

ERIC THE MOLLIE



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2014

Welcome to **Eric The Mole 5**

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Art

Many thanks to Brad Foster for the brilliant cover art and fillos on **Pages 8** and **10**

Eric The Mole 5 comes to you from **Ron Gemmell** and is available for the 'usual', at ron.gemmell@btinternet.com

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and Supports

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So here's the thing. Mad crazy at work and launched on a rolling delivery programme of first aid courses, I foolishly thought it would be a good idea to publish a fanzine! The plan is to get a quick fire issue of Eric The Mole out there in time to support Brad and Cindy in their TAFF Bid.

I must be mad...

Fortunately many of you decided to write LoC's on ETM 4, so I don't have to bore you all with talk of mountains and 'My Return to Fandom' tales (I've been back for five years or so now, hardly news), though mountains nearly did creep back to the front of my brain for a while until an interesting thing happened to me the earlier this week – somebody bought me a present. My offering this time round will be a hopefully interesting piece on one of my stranger hobbies, my collection of holiday tack and why I think they matter so much to me – feel free to skip it and go straight to the LoC's from the clever people if you wish.

This year will be a fandom first for me by the way, I'll be bringing my eldest son Josh along to the Worldcon in August and I've actually shocked myself to volunteer to help on the staff. The last con I worked on was Conspiracy in 87 – I'm hoping to see a little more of the convention this time!

Really looking forward to it, and really looking forward to seeing many of you from overseas again. See you in London!

RON

Plastic Snow and Real Smiles!

Holiday vacations have always played a major part in my life. In my childhood I was blessed with a family that really believed that it was important to 'get away' a couple of times a year, be it for a few days or a fortnight. Nothing too adventurous by today's standard and never too far away.

It wasn't that we were wealthy, far from it. Mum and Dad were both unskilled workers, Mum working as a cleaner and home-help, Dad working 'piece work' ten hours a day in a factory in Trafford Park, money never came easy. They put great stead in holidays, saving up for them throughout the year. They as children never had holidays; coming from large families in Salford and Manchester where money was always in short supply. With us, they obviously decided that things would be different.

Family summer holidays for years were more often than not somewhere near a beach, mainly in caravans and likely to be in North Wales. Occasionally we travelled further afield (though we were limited to rail or coach destinations as we didn't have a car), we spent a couple of weeks in Cornwall one year, Ireland once and the Isle of Man in another.

My personal favourite was Cornwall, I was ten years old. Any holiday that starts with the midnight sleeper train from Manchester Piccadilly to Truro, includes a caravan with a TV and indoor 'proper' loo, Cornish Pasties, full-fat ice cream, great beaches, plenty of sunshine, castles and even King Arthur can't be too bad!

Forty six years on, and I still have fond memories. Probably not 'true' ones – chances are it did rain once or twice; chances are we did fall out every now and then. It was a touch sunny though, I definitely recall getting quite spectacularly sunburnt one day on the beach (the same day my Mum came down with heat exhaustion, we never were very good with hot summers..)

It was a fantastic holiday with no expense spared, full of coach journeys along the coast to Tintagel, Boscastle and Land's End interspersed with seemingly endless days on Perranporth beach. Just a mile or so inland from the beach there is a buried chapel called St Piran's Oratory. At the time we visited it the place was half filled with sand but still able to be entered. The chapel itself is believed to be the oldest Christian church in the UK dating back to the 6th century and was lost for half a millennium under the dunes before being excavated in the 19th century. It's barely 30 foot long by 10 foot wide and was first part encased in concrete for protection in 1910 then allowed to be reburied by the sands again in 1980. Buried that is until last month – archaeologists have started excavating again on the site – it will be great to see the place in a year or two.

Our visit was in the summer of 1968, and although I can't be certain, I think it was about this time that I first came across the magic that are Snow Globes....

Snow Globes had been around ninety years or so before they came to my attention (apparently the Paris Universal Expo featured them amongst other things of world-wide interest back in 1878) and by the time I gazed on them for the first time they were no longer works of art in glass bowls originating from Austria (Erwin Perzy took out the first patent, and along with his brother Ludwig they set up a family business in Vienna where they make snow globes to this day) , but slightly less impressive works of plastic in water filled plastic domes from one of the

multitude of factories in far away Hong Kong.

You've seen them, you've probably even got a couple gathering dust on the top of that bookshelf or under the bed. They are filled with a mixture of water and glycerine; they have fake snow in the form of plastic flakes or sunshine in the form of glitter. They may have figures or landmarks from the places you bought them, you shake the globe and the snow falls.

I could say now, that as a child I was captivated by them. How I started collecting the globes forty six years ago and now I had thousands of them archived in the garage. But that isn't how it is; I probably bought my first snow globe just twenty years ago.

An elderly friend of mine at the time, a lovely lady called Billie Parsons lived independently nearby in a small sheltered housing bungalow. Billie had lived an amazing life and was very well spoken and caring. She was about eighty at the time and her small home was furnished with traditional post war furniture and display cabinets far too big for the rooms they occupied. The display cabinets housed a mixed assortment of fine bone china and what Billie would freely describe as tack – poor quality items with no intrinsic value but to her emotionally charged. They were tactile snapshots of a life shared with her two long passed husbands, and her still very much alive loving son and daughter from her first marriage.

Billie was a typical British middle class lady, who had lived through some amazing experiences – including being torpedoed in the North Atlantic in a convoy returning from Canada with her two year old son. This was the lady who on arrival back home to London got there only to find that her home had been reduced to rubble. In the post war years she had a run a pub with her first husband (who incidentally had been a

pilot in the RAF) until he died suddenly. Billie remarried a few years later, she was widowed a second time a couple of years before we met her.

When I asked her on one occasion why she had such an odd assortment of objects in her display cabinets she told me that most of small tackier objects had been bought on her travels all over the world and that she had quite early on in her life realised that the cost of holiday gifts wasn't important – it was the memories that was recalled that mattered.

This wisdom stuck with me, and since then I've made a habit of buying such small souvenirs from places we visit, be they two week holidays or two hour visits to stately homes.

It isn't only snow globes that are collected; fridge magnets have found their place on the shopping list – these at least serve some practical purpose. Snow globes are my choice, and the tackier the better to be honest. I prefer the cheap plastic globes rather than the 'classier' glass ones. The plastic ones take me back to the original childhood interest and are also more likely to survive the rigours of air travel.

Unfortunately, the plastic globes are far harder to find. Whether it's the case that the travelling public's 'taste' has changed or the factories in Hong Kong have switched their production lines to glass I can't tell you, and even Google struggles to enlighten me much.

Things I look out for in the perfect snow globe ...

First they have to be relevant, a scene of somewhere I've been to, and the attraction, the area or possibly a city has to be represented. I have a couple of Le Mont Saint Michel's that look particularly impressive, Euro Disney appears to be somewhat over represented (which reflect the amount of times we have been there

over the years). No country I have visited has escaped, my latest acquisition being a tasteful harbour scene of Stockholm – and prior to this a scene of Romeo and Juliet from Verona.

I was tempted to publish photographs in this issue, however I thought this might prove a little boring to the reader so thought better of it – photos can be requested however, just drop me a line and I'll take some limited edition orders ...

Perhaps the less tasteful of the collection is the one from the local Cold War bunker museum that I bought four or five years ago. The model in this case is a plastic representation of the above ground elements of the bunker with what appears to be a familiar mushroom cloud of a ten megaton ground burst in the background, even by my standards this was a little too much!

I've about a hundred snow globes in total, cleaned and inspected every now and then and stored in a box in the conservatory. For some reason beyond my comprehension, my wife Wanda doesn't really want to display these works on our lounge shelves so with the exception of a handful of my favourites the rest are consigned to storage. Of the hundred or so snow globes perhaps a quarter of them are gifts from an assortment of friends, family and even work colleagues.

I have globes from former scouts of mine who have travelled far more than I have, Toronto, Barcelona, and Oslo being amongst my favourites. When my eldest son visited New York five years ago with his college, he brought back the Empire State Building in a globe for me, I'm easily pleased!

David, the well travelled husband of my niece, recently told me on Facebook that the collection of globes he has picked up for me over the last few months was steadily growing – I suspect that the

collection will exceed the one hundred and fifty before too long.

There are still those that I hope to add myself. I've never been to America and am presently planning a handful of trips – one of which might actually get as far as the airport check in. Front runner at the moment is a two-centre trip staying in the Washington DC area for a couple of weeks with a mid-break four or five night stop in New York (taking advantage of a rail journey to and from Washington – I don't really fancy the idea of driving around New York..). We are going to Denmark in the summer so no doubt at least one or two will be added to the growing treasure, and one day I will have to add Barcelona myself, probably just after they finish building the Sagrada Familia, sometime in 2026! I've also still to acquire any southern hemisphere globes, something I hope to rectify in the years to come.

It's just occurred to me, that the timing of Loncon 3 could well be an advantage to my quest of filling the conservatory with boxes full of snow globes. So if you happen to be travelling over to London this summer, and have room in your baggage allowance for a small glass or plastic dome filled with water and fake snow, please spare me a thought. Payment may well be offered in the guise of a coffee or a pint at the con bar.

And the real smile bit? I can guarantee I will!

Thanks for Writing!

Many thanks to all of you who wrote in, Eric The Mole 4 followed issue 3 by over seven years – you would have been forgiven for wondering if issue 5 would make his appearance much before the London WorldCon, I'm so glad you did!

*First off with an extract or two from **Sue Thomas**, leading off with Sue's comments on the piece 'Seemed like a Good Idea'*

Ah, I recognise your Good Idea, as I share a house with a confirmed map-reader (this is "reading a map" in the same way that other people read novels) and walk-planner, and we've both spent a *lot* of time in the wilder bits of Scotland. I don't want to cop out of responsibility for planning our walks and backpacking trips, but Rory *so* much enjoys the planning stage that he gets to do most of it. And we've had several visits to the Ben Alder area, mostly walking in along the Loch Ericht track from Dalwhinnie and wild-camping somewhere around Loch Pattack. I remember one memorable winter-conditions trip, walking in snow and fog (but not whiteout) towards our chosen approach to the plateau, hearing a big avalanche come down... somewhere... and hoping we were in the right place (i.e. not in the run-out zone). I don't think I've ever stayed in a bothy, though; we usually wild-camp. Picking out a good campsite is an interesting and fun challenge, particularly in bad weather (we have had some amazingly sheltered nights in amazingly rough conditions), and one of my **ultimate** feelgood experiences is to be lying snug and warm in the sleeping bag, after a hot meal and a cup of coffee, listening to the rain/sleet rattling on the flysheet. (Camping in snow is also fun, but snow doesn't rattle.)

I have to agree with you Sue, the sound of rain on the flysheet is very relaxing, but never much fun when you wake in the morning and it's still raining! I've not camped in snow for a couple of years now, but one of the most amazing experience I had was actually bivvying in snow one November up in the mountains (bivvying gentle reader is sleeping out under the stars in a goretex bag without a tent), waking up in the morning with three inches of snow covering everything except yourself was quite impressive!

And on to my return to Fandom

Eh, you know, I don't think I was ever going to be a BNF, although my relationship with Fandom does rather mirror yours, but 20% under the curve... a few conventions, a few fanzines, and a big gap. I'm really not sure what's brought me back into the fold (assuming I am back in the fold). I've never completely lost touch with apas, so that's one strong strand tugging me back towards fanac. Conventions are both wonderful (all those people!) and scary (all those people!), and as Rory doesn't do conventions, travelling on my own gives me a whole new range of things to be scared of (public transport! Cafes! Spending money!) However, I had a great time at Novacon – such a good time that I've signed up to Eastercon in 2013... and hey, you know, maybe if I'm going to Eastercon, it would be a good idea to put out a zine..?

Sue Thomason

190 Coach Road, Sleights,
Whitby, North Yorks., YO22 5EN

It was great to see you Sue on both occasions, though I haven't yet seen your zine ... Any chance you will be down at Loncon 3 by the way?

Thanks for your May 2012 trip report as well –Scotland is a Big Place, hopefully I'll see more of it before I hang up the boots!

Over now to **Eric Mayer** who really surprised me when he talked about orienteering, something I've often fancied doing but I was never so sure about my navigation to actually run to the target!

Fascinating subject matter. The walks sound like great fun, albeit the camping out part might be a little too rough for me. I've rarely camped out, and I doubt I'd be able to pack enough to carry the required equipment much further than, say, across the room. In fact these days just filling the pack would probably exhaust me. Besides which I think I can still feel the exact shape of the root I managed to spend the night lying on the last time I tried vainly to sleep at a camp site during a weekend orienteering meet.

I suspect I don't need to explain to you what orienteering is. (If not, you are unusual) I wrote about the sport in *Revenant #8*. You can probably imagine I really perked up when you started describing examining ordinance maps to find a route. I love maps and orienteering maps are like topo maps on steroids.

It's hard to explain the joy of plotting a route on a map and seeing the features depicted there, and imagined, appearing up ahead, right on cue. (And hard to imagine the horror when they don't appear on cue....) An orienteering meet is a far less wild experience than your walks. Confined to a forested park and a few hours (unless one is into 24 hour events).

Whenever I hear about folks doing such walks I have to remark that if you tried it in the US you would probably end up shot while crossing someone's property. Sad to say.

My orienteering petered out after I had to stop running due to a bad back and began to get out of shape. Then a move took me away from convenient access to meets. I'm not up to driving three hours to a meet, spending three hours in the woods and driving home these days.

By all means do not submerge yourself completely in fandom. And keep walking as long as possible.

Wonderful cover by the way. It would look great on a mini-comic and I mean that as a compliment.

Best,

Eric (not the mole)

Thanks Eric, as a hill and mountain walker I've loads of gratitude for the orienteering navigation skills we learn – and indeed teach. Something we've borrowed without having to run through forests looking for well hidden marker posts!

Fandom is being kept in check, I'm still having fun walking the tops but find that my other 'hobby' – namely First Aid training is beginning to take over my life instead, the difference is however that people actually pay me to teach them First Aid, quite a profitable and fulfilling pastime to be honest, quite a buzz!

Andy Hooper picked up on *ETM 4* from the *eFanzines* site, a name from my ancient fannish past ..

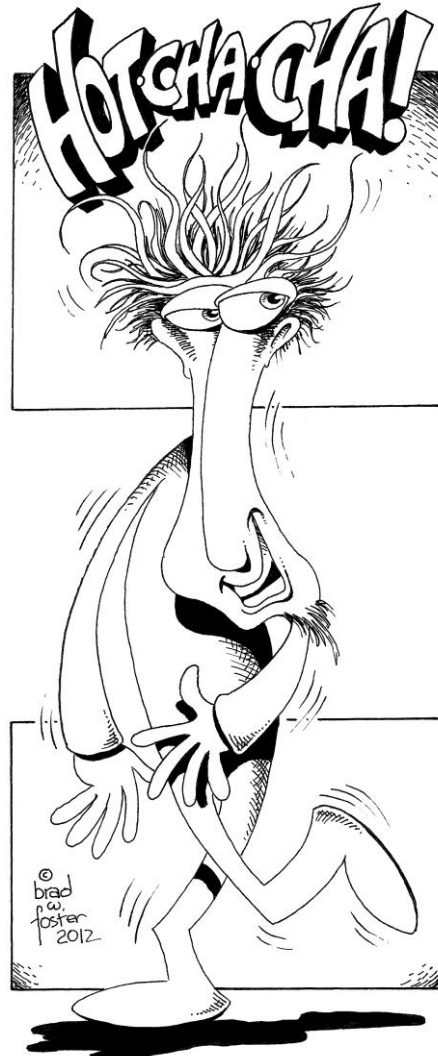
Dear Ron,
I wanted to take a moment to write to tell you how much I enjoyed reading ERIC THE MOLE #4. Cruising through recent updates on *eFanzines*, I spotted your name stuck in with the usual bulletins from Garcia, Katz, Mayer, et al, and did a double take. Ron *Gemmell*? A byline that seems familiar from my fannish youth. What could have prodded you awake from your mossy slumber in the glades of gafia?

Facebook, of course, and the general ease of publishing through the auspices of St. Burns of Long Island. To me, the recent rush of faneds of old returning to correspondence (I got a GIANT letter from Paul Skelton a month or two ago) has been a delightful inversion of recent

demographic trends in my own mailing list, where new arrivals have not kept up with terminal departures for several years. But with your permission, I'll add you to the UK mailing list for the next issue of CHUNGA, which we quixotically persist in producing on paper. Another appealing element of ERIC #4 was its modest size - - at ten pages, it was no effort at all to print a copy out and read it while I was out eating lunch. It's backward of me, I know, but it makes a fanzine somehow far more real to me to read it on paper; and I think Brad's cover art benefited from being viewed from the frame of an 8 1/2 by 11 sheet. The eyes seem to follow me around the room....

Like you, I'm a fat hiker, so when I read the remark that the distance between Dalwhinnie and Courror was "only 50 kilometres," and that over Ben Alder, I actually laughed out loud. What misery might be behind that tiny space on the map! Here in Western Washington State, a hike of similar distance would almost inevitably include far more elevation gain and loss, which makes the pace you set on some legs of your journey sound quite impossible to me. The Bothy system and the presence of B&Bs also sounds quite wonderful; here. You're going to end up sleeping under nylon 95% of the time.

I also find it impressive that you have a family with two kids, but still seem to find plenty of time to do hiking trips with your mates. I'm sure it was a lot more challenging when your boys were younger. Your list of the trips you've taken with them was also quite enviable - I'd really love to tour the Ionian coast you listed in your early "bargain" period. The planning stage is always the most magical phase of any trip, before reality sets in. And there is something in most fans that loves a good map, real or imagined.



It's really quite refreshing to read an entire issue of a fanzine without any whinging about the future of fandom or awards or convention politics. It seems telling that you count Ian Sorensen among your friends in fandom - he always struck me as having far more energy than the average British fan as well. The 2014 London Convention also holds a hypnotic attraction for me - I feel certain I'll end up attending the event; the only question is how much work I end up doing in the process. At the last UK Worldcon I attended in 1995, I brought a different fanzine to hand out at each day of the convention. I'd love to be able to attend the event and enjoy it, without doing anything particularly stupid like that. I'm extremely fond of two of the convention's Guests of Honour, Iain Banks and Jeanne Gomoll, so I expect there will be

programme events involving them that I would actually like to attend. And of course the prospect of a reunion with at least some fans last encountered in 1995 is also very attractive.

This letter is now about 10% as long as the entire fanzine, so I'll close here. I'm glad that eFanzines.com has done so much to reduce the vagaries of overseas distribution for so many British fans – there are always titles on the Nova list that are a complete mystery to me, but less so now that most have migrated to the Web. Here's hoping it is quite a bit less than seven years before you publish your next issue.

Andy Hooper
11032 30th Ave. NE
Seattle, WA 98125
USA

November 28th, 2012

Hi Andy, many thanks for getting in touch! Thanks also for CHUNGA, great to see paper fanzines through the door. Funny you should mention trekking in Washington State, I've never been to the States but do find myself being drawn over there for a convention cum trek trip though wouldn't fancy it on my own – now if I had a few local fans to walk with...

It would be great to see you if you could make it over here for the Worldcon. Obviously since your letter we have lost Iain but I wouldn't be surprised if there is still a few programme slots where his work and play features. I edited a small zine back in November call a Tale from the White Hart, which is basically almost a mini con report about an evening a few of us shared with Iain a few weeks before he died. Probably the hardest thing I've ever had to write. Drop me a line and I'll send you a copy or check out eFanzines.

*And still on the same continent, here's one from **Lloyd Penny***

Many thanks for Eric the Mole 4...I don't think I have seen this little zine before, so it is indeed time to take a swipe at it, and see what I can say about it. You are planning a local, hm?

I often go for walks, but these days, it's mostly to get from one bus line to another in my enormous commute from one job to another. It's been a while since I've had the opportunity to go for a walk just to go for a walk. I've done 28-kilometer walk-a-thons, but I was a lot younger then. And then the Hogwarts express happened by? I think even Yvonne, my wife, would go to see that train go by, although she'd rather be riding it. As would I.

I was a Scout a long time ago, and in this modern age, I rarely see a Scout anywhere in Toronto; I guess it's just not cool any more. No one that age goes camping, anyway. I liked working towards the badges I'd get, and I got some badges few actually cared to get anyway, like Collecting and Man of Letters. I was a Scout for almost four years when I got a double dose of itching powder down my back at the Scout Christmas party. I never went back to a Scout meeting, and the leaders didn't care enough to inquire about my absence.

Another Facebooker? As am I. Like any other interest I've had, I'd like to do a little more than just participate. I'd like to stand out, and in some ways, I think I have. I've done it in a stamp club I belonged to, and to a shortwave radio club, but there you were encouraged, and in fandom, you're often torn down. My desire to stand out is largely done, and those who would tear you down have gone on to other targets.

Our final Worldcon target is to get to London for Loncon 3. We hope to be there, we hope to save enough money to go. Right now, we are leaning towards, the hell with it, we'll go, and put the remainder on the credit card. This will be

a once-in-a-lifetime trip, and it may be our last.

Yours, Lloyd Penney
Etobicoke, ON
CANADA M9C 2B2
December 9, 2012

*Here's hoping you are can make the con Lloyd, it will be great to see you guys! The final LoC is from **Brad Foster** who with a bit of luck will be coming to Loncon 3 with **Cindy**. Brad and I have known each other via zines and phone for decades, it would be great to finally meet up!*

I have never heard of these "Bothies" before. What a great idea! Of course, the cynic in me looks around at all the trash and mindless destruction-for-no-reason that people do, and have to wonder if such an idea could actually exist here. But, nice to know there are places in the world where such an idea -can- be carried out.

The entire tale of your hike here almost worn me out, though. I used to get out on multi-mile walks every day, a way to clear my head and explore different areas around my home. But over the years have done less and less of that, and now even will think twice about making the walk to another room. What a slob!

Regarding your comments about Facebook. While I like that it has connected me up with a lot of folks around the world, I also have to guard against letting it become too much of a time-sapper for me. I'm in a couple of different discussion groups there, and I find I will often be sitting in front of the screen for hours at a time, because there is some miscreant who dares to have the "wrong" opinion, and it is up to ME to correct them! Or, at the very least, to mock them mercilessly.

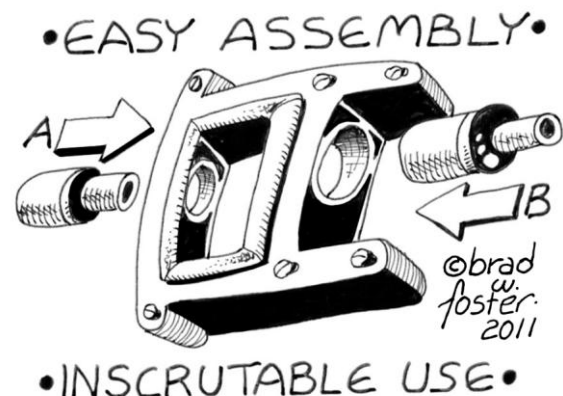
Speaking of which, need to go check in on those groups and see if any of them need to be corrected of their wrong ideas again today!

stay happy~

Brad W Foster
PO Box 165246, Irving, TX 75016 USA

Will do Brad! I'm actually at the PC typing this at well past midnight on the 7th April which incidentally is my birthday!

Another Big Idea of mine if I ever get round to trekking a bit in the US is covering stretch of the Appalachian Trail. UK Bothies are probably very similar to the AT's backcountry shelters with the same approach to basic facilities and 'single night rule'. Like the AT's shelters it is always a good idea to take a tent – as tents are often far more comfortable! The downside of camping is that they can be tricky to put up – sometimes the instruction are similar to these ...



Final Words

Just enough space to wish you all well, it's been fun writing this little zine again and it would be much appreciated if you could write in. Eric The Mole 6 could well be out in time for Novacon, maybe even Novacon this year!