and am mightily chuffed.

Vancouver 2022

Garth Spencer: **WHAT CORFLU DOES**

What was your first Corflu like? My first Corflu (Pangloss) was a little like my first convention, when I met fans from out of town for the first time, and having a lot of fun with people who knew the references. Except that almost all of us had white hair at Pangloss.

Which Corflu was most enjoyable or special to you or gave you especially fond memories? This may have been my first Corflu, or the second if, at the time when Seattle hosted Corflu and Potlatch on consecutive weekends, I actually attended Corflu.

What is the silliest (printable) anecdote you remember? Nic Farey coming up to me in the consuite and bellowing “HELLO!”, and we immediately enacted the Gumby brain surgery sketch. Not remembering that it was well past the deadline for being Very Quiet in the hotel.

What has Corflu done for fanzines, fanzine fandom and fanzine fans? Preserving a place for us to go and meet each other.

Claire Brialey: **VIRTUAL ACCOLADE**

The Vancouver Corflu (2022) was also a first for me, because it was the first one we attended virtually. And of course that’s not actually true: Corflu — that bastion of traditional fan activity — was a trailblazer when it came to having a virtual con suite, streamed and recorded programme for catch-up viewing, and indeed hybrid auctions. But in the Before Times we didn’t think about, say, dropping into the post-banquet festivities from the

comfort of our own home as being a virtual member of the con; it was just the sort of thing you could do at Corflu.

And so I was not just watching but also being watched over the internet when I was — to my considerable surprise — elected the past president of fwa for 2021. As I said then, it might be the best accolade I’ve ever received because it’s the only role I’ve been given in fandom that didn’t require me to do anything!

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Belfast 2023

Gerri Sullivan: **CORFLU CONNECTIONS, PART 2**

Fast-forward from 1986 to 2023: My year started with a 6,000-mile, 4-week road trip to Texas and Arizona. Pat Virzi joined me for the TX–AZ half of the trip, where we stayed with... yep, Patrick and Teresa Nielsen Hayden. Pat and I are sharing a room at Corflu Craic and I look forward to showing her Oblique House and the Tower of Trufandom, places Walter took me on my first visit to Norn Iron in 1989.

What goes around, comes around. Corflu remains a fountain of friendship and a wonder in my life.

*Gerri's massive inflatable gargoyle, Fido, makes a surprise appearance in a hotel room at Chiflu.
(Photo by Pat Virzi)*



All Corflus

Claire Brialey: **IMMORTALITY AND COMMUNITY**

For the second British Corflu (2010) Mark and I worked with Randy Byers to produce a fanthology, *Slow Train to Immortality*, which covered the period since *Time Bytes*, edited by Lilian Edwards and Christina Lake for the 1995 Worldcon. It provided a wonderful opportunity/excuse to (re)read many fanzines, and it was interesting to see the themes that emerged — not least how people were feeling about the relevance and utility of fanzines and fanzine fandom. Even the years of high activity involved a degree of worrying about how much time fanzines had left, rather than deciding that was all the more reason to make a point of enjoying it while we could.

I really miss the sense of community that I found between fanzines, back in the day

when it felt as though there was a fanzine scene, both in the UK and as part of a wider international community. Not the '50s, '70s or '80s, that time: it was in 2002/3, which feels almost as recent now as it still did in 2010. Those fanzines were talking to and about one another. Yes, we were writing on LiveJournal and elists as well, and some of the fanzines were reprinting some of the best writing from those places, but that in itself showed that fanzines were still where we felt the locus of conversation to be, even then.

I appreciate Corflu as an opportunity to hang out with some of the people who understand why I still spend some of my time doing this, and also to pick up the conversations in a more direct and immediate way.

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The group doesn't include everyone I want to talk to in fandom, or even every fanzine fan I want to talk to, but it's a condensed experience of a community to which I do now feel that I belong. And of course, Corflu can be a great incentive and inspiration for fanzines: a fixed point by which to produce a fanzine, a

renewal of energy for all sorts of fan activity afterwards — and a source of content that goes beyond con reports to prompt thought and discussion and share scurrilous stories beyond the group of people who were there.

Did you know I even met Graham Charnock in a Corflu bathroom once?

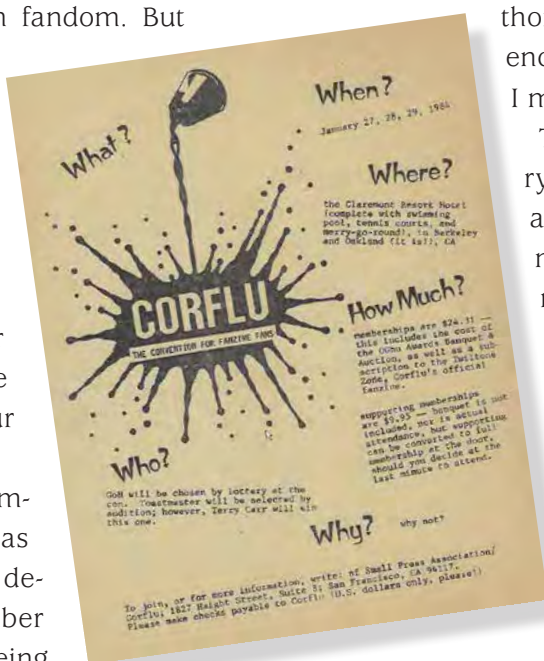
Lucy Huntzinger: CORFLU MEMORIES

It's easy enough to remember how we came up with the idea for Corflu. I've told that story a lot over the years because I'm the only co-founder and member of the original committee still involved in fandom. But it's harder to remember the details of its genesis. I just remember how excited we were to bring the focus back to print fandom. Fanzine fandom had been marginalized at the bigger conventions for some time and we were gleefully taking back our fanhistory.

The one thing I do remember is how everyone was 100% on board with the decision that every con member was by default worthy of being

the Guest of Honor. That is still my very favorite part of Corflu. One of my two absolute best memories was finally having my name pulled out of the literal hat at Corflu 30. I thoroughly relished the experience and my "speech" was, if I may say so myself, a big hit.

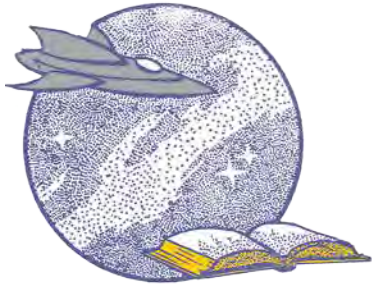
The other favorite memory is meeting my husband at the first Corflu. Our eyes met across the hotel ballroom and we had the same thought, as we later discovered: "There is the only other cute, single person at this con. I must meet them." So thanks for the spouse and the Guest of Honorship, Corflu!



Reprint acknowledgments

Reprinted pieces listed below, with thanks and original publications as listed.

- Rob Hansen (*Tyson's Corner 1986; Portland 2013*): **American Trips** (TAFF e-book, ed. Rob Hansen).
- Dave Langford (*Leeds 1998; Winchester 2010*): *Ansible* (ed. Dave Langford). *Bristol 2021* is first published here.
- Mark McCann (*Leeds 1998*): *Gotterdammerung* (eds. Mark McCann & James McKee).



The FANAC Fan History Project

**for preservation and distribution of information about
science fiction and science fiction fandom**

fanac.org

is for original fan materials. Here you might find copies of your favorite old fanzine, pictures of Walt Willis playing Ghoddminton in Ireland or Harlan Ellison by the pool at the convention that inspired the writing of the filk song "Bouncing Potatoes", and the lyrics to the song as well. You'll find original fan articles, histories, and references about fandom. We catalog and provide access to material from Worldcons and other conventions, fanzines, clubs, photos, fannish references, Fan Funds, and just about anything else related to science fiction fandom and its past. You can find information about today's fandom too, because that's tomorrow's past. We are the archive of fandom.

FANAC.org as of 2/7/2023: 1,902 Fanzine Titles • 19,961 Fanzine Issues • 361,014 Fanzine Pages • 111 Newszine Titles • 4,172 Newszine Issues • 35,083 Newszine Pages • 822 Conventions • 3,447 Convention Publications/Related Pubs • 63,816 Conventions Publications/Related Pubs Pages • 8,500+ total photos • 75 Worldcons represented • 244 Other conventions represented • 55 Clubs and regions represented • 7 Personal collections. (Fanzine numbers include newszines; convention numbers are current as of 12/22/22)

fancylopedia.org

is where you can find articles and interpretation about all aspects of SF fandom: people, places, things, events, honors and awards, conventions, slogans, clubs and most of the etceteras that occur to you. Fancylopedia 3 is a collective enterprise of all of fandom. Based on the previous works by Jack Speer (*Fancylopedia 1*), and Dick Eney (*Fancylopedia 2*), it is written by fans who want to contribute. You will find material on topics as far ranging as the Cosmic Circle of the 1930s to the Sad Puppies of 2014. It is a "Wikipedia for Fandom".

*Fancylopedia 3 as of 12/22/2022:
29,538 Total articles • 6,341 People, including 4,593 Fans • 338 Fanzines • 6,191 Conventions • 1,515 Clubs and APAs*

Our YouTube channel at
preserves video and illus-

youtube.com/c/fanacfanhistory

trated audio records of science fiction and fandom. You'll find a recording of pulp writers discussing how it was to work with H.P. Lovecraft and Robert E. Howard, video of Gary Kurtz and Mark Hamill talking about *Star Wars* before its release, reminiscences about the fan scene of the 70s in Minneapolis, and more. These recordings add another dimension to understanding and appreciating the science fiction and fandom of the past.

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The FANAC Fan History Project is sponsored by the Florida Association for Nucleation and Conventions (F.A.N.A.C.), Inc. which was the organization behind MagiCon, the 50th World Science Fiction Convention in Orlando, Florida in 1992. FANAC was organized in 1987 to bid for and run the 50th Worldcon. The Fan History Project has been running since 1994. The FANAC.ORG website was started in 1996, Fancylopedia.org in 2010, and the YouTube channel in 2016. F.A.N.A.C Inc. is a non-profit organization approved by the IRS under section 501(c)3.

“ANY CRAIC, LADS?”

Craic is the Irish word that most confuses outsiders, yet it is a relatively simple concept. It is the atmosphere, fun, carry-on surrounding a particular night out.

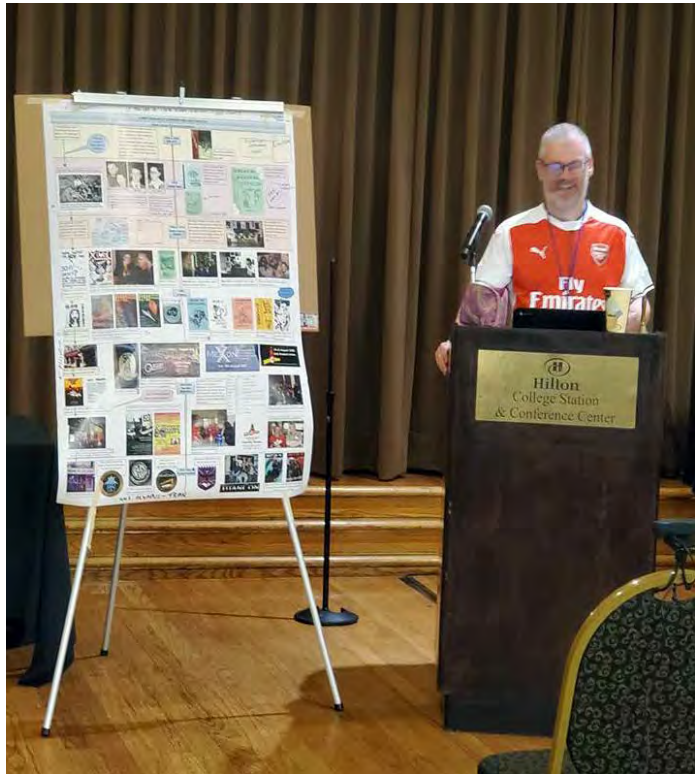
“How was the craic?” is the first question uppermost in most young (and old) Irish minds after a weekend. Here’s the encyclopedia definition:

Craic (/kræk/ KRACK), or “crack” is a term for news, gossip, fun, entertainment, and enjoyable conversation, particularly prominent in Ireland. It is often used with the definite article — the craic.

So now that you have a grasp on what craic is, here’s all the different kinds of craic (as if you weren’t confused enough!):

- ❖ **Good craic:** A fairly ok night out, fun but nothing too amazing.
- ❖ **Mighty craic:** Better than good craic, not quite at the highest level, someone did some crazy stuff maybe.
- ❖ **Savage craic:** Almost there, great night all together, everyone on top form, Guinness flowing, great jokes.
- ❖ **Deadly craic:** A step above savage craic but not quite the Everest moment.
- ❖ **Wile Craic:** Next level stuff — Derry Craic (Derry Girls anyone?) -It represents a pronunciation of wild!
- ❖ **The craic was ninety:** The nirvana of craic, everything was amazing, incredible, everyone hooked up, the pints were great. No one quite sure how the word ninety came into it — a famous Christy Moore song “The craic was ninety in the Isle of Man” maybe...





NORTHERN IRELAND FANDOM

The TommyWorld View

..... TOMMY FERGUSON

This is a history of Northern Ireland fandom, but in reality it's a history of Tommy Ferguson in Northern Ireland fandom. I prepared a detailed flipchart poster with what I know of the history of Irish fandom for a talk at the 2019 Dublin Worldcon, and when I was the Corflu Fifty guest at Corflu Heatwave in College Station, Texas in 2020 I gave another presentation and used it again. But I do recognise that there are people attending Corflus who know a lot more about Irish fandom than me. Certainly at the Worldcon panel at Corflu Heatwave, Sandra, John D. Berry and people talked about some of the older fans and I found out stuff that I didn't know. Sandra Bond quickly spotted a number of errors and typos on the poster, as it was really thrown together for the Worldcon the previous year.

So what I did at Heatwave was to rattle briefly through the poster, which was in three stages: the old stuff, what we call the new stuff in the middle, and the really new stuff. I'm around for the really new stuff, and I have some stories and tales.

So the old stuff. There's three key people in Irish Fandom: there's Walt Willis, Bob Shaw and James White. There were some others around at the time, but for me that's the cornerstone of our family, to be honest. Walt Willis and me: this is going to be the topic of a forthcoming article, so yes, I am writing again.

Certainly at first, I didn't like Walt Willis; I wasn't his favourite person, and he really didn't like me. That's a generational thing, nothing to do with fandom, because when we first met I was eighteen or nineteen, straight from university. I come from a fairly socialist if not communist background, trade union movements, and in terms of Irish politics that was quite on the other spectrum from what Walt Willis was. We all knew Walt was a fairly senior civil servant in the Irish government; he was responsible for laws and legislation which I didn't practically agree with.

But we had fandom in common, and the first time I met him he gave me one of his own copies of *Warhoon* to read which kind of opened my eyes to fandom — that's one of the reasons I'm here. But he also bought me lunch. It was very awkward back in the mid-eighties; in Belfast, you couldn't go anywhere for lunch especially on Sundays. So he



took me to one of his haunts — almost a private club. When we got there, I thought my God, these are all the people the folk down on the streets protested against. Why are we sitting here? And you couldn't get a drink; the licensing laws in Northern Ireland were — still are — appalling. On Sundays they close at 10 pm; it's awful. Within ten minutes of starting our lunch we were just railing against this and I was saying that it's terrible, young people like me who are coming up who want to change the world, and to do that we need Guinness on Sundays. And he politely said, "Well, I'm the person who built all those laws and that's why you can't drink Guinness on Sundays."

So we didn't start off well. But we did continue to correspond and in fact Walt donated a lot of his fanzines (sadly not the exciting stuff!) when he left 32 Warren Road.

Bob Shaw's a different story. Anybody who's ever met Bob will know what a star he is. He's funny, he's generous, he's wonderful. The story I tell is around one of our conventions here. We were thinking who to have as our Guest of Honour and we thought, you know, Bob Shaw's from Belfast, we've got to have him over. James White was the Guest of Honour as well. And so we invited him over.



But being poor students we didn't have any money, and he very generously flew over on his own dime. As you know, his family are from Belfast and he got a chance to visit them as well. Though Bob came on the serious side to give talks, he made himself available, he signed books, he had a few beers. It was a really good occasion.

The convention itself was terrible but he was fantastic, he was the stand-out star. It was only afterwards we found out that because of the university timetable we'd organised it midterm in the winter term — just the same weekend as Novacon! Of course we didn't have this broader context, and we found out that that was the first time he'd actually missed Novacon. He'd been to all of them before and subsequent to coming to Belfast he went to all of them afterwards. We felt only half an inch tall after hearing that, but it's a measure of the man that he actually did that. He came across and spoilt his perfect record, as it were, to come and support the Northern Ireland fans. That sticks in my mind as the kind of person Bob Shaw is.

The third person is James White. He changed my fannish life; and not only changed my fannish life, he's changed my life personally, and made me a better human being for having known him. That's the kind of man he was. I wrote a little bit about him on the back page of my fanzine. It's called "James White: A Gentle Fan, and a Gentle Man," and that's exactly what he was; he was a wonderful man. I missed Caroline Mullan's presentation at Worldcon, though she did send me her poster to view and comment beforehand. With all the fannish stuff at Worldcon scheduled on Thursday I wasn't able to attend, but



just seeing all this stuff on the poster and presentation she had, she just nailed it, she got him to a T. That's exactly how he was.

He was impeccably kind, he was always there, and hilariously funny. You'd suddenly go hang on, that was five minutes ago, that was a brilliant joke; it went right over my head! Very smart guy, very welcoming. He was always present. Sometimes you'd see Guests of Honour or big fans, and they're thinking of the next quip to say or thinking about what's going to happen next in the convention, or their mind's not always there. James was always present; he was

always staring you in the eye, he was always interested in what you had to say. These days we'd call him an active listener.

He was a wonderful human being. He was the Honorary President of the Queens' Science Fiction Society, which myself and a colleague founded in 1986. He jumped at the chance. He actually suggested, "you know, you need somebody with a little bit of gravitas to pull people in."

He was omnipresent until he passed away.

Ian McDonald has that honour at the moment, so when the president comes along, we give him a bottle of whiskey or something as a present. So Ian got a bottle of whiskey and then every time he attends a meeting, he expects a bottle of whiskey. That's Ian for you. Back in the day when you went to a convention, you used to walk up to an author, a bit shy, and say "Excuse me, can I buy you a drink?" just to get the opportunity to chat to them. Ian McDonald's always been different to me. He'd always go up to the bar and say to me "Tommy — buy me a drink!" And I always do.

So that's the triumvirate. As I say, there are more knowledgeable people about the three of them, but that's based on my personal knowledge.

After those guys we come to the middle, the Sixties and Seventies. We call these the lost decades of Irish fandom, because even though there was a lot of stuff happening in Belfast and the rest of Ireland as well, it wasn't really fannish. There were no publications, authors, writers or anything like that, but it was a real hot bed of groups and people meeting up, all based on James White's Belfast science fiction group. He used to teach creative writing at a local college in Belfast, and after the course we'd all retire to the pub; and that's where the Belfast Science Fiction Group meeting really got started. And it's been going on ever since then; that's been the spine of the whole timeline of the fandom. That was on the far left of the poster I did.

There was a bunch of people there. There's a guy called Dr. Jim Mallory who's a professor at the University of Belfast; he's been around Belfast for donkey's years; and another guy called Paul Campbell, another old-time fan who produced a science fiction magazine from Northern Ireland. There were three issues, called *Extro*; and famously the 4th issue is providing lining in his attic, as it didn't get published. Semi-professional, it went up against *Interzone* and battled strongly. If you ever get the chance, look that up; it had some really good short stories in there. Other guys were Frank McKeever and Joe Dolan, who sadly aren't with us any more. One of the guys used to work in the shipyards — full of stories, very entertaining. Frank McKeever was our local science fiction buff; he was a data mine for our group. He knew everything about everything; in particular, he knew everything about pseudonyms.

There was a whole bunch of stuff going on there, but if you think back to Sixties and Seventies Belfast, you can imagine how difficult it was actually to get to meetings. There was civil unrest, there were the Troubles. They led to one of the great stories Jim Mallory told often. We couldn't meet in his home any more with various bombs and bullets and threats etc. We actually met at James White's house in West Belfast; we met in various homes. Jim Mallory is a Californian liberal, 6 foot 7 inches tall. There was Graham Andrews, whose grandfather was Prime Minister of Northern Ireland.

He was a bastion of the local establishment, quite posh as well. Paul Campbell was a teacher at that time in a Republican nationalist area.

They were stopped by the police. When you were stopped by the police in Belfast, they were carrying automatic machine guns, they were in full Kevlar, and had big Jeeps. When you get stopped by the police you get stopped by the police!

They asked: "Where are you guys going to?" One was going to south Belfast, the university area, very liberal. Others were going to east Belfast, which is one side of the tracks, but others were going to north Belfast which is on the other side of the tracks.

They were going; "Where the hell have you guys come from? How do you know each other?"

They all started to laugh and said, "It's science fiction."

They said, "All right, on you go." Really nice story.

At Heatwave, Sandra Bond asked if I had some Joe McNally stories. My lawyer wasn't around, so I told one!

Joe McNally is in one of the pictures on the poster; he's the big guy with the hair. Joe is a contemporary of ours. He's not involved in fandom any more. His Dad was the Chief Justice of Northern Ireland, an old fashioned member of the establishment. We went to his house one night. We'd had a few drinks, played some RPGs and chilled out. Joe was a 19 year old; he didn't have a bedroom, he had a suite. He had a room and an en-suite.

It was a huge house, so we all just crashed out there as we'd had a drink. He said, "Don't get up in the morning without waking me," and we said OK. He said, "Stay here; don't go anywhere else." But we'd had a few drinks, and on Sunday his dad had the papers delivered.

So Eugene Doherty was the least hung over of us and went down to get them from the front porch, inadvertently setting off the house's silent alarm. Joe staggered downstairs to try and enter the security code, but missed by seconds. "Right — everyone into the dining room," which was on the ground floor with huge bay windows looking over the mature garden. "Put your hands on the table, and keep

them there, as if we were in a séance.” Stranger and stranger, I thought, until the armed response unit from the local police turned up in the garden with machine guns and tactical gear like some SWAT team from the movies. It all got sorted out and no one got shot, but we left shortly after that and weren’t invited back!

This is where I went off script; you have to look at the poster. The middle years, the lost decades, are in the middle, with the 1960s and 70s. I showed the three copies of *Extro*, the science fiction magazine published in Belfast.

Part-way down the poster is where I come in, in 1986. I come to Belfast from a small town in the northwest to come to university; and I rock up and say “Great — where is the science fiction club? Can I sign up?”

“We don’t have anything like that here!” And I said: “Bloody ridiculous!” So I started one. I think that’s what happens with me. More recently I went to Canada in ’97 and said: “Where’s the club meeting? Where do all you guys hang out?”

And Mike Glicksohn says, “There’s nothing; we don’t have anything like that.”

So I say, “Okay let’s fix that,” and start the first Thursday meetings, which are still going. I rock up and find out there’s nobody of my people where I am, so I find them and get them organised, and make things happen. And that’s what happened in Belfast as well.

After that I went to my first Eastercon in Glasgow, Albacon 3, in the Central Hotel — where I had the misfortune to meet Ian Sorensen. We were just chatting; he used to do *Conrunner*, and I said, “This is great stuff.” There were hundreds of people there, all fans — all my friends, people I know, and some others. We should do this in Belfast. On the Sunday they had What’s Coming Next: any cons? And Ian said. “Tommy Ferguson’s running the Bridge in Belfast next year!” So I took it on myself, and we had NIcon in 86. Anne McCaffrey was our guest of honour. We really wanted her there, and she was cheap. We had four NIcons; you see them here. At the last one Terry Pratchett was our guest of honour. Sandra (Bond) in 1988 would have been to that one in Winchester. That was the blossoming of Northern Ireland science fiction fandom.

I was away after that for 10 years or something; it seems such a long time ago.

If experts such as Mark Olson are around, I’d love to have them edit the poster; there are many, many errors and typos. I had a clean copy of the poster at Heatwave, and we will have this at Craic as well. So please come and have a look, and add stuff that needs to be on there. The dotted line coming down the left is me, my fannish story as it were. Here I started my own science fiction society. I’ve been involved in a number of fanzines; you may know about a fanzine called *Gotterdammerung*, a Belfast fanzine. It was a bit rough and ready, but there was some excellent writing in there.

On the poster is the bar where we used to meet. This was a bar called White’s Tavern; there was a jazz band there then. Being true fans we also used to go to a bar called the Monaco bar; we went there for years and years. We’ve moved on now to a place called the Errigle Inn. If you were at the Eurocon last year you’ll know we went there on the Thursday night. A big pub with no music, no TV’s; you’d be happy to chat. A real nice pub. It also happens to be just round the corner from my house — that’s a coincidence! — and that is where we’ve been meeting ever since. There’s *Dr Who* and media fandom, but no real fannish fandom apart from us guys in the pub.

And then we get onto the new stuff; this is where the kids take over, and it all goes horribly wrong. Or right. We had another series of conventions called MeCons. We’ve got a list here; it’s a Who’s Who of authors. James White the first one; Harry Harrison, Ian MacDonald, Ken MacLeod, Peter Hamilton, Robert Rankin, Diane Duane, Iain Banks, and Charles Stross. A really great series of 10 cons, all student run, all really well done.

That rather died a death at the end of the Noughties, but we’ve got a lot of other stuff going on. After NIcon and MeCon we’re now on to Titancon, that’s the latest series. I think we’ve had about 10 now, the last one being

(continued on page 48)



"A Brief Timeline of Northern Ireland Fandom"

(upper left poster panel)

A BRIEF TIMELINE OF NORTHERN IRELAND FANDOM

People, Groups, Fanzines

Science Fiction League (SFL) Chapter 20 formed in Belfast — the beginning of Irish Fandoms' Golden Age.

IF lineage through to today, follow the dotted line

James White discovers fandom through a reference to the Belfast chapter of the SFL (#20) organised by a Hugh Carswell, in a 1935 issue of Wonder Stories. He later meets Walt Willis on 26th August 1947 and Irish Fandom is born—this date later becomes 'Irish Fandom Day' and is celebrated in a few places... Raise a glass of your favourite tippie.

1930s & 1940s
Birth of IF

The Golden Age of Irish Fandom—all in one picture...



Left to Right: George Charters, Bob Shaw, Chuch Harris, Peggy White, James White, Madeleine Willis, Walter Willis From the collection of Jeff Schalles



Walter & Madeleine Willis



Bob Shaw



James White

1950s
Golden Years

"WAW with The Crew in 52!" Walter A Willis Travels to the 1952 WorldCon in Chicago ChiCon 2 on the back of donations from other Fans—TAFF (Trans Atlantic Travel Fund) is born.

James White discovers fandom through a reference to the Belfast chapter of the SFL (#20) organised by a Hugh Carswell, in a 1935 issue of Wonder Stories

The 'Golden Age' of Irish Fandom: an era drew to a close in 170 Upper Newtownards Road, as the Willis's move to Warren Road in the 'D' - Donaghadee.



1960s & 1970s
Fallow Years
Rebirth?

Wanna Join/Form The New QUB SCI-FI SOCIETY? MEETING IN CONFERENCE ROOM - THURS 13th FEB 1-00 PM CONTACT T.FERGUSON 18 COLLEGE Cdns PHONE 667067

1986 Tommy Ferguson & Eugene Doherty launch the QUB SF Society



NI has a strong Comics tradition—Will Simpson, Hilary Robinson, Peter Morwood & Davy Francis (here with Harry Harrison at UNICon X) emerge from the underground scene.



Hyphen 37—reflecting on 40 years of Irish Fandom

1980s
IF Redux



Really Steenky Badges!



A full-resolution image of this poster is available at corflu.org.

"A Brief Timeline of Northern Ireland Fandom"

(upper right poster panel)



NORTHERN IRELAND FANDOM

Magazines & Conventions

1940s
of IF



Slant fanzine published by Walt Willis and Bob Shaw from 1948

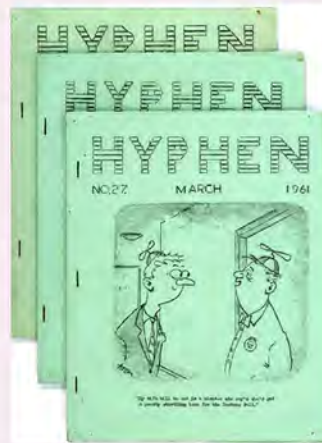
1950s
Years



"The Harp Stateside" Willis published classic trip report "The Harp Stateside" (1957), which has come to be regarded as the best fan trip report ever written.



Enchanted Duplicator (1954)



Hyphen fanzine published by Walt Willis and Chuck Harris (1952–1965)

1970s
Years or
Birth?

New Age of IF 'New Irish Fandom' opens with James White teaching a writing class in the Belfast Tech for the Workers Education Association (WEA)—the class meets afterwards (with Bob Shaw) in White's Tavern and Belfast science fiction group/society is born -'New Irish Fandom'.



Paul Campbell, Frank McKeever, Graham Andrews, Jim Mallory and Joe Nolan—with Caroline Mullan—take over the reins...



NiCon 86 Guests: Anne McCaffrey, Peter Morwood and James White.



NiCon 88 Guest: Katherine Kurtz, being interviewed by committee member Bill Boyle



NiCon committee members celebrate surviving another con

1980s
Index



NICON '87



"NiCon all we need is U!"

A full-resolution image of this poster is available at corflu.org.

"A Brief Timeline of Northern Ireland Fandom"

(lower left poster panel)



Tommy Ferguson, Mark McCann & James McKee launch *Gotterdammerung*—and publish it for 12 issues!



Extra—Northern Ireland's first semi-professional SF magazine is launched by Paul Campbell—the near mythical 4th issue is still lagging the roof space of his old house!

Really Steenky Badges!



White's Tavern morphs into The Monico group to get away from the Jazz night



James White award launched



Q-Con—a hugely successful gaming con in Belfast—26 of them to date! Even knocking down the venue hasn't stopped them...



Young upstarts Tommy, Eugene and Malcom start attending The Monico and fanzines/ newsletters appear

Ni's love affair with comics continues from 2D in Derry—and the ever expanding and successful Enniskillen Comic Fest. None of that ComicCon nonsense...

"Don't mention Octocon and the Cortex incident..."

1990/2000s
The New Generation



The Monico group migrates to the Errigle Inn—where we continue to meet every other Thursday. Jim Mallory is the tall guy at the back linking us right back to the 1970, and a continuous meeting Belfast from the 40s.



Errigle "Summer Outing" trips start!

USS Caroline—local Star Trek fandom—has its own Belfast ship. See what they did, there?



TTN—A very popular gaming group—meeting weekly in Belfast.

Another regular pub meeting—a lot more organised than the Errigle!



2000s & Beyond
Go Big or Go Ho

"A Brief Timeline of Northern Ireland Fandom"

(lower right poster panel)



dux



Shortly after the formation of the QUB SF Society—a Convention series was born!



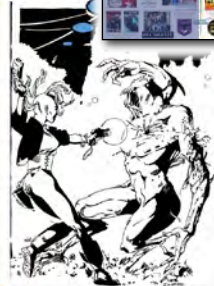
NICONs quickly descend to the normal fan cat worship!



With the next year the ante is upped—a great con



NiCon 88—the lull before the big finish!



Cover art for U-NiCon X—UK Annual University Con 1989—a massive success



Northern Ireland's Premier Science Fiction and Fantasy Convention
3rd - 5th August 2007

29-31 August 2008
QUB Student Union
a Science Fiction and Fantasy Convention

2000s New ation

The MeCon series of conventions deserve a whole poster to themselves—as you can see from the table on the right. Wonderful guests like Michael Sheard regaling with tales from the industry and the now infamous Iain Banks Whiskey/Whisky tasting panel...

Convention	Dates	Guests
MeCon 1	Apr 18-19, 1988	James White
MeCon 2	Mar 13-14, 1989	Michael Marshall Smith
MeCon 2000	Mar 11-12, 2000	Harry Harrison, Ian McDonald
MeCon Delta	Mar 9-11, 2001	Michael Sheard
MeCon V	Mar 8-10, 2002	Ken MacLeod, Mike Cobley, Ian McDonald, David Wisniewski
MeCon 6	Mar 7-9, 2003	Peter F. Hamilton, Paul Holden, Ian McDonald
MeCon 7	Mar 5-7 2004	Robert Rankin, Ian McDonald, Paul Holden, John Meany, Michael Carroll, Glenn Fabry
MeCon 8	Mar 4-6, 2005	Juliet McKenna
MeCon 9	August 4-6, 2006	Diane Duane, Peter Morwood, Ian McDonald
MeCon 10	August 3-5, 2007	Iain M. Banks
MeCon 11	August 29-31, 2008	Charles Stross



Various MeCon Committee members and guests.



Malcolm Hutchison being regaled by Graham Andrews.

Queen's Student Union, Belfast
29th-31st August 2008
Guest of Honour
Charles Stross
Special Guests:
Michael Carroll - Paul Cornell - Paul J. Hozan
John Meany - Ian McDonald - John Vaughan
Special thanks to: [unreadable]
www.mecon.org.uk



Iain McDonald and Iain Banks—great guests!

Brotherhood Without Banners—help get TitanCon started...

Beyond: Go Home!



TITANCON



Belfast Comic fandom going strong with Sector House 13 'The Pit' crew publishing semi-professional comics with fantastic stories & artwork

A full-resolution image of this poster is available at corflu.org.

(continued from page 43)

Eurocon in 2019 after the Worldcon, and although we'd planned to run that again it got cancelled due to COVID. That was themed after *Game of Thrones*.

What's going to happen next? Well, I'm excited again; I'm genuinely getting back into things. I'd been out of fandom for quite some time, but was brought back in because of the Worldcon. I hadn't been involved with the Eastercon, but had to run one of the bids in Belfast when we had to step in and run Titancon in 2019. It was effectively a rescue con, as we had to step in and run it at very short notice. You can find a web page that announces a science fiction "trade show" called Titancon in August last year, but this is a scam, as the event didn't exist.

Comics are a big thing in Northern Ireland just now, a huge comics fandom happening — gaming, anime, cosplay, all that stuff for the

young kids. We're organising a convention this year for around a hundred people. Each year in Belfast they have a gaming convention with just shy of 10,000 people; it is huge. There's a fan base in there, people in there we know we could grab; as there's 10,000, if we could grab a half dozen of them that'd be great. And that's what's happening with fandom in Northern Ireland these days. *Game of Thrones* has been a game changer, raising things to a new level. I'm not a big *Game of Thrones* fan, through I love the books. The shows I don't get, but I can see the commercial opportunities there of getting those people in through the door, so we do want to influence people with this stuff.

Finally, don't forget to look at the poster which will be on show again here at Craic, and add anything we haven't got on there that needs to be recorded. We don't want our history lost!



COR41U
LAS VEGAS

FEBRUARY 29 - MARCH 3 2024

TAKE THE LEAP

SANDRA BOND CO-CHAIR, PROGRAMMING
NIC FAREY CO-CHAIR, PLANNING
JEN FAREY NORTH AMERICA ADMIN AND TREASURER
KEITH FREEMAN EUROPE ADMIN AND TREASURER

THE EXORCISTS OF IF

..... JAMES WHITE

A large and vulgarly ostentatious station wagon with the name of a local estate agent inscribed on its flanks pulled in and parked outside the garden gate of 170 Upper Newtownards Road, Belfast. Within a few minutes the Willis MG, the Charters Morris and the White Fiat, which happened to be red, pulled in behind him. The estate agent introduced himself to the three drivers, then paused while four Saracen armoured cars whined past in low gear.

“It was very good of you to come,” he went on, when they could hear themselves think again. “I know there should be five of you, but Mr. Shaw has moved with his family to England and Mr. Berry recently retired from the police fingerprint department to do the same. But I hope that you three, Mr. Willis as a former occupant of 170, and Mr. Charters and Mr. White as frequent visitors to the place, will be able to help me. You’re my last hope, in fact.”

“You weren’t very informative on the telephone,” said Walter. “What exactly is your problem?”

“And if we’re your last hope,” said James, “who or what did you try first?”

“I... I couldn’t go into details on the ‘phone,” the estate agent replied nervously. “And the first person I tried was Father Mallon from the chapel down the road —”

“I know him!” James broke in. “He’s a member of the British Interplanetary Society and he’s got a private pilot’s license and a 12-inch reflector on the presbytery roof which the Army thought at first was a SAM 7 missile system and, although he doesn’t read sf, he’s a very —”

“Well, said George, “nobody’s perfect.”

The estate agent gestured towards the three-storey, red-brick building which was 170, then went on, “I told him about the voices and noises and... other manifestations, and he agreed to visit the house for a preliminary reconnaissance prior to briefing himself on exorcism procedures. But he couldn’t do anything. Apparently the bell, book and candle bit works only against manifestations of evil and these particular spirits were noisy, hyperactive and almost palpable, but not, so far as he could ascertain, evil.”

“When he left he was talking theology, I think,” the agent finished, “and he said something about the questionable efficacy of a Holy Water sprinkler against an Opponent armed with a spectral water-pistol.”

Walter and George looked at James, who tried to look innocent.

“Anyway,” said the agent, “He agreed that there was something there, all right, but he just couldn’t enter into the spirit of the thing.”

“A priest,” said James solemnly, “could get excommunicated for a pun like that.”

“Please be serious, gentlemen,” the estate agent went on. “People, potential tenants or buyers, even I myself, have heard and seen things, the laughing and shouting noises. But I have never been able to make out what the voices were saying, or shouting. There has always been something strange about that house since you left it, Mr. Willis, and since the Troubles started it has become steadily worse. It’s a good, well-built house, but nobody will live in it for more than a week. That is why, I contacted you gentlemen. I am hoping you can do or suggest something that will rid me of these awful ghosts.”

Walter inclined his head, but he was staring at the well-remembered house as he said, “We’ll do what we can, of course. May I have the keys?”

“Thank you,” said the agent, handing them over. “You all know your way about this place, so I’ll just stay out here and mind your cars. Good luck.”

They left him pacing the pavement alongside their cars, where he would be able to reassure the Army patrols who might otherwise decide that their vehicles were possible car bombs and blow them up, and went through the garden gate and up three steps to the lawn. The gate still creaked and the lawn was covered with the same irregular patches of clover and/or shamrock, and the distant clattering of an observation helicopter merged with the buzzing of insects both actual and spectral.

“It all comes back, doesn’t it?” said Walter. The voices from the past were saying things like, “Let’s not collate today — we can discuss broad matters of policy and get sunburned” and “I’d rather lie on shamrock than real rock, which is why I like champagne, too” and “Nonsense, George, shamrock only grows on Catholic lawns” and “Well, I’m not one to worry over trefoils” and “Is it cruelty to animals to shoot down a wasp with a water-pistol?”

Walter said, “Let’s go round the back.”

It was much quieter in the back yard. A ghostly Bonestell-type spaceship towered all of eight and a half inches above the tiles while the misty figures of an impossibly young Walter, Bob and James and a slightly less

elderly George Charters crouched over it, discussing a technical problem.

According to the youthful, ghostly James, who even then had been a lapsed member of the British Interplanetary Society, the trouble lay in the fact that his balsa-wood spaceship weighed three-quarters of an ounce while its motor developed a maximum pre-Brennschluss thrust of only half an ounce, which caused the thing to just sit there hissing and straining upwards. The answer which had been worked out was breathtaking in its simplicity. A length of thread had been attached to the vehicle’s nose cone, passed over the Willis clothesline and a small bunch of keys — weighing just under three-quarters of an ounce — was tied to the other end. Phrases like “It’s an old trick, but it just might work” and “It beats the Dean Drive” hung in the air.

“Pity,” said the contemporary James, “there weren’t more clotheslines in the lunar insertion orbit.”

They passed through the oblivious figures and into the kitchen before the phantom spaceship took off and set fire to the spectral clothesline.

“Surely,” said Walter, “you were never that skinny, James. But you, George, haven’t changed a bit. You must have been born old and venerable.”

“Not true,” said George. “I got like this in primary school when I started carrying little girls’ tablets of stone home for them. I didn’t build the pyramids until a long time after that.”

The remembered smell as they entered the kitchen was a culinary effluvium describable only by Ray Bradbury in his homespun period, and the air was made even thicker by conversation like “I hate to see you slaving over hot dishes, Madeleine. Can I give you a hand?” and “Go sit in the lounge, Harris, you’re not going to slaver over my dish!” and “Farmhouse vegetable soup clogs water-pistols” and “It happens to be a diabetic apple tart riddled with visually loathsome masses of undissolved Saccharin” and “Sorry, we’re fresh out of eyes of Newt” and “No newts are good newts.”

They shuddered in unison and moved into the dining room where a ghostly double-dished light fixture — which Peggy White had once called a

candle-bra — shed a warm effulgence (because light had already been used in this sentence) on a dining table groaning with good things and bad puns provided, respectively, by Madeleine and all the fans who had visited Oblique House over the years — Lee Hoffman, Vinç Clarke, Ken Bulmer, Chuck Harris, Mai Ashworth, both Ian McAulays and dozens of others.

The noisiest spectre of the lot was Chuck, who at that time had recently gone completely deaf and had not yet learned to modulate his voice properly. He kept shouting for everyone to write it down because he couldn't lip-read Irish accents, then surreptitiously pocketed the scraps of paper for use in his monumental fan work, *Through Darkest Ireland with Knife, Fork and Spoon*. The leanest and hungriest ghost was that of Bob Shaw, who complained of having hollow bones and a fifth-dimensional gut.

“Yes, I tried the gingerbread and found it not guilty,” they were saying, and “Nobody asked if I wanted a seventh cup of tea,” and “Why do English people speak English with that terrible English accent?” and “White lions running down the middle of the road, it's the lines they keep locked up in the zoo” and “Maybe it was a mane road” and “We couldn't use grief-proof paper” and “We didn't like assembling the mag on a dining table — nobody knew if we were going to have a meal or a small collation...”

In the front lounge a ghostly John Berry, on tiptoe and with his arms flapping up and down like a pterodactyl, was describing the preliminaries to lovemaking in his house. The idea was to display one's ardour, physical fitness and aerodynamic control by launching oneself off the top of the wardrobe to make a semi-crash landing into the eager arms of one's mate. All that was required was a flat-topped wardrobe, a solidly sprung bed and a steady diet of watercress.

In a series of temporal overlays the other fannish conversations and incidents which had taken place in the room proceeded over and around the flapping figure of John, including one involving fireworks, a box of which he had inadvertently ignited with the ash from his cigarette. The other occupants of the room had hurriedly evacuated the area and were watching George from the safety of the lawn.

But George had been trapped by the Willis settee, whose upholstery was as soft and yielding as quicksand.

“Surrounded by all those sparks and glowing balls,” George replied, “we would probably have been interned for running a bomb factory.”

A slow, clanking sound — which mundane fold might well have mistaken for rattling chains — grew louder as they mounted the stairs towards the box-room. Apart from the noise made by Manly Banister's printing press turning out one of the later editions of *Slant*, the room was quiet — except when one of the fan compositors accidentally dropped a stick of type on the floor and felt the need to relieve his feelings; or when Bob and James were trying to decide whether an illo was crude or stark; or when Madeleine arrived with the tea-tray; or when a ghostly Walter dashed into the room, immaculate in tennis whites, to set a few lines of type between matches in his club's tournament, to dash out again looking like a less than immaculate Dalmatian.

Respectfully and almost ashamedly they backed away from that tiny room and its ghosts, the scene of so much fannish energy and enthusiasm, to climb slowly and thoughtfully to the front attic.

There, the ghosts of people and things were almost palpable.

Ranged around the bare plaster walls were the spectral shapes of bookshelves bulging with promags and fanzines, the duper, the Bannister press which had been moved up when the box-room became a nursery, the big wall mirror with the transverse crack which Bob had painted over with a rocketship trailing a long trail of fire, the Marilyn Monroe calendar, the ATom illos, the St. Fantony statuette, the Berrycade, which was a wooden frame covering the inside of the window to prevent John Berry from pushing his posterior through it, as had been his wont, during games of Ghoddminton. And across the table and net in the centre of the room raged the game of Ghoddminton itself, a game which was part Badminton, part all-in wrestling and part commando assault course.

“Face! Face! You hit my face, our point!” the players were shouting. “Take the shuttlecock

out of your mouth, then, before you warp the feathers,” and “It went into the bookcase, out. Our point!” and “It’s not in the bookcase, it must have gone into hyperspace,” and “Hyperspace is out. Our point!”

But it was the other voices which sounded stronger and more insistent. There was the southern brogue of Ian McAuley, who often motorbiked the hundred plus miles from Dublin on Thursday nights to play Ghoominton and talk before leaving early to get back across the border before the Irish Republic closed for the night. And there were the ghostly faces of Big Name and small name fans from the U.S. and U.K. who had come and been so affected by the Ghoominton or Madeleine’s cooking or the unique fannish atmosphere of the place that they, too, had left a part of themselves behind to take part in the haunting.

“We can remember,” said Walter quietly as the three of them stood in the middle of the attic with the conversation and the laughter beating insistently at them from all sides. “But why should it affect ordinary, non-fannish people who —”

Suddenly a savage, crashing detonation rattled the windows and a black misshapen finger of smoke poked slowly into the sunset sky. Very faintly came the crackle of automatic weapons, the snap of a high-velocity rifle and the distant braying of an ambulance. But the voices from the past were there, too, and louder than ever.

“Sounds like your side of town, James,” said Walter in a worried voice. “It will be dark in an hour, and you would be safer back across the Peace Line before —”

“The fuggheads,” said George, still looking at the ascending pillar of smoke.

“Yes,” said James absently. He gestured, the jerky movement of his hand taking in the room and the house all around them, and went on quietly, “I think I know what is happening here. Think for a minute about a haunted house. It is a place where something so terrible or evil has happened in the past that the very structure becomes imbued with it, and it lingers and frightens the ordinary people who come in contact with it.

“But now,” he went on, waving towards the window, “it is the city and the country which have become so terrible and evil that they frighten the ordinary people, with bombings, ambushes, sectarian murders, widespread intimidation. It is the outside that is haunted, and in here... Well, remember the people and the kind of place this used to be. It wasn’t just the fan group or the awful puns or the fanzines we put out. No, we were fanatics, in a quiet way, about other things, too. Like religious toleration, racial equality, lots of things. But now we are scattered. Even we three can’t meet very often, things being as they are, and the people we used to be are reacting to this present ghastly situation all around us by haunting this place.”

“I think you’ve got it,” said Walter. Very seriously, he went on, “But remember, James, despite our religious and other differences, we three haven’t changed.”

“No,” said George, “we haven’t changed.”

“That’s right,” said James, “we haven’t.”

They stood together for a moment looking out over the city, then they left the bare and utterly silent attic and walked slowly downstairs past the box-room, where the ghostly clanking of the Bannister press was stilled, past the kitchen, dining room and lounge which were likewise silent, and across the lawn which buzzed only with this evening’s insects.

The estate agent hurried forward to meet them, then he saw the expressions on their faces and went past without speaking. For several minutes they could hear his feet clumping about on the floorboards and stairs of the now empty house, then he returned.

“You’ve done it!” he said excitedly. “It, they, whatever it was, has gone. Thank you, gentlemen, very much...” He paused, studying their faces for a moment, trying to analyse the expressions which were not sad, exactly, and not exactly triumphant, but a peculiar mixture of both feelings. Hesitantly, he went on, “If you can tell me, how... how did you get rid of the ghosts?”

The three old-time fans looked at each other and nodded. James cleared his throat. “We managed to convince them,” he said quietly, “that they weren’t dead yet.”

BY A SPECIOUS CORRESPONDENT

..... BOB SHAW

“**W**rite something for *Egoboo*,” John Berry says. Let’s see now – what do I write about? No ideas spring to mind, but at least I’m writing for a fanzine, which should be more sympathetic work than what I do for the sports pages of the local papers every week.

I blundered into sports writing several years ago when I applied for and got a job as a feature writer with a weekly journal called *Ulster Week*. Unfortunately, the paper folded up two days before I was due to start and my appointment was shifted to a sister publication, the *Belfast Telegraph*, which had no vacancies for feature writers. So instead of being a features man on a weekly – which was a job I rather fancied – I found myself, with no previous journalistic experience (unless one includes *Hyphen*), as a general reporter on a daily paper which has a readership of one million and a reputation for solid, in-depth coverage. One of the more depressing aspects of this was that I was expected to report sport.

“I’m putting you onto hockey,” the sports editor told me the first week.

“I’ve never seen a hockey match,” I replied brightly.

“Don’t worry about that – it’s almost the same as soccer.”

He was gone before I could explain that I had never seen a soccer match either, and the

next Saturday afternoon found me standing glumly on the touchline of an incomprehensible game upon which I was expected to write two hundred words of penetrating analysis. A few minutes’ study convinced me that I would never understand hockey, and as the curtains of fine cold drizzle billowed across the field, numbing my face and hands, I wondered if there was a Pulitzer Prize for the shortest stay in journalism.

Then, just as my despair was at its greatest, I heard an elderly, experienced-looking spectator announce from below his umbrella that Antrim weren’t using the left side of the field enough. I took out my notebook and wrote, “Antrim not using left side of field enough.” The words looked quite impressive. I eyed the clump of umbrellas gratefully and moved a little closer. A few minutes later I overheard, “The Portadown defenders are not working together.” I put that down too, then after some consideration crossed it out and substituted, “Portadown defence lacking in cohesion,” a version which I felt had a more authoritative flavour.

By the end of the match I had perhaps a dozen similar comments, plus the names of three goal-scorers and the times at which the goals occurred. I joined the lot together, phoned it into the office and made my way to the

nearest bar where I had several hot whiskeys to settle my nerves.

On the following Monday morning the sports editor came up to me and said, “Nice job, Bob — I thought you said you knew nothing about hockey.” I smirked modestly into the dusty mechanisms of my typewriter, exulting over the fact that if my luck held out I would not be required to learn about hockey, ever.

That was five years ago. I have been reporting hockey constantly since then, and still have only the vaguest notion of the rules of the game. In that time I have not even learned to recognise the Northern Ireland teams by their colours, and have never turned to the back of the paper to read my own reports. But when I quit the newspaper two years ago the sports desk asked me to continue working for them on a freelance basis, and I do it every

Saturday – using my own system. I have even built up a minor reputation as a sound, reliable hockey specialist, and papers from England and the south of Ireland approach me to cover games for them in addition to my original paper. Sometimes, when at a game, I am being paid by as many as five different papers, including – on occasion – the prestigious *Sunday Times* and *The Observer*.

Some people say there’s a lot of hack work in science fiction but, by Ghod, it can’t be anything to what goes on in sports writing. I should worry, however. I make money, and the country must be full of people who say to themselves, “Good reporter, that fellow Shaw — the stuff he writes agrees exactly with what I was saying at the match.”

The only trouble is, I still haven’t thought of something to write for *Egoboo*...



THE HARP THAT ONCE OR TWICE, TWICE

..... WALT WILLIS

CHANGE

Er... would you like to buy a gas-operated radio? I know a junk-shop in Belfast where I could get you one, cheap. It's the very latest model, (if you happen to be a student of the circuitry of gas-operated radios, the basis of this one was a row of thermocouples and a row of gas jets.) No? I was afraid of that. Bang go my hopes of making a fortune by cornering the market in gas-operated radios. I'm afraid the days of the gas-operated radio have dwindled; they can be numbered on the fingers of one foot. They belonged to that brief period between the invention of the thermionic tube and the spread of mains electricity, and are now irretrievably lost in the limbo of technological obsolescence.

Like the old radio set I have here in the attic, which must have been a sensation in the Twenties. I bought it for practically nothing just for the screening cans and though the rest of it is completely useless I can't bear to throw it out. It's so beautifully made. The cabinet is polished walnut, the screw terminals on all the components are fashioned like jewels, and the tuning condensers... Ah, those tuning condensers. A symphony in black and yellow, a glory

of polished ebonite and brass, with precision air-spaced trimmers consisting of polished brass disks, operated by knurled wheels like golden sovereigns, all so beautifully made as to almost make you weep with the sadness of it. For all that loving craftsmanship is now just junk. I have a private dream in which I check over the old radio, and find old bulbous tubes for it, and connect up batteries and an old horn speaker... and out comes faintly but clearly Amos 'n' Andy or the Savoy Hotel Orpheans. We could hear ragtime, and the first broadcast of *Stardust*, and the news about Lindbergh and the Graf Zeppelin, and Jim Harmon could listen to "I Love A Mystery" all over again. But for all we would really get, a cheap little mass-produced thing of aluminium and polystyrene would be more efficient than those lovely old tuning condensers. There's no help for it, they're just junk. A vintage radio isn't like a vintage car, for what would be the point in dressing up in a raccoon coat to listen to the Everly Brothers? Nevertheless as long as I've got room for it I'll keep that old radio, and every time I have some like-minded visitor I'll open it and show him those tuning condensers and we'll

mourn together for useless beauty and wasted craftsmanship.

There was a time when the vanishing craftsmanship of the 19th Century was married to the coming science of the 20th. That was the age when even the most forbidding machine was humanized by some craftsman's touch. Even a steam hammer would have wrought iron curlicues, and the non-functional surfaces of a press would be decorated or polished for no reason but love and pride. The best example most of us are likely to have seen recently was the Time Machine in the movie, a perfect example of late-Victorian craftsmanship right down to the little plaque "Made by Herbert George Wells." In those days you knew it was a man who'd made a machine, not just other machines.

The last vestiges of this tradition today are the polished wood dashboards of high class cars, but occasionally you'll come across some more fascinating survival. I was reminded of one the other day by a charming letter from Noreen Shaw in which she mentioned that her father came from Westport, Co. Mayo. Why I know it well, I told her, a sleepy old town with a little river and treelined roads beside it. That's where we go to buy our Tchaikovsky Piano Concertos. And then I remembered just how we happened to buy a Tchaikovsky piano concerto in the wilds of Co. Mayo.

Madeleine and I were younger then and on a cycling tour of the West of Ireland, and we pedalled our weary way into Westport about four o'clock on a June afternoon, having just climbed Croagh Patrick. We knew and loved Westport for its peaceful air of genteel decay, so it was a surprise to see a little knot of people in front of a shop window. We'd never seen so many people in Westport before. A new bacon

slicer, we thought, knowing what life is like in the West of Ireland. But no. It was, of all things, an enormous magnificent phonograph. That in itself would have been sufficiently astonishing in Westport, but this phonograph would have been a sensation anywhere. It had an automatic record changer, and it was working.

Those words are pitifully inadequate to describe

what was going on in that window in front of the dumbfounded peasantry. That automatic changer was designed by a mad genius, and it must have been the first one ever made. For one thing it played both sides of each record in succession, which dates it before the introduction of automatic couplings. Furthermore it was designed with all the lunatic ingenuity of those Victorian clockwork toys or chiming clocks, or those slot machines you find in old railway stations over here where you put in a penny and a light



comes on and some mechanically animated puppets jerk into action and enact a public execution or a graveyard at midnight or whatever edifying spectacle that particular machine is programmed for. We found some of these machines in Portrush last year and it cost me a small fortune in pennies before I could get my children away from them.

But this machine in Westport was more horrifying than any of those. The pile of records was suspended about a foot above the turntable and when the mechanism was started the bottom one fell onto the turntable with a horrible CRASH. You remember how heavy twelve-inch 78's were? Well, they used to be even heavier. So far so good, but it was when the machine had played that side that the real drama began. A big arm whirred out from the side and levered the helpless disc into a vertical position and, while it was still wondering what was happening to it, another arm sneaked out from the other side and caught the feet from under

it, sweeping them across to the other side in a sort of football tackle. Then both arms suddenly retracted, leaving the record to collapse back onto the turntable with another horrible CRASH, but this time upside down. While it was still quivering from the shock, the great half-ton pick-up advanced remorselessly onto it with its rusty steel needle ready to give the coup de grace. CRUNCH. Shattered, we waited to see how the body would be finally disposed of. The pick-up heaved itself off the record and the first arm came out again, but this time it didn't stop. It carried the record right off the motor board, where it abruptly disappeared from view. Decent burial, we agreed, was the least it was entitled to. Then we heard a rumbling noise from way down in the foundations of the great mahogany edifice and there in the bottom lefthand corner we now saw a plush-lined compartment into which the record was now tumbling, for all the world like change out of a slot machine.

Were we mistaken, or had the white label on that record before it started its death-ride not originally been red? Anyway we felt it our duty to rescue at least one record from that monster, so I went in and bought the first movement of Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto in B Flat Minor. Well, I admit I'd been meaning to get it sometime, but I don't think I'd have bought it in Westport if the balance of my mind had not been disturbed. I mean, have you ever tried to carry a twelve-inch phonograph record 300 miles on a pushbike? If you're ever faced with

the problem I suggest you bore holes in the corners of the cardboard jacket and suspend it inside the frame. It worked all right with us except that three days later on a mountain road near Ballina a pebble was flung up and chipped a piece out of the first four bars. Ah well, worse would have befallen it in Westport.

But you see what I mean about the poignancy of technological obsolescence? Here was this beautiful piece of mechanical engineering, cabinet making and misplaced ingenuity, which would cost hundreds of pounds to duplicate today, and it isn't worth a penny. Wait a minute... I don't know though, I've just thought of those carnival sideshows where you can work off your frustrations by smashing crockery. And then I thought of Ian McAulay and his LPs and the way he handles them with the tips of two fingers, and dusts them with his special anti-static duster, and weighted my pick-up on his specially bought machine, and won't use my changer in case the little Perspex arm should brush the face of the record... Why, if all discophiles are like that they must be bursting with inhibitions. Put that old phonograph in the window of a hi-fi shop in New York with a pile of expensive LPs and it would attract more people than it did in Westport, all of them rooted to the spot in morbid fascination. It would have all the appeal of a public execution, and I know the modern generation will pay to see that. Any message for your relatives in Westport, Noreen? I'm off to make a fortune by cornering the market in antediluvian automatic changers.

HOME HINTS FROM OBLIQUE HOUSE

One of the perils of living in Oblique House is that you may find butterflies in your bed. "I found a butterfly in my bed last night," announced Ian McAulay at Irish Fandom's last party. I sprang loyally to the defence of Madeleine's housekeeping. "All I can say," I replied with cold dignity, "is that you must have brought it with you yourself."

"What would Ian want with a butterfly in his bed?" pondered Bob. "It was bad enough when Berry accused Chuck Harris of indecently assaulting his budgerigar but a butterfly! That's stretching things a bit far."

"But the butterfly may have flown into his bed," pointed out Peggy. "Maybe it thought they had something in common."

"They both live on lettuce," I said, "or is that just caterpillars?"

"Ian," pointed out James keenly, "does not look like a butterfly. I don't know what he looks like, but it's definitely not a butterfly."

"No," agreed Peggy, "but neither does a caterpillar. He's just in the chrysalis stage. Any day that mouldering carapace will split open and reveal a handsome intelligent young man."

When order had been restored it emerged that I had been wrong. It was Madeleine who had put the butterfly in Ian's bed, or at least into his room. She had found it frozen stiff in the backyard, having been presumably struck down in mid-air by a cold East wind. Having thawed it out on top of the stove she had then put it on top of Ian's wardrobe... his room is on the ground floor and the nearest one with an article of furniture out of reach of the children... to continue its hibernation, with a

drop of honey beside it for when it woke up again. The chlorophyll-full atmosphere of Ian's room must have made it think it was Spring and the good Irish heather honey restored its strength for flight. I don't know the reason for what it did next... I hate to think of an innocent butterfly having read John Berry's notorious article about wardrobe-jumping... but the message for conscientious housewives is clear. Never put hibernating butterflies on the wardrobes of lettuce-eating lodgers.



FIRST DRAFTS?

"Tell me," asked your editor the other day, "is The Harp all first draft material?" I laughed lightly, banging my head nonchalantly against the nearest wall. I could see myself as I usually am before a Harp deadline, sitting at one o'clock in the morning before a dying fire, kept alive only by an occasional first draft, and still hammering away at the x key on my typer. (I used to use the m key for x-ing out because it was more effective than the x-key, until Evelyn Smith told me my letters looked as if they were interspersed with lascivious humming. Since then it's looked like that to me too, and those are inconvenient ideas to get at one o'clock in the morning.)

But later it occurred to me that some of you non-writers might be interested to know just how I do write this stuff. It might even be of some help to you if you'd like to write for fanzines. After all most of the advice you see about writing is from writers, and all they're really telling you is how to use a gift you haven't got. What you really want is a fellow non-writer to tell you how to write. Well, I'm a non-writer. I don't get brilliant ideas and dash to my typer in a fury of inspiration. I don't find complete articles and stories writing themselves in my head. If it wasn't for fandom I dare say I wouldn't have written a line since I left school. But, what with publishing a fanzine and making rash promises to other faneds, I find myself periodically driven to try and write something, and this is how I go about it.

To sit before a blank sheet of paper with nothing to say is an experience so dreadful that writers will do anything to postpone it – change the typer ribbon, clear the desk, tidy the room, fight with their family, go and get drunk, even commit suicide – anything to evade that terrible endless moment of truth. The trouble, I think, is that they are so appalled at the gap between what they want to produce and the blankness of the paper and of their mind that their subconscious has stalled.

So start it off again in low gear by telling it you're not really trying to write just now, you're just making a few notes. Then type out something, anything. Here's where it's a help to have a notebook in which you've jotted down throughout the day anything interesting you've seen or thought of or remembered. It doesn't matter that you can't see any potentialities in it at this stage – I never do, and usually I finish by trying to cut it down to four pages – the point is you're breaking the hypnotic spell of that blank paper and releasing your subconscious from its inhibitions.

Now let your association centres loose on what you've written. What do you associate with it, what does it remind you of? A context, a similarity, a contrast? Write them down. Each one in turn should remind you of something else and if your association centres are properly free the proliferations are infinite. Don't worry if everything you thought of still seems banal. You're still not writing yet, you are merely freeing your subconscious: some

writers can do it all in their head, but if you're a non-writer like me you may need the mechanical process of typing to occupy the front of your mind while your subconscious makes its associations. I use the typer something like a dowser uses his twig, to roam over the surface of words looking for a lode.

But it's no use roaming about unless you know what you're looking for. Your subconscious will create but your conscious mind must select, and both are equally important. You must have a clear idea of the way the piece you're trying to write should be constructed.

Now there are fundamentally two types of fanzine non-fiction, the article and the essay. Articles include reviews, conreports, attacks, defences, analysis, surveys, histories, reminiscences, and generally everything where you know pretty well what you want to say. This makes them pretty easy from the constructional point of view (though they and fan-fiction present their own problems which I'll talk about next time if you're interested) because all you have to do is say it as clearly and as brightly as you can. Their form is dictated by the subject matter. But an essay, in which you don't know where you're going, must have form imposed on it by you. It must seem complete, not mere aimless maundering. Paradoxically, the imposition of form on an essay makes it easier to write, not more difficult. One reason is that anything done within a strict artistic discipline has added impact, which is why a thought that sounds trite in prose can seem profound in poetry. Another reason is that the 'canalisation of your subconscious' thought-flow, by the search by your conscious for form, can divert it into channels it might not have found by itself.

The ideal construction for an essay is sonata form. That is where you have two themes, apparently contradictory or at least unrelated, and you finish by combining them. Hegelians and dialectical materialists say that this process — thesis, antithesis and synthesis — is the essential nature of all phenomena and there's no doubt it is somehow pleasing to the human mind, even if it's really just a symbolism of sex. An essay in this form, even if entirely frivolous, gives your reader the

subconscious feeling that he has witnessed something constructive. Unfortunately true sonata form is not always possible, but you can often counterfeit it so plausibly that your reader won't notice the difference unless he subjects it to careful semantic analysis...and you will have other readers than Redd Boggs. The trick is just to lead back to your opening statement. The development of your opening statement into something else takes the place of the antithesis, and then its conversion in turn into something reminiscent of the opening theme gives your ending the semblance of a synthesis. Your reader, having been led unexpectedly back to the opening theme which he had almost forgotten has that sense of recognition of the similar within the dissimilar and of the dissimilar within the similar, which it has been said is the essential nature of all aesthetic enjoyment.

But all this must seem a bit up in the air, so let's take a concrete example, the piece in the last *Harp* about the automatic changer. Not because it was anything much as an essay, but because it's the one thing of mine I can be sure you've read recently. In one way this is a pretty good example of what I was saying at the beginning because at that time I was absolutely stuck for something to write about.

My notebook had been scraped clean for *Hyphen* baquotes and I was forced to my last resort, writing a letter to somebody congenial and trying to think of something interesting to tell them. This time it was Noreen Shaw, and in the letter I was answering she'd mentioned about her father having come from Westport, and I was reminded of the automatic changer in the shop window. It seemed reasonably interesting but it wouldn't stand by itself even in a column (which is usually just a collection of short essays.) A context perhaps. But I had already written up the only other incident worth recording of that holiday, Madeleine's attempts to throw away a pair of shoes, in an *Oops!* Harp.

Maybe I could follow up the gramophone record angle, with the peculiar histories of other records in my collection, but then the piece as it stood opened with that Tchaikovsky record and closed with it. It seemed complete as it

was, so I thought I'd better look for something else, something similar perhaps.

I thought of other obsolete electronic equipment and remembered the old 1928 radio I have with the brass tuning condensers. Good, fans are inclined to be nostalgic about radio, as witness Jim Harmon's articles about "I Love A Mystery", and lots of them are interested in electronics. But there should be a more logical-sounding connection. What had both those items in common besides age? Answer: craftsmanship, so I described the old radio from that angle, led on to general remarks about the gradual decay of 19th Century craftsmanship, instancing the time machine in the film, and thence to the Westport record changer.

So far so good: I already had humour, nostalgia and a touch of seriousness, a pretty good basis for an essay as Bob Shaw's work shows, though from the constructional point of view it was a bit jerry-built. Reading the bridge paragraph again, the time machine reference struck me. Fans are interested in time machines as well as electronics and old radios: wouldn't it be wonderful if you could get old programmes on old radios, as you can get old car performances on vintage cars. So I rewrote what I had again adding in that bit, mentioning old radio programmes both British and American. That fitted in nicely with the nostalgic mood of both the holiday reminiscences and the decay of craftsmanship, and tied up the first two paragraphs solidly.

Having sufficiently firmly established the theme I could, then "be reminded of" the Westport changer and bring it in apparently spontaneously. (I'm sorry to have to tell you that essayists are seldom really reminded of things when they say they are any more than funny things happen to comedians on their way to the theatre.) While I was at it I rewrote the Westport episode, adding a little local colour and slightly pointing up the nostalgia, expanding the bit about the changer itself which could now stand it since it fitted in with a general theme, and tying it in more closely with the Victorian craftsmanship angle by comparing it to old clocks and toys.

That reminded me of the old railway station slot machines that showed public executions

and things which had fascinated my children, so I threw those in too figuring they might interest American readers. I now had seven paragraphs but they were still incomplete so I left them for the night.

Whenever I'm lazy like that I tell myself I'm just turning the problem over to my subconscious, and maybe I am, but next night I could still see no solution. So I did what I always do in such a plight, typed the whole thing out over again.

One thing that was obvious was that the opening was very pedestrian, nothing to catch the reader's attention. I mentally reviewed other old electronic gear I'd come across and selected the gas radio because it was inherently the most bizarre and might seem even more so to American readers, and because it was the most striking example on the theme of technological obsolescence and yet was closer to the old radio angle than to the craftsmanship theme introduced later, so that the development from it would appear a progression. To establish a personal relationship with the reader right away I put the first sentence in the form of a question; "Would anyone like to buy a gas-operated radio?" Then immediately x-ed it out and substituted; "Er... would you like to buy a gas-operated radio?" to make it more informal and because a writer has only one reader, you. Then through the rest of the thing as before, polishing as I went.

By the time I'd got Madeleine and I out of Westport again it was obvious that the end must be near, because eight paragraphs is quite enough for one item in a column, so I read it through again looking for something I could hark back to, to finish it all off. The best theme to re-introduce was the very beginning, which must obviously now become "Would you like to buy an old automatic changer?" But why would you? What did an old automatic changer do that a modern one didn't? Answer: it damaged records and horrified discophiles. What profit could there be in that?

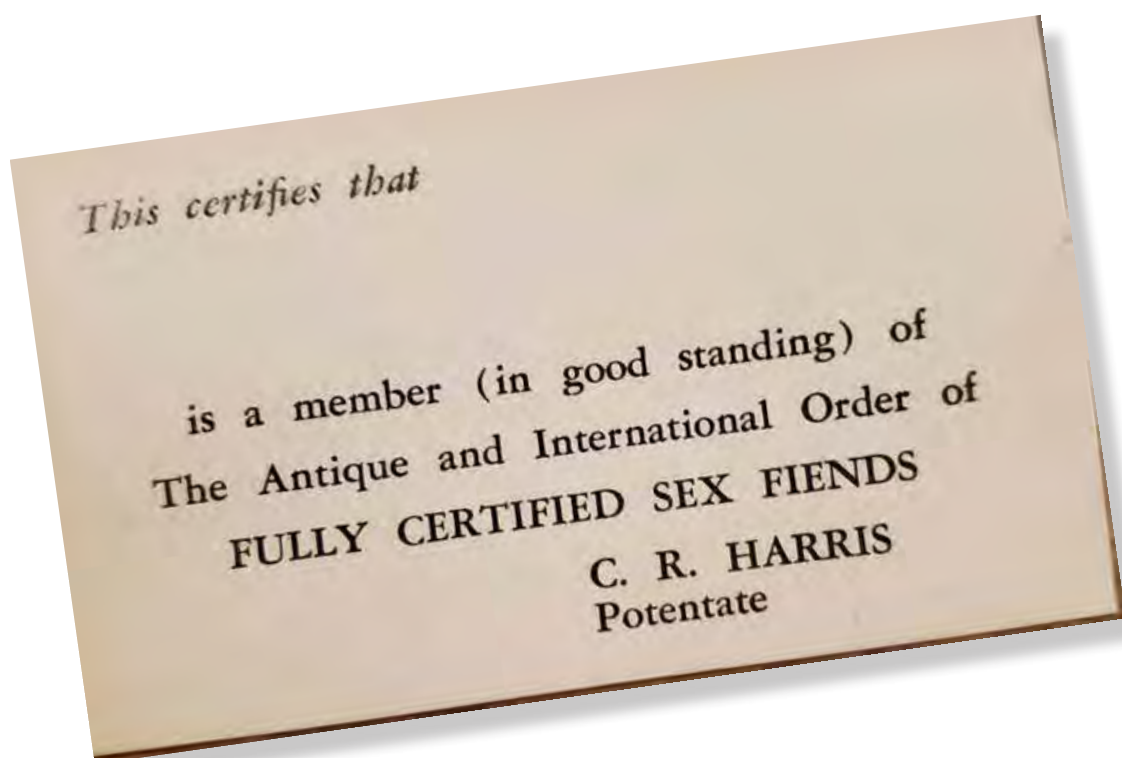
There was no answer, so I got out the carbon paper and started typing the item in final form for sending to Dick. No, I hadn't given up... I'd never really send away an article while I still felt there was something to be done to

improve it... it's just that I find that if you write drafts too much you find yourself writing them as drafts, a sort of masturbation which can lead to mental impotence. Whereas the stimulation of actually writing for publication, the renewed sense of being in actual contact with the reader, stimulates the subconscious again. Having got a beginning and a middle which seemed to belong together, I felt that my subconscious would be able to supply the ending now that it knew the sort of thing we were looking for.

I found it in the sixth paragraph, in the bit about the old slot machines. Public executions, that was it. That automatic changer was publicly executing records. People would pay to see public executions, at least my children would, and discophiles might find the same morbid fascination in the public execution of records. So I added in a sentence about my children running to me for pennies to watch the old slot machines, to prepare the ground

for this comparison later. Then in a new and final paragraph I reintroduced Ian McAulay representing conveniently both the discophiles and the younger generation (cf. ray children), made the suggestion about the New York hi-fi shop, and finished off with a sentence in which I repeated in the new context some of the phrasing from the first paragraph. In fact if you're interested enough to check you'll find I led back, unexpectedly but more or less logically, to no less than seven earlier references. Like a series of closing parentheses. It isn't just chance that it is sometimes possible to arrange an article in such neatly concentric circles: if your development has been soundly and progressively constructed, your reintroduction of an opening theme tends to involve a sort of recapitulation in reverse of that development: so that last paragraph could be, as it were, composed on stencil.

But no, Dick, the *Harp* is not all first draft material.





PYROTECHNICS

..... • BOB SHAW

This column, written more than 20 years ago, remains the one which gives me the most pleasure to re-read. It is the most evocative and nostalgic, perhaps because of the ambience of Fireworks Night. Certainly, the occasion provided a perfect opportunity to bring all of the characters of Irish Fandom together on the stage and show them in action. It is sad to reflect that, because of the Northern Ireland situation, the authorities had to ban fireworks and therefore Halloween can no longer be celebrated in the way I described here, in the winter of 1954....

((1979 introduction))

On Saturday, October 30, the city of Belfast held its Halloween celebrations. [Note: this is the Irish equivalent of Guy Fawkes day.] There was the usual number of explosive sounds and bright flashes of light extending into the small hours of Sunday morning. By Sunday night the last newly neurotic cat had descended from the trees and all but the most cautious of old ladies had removed the plugs from the ears of their pet canaries. By Monday the city had relapsed into its normal, quietly humdrum existence...

Heh! Heh! Heh!

We held our display on Tuesday night.

At a quarter to eight George Charters arrived and I let him in. He was wearing a bulky tweed coat and a bulky tweed cap, an outfit which

makes him look rather like a hairy mammoth with herring-bone skin. "Ah, there you are," he shouted. "I'm going to let you and the rest have it. I'm in form for bloodshed. Just let me get at yiz — I'm dangerous tonight."

"Wait a minute, George," I said, "we won't be playing ghoddminton for a while yet — we're having a fireworks display first."

"That's a pity," he replied, "I was looking forward to a friendly game."

We went out to the back where the others were gathered watching Walter let off a few Fairy Sparklers for the benefit of his small daughter and two of her playmates. We arrived just in time to hear the last of an argument between him and James. James had tied two threepenny rockets together and fixed

a sparkler onto the bottom of the sticks. Walt had said that this contraption would rise no higher than a single rocket, which remark had caused James to fall back on his BIS jargon in indignant denial. He spouted a lot of highly technical data and knelt to ignite his masterpiece. He lit the sparkler and the two fuses and leapt back, glancing resentfully at the layer of slightly leaky cloud a mere two thousand feet up. He resigned himself to losing sight of the rocket before it really got going.

We all stood there in the damp darkness — waiting. The sparkler burned merrily inside the milk bottle for about three minutes and then went out. “Stand back,” warned James as we closed in a bit. “It will go thundering skywards any second now.” About a minute later the slightly touched paper was all consumed and the rockets began to blast. They thundered skywards for about ten feet, faltered, keeled over and wobbled drunkenly along the ground for a short distance. They barely cleared a fence and expired fitfully in somebody’s back garden.

We could see that James was shaken, that his faith in rocketry was shattered, so nobody spoke. We just laughed.

“Let’s get on with the other stuff,” said Walter. “What else have we?” As I told him about my deadly arsenal of Atomic Crashers and Little Demons, and John Berry babbled enthusiastically about the blast areas and flame throwing abilities of his stuff, it seemed to me that Walter’s face paled slightly. “I’ve been thinking,” he announced after a few moments. “There isn’t much space here — let’s all go round to my father’s house.” This seemed a good idea so we set off. As I passed James he was staring at the point where his rocket had disappeared and muttering, “The fools! The poor fools! They’ll never reach the Moon.”

With rustling raincoats and squelching shoes we trooped along through the fine drizzle to a house several quiet streets away. Walter opened the front gate and ushered us all in; for some reason he seemed happier now, and placed us at the side of the house with a severe injunction to keep quiet. We huddled against the gable while Walter brought Carol and the other two little girls to the front door and rang

the bell. We listened with bated breath as he explained how, out of the goodness of his kindly heart, he wanted to treat the children to a few fireworks. He reappeared and we trudged round to the back.

I saw the rain blurred faces of Walter’s father and mother peering out of a side window as Walter went by with his silent retinue of small children. The faces began to withdraw, then reappeared hurriedly as Madeleine Willis and my wife Sadie passed into their ken. They remained there in silent bewilderment as James and his fiancée Peggy went by, closely followed by John, then me. They drew back instinctively as George lumbered past in the rear in his bulky tweed overcoat and bulky tweed cap. I felt sorry for those faces.

To begin the display we shot off a few rockets in their natural state. These flew quite well but they all seemed to fly in the one direction — towards a dimly seen house in the row whose back gardens abutted on the one we were in, separated from us by a tennis court. After we had tired of this we began the second part of the show — the aerodynamic section. I had brought some of the flying squibs known as “Flying Imps” and glued wings onto them making them look like tiny V2s. I felt proud of these little spaceships for they flew perfectly although the weight of the wings always brought them down again. Funnily enough, these too all landed on or around the same house. I became distinctly aware of slight stirrings of life from the direction of this ill-fated building, but it didn’t seem worth mentioning.

The next item was the ascent of John’s Viking. He had sawn the stick off a shilling rocket and glued on balsa wood wings and painted it in big black and white checks. It was lovely looking. We lit it and stood back. At that moment we heard an aeroplane passing over very high and somebody suggested trying to bring it down, somebody else began to hum *Dragnet* and I heard Walter muttering something about lighting the blue paper and retiring from fandom. At that moment the Viking took off. It was magnificent the way it climbed on a pillar of blinding incandescence just the way they do in the books. Everybody agreed afterwards that it was the best thing in the

show. There was only one thing wrong. John must have made one of the wings heavier than the others because pretty high up the rocket leaned to one side and turned over, still blasting away. I looked round for a shovel with the vague idea of digging a slit trench, but I need not have worried — it nosedived the same house as before.

Next I let off some of my high explosive ones but only a couple of them banged and Walter's father came out to see what was happening. He looked at his garden which we had reduced to a pretty fair imitation of Flanders. I heard him say, "This is a good place to let them off," and he wasn't even *slightly* sarcastic. Honest.

Sadie and Madeleine were beginning to get bored with the poor performance of the bangers so they called for something new. James must have been still carrying the mental scars of his earlier brush with the force of gravity, for he suggested tying two rockets together so that they face in opposite directions... "Let them lie there and strain." This sadistic idea was quashed by John who suggested tying four rockets together and holding them with pliers until they were all firing. James countered this by pointing out that we had no parachute to wear "just in case".

We finally decided to tie an Atomic Crasher onto a rocket. Now, I have a theory about these particular squibs. I bought them in one bundle and I think that, by some mistake in the factory, the first six I lit had had no explosive in them. Also I think that all the powder that should have gone into them went into number seven. As luck would have it that was the one we put on the rocket. While we were sellotaping it on James, who was beginning to recover his faith, worked out the chances of a good flight. "A 3d rocket and a 1d banger... hmmm! That's a pretty good lift — a three to one ratio." Getting even more hopeful, he said we might even break the sound barrier. I never heard of anything sillier — for supersonic flight you need a sixpenny rocket at least.

Anyway I lit the Atomic Crasher, waited a few seconds, and then lit the rocket. It went up at a terrific velocity. It had achieved quite a fair height when the weight of the

banger pulled it over to one side. It turned and zoomed downwards, its trail of sparks now reinforced by those from the squib. It disappeared from view behind a hedge, but we could see that it had landed... yes, that's right... fair and square in the backyard of the same house. Exactly at the moment of impact the Atomic Crasher exploded. I saw the intervening hedge limned with crimson flame and the ground shook below our feet. Everybody burst out laughing except me — I had belatedly remembered that there had been somebody moving out there. Somebody in our group said in a stricken voice, "My Ghod! The Russkis have got in first." James said, "The lights are going out all over town." When our ears stopped ringing we realised that every dog for miles around was appealing in a loud voice to its canine Ghu to come and save it. Suddenly through the sounds in my head and the, I suspect, slightly hysterical laughter and the yammering of the dogs I heard what I had been dreading to hear —

From the direction of that last appalling detonation, borne on the rain-laden night air, there came faint piteous cries.

I don't know what the poor devil was trying to say but he certainly sounded as if he was in a bad way. My sleep is still haunted by his faint bleats of bewilderment mingled with pure fear and helpless, impotent anger. James, who was by this time once more his old devil-may-care self, gleefully whispered, "That gap in that row of houses wasn't there before."

The more prudent of us decided that we had better move on before the police cars arrived, so we gathered our gear and set off back to Walter's. As we were walking back I found a Flying Imp in my pocket so I let it off in the street. I can't remember much about the ensuing few seconds but John has covered it for me...



[*JOHN BERRY writing*] I noticed that Bob was absent. I looked round, and saw him bending down by a front gate. I hurried on, presuming he was trying to complete the night's destruction by blowing up the gate with his last Atomic Crasher. Seconds later I heard a hissing noise, followed by a cry of frustration. I looked

round, startled. There was Bob, eyes protruding, cheeks puffed out, his feet a sheer blur of slashing movement. He flashed past, coat tails akimbo, hotly pursued by a Flying Imp with a long comet-like tail. The nose of the Imp was about 2½" from Bob's nether regions. I yelled to the crowd, and they parted respectfully to make way for the strange procession. There was a final devastating explosion, then silence and utter darkness. We pulled Bob from the hedge, carefully removing the Imp. Sadie retrieved his collar and tie from a nearby lamp-post. We eventually managed to calm him down, none the worse for his impulsive flight.]



[BOB SHAW *ctd.*] Thank you, John. Personally I refuse to believe that I could ever behave in such an undignified manner, but let the readers judge for themselves. See the way when anybody makes a crack at me I just laugh?

Back at Walter's I planted my remaining banger in the damp earth and lit it. To tell the truth I was still thinking about that unknown soul whose evening reverie had been

so rudely shattered... that's how I failed to notice that the blue paper had broken off this one. I absent-mindedly touched the match to it and found to my horror that I was squatting (off balance too) in a shower of sparks from a prematurely exploding Atomic Crasher. Gibbering horribly with undiluted fear I took off down the path, travelling about six inches above the ground. I crashed through the world record for the twenty yards, the sound barrier and several ranks of grinning fans and femmes. I was proud of that dash — it made me feel like one of the Unkillables in *Final Blackout*. Gritting my teeth to keep my heart from bouncing out onto the ground I turned to witness the explosion of the Hell-Bomb.

It went..... "phhht".

A dimly seen object that I had taken to be a huge pile of dustbins painted in zigzag camouflage turned out to be George Charters in his bulky tweed coat and cap. It said, in a patient voice, "Now will you go up and play Ghoodminton?"

So we all went in for friendly, safe, *predictable* Ghoodminton.



The Corflu Fifty

Perhaps the smallest and most personal of the fan funds, the Corflu Fifty started in February 2007 just after Corflu Quire in Austin. Rich Coad gives this account of its genesis:

“This idea grew out of the successful funds to bring Bruce Gillespie and William Breiding to Corflu Titanium and to bring Harry Bell to Corflu Quire. At Corflu Quire, additional names were mentioned for fans we would like to see at Corflu but who are unable to attend for a variety of reasons. Subsequently, Andy Porter came up with the eminently sensible idea of gathering a group of 50 fans, each willing to donate \$25 a year (or, to include British fans, £15) to a fund for the express purpose of defraying most, if not all, transportation and lodging expense.”

Rich then set up an email list and invited fanzine fans to join the Corflu Fifty. The target has been \$1,250 (minimum) each year, to help a fanzine fan who has earned the respect of their peers and would be particularly welcome at that year’s Corflu, but couldn’t otherwise make the journey. We could do with more members, but every year we have achieved that target through both the core donations and extra fundraising efforts. Though they don’t have to (the minimum is OK), many members give well above the minimum, which shows what wonderful people they are.

Rich Coad is the US Administrator and Rob Jackson the UK Administrator; they co-moderate the email list where the fund’s recipients are chosen through discussion (TheCorfluFifty@groups.io).

We have supported eight Transatlantic trips by nine winners in total (given that one couple were joint winners). One could be called Transpacific if you count Pete as leaving from his base in Thailand. We have supported three couples to travel within the US. 2020 was the first time we brought two guests from separate locations, one from the UK and one local to Texas.

The COVID pandemic meant mid-2020 to early 2022 were nightmarish for travel; though Corflu Concorde was eventually held successfully late in 2021, travel uncertainty meant we couldn’t plan ahead for a Corflu Fifty guest that year. But last year’s delay to Corflu Pangloss and the easing of travel restrictions meant we were able to get back on track last year.

This year, we are delighted to welcome two guests once again. Our first British guest to another Corflu within the UK is Sue Mason, whose contribution to fandom as part of the *Plokta* cabal goes far beyond the art she has contributed to that fanzine and elsewhere, as she has been at the heart of that uniquely creative group’s contribution to conrunning as well as fanzine production, and goes back as far as drawing the artwork for the promotional T-shirt for the UK 1987 Worldcon bid.

Second (in alphabetical order), our first guest from continental Europe, Pascal Thomas, has a long history with Corflu. He was not only at the very first Corflu in Tysons Corner in 1984, but was the first ever out of the hat for Corflu’s uniquely democratic Guest of Honour tradition. And you can still read his fanzine *Keep Watching the*

Skies (which will help you revise your French) at: https://www.quarante-deux.org/Keep_Watching_the_Skies/.

If you not only want to help out financially, but also to influence who gets the group's support next time round, please join! Go to the email list's website (<https://groups.io/g/TheCorfluFifty>) and click on the Subscribe link at the bottom of the page, or send an email to the list owner (TheCorfluFifty+subscribe@groups.io).

— Rob Jackson, February 2023

Guests of the Corflu Fifty

2008 Steve & Elaine Stiles

(Randallstown, MD)
Corflu Silver – Las Vegas, NV

2009 Curt Phillips

(Abingdon, VA)
Corflu Zed – Seattle, WA

2010 Earl Kemp

(Kingman, AZ)
Corflu Cobalt – Winchester, UK

2011 Dave Hicks

(Leicester, UK)
e-CorFlu Vitus – Sunnyvale, CA

2012 Shelby Vick

(Panama City, FL)
Corflu Glitter – Las Vegas, NV

2013 Rob Hansen

(London, UK)
Corflu XXX – Portland, OR

2014 Dan & Lynn Steffan

(Portland, OR)
Corflu 31 – Richmond, VA

2015 Geri Sullivan

(Wales, MA)
Tynecon III: the Corflu –
Newcastle upon Tyne, UK

2016 Grant Canfield

(Novato, CA)
Chiflu – Chicago, IL

2017 Pete Young

(Hua Hin, Thailand)
Corflu 34 – Los Angeles, CA

2018 Paul & Cas Skelton

(Stockport, UK)
Corflu 35 – Toronto, ON,
Canada

2019 Steve Jeffery

(Oxfordshire, UK)
Corflu FIAWOL – Rockville, MD

2020 Tommy Ferguson

(Belfast, UK)
Howard Waldrop
(Austin, TX)
Corflu Heatwave –
College Station, TX

2021 None, due to Covid restrictions
Corflu Concorde – Bristol, UK

2022 Moshe Feder

(New York, NY)
Corflu Pangloss (39) –
Vancouver, BC, Canada

2023 Sue Mason

(Cheshire, UK)
Pascal Thomas
(Toulouse, France)
Corflu Craic – Belfast, UK

Sue Mason

Corflu Fifty Guest, 2023

..... GIULIA DE CESARE

Sue Mason is probably best known as an artist, using a range of media including pencil, charcoal, water colour, pyrography and digital, but is actually pretty much a Universal Fan. During a long fannish career she has been a filker, a costumer, conrunner, Viking and English Civil War re-enactor, Masquerade Mistress of Ceremonies, fanzine and comics fan, and gamer. She has gotten lots of Famous Authors drunk in the bar, and has long been the grease between the gears of fandom. Most of us are within a couple of degrees of Sue Mason, whether we realise it or not.

I met Sue at Novacon 19, but my first real recollection of her comes from being co-opted by the late Gytha North onto the Fourplay Committee the following year, thus joining the band of reprobates who evolved into the *Plokta Cabal*. It says a lot that, in such company, Sue is often the voice of reason, restraint and common sense.

Sue won TAFF in 2000, when we sent her to Seattle, San Francisco, Minneapolis, Chicago and New York. They did, however, send her back. She was Fan GoH at Concourse, the 2004 Eastercon, and has won two Hugos as Fan Artist (2003 and 2005) and more Nova Awards than will fit on her mantelpiece. In Real



Life she works for a medical supplies company and can tell you things you never knew about allergy testing kits and colostomy bags.

Sue's Evil Nemesis was her cat, Max, who put her in hospital with infected cat bites. Sadly, Max's Sue-biting permit was recently rescinded with his return to the Pits of Hell, but Nature abhors a vacuum so will very likely send a replacement along any day now. Sue has the weirdest phobia I have ever encountered, but it's more than my life is worth to tell you lot what it is. Ask her in the bar. I will instead finish this brief encomium with a few of the things she does like, in alphabetical order because I couldn't begin to list them in order of preference:

- Amber
- Bracing Welsh weather
- Cats
- Cheese
- Chocolate
- Cider
- Foxes
- Long walks in the country
- Portmeirion
- Real ale
- Silver jewellery
- Skinny, white-haired, angst-ridden elves
- Tea
- The Archers
- Wales

Pascal Thomas

Corflu Fifty Guest, 2023

..... JOHN D. BERRY

Pascal Thomas's connection with Corflu goes back to the very first one (Berkeley, 1984), where his name was pulled at random out of a beanie, making him Corflu's first Guest of Honor. This unexpected honor also made him the first to be saddled with the burden of having to make up a speech in time for the banquet. Those who were there remember his speech as setting a high bar.

Despite its English-language title, Pascal's sf review fanzine *Keep Watching the Skies!* is published in French, as is his website *Quarante-Deux* ("42"), which is devoted to French-language science fiction. As Pascal says of *Quarante-Deux*: "There is no English version of this site, nor are there any plans for one. Why not? Because it is entirely devoted to science fiction in French and as such can be of interest only to those who can at least read it."

Don't let the fact that the website is mainly in French

put you off though. There is a small but perfectly-formed English section, which introduces the rest of the site. *La Galerie Virtuelle* has some very well-chosen artwork including some beautiful book covers by Jackie Paternoster, with some wonderful almost fluorescent colors. The rest of the site gives all of us English speakers the chance to brush up on our French, of course...

Pascal himself is fluent in English, French, Occitan, and mathematics. (Ask him about conversing at home with his wife Christine and their children in Occitan.) In his professional life, he is full professor of mathematics at the Université Paul Sabatier in Toulouse, France.

We invited Pascal as one of this year's two Corflu 50 guests for the usual reason: we enjoy talking and spending time with him.



fwa

The Fan Writers Association (formerly the Fan Writers of America)

The Fan Writers of America were born in a serendipitous moment at a party in my room one night at the 1984 LACon. The room was packed with fans and the air was thick with smoke (the hotel's airconditioning system endlessly recycled the room's stale and increasingly smoky air for the entire weekend) and as if by magic the smoke shaped itself into thick, balloony letters which hovered over our heads and spelled out "fwa". It required only moments for us all to realize that we were present at the actual formation of the Fan Writers of America. I called up the already sleeping Lucy Huntzinger and told her, "Fanhistory is in the making! You need to be here!" And soon she joined us, a bit bleary-eyed but brightening at the sight of Fandom's Very Best, murkily outlined in the smoke.

It was immediately obvious to us that:

1. For purposes of fannish inclusiveness (and perhaps American imperialism), "America" is defined as "the entire world."
2. Generally "fanwriting" is defined as "writing by a fan," and its preferred venue is fanzines, but not exclusively so. (In 1984 the internet was still to come for most of us.)
3. If you do fanwriting and think you could be a member of the fwa, then you are a member. It's that simple.
4. The fwa has no current president, and never has had one. All of fwa's presidents are past presidents at the time of their selection.

In the Early Years past presidents for the years preceding fwa's founding (going back one more year in each subsequent year's selection) were selected at Worldcons. But quorums of assembled members of fwa were less easily assembled than they had been in 1984, and after the 1986 Worldcon this idea was abandoned. It was decided that the membership of each year's Corflu represented the best quorum (all members of Corflu are considered members of fwa) and that the previous year's president of fwa would be selected at each Corflu. Selecting pre-1980 presidents would not continue. (Occasional exceptions have been made, such as John Foyster's posthumous selection as president for 1975.) The selection process has taken place, beginning with the second Corflu, at the Sunday brunch-banquet – where all of Corflu is assembled and can both nominate and vote. I run the selection process with an iron fist (in a velvet glove).

— Ted White

2023 UPDATE

Since 2019, Ted has been unable to make it to a Corflu, so hosting the selection of the fwa Past President has been delegated. In 2020 at College Station and 2022 in Vancouver, Andy Hooper hosted; in 2021 at Bristol Mark Plummer did the honours. Whether either successfully replicated Ted's iron fist is for the viewer to decide.

At Corflu Pangloss in 2022, Tom Becker proposed that the award be renamed as the Past Presidency of the Fan Writers Association, on the basis that America is not the whole world. Early in the history of fwa, a separate British equivalent, FWUK, had been mooted but had failed to gain traction.

Alternates were considered; Jerry Kaufman proposed "fwaa" (Fan Writers and Artists Association), and Patrick Nielsen Hayden (attending online while staying with Geri Sullivan) suggested "fww" (Fanzine Workers of the World); but neither proposal received sufficient support. Jerry suggested that Writers should be seen as implicitly including Artists, and there was overall support for the renaming.

Claire Brialey was nominated and seconded by acclamation and made history as the first ever Past President to accept the award remotely live.

— Rob Jackson

past presidents of fwa

<u>LACon, 1984</u> Avedon Carol, 1983	<u>Corflu 13, 1996</u> Bob Shaw & Peter Roberts, 1995	<u>Corflu 26, 2009</u> Andy Hooper, 2008
<u>Corflu 2, 1985</u> Suzle Tompkins, 1984 Terry Carr, 1982	<u>Corflu 14, 1997</u> Bill Rotsler, 1996 Lee Hoffman, 1951	<u>Corflu 27, 2010</u> D. West, 2009
<u>Corflu 3, 1986</u> Lucy Huntzinger, 1985 Gary Farber, 1981	<u>Corflu 15, 1998</u> Greg Pickersgill, 1997	<u>Corflu 28, 2011</u> Spike, 2010
<u>ConFederation, 1986</u> Ted White, 1980	<u>Corflu 16, 1999</u> Shelby Vick, 1998	<u>Corflu 29, 2012</u> Earl Kemp, 2011
<u>Corflu 4, 1987</u> rich brown, 1986	<u>Corflu 17, 2000</u> Geri Sullivan, 1999 Walt Willis, 1952	<u>Corflu 30, 2013</u> Roy Kettle, 2012
<u>Corflu 5, 1988</u> Judith Hanna & Joseph Nicholas, 1987 Stu Shiffman, 1979	<u>Corflu 18, 2001</u> Art Widner, 2000	<u>Corflu 31, 2014</u> John Nielsen Hall, 2013
<u>Corflu 6, 1989</u> Terry Carr*	<u>Corflu 19, 2002</u> Eve and John Harvey, 2001	<u>Corflu 32, 2015</u> Graham Charnock, 2014
<u>Corflu 7, 1990</u> Harry Warner, 1989	<u>Corflu 20, 2003</u> Mark Plummer, 2002 John Foyster, 1975	<u>Corflu 33, 2016</u> Bill Burns, 2015
<u>Corflu 8, 1991</u> Bill Bowers, 1990	<u>Corflu 21, 2004</u> Arnie & Joyce Katz, 2003	<u>Corflu 34, 2017</u> Pete Young, 2016
<u>Corflu 9, 1992</u> Robert Lichtman, 1991	<u>Corflu 22, 2005</u> Bruce Gillespie, 2004 Buz Busby, 1960	<u>Corflu 35, 2018</u> Taral Wayne, 2017
<u>Corflu 10, 1993</u> Bob Tucker, 1992	<u>Corflu 23, 2006</u> Mike Glicksohn, 2005	<u>Corflu 36, 2019</u> Victor Gonzalez, 2018
<u>Corflu 11, 1994</u> Jack Speer, 1993	<u>Corflu 24, 2007</u> Pat Virzi, 2006	<u>Corflu 37, 2020</u> Rob Jackson, 2019
<u>Corflu 12, 1995</u> Charles Burbee, 1994	<u>Corflu 25, 2008</u> Dan Steffan, 2007	<u>Corflu 38, 2021</u> Sandra Bond, 2020
		<u>Corflu 39, 2022</u> Claire Brialea, 2021

**per documentation found by Geri Sullivan*

A bid to host the 2025 Eastercon in Belfast — Let's Reconnect



RECONNECT

2023 Fanzine Activity Achievement Awards

Nic Farey, current FAAn Awards Administrator

The first rule of the FAAn awards is that there are no rules for the FAAn awards, at least none that are chiselled in stone. The very early history of the awards is coming to light, thanks in no small part to the efforts of fanac.org (see their fanzine listings under '[Fan polls, Awards and Discussions](#)') and would now appear to date back to 1959 in proto-form. Documentation of [Moshe Feder's 1974 proposals](#) (which were taken up in a revised form for the awards running from 1975-80 – see details at <https://corflu.org/history/faan.html>) is also available.

Since the 1995 revival of the FAAns after a fifteen year gap, their administration has passed through divers hands, with Andrew P. Hooper having a long tenure in that role and to a large extent defining and occasionally modifying their format. After Andy retired from the position, Claire Brialey, Mike Meara, Murray Moore, Nic Farey, Michael Dobson and John Purcell have taken turns holding the reins.

Two points of consensus apply. Firstly, the awards are given for work originally published in the previous calendar year, although this has been defined slightly differently in the past. Secondly, voting is open to *anyone* with an interest in fanzines. No convention or group membership is required.

The FAAns have been associated with, sponsored by (and presented at) Corflu for reasons of both convenience and logic, as it's the annual fanzine fans' convention, but it must be stressed again that Corflu membership is *not* a requirement for voting. You do NOT have to have read or received any minimum number of fanzines to vote, although of course we encourage you to check out the contenders. In recent years the Administrator has published a voters' guide including a list of zines known to have been issued the previous year, *The Incomplete Register*.

2023 FAAn Awards: Categories, for work published during 2022

To be presented at the Corflu Craic Banquet on Sunday 2 April.

MC: Jerry Kaufman.

FANZINE CATEGORIES

GENZINE: A fanzine which typically has multiple contributors in addition to its editor(s).

PERZINE: A fanzine which typically has few, if any, contributors other than its editor(s).

SPECIAL PUBLICATION: A "one-shot" fanzine or collection.

INDIVIDUAL CATEGORIES

FANWRITER: A writer who has work first appearing in a 2022 fanzine.

FANARTIST: An artist who has work first appearing in a 2022 fanzine.

LETTERHACK (Harry Warner, Jr. Memorial Award): Loccer whose responses have appeared in a 2022 fanzine.

COVER: Best fanzine cover (including bacovers) of 2022.

CRAIC TEAM

Tommy Ferguson

Chair, Hotel Liaison,
Program

James Bacon

Committee member
without portfolio

Keith Freeman

Bookkeeper

Eugene Doherty, Mark McCann & Malcolm Hutchinson

Local On-Site

Geri Sullivan, Sandra Bond & John D. Berry

Special Fan Publication
Committee

Geri Sullivan, Eugene Doherty & Malcolm Hutchinson

Bus Tour

Peter Sullivan

Virtual Host

Claire Brialey

Discord Set-up

Nigel Rowe

US Agent

Bill Burns

Website

Rob Jackson

Programme Book Editor
ReadMe Editor/Publisher

Pat Virzi

Programme Book
Design / Production

Sue Mason

Programme Book Illustrations
Corflu Craic logo

Alison Scott

"Corflu Craic" lettering

Acknowledgments

Huge thanks are owed to all those who have helped get everything ready for Corflu Craic and specifically for this Programme Book. Thanks particularly to all who contributed Corflu Memories.

In alphabetical order, we are also grateful to:

John D. Berry	Dave Langford	Joe Siclari
Giulia de Cesare	Sue Mason	Edie Stern
Nic Farey	Curt Phillips	Geri Sullivan
Marcin "Alqua" Klak	Alison Scott	

Photographs provided by Hazel Ashworth West, John Coxon, Tommy Ferguson, Rob Jackson, Gary Mattingly, Pascal Thomas, Pat Virzi, and Robin Webber (via Nic Farey).

Most interior illustrations are by Sue Mason; D West cartoon on page 11 was provided by Ian Sorensen; Jim Barker illustrations on pages 62 and 64 are from *The Best of the Bushel*.

Chuch Harris "membership card" scan on page 61 provided by Curt Phillips.

The Corflu Craic programme book cover art and logo art is by Sue Mason, with lettering by Alison Scott.

Corflu Craic would like to thank Dublin 2019: An Irish Worldcon for their generous financial support which enabled the con hotel to be secured with a deposit.

Thanks to the generosity of Corflu Pangloss, there will be no charge for the Belfast Fan History bus tour on Friday morning

Corflu Craic Membership

ATTENDING MEMBERSHIP (£70 or US\$80) includes in-person attendance at all convention events as well as all convention publications. Walk-in members are welcome at these rates, though it may be a squeeze at the banquet — we'll bring you a doggie bag!

SUPPORTING MEMBERSHIP (£15 or US\$20) includes virtual attendance at the convention programme, plus all convention publications.

VIRTUAL MEMBERSHIP is free and includes access to the convention's Discord channel, where the Zoom links for the programme items will be found.

We expect all members (Attending, Supporting and Virtual) to respect each other. If you feel someone is out of order during the con, please let a convention committee member know. As we say in Belfast, 'we'll have a wee word...'

COVID Policy

The hotel is operating within UK national guidelines for COVID safety. Masks, vaccination (double, triple or whatever you can get) and regular thorough hand-washing are not compulsory but very strongly encouraged, and hand sanitiser will be available in prominent locations. The con will not be enforcing the wearing of masks, or asking for proof of vaccination — we're all adults here and know what the craic is. "Let's be careful out there!"

Glasgow 2024

A Worldcon
For Our Futures

8th–12th August 2024

SEC, Glasgow

www.glasgow2024.org

    @glasgowin2024

