

iOTA 01

December 2016

iOTA is a little efanzone put together by Leigh Edmonds for the singular purpose of keeping informed the fans who are interested the progress of his project to write a history of Australian sf fandom in the period from 1956 to 1975, and sundry offences. Since it is an efanzone you can only get it electronically and you can also get in touch with me electronically. If you want to contact me try hhandc@hemsleypark.com.au.

Explanations first

Why iOTA?

Because the working title for the fannish history is 'Olympicon to Aussiecon', but there is no such word as 'ota' in my dictionary so I had to find a letter to put in front of it. 'M' would have been nice, but Terry Hughes has already taken it. The second obvious choice was 'i' because everyone who is somebody puts that letter in front of their otherwise very uninteresting name or title to make it sound modern and innovative. Wanting to be somebody, I will too.

Why a little efanzone about a history of fandom project?

The main reason is that, for every commissioned history I've written, I've always had to produce regular progress reports, and it's a habit that I've got used to and found useful. Not only are regular reports important to make the commissioning body think that they are getting something for its money, they are very useful to help me chart what I've done so far, what needs to be done and also helps me organize my thoughts about the project.

I am also aware that the few fannish friends who know

about the project sometimes wonder what I'm doing, if I'm making any progress and, if so, in what direction. By publishing this regularly I hope to be able to keep fans who are interested informed of my progress.

What is likely to appear in iOTA?

A good question! A bit of a progress report on what I've done since the previous issue. Maybe something about what I'm likely to be doing in the immediate future and possibly some mumblings about what I'm thinking about as the project trundles along.

I also keep coming across little interesting bits and pieces in old fanzines that I'd like to share with others, and they are likely to appear here. This includes shortish articles, reports and other fannish writing, bits and pieces of art work, covers and goodness knows what else. Let's find out as we go along, shall we?

How to get iOTA?

That's a good question. I may look at putting it up on a site such as efanzone but in the first instance, like now, I'll keep a mailing list and send out PDF files to anyone who lets me know that they are interested.

A History of Australian Fandom?

The first reason for researching and writing as history of Australian fandom is; why not?

From an academic point of view, I think that a history of what science fiction fans did might be considered a vital adjunct to the current study of science fiction, due to the very close relationship between sf and fandom over the generations.

I'm also keen to do this because most of my recent history

projects have been about large organizations employing thousands of people, and I'm looking forward to a project in which it is possible to get closer to people and their daily lives.

Perhaps most important, this project will tell a story about what fans did and what their lives were like. We had fun, didn't we? That should be worth celebrating.



Illustration by 'McIntyre' from *Etherline* 72, p.10, undated but probably July or August 1956

Explaining the Project

Like most commissioned history projects, this one has a defined goal. It is to research and write a history of Australian sf fandom. In general the project will take around three years to

complete and will probably result in a book of some kind containing a text of somewhere between 60,000 and 80,000 words with plenty of illustrations including photos, selected fan art and things like fanzine and convention program covers.

After that it all gets a bit more vague. I've done enough of these projects to have learned that where I expect to end up is most unlikely to be where I actually end up. I'm told that fiction writers have the same problem when their characters decide to take the story away from the author, and while the actors in a history are less likely to mutiny, they still keep on revealing motivations, experiences and secrets that take the story in unexpected directions.

At this point I must add that it is not my intention to put anyone under the microscope and reveal their weaknesses and foibles. This is to be the history of a group of people who had fun (though it might not always have seemed like it at the time) working together on a number of projects for a common interest and good. It is to be a history of generally good experiences and feelings and I hope that when non-fans read it they will wish they had been able to share in the experiences.

I'm giving as the starting date of this history as Olympicon which was held in Melbourne in late 1956 and the ending date as Aussiecon, which was held in Melbourne in mid 1975. There are two reasons for doing this. One is practical in that the amount of research needed to explore these two decades is already more than I really care to think about - the amount of printed material fans generated over this period is truly frightening. The other is more theoretical in that I want to locate this history against a cultural history of Australia during this period, which begins in the

wowserism, conservatism and censorship of the 1950s and ends with the opening up of Australian culture during the 1960s and the social and cultural revolution of the Whitlam era in the first half of the 1970s.

I cannot, of course, ignore what went before and what followed. As far as I can discern so far, organized fandom began in Australia in Sydney in the late 1930s. Until the mid 1950s Sydney based fandom was the moving force of Australian fandom, but there was a great deal of disharmony among Sydney fans and, quite frankly, it is not something that I care to spend too much time on since it seems so counter productive in retrospect. When fans in Melbourne began organizing in the early 1950s they decided to take what they saw in Sydney as a model of what not to do, and it seems with hindsight that this resulted in a much more productive culture. Over time this spirit spread to other Australian fan groups so that, by the early 1970s, most Australian capital cities had a sf group of some kind.

Consequently, I'm expecting that there will be an introductory chapter, probably a long one, about events leading up to Olympicon. I'm also expecting there to be a chapter about what followed on from Aussiecon - but no spoilers yet.

SMOF ACTION - 1966

Here is an extract written by John Foyster in *Australian Science Fiction Review* 3, edited by John Bangsund and published in September 1966. The convention John refers to is the 1966 Easter convention which led to the publication of ASFR. It is more of less self explanatory, including the news of the fire that destroyed John and Elizabeth Foyster's house and contents in May that year. It is a reminder of the small scale of Australian fandom

at the time and the minimal budget on which things were run.

In the final paragraph John instructs fans at the time that it is their duty to organize the next convention as he won't be around to do it. I don't recall John disappearing overseas in 1967, but then I might not have been paying attention. There was also, so far as I can recall, no convention in 1967.

***** (Advertisement) *****

REPORT TO MEMBERS OF THE SEVENTH AUSTRALIAN SCIENCE FICTION CONVENTION

The Secretary-Treasurer of the convention regrets his inability to provide a report which he would consider at all satisfactory. This notice is intended to inform members that something is forthcoming, and to perform several other small tasks.

The convention was a financial success, in that a small profit of about \$40 was made. However, this is only a paper profit, and after writing off bad debts this had best be reduced to \$35. The Treasurer begs to report that this is about as accurate as his accounting can be at this time, as his house and all contents were destroyed by fire in early May. However, this profit was only possible through the selling of space in the convention booklet, and through commissions on the Auction, these bringing in \$40 and \$30 respectively. Total income, aside from the Auction, is around \$180 and expenditure a trifle more. Ten to fifteen dollars was spent on food for convention attendees, fifty dollars plus on films and the remaining expenses were involved with production and mailing of leaflets

and booklets, and the purchase of materials for display. Basically, it might be said that the Treasurer had to hustle to keep the Con out of the red. Until the Sunday, in fact, the convention was running at a loss.

The average attendance was 45 per gathering, with ver little dispersion. Publicity was very good, as has already been mentioned in these pages.

The Secretary intends to donate \$20 to the AUSTRALIAN SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW (with which he has no connection other than that he writes half of it, and pays for his copies like anyone else). This advertisement is also being bought out of convention profits. In addition, some money has been spent on the preparation of a report which was initially to be rather ambitious, involving the transcription of tapes. To date this work has been slow but sure, with those involved spending a great deal of time on it. Transcriptions have been released to the REVIEW in the belief that this would be of the greatest possible benefit. However, much has still to be done, and neither of the two people involved in the work can see any possibility of its completion this year. For this reason they plan to bring out a small report in the near future.

To this end, the Secretary requests your assistance. All convention papers were destroyed, and although those who were at the con were consulted, some fifteen names seem to

be missing from our lists. Would those reading this who were at the convention please supply the Secretary with the names and if possible the addresses of others they know to have been at the con, so that everyone will receive this report. Address below.

PLANS FOR A FUTURE CONVENTION. The present Secretary wishes it to be understood that he cannot do anything at all about future conventions. Many People have asked him just what is happening and the answer has been and will be that he knows as much as they do. The last con agreed IN PRINCIPLE to the holding of a future convention, and at that time it was made quite clear that NO-ONE was obligated to put on a convention at any time. This can be extracted from the con tapes is anyone so desires. The simple fact is that the Secretary will have left the country by Easter of next year, and does not intend returning for some time. There are many fans who will still be here, and it must be their duty to run a convention if they want one.

From where I sit, it's easier to talk than to do anything.

JOHN FOYSTER P.O. BOX 57, DROUIN VICTORIA

A Brush with the Academy

A few months back Lee Harding sent me news of an announcement he'd seen in the *ASA Newsletter* about a Dr Jessie Lynn of the School of Information Studies at Charles Sturt University who had received a fellowship to study 'Practices of

Australian (fan)zines - uncovering the networks and practices of early Australian sci-fi fanzines'. This sounded interesting so I found her email address and announced myself to her. As it turned out, she had been trying to get in touch with me but had an old email address. So we swapped a few emails and got to know each other a bit.

It turns out that Jessie's prime interest is in libraries and their contents and, as an old 'zine' maker - the term 'fanned' had yet to enter her vocabulary - she was interested in them and had discovered the special collection that Grant Stone had put together at Murdoch University, including a lot of fanzines and the collection that I had donated to them in about 1988.

In early November Jessie went and spent a week or two in Perth (and fell as much in love with Western Australia and Western Australians as Valma and I did) and looked through the collection.

On her way back to Wagga Wagga Jessie, her partner and child stopped in Ballarat for two or three days and she and I spent two mornings talking about what we were doing and she interviewed me about my fannish experiences, in particular the process of making fanzines. I have to admit that I hadn't thought about it very much, it was just something that fans did, using knowledge passed down from earlier generations and experience of getting ink splashed about where it wasn't supposed to go. I found myself explaining how an issue of *Etherline* or *Fanew Sletter* (with their landscape layouts) was put together with the arrangements of stencils and the two drum arrangement that AFPA had in the 1950s. I tried to express to her the might and mystery of the Roneo 750 or the poetry (Spike Milligan style, sorry Bruce)

of watching Bruce Gillespie crank out an early issue of *SFC*.

If you asked me I'd say that Jessie's main interest is in fanzines as artefacts - how they were made and distributed and how they should be stored, looked after and made accessible. I said that, for my part, I was interested in the writing in the fanzines as a source of historical evidence but she assured me that she has an interest in the content too. And after Jessie's visit I will be paying more attention to the process of editing and producing fanzines that I had previously intended to do.

(I'm certain that I'm seriously misrepresenting Jessie's interests in fanzines and fandom so, if she is inclined, I'll invite her to write a piece to be published here that represents her interests much better than I can.)

On the second morning we went to have a meeting with the head of the Collaborative Research Center in Australian History at the local university to see what collaborations might be possible

between our two universities.

Which might be promising.

As we were leaving we bumped into Jessie's partner, Cassandra, and her little boy Louis Lynn and I had to take a photo.



After that we returned here and continued our discussion, about such fannish mysteries as non-stop paragraphing, how to cut stencils with fully justified margins, apas and other things I've now forgotten about.

After a while Robin Johnson came around (no, he wasn't unconscious, he lives close by) and Jessie talked to him about his experiences in fandom, to give her a different perspective from mine. After that she headed off to make sense of everything she had seen and heard in the past couple of weeks. She has a mountain of work ahead of her and I trust it will all work out well for her.

Jessie is a bright, intelligent, interesting and entertaining person, just the kind of person who would have fitted nicely into the membership roster of ANZAPA or on a convention committee. I have learned a lot from her about how to look at fandom from a fresh perspective with a different theoretical outlook. I hope that she had found fandom just as interesting and useful.

Fandom Studies

Through Jessie I have learned of this new field of academic activity called 'fandom studies'. It is, more or less, what it says it is, the academic study of fandom.

But don't worry, it's not about us, yet. I get the impression from my reading so far that fandom studies has its fangs into media fandom and it is possibly from that subset of fandom because there seems to be a lot of interest in the phenomena of 'slash' fiction - I had to explain to Jessie the kind of fiction that appears in sf fanzines, including faaan fiction - and the relationship between media products and their consumption by fans.

Running with a wild hypothesis here, my guess is that sf fans with an academic inclination went into litcrit while the academic inclinations of media fans led them to cultural studies, in particular film and television.

There is a lot more to this field of study but it is a different discipline with different views of the world to that of litcrit and so somewhat alien to me. Not that I'm that interested in litcrit either, which probably explains why I became involved in history, which is a form of story telling which is just as academically formalized as litcrit or media studies, but with a different language and way of analyzing the world.

I may have to come back to this topic in some future issue, but I can think about more interesting things to read and write about.

Progress Report

I started work on this project at the beginning of June this year with some interviews with the surviving original members of the Melbourne SF Group; Race Matthews, Lee Harding, Dick Jenssen and Merv Binns. I also did a session with Bill Wright who arrived at the MSFC well before I did. These were thoroughly interesting and entertaining interviews and I am only now beginning to understand the questions that I did not know to ask, so I hope to get back to them all in the coming few months.

Then, in August, I underwent some rather ghastly dental surgery which included some unintended nerve damage which made life more than a little unpleasant for the following months and left me quite drained of the energy necessary to continue with this new project. I found it difficult to concentrate on this and so went back to another project that I had put to one side and carried

on with it instead since it involved little more than review, revision and rewriting of a previous text (on civil aviation in Australia from World War II to 1974 - a bit of a coincidence with the dates there). That has now gone off to the publisher and I'm back on this project full time - or what equates to full time for somebody who would normally be retired by now.

I've made a couple of trips down to the rare books collection at Monash University where they have, among other things, the MSFC fanzine collection and also John Foyster's papers, which includes a lot of fanzines. I've also been trawling (a technical phrase historians use) the online fanzine collections on efanzine and fanac.org which includes quite a bit of historical Australian material, a lot of it contributed by Kim Huett.

An invaluable source to be found on the interweb is a complete set of Chris Nelson's *Mumblings from Munchkinland*. Apart from a lot of fascinating writing about Chris's life and times, there is also a lot of very good work that he has done on early Australian fandom, mostly to do with the FSS (Futurian Society of Sydney) which includes commentary on many Futurian activities, interviews with Futurians and extensive obituaries of old time fans including Don Tuck, Graham Stone and Ian Crozier. I already owe a great deal of my understanding of the early days of Sydney fandom to Chris's fine work.

Perhaps even more impressive is the work that Chris has done in trawling the letter columns of early prozines in search of contributions by Australians and New Zealanders. As a result of this work we now know, for example, that three people who played important roles in Australian sf and fandom in the 1950s to the 1970s had letters in early issue of *Amazing Stories*, Bert

Chandler in the July 1927 issue, Ron Graham in the May 1928 issue and George Turner in the July 1932 issue.

Unfortunately, the life of a historian is a fairly uninteresting one filled with drudgery. We occasionally go out and talk to interesting people or make exciting discoveries in the archives, but mostly our lives are simply the tedium of endless reading or ordering information so it is organized and ready to hand when it comes to writing. It involves, for example, the creation of a chronology of endless details and the construction of a data base of fanzines I've seen and the places I've seen them to save me from doubling and tripling up when I go to different archives. I won't bore you further with the tedious details.

To Be Done

Lots of unexciting work, I'm afraid. After interviewing Race, Lee, Merv, Dick and Bill I've been reminded, again, of my very limited detailed knowledge of what happened when. In time I will need to do a lot of traveling to interview fans in the capital cities but, before then, I need to do a lot more reading and work on the chronology. In the immediate future the most important task is a trip to Perth to raid the fanzine collection at Murdoch University - hopefully in February if things go according to plan.

So, in summary for the coming six months or so at least, a visit to Perth and then weeks spent in making sense and order of everything I've found there.

The Roll Call - February 1941

Headlining the 30th issue of the *Futurian Observer* for 23 February 1941, 'gathered and slapped together by Bert F Castellari', is an article listing the involvement, or potential involvement, of Australian fans in the war effort. First mentioned

is an old friend of many fans in Australia in the 1970s and beyond.

AUSTRALIAN FANDOM GOES TO WAR

Possibly the only known Australian fan to be occupied greatly with the present war is George R Turner of Melbourne. Though no one has heard from George since he left Australia ('twas with the second contingent) it is believed that he has been very much active with the rest of the Australian running team in the Libyan Athletics. However, should anyone hear from him we would be glad if they would forward his address in order that we may communicate with him.

Other Melbournites, Hockley, Taylor and MacBride are at present too young to undergo training, but it is believed that the silence of Marshall L MacLennan may mean that he is doing his 90 days - what sayeth Marshall?

Don Tuck expects to be call up soon for his 90 days training, which means that Hobart's "only" will be inactive for a little while.

In the North J Keith Moxon states that ill health has forced him to head for the country and is now working on the land. This makes Keith exempt from training (the ill health, not working on the land). Still moving around the North, wonder if Chas S Mustchin has been spending some time in the army?

Back South again and in Sydney we must ferret around a bit. Two Sydneyites suffer from physical disabilities which make them exempt. They are Vol Molesworth and David R Evens. Bruce

M. Sawyer is just completing his 90 days in camp - our dampened spirits may brighten when his 'happy, smiling face' pokes around the corner into Pitt Street again! Speaking of Bruce reminds me that Eck, oop, Eric Russell is now near training age - wow! That will leave much younger brother Ted to hold the fort with Ultra. Then, of course, there's several 17-year olds who haven't much longer to wait ... William D Veney, Kenneth N Dwyer, Bert Castellari and so on! Ronald B Levy (16 years) is not new to it having been in training for some time with the Sydney Grammar regiment.

So there is the bulk of Australian fandom in the conflict, excepting for one Gentleman who does more good work in science fiction in this country than is known; Charles Le Caste says he expects to be called up for his 90 days any time now.

And finally, one of the fans already mentioned is entertaining thoughts of joining the RAAF reserve - to be transferred to the RAAF proper later on. (No name allowed.)

The News of the Day - 1955

After having snatches from the 1960s and the 1940s I thought we'd dive into the 1950s, and I chose an issue of *Etherline*, edited by Ian Crozier. This is issue 56, but I discovered, to my horror, that *Etherline* is undated so far as I can see, so we can only guess at the date. Going by the prozine review and adding on a couple of months, this was probably published around October 1955. I picked this issue at random. If the fan groups

back then had this much fun I want to know where that time machine of mine has disappeared to because I want to pay them a visit.

BRISBANE NEWS

Recent fourth wedding anniversary celebration of George and Betty Tafe might almost have been a meeting of the BSFG.

After a busy Show week, Betty's last minute inspiration resulted in a very enjoyable small party at the Tafe's flat on the evening of Monday, August 22nd.

Present were: Arthur Clarke, feeling free and relaxed after getting the last pages of THE COAST OF CORAL out of the typewriter; Hike Wilson, uninhibited as usual, and using many flash bulbs to record the events of the evening; Don and Dawn Campbell, with whom Arthur and Mike are staying while in Brisbane; Elaine and Jim McLaughlin, who have every excuse for thinking SF fans are nutty but nice to know at times; Reg and Val Urquhart, who were able to arrange for a babysitter for junior ; and Frank Bryning - there to keep order.

There were refreshments, talk, refreshments, much teasing of Betty and George, refreshments, broadcast over 4KQ by Arthur Clarke interviewed again in IN TOWN TONIGHT. At the receiving end, Arthur took his own comments very well and 4KQ executive Don Campbell, chest stuck out, put on his proud and aggressive if you laughed in the wrong places look.

Then there were refreshments, talk and

browsing amongst the libraries of the Group and the Tafes, in which, somehow, the two collections became one. (Sorting job next day for Librarian Betty!)

Wishing Betty and George all the- best for the next four years and more - many more - the guests departed at the respectable hour of 10.30 - most of them driven into town by Mike and Arthur in the Chev.

WARREGO

MELBOURNE NEWS

In my seven years association with the Group, this is the happiest report I have ever written.

A Bertram Chandler was present, and showed us the typescript of his novel, at present titled GLORY SHORE. We quaffed a can of Barclay's to its successful launching,

Frank Bryning was present. He graphically described his introduction to sub-surface swimming, and he promised-to be 'Guest of Honor' at the Convention. Thanks a million, Frank, you're a champion fellow!

Race Mathews put in an appearance. He is committing matrimony soon. Best wishes Race and Geraldine, for your future, from the whole Group.

One of our members. who will prefer to remain anonymous, won second prize in a Tattelersal lottery - £2000. He doesn't know he's won it yet - he's flying overseas. We congratulate him and hope his luck is

infectious.

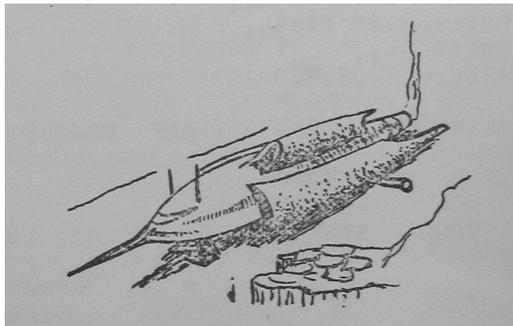
Both Ian Crozier and Keith McLelland have acquired cars.

Just one fly in the ointment. Jack Keating's stepbrother is very ill. We send him our hopes for a speedy recovery.

Bob McCubbin

Three Cheers for Dick

You've probably heard that Dick Jenssen has been awarded the Rotsler Award for achievements in fan art. Well deserved too. In recent years Dick has been producing spectacular covers for many fanzines, using his imagination and some really spiffy software.



To help celebrate Dick's achievement I have fossicked back through the annals of *Etherline* to issue 27 of Easter 1954 and found a couple of very tasty little fillos. They were done by scratching away some of the wax on a duplicating stencil, a very tough art to master.

Here also is the cover illustration Dick did for the cover of *Etherline* 28, published in April 1954. It lacks the vibrant color of Dick's most recent work - which is understandable given

the medium he was working in - but the basic Jenssen eye for shape and movement is there.

There Dick, I hope I haven't embarrassed you too much.

