



Have you considered voting  
Jim Mowatt for TAFF?

## 1492 & ALL THAT

So, I've been swotting up on the history of America and I think I've got it all sorted now. America was conjured into being in 1492 by a chap called Columbus. He was so desperate to find land that he invented a whole continent so that he had somewhere to dock his ships. Unfortunately he accidentally invented lots of native peoples who roamed about the place getting in the way and bumping into folks. As a health and safety measure lots of these native peoples were removed from the continent and this made it much safer as there were fewer trip hazards. Later someone decided that they didn't like tyrants and they said George was one. George the Turd (for twas he) got cross and sent lots of people in red coats to remonstrated with the tyrant haters. The haters refused to stand still and be shot at so it all got a bit messy and George decided it was a silly game and he didn't want to play anyway. To celebrate the people decided it was their inalienable right to draft a constitution and so they did. In 1848 there were rumblings in the not so United States. Some of them thought that slavery was a jolly super idea and others thought it not quite the thing. Everyone got a bit cross with each other but someone looked up Gettysburg's address and they calmed down again and tried to pretend they were all friends. Since then they have made cowboy films, hamburgers and Lenny Bruce. God Bless America.

# MOWATT FOR TAFF



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# JIM

## THE UNIVERSE & EVERYTHING



TINY TAFFZINE ISSUE 4

# I Wish I Could Write Like David Langford

It all started with a fanzine. Many things start with fanzines: conventions, fanwars, mild disapproval. This time it was a heated discussion on Facebook about the Jacq Monahan opinions. There were a few lines slipped in at the end of the article about LosCon that directed a little ire toward some convention people who were trying to annex all the elevators by eating and continuing to eat until they occupied all the available space. A cunning ploy indeed but one can see how a fellow elevator occupier might object to this sort of thing. Ulrika O'Brien objected strongly to Jacq's depiction of these people and felt it a vicious attack upon large people, up with which she would not put. So far, just another day on Facebook. However among the Ulrika comments was one that insinuated itself inside my head and filled it with angst and bothersome thoughts. "Yeah, this is what differentiates the Ugly American from the Ugly Briton. Britons are just as virulently bigoted, but they're actually funny about it." Hang on thinks I, there's a lot of expectation there. Then I began to quake as I realised that there's a very strong possibility that this sheer cliff face of expectation could shortly rise up in front of my own person. What if I win this TAFF thing? They will expect me to write a trip report brimming with devastating quips and choc-a-bloc full of super zingers of astounding wit and incisive perception. Twas then that I realised whose fault it all was. It's that bloody Langford again. Many years ago, when dinosaurs were pubbing their ish, Dave Langford won TAFF, went to several places in North America, came home and then had the audacity to write an incredibly funny and interesting trip report. Not the

most heinous crime in the universe, you might be thinking, but it does set a standard that we mere mortals can only step back and gaze up at. North American fanzine fandom now blithely wanders around assuming all British fan writers are devastatingly witty and so we British writhe in terror as the expectant gaze of North America turns its focus upon us expecting wit and satire to vomit forth from each and every one of us. Damn you David Langford. Damn you to hell. So what shall I do if I win and need to write a TAFF report? I suppose I could just copy The Transatlantic Hearing Aid and pretend I wrote it. Unfortunately there are a number of places there which may not feature in my fan report. Most prominent of these is the Worldcon itself which is scheduled for San Antonio in Texas. I'm not sure the Langford description of Boston (which apparently isn't in Lincolnshire) would translate to Texas. Hmmm, a dilemma indeed. Could I learn to write like Langford? Let's take a look at a couple of the opening lines from his TAFF trip report:

"I shall be *sick*," Hazel told me with a sort of satisfied determination. "I was sick in France



and sick in Germany and sick in Austria and ... well, every country in Europe except Liechtenstein."

"You need good aim to be sick in Liechtenstein," I agreed.

Well, I suppose I could make jokes about Liechtenstein but maybe that isn't the point. Pointing out the size inadequacies of small countries does not a trip report make. Can I reduce the expectation somehow? Perhaps I can reprint vast numbers of the more tedious tomes of Britfandom in an attempt to convince North American fandom that we are almost human and not always brilliantly witty and satirical. Hmm, maybe a little cruel to inflict this upon people who may well have voted for me in the TAFF race.

I wonder - as it is all David Langford's fault, is there any way I could nobble him? Possibly I could go back in time and break all his fingers, so preventing him from producing wonder and merriment with his typing digits. No good. The talented git would probably still manage to manufacture his magic with the pen clutched between his toes. Could I break his toes also? This is all getting a bit gruesome and there's the possibility that he might not allow me to break his toes. There's also the slight technical problem that when H.G. Wells wrote his documentary on time travel he forgot to include the detailed technical drawings that would help me at least to embark upon my mission.

And so here I am, being violently pitched from trough to crest in this sea of anguished despair. In my head there are the words, Wish I Could Write Like David Langford to the tune of the Sensational Alex Harvey Band number, Sgt Fury. Unfortunately I can't think of anything, remotely relevant to rhyme with Langford so I'm stuck with the same line over and over and over again.