

Outbreak of Heresy (contd p94)

January (& possibly all for) 2022

from Nick Kinzett (nick.kinzett@gmail.com), this may alter in near future
07505 004356 but this shouldn't change.

Even more notional deadline: a perilous use of Valentine's Day, again, but see on

NEW YEAR IRRESOLUTION

NK: Well, I may have to shrink or slow *Outbreak of Heresy*, or possibly (again) even suspend it for a time. This has nothing to do with the gaming Hobby (remote play or otherwise) apart from the sheer 'spare' time said Hobby consumes. And I'm going to need time for a couple of Real World matters (one in particular) that I've previously just let drift, but which now need attention.

Nothing dramatic, I hasten to add. Certainly nothing like the trauma that kicked off the current 'run' of *OoH* (from issue 60). Which run we could say has served one useful purpose: help get me back into some sort of mental (and thus physical) shape following the stroke. As I reckon I'm now back to as normal as possible (given my outlook and slightly more advanced years) I'm sure it has helped, though I'm definitely slower of mind than of yore (and occasionally still ratty, to my eternal regret). Therefore thanks to everybody, from the frequent *OoH* contributors to those mildly tolerant, about sixty Good Folk And True at the last count.

One way or another I'll let everyone know what's to happen, it'll largely depend on how things pan out over these first two months of the year. If *OoH* is suspended I'd certainly like to keep in touch with anyone who wants to keep in touch, so hope no one will mind me sending the odd *bcc* email at the very least (especially to keep interested parties informed should the email address indeed change).

Editors: by first week March latest I'll let you know if it is indeed a 'suspension', please let me know if you require an admin fee in order to keep sending me the e-form of your zines. If yours is free in e-form anyway, please keep sending and I'll do my best to keep corresponding in my usual intermittent and scatterdash (if not scatterbrain) fashion. I'm genuinely interested, not least in observing which (and how) games can be run by email in something like the old postal fashion.

Whatever happens, it's handy that those games or game playtests I was planning or actually running have either just come to an end (see last issue and over/on) or haven't really got off the ground as such (I'm now in a minor dilemma whether or not to adjudicate 'Vera' & 'When You're In' yet). But the games collectively have proved instructional in my endless quest for remote-play nirvana. This includes those that didn't work.

Tony Ross's *Aquarius* footie game aka "Pigs on the Wing" (or Pigs Might Fly as he wryly thinks of it) will of course continue in full via his publication *Royal Leamington Spa Gazette*. Not sure how much summary I'll get in this time (see back page I think) but as the season goes on it might be even more of a summary even if *OoH* persists throughout this calendar year. [My Ireteam crew are still plummeting down the table, by the way, though I swear the two things have no connection. I shall cheerfully report my battle against relegation should Tony take up my two-division suggestion for next season.]

Meantime, I've received enough material up to the New Calendar Year [happy new one] to concoct at least a mini-form of the current customary *OoH* and maybe more. But just in case WE (ALSO) HEARD FROM Alan Osborne, Alan Parr, Alex Richardson, Andy Lischett, Bob Gingell, Chris Johnson, Colin & Karen Day, Colin Evans, Dan Bowden, Dane Maslen, Dave Berry, Gary Lyon, Ian Wilson, Janey Cage, Jeanette Hawley, Jim Reader, John Marsden, John Riches, Liz Rhodes, Mark Nelson, Neil Carson, Neil Duncan, Paul Evans, Paul Ratcliff, Paul Regan, Paul Roman, Richard Minson, Sandra & Andy Potter, Simon Langley-Evans, Stephen Agar, Steve Borndale, Steve Jones, Tony Hedges, Tony Ross and of course W Marcus Arnold. Plus the collective Clan Kinzett. All the best from Nick & Lorraine.

*

PAGE TWO

still NK: As for those games finishing last time or this time:

Karen Day: *Happy New Year Nick! Don't worry about "See Emily Play". Fun idea but it looks like a lot of work for you for not that much return. And if I've won anyway...*

NK: Didn't think it through, is all. Once we got past books that I knew a fair few of us had in common, we were into the more obscure (even peculiar to me) corners of my library. And, as AndyL's bit showed, I could have been a lot more thematic, though I suppose that might have meant even more work. May revisit the basic idea some time in the future (though not immediate future given my meanderings front page).

Dave Berry: *I hope you had a good Christmas. I enjoyed OoH, as always. Congratulations to Marcus, who pipped us all at the end in "Run Like Hell".*

NK: To his lasting surprise. His sort-of Game-End Statement follows. And as you'll see facing page, you managed to return the compliment in "Quicksilver".

W Marcus Arnold: *"Run Like Hell"... I find myself winning. (So I take it you enjoyed the box of chocolate-covered radioactive squid I sent.) Oh frabjous day, calloo callay, my scaly tail vibrates with delight. It shall take 2nd Pride of Plaice on the achievements section of my CV, right beneath passing my recycling proficiency test and acceptance into the elite Tufty Club at Primacy School.*

NK: No doubt equally merited, and thank you H.P Arnoldcraft. Further thanks for the copies of *Pit* etc. (For concerned observers, this wasn't *Things From The Pit*.) All this would have led nicely into the final turn for "Quicksilver". But the adjudication for that will consume more than the space immediately below, so instead we'll squeeze in another (probable) finale...

"ONE SLIP" (Still Less Intimate Diplomacy) Winter 1906 (GM NickK)

...though, as indicated, possibly the final turn, as between the mini-deadline and the main one (and perhaps with seasonal considerations), the three players have seriously considered the Draw. As two put it:

Neil Carson: *We've all been made to work from home again. Just when we were getting used to hybrid working too! Thing is, the game was really beginning to flow once we were seeing each other at work now and again. Now that we can't even do hybrid it's not the same. And we think, well I think, and I think the others think, that these latest bids will just result in back-and-forth. Merry Xmas by the way.*

Paul Regan: *I have all the mercs but won't have next year, also Marseilles for now and the highest centre count and could possibly grind out an 18-centre win anyway, though the Turkey thing has been a set-back. But Neil has the best forward position, he's on both our territories. Tony had a chance while he had forward units but might now be reduced to just stopping either of us winning. It will be either a long haul or a sudden mistake to decide who wins, so a draw is fairest?*

NK: No direct comment from Tony though likely he's not arguing. The players have raised this possible finish independently of my own particular perambulations re *OoH* (see front) but it has helped me to at least a semi-decision. Could you confirm for next time please folks? I have just-in-case Spring06 orders on file from two of you. Also just in case (for other observers and the record), the bids were...

FRANCE (Tony Hedges): Eng 0, Rus 10, Tur 0. Controls nothing, all 10 credits remain.

GERMANY (Neil Carson): Eng 12, Rus 0, Tur 12. Controls nothing, all 12 credits remain.

AUSTRIA-H (Paul Regan): **Eng 13, Rus 12, Tur 13.** Would control all three, no credits remaining.

...leaving mercenary credits England 19, Russia 26, Turkey 15. (Italy currently in exile 4cr.)

“QUICKSILVER” (*Just Who*)**Final Turn (8)****(GM NickK)**

Paul Regan: (*Just*) run out in Run Like Hell! Oh well, well done Marcus. Can't really have a go at the remaining Quicksilver target either, Game of Thrones not my thing. (Nor was Philip Dick.)

W Marcus Arnold: Sadly I can add no more to my score having entered the territory of boastful ignorance of GoT. But perhaps the forgotten character is the one who goes around with a sword, wears furs and engages in vicarious sexual activity and homicide and is allergic to dragons and who has the appearance of not eating seven portions a day of fresh fruit and vegetables... ((This may not narrow it down much.))

Karen Day: I can't guess at the last character, knowing next to nothing about Game of Thrones.

NK: I won't know much more. Which I suspect is also true of Col, though it hasn't stopped him correctly paraphrasing his namesake (who himself gets a further vp for the original inspiration):

Colin Day: NED STARK LIVES! As I remember Colin E joking of some **GoT** game.

Steve Borndale: From the one GoT book I've read the last character has to be Eddard (Ned) Stark. Which also means... ((wait for it, wait for it))

Dave Berry: Is the GoT character Ned Stark? He's the member of House Stark who dies in the first book (and the first TV series) and whose death triggers the war between the Starks and the Lanisters. And if you haven't read the book or watched the TV series, he is the character that you're most likely to have heard of.

NK: Dead right (ho ho) thus 3vps to you & ColinD & SteveB. But Steve also goes on to nail that other connection to the (*TLotR*) character of Boromir for a further 2 vps, something likewise echoed by:

Alan Osborne: ((on Xmas Eve)) Oh, SEAN BEAN of course. Ned Stark, that is.

John Riches: ((on Mon Dec20)) Sean Bean's character. Give us a moment and I'll remember who that is. ((Two days later)) Eddard Stark.

NK: John went on to remark (for another vp) how Bean makes a habit of portraying conscience-bound characters who wind up in an, ah, *compromised state*. More or less as a consequence of being so bound... (e.g Robert Aske in *Henry VIII*). That's it. Extra 1vp to all the above for “finishing off the game”, and so:

FINAL SCORES/DOORS: **Dave Berry 19**, Steve Borndale 18, John Riches 16, W Marcus Arnold 16, Colin Day 13, Karen Day 11, Alan Osborne 9, Paul Ratcliff 4, Paul Regan 3, Colin Evans 3, Neil Duncan 2, Steve Jones 1, everyone else 0. Thanks all, however brief/marginal the entry, well done to Dave.

“TAKE IT BACK” (*Take It Back*)**Turn 5****(GM NickK)**

Dave Berry: In your comment to Colin D, “verses” versus “versus”. ((Correct for 3vp.))

Colin Day: Erm, “verses”... Too minimalist for you? ((Nope. 3vp as per Dave.))

Paul Regan: In One Slip, A(Gal)-Vie “cut” rather than “fails”. The support was cut, as you say... ((Not what I had in mind but have 2vp.))

Dave again: One mistake you possibly haven't noticed: the “title” property in the PDF file is set to - “LUCIFER SAM” (Ark) - which is what shows in the browser tab when I'm viewing the PDF file. ((Holdover from using the old “LSam” file as template, unsure how to get rid of it, have 1vp anyway))

SCORES ON DOORS: PaulRg 9, KarenD 8, ColinD 8, DaveB 7, Marcus 4, NeilC 3, ColinE 2, rest 0.

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NK: Okay, with four submissions (and a knockout) for each new game I'm going to adjudicate anyway...

“VERA” (*Who She?*)

initial turn

(GM NickK)

NK: To clarify for everyone: “Vera” involves identifying a female. And that's all I've given away initially apart from the fact that it isn't (as per the Pink Floyd 'song') Vera Lynn.

W Marcus Arnold: *VERA. She who must be identified. Firstly in this age of inexactitude and obscurity of pronouns I must ask:*

Is Vera biologically female? ((Yes but no vp.))

Is Vera white privileged? ((Don't really know. Probably not.))

Is Vera amongst the living? ((No: +1vp))

Is Vera veracious as opposed to fictional? ((Yes, in the sense that she existed. +1vp))

...It does not do to make assumptions. However, using my Universal Challenge technique, hit the buzzer before anyone else and ask: is she Vera Brittain author of Testament of Youth? ((No & see below))

Andy Lischett: *I get one question, right? Wait! That was not my question. To get the obvious over with, is it Vera Miles?*

NK: It isn't but have a vp anyway (as I'll also give Marcus) for eliminating a plausible candidate and forcing me to admit the female in question isn't called Vera at all (see Dave's submission below), in this case it's merely a handy game-title. As you'll gather from above and below, you're also not limited to one question per turn. But it's my judgement as to whether a multiple of questions is relevant or worthy of vps, also whether a multitude of them is Extracting the Michael. (Sorry for that colloquialism.)

Dave Berry: *Apropos of "Vera", the only woman I knew who was called Vera was my Mum. She was born in 1923, when the name was more common than now. Several names for girls that I considered "old-fashioned" have come back into vogue: e.g. Olivia and Amelia top the list of popular baby names for 2021, but Vera is one that hasn't regained favour.*

...Regarding the game, the obvious question is, is or was this woman called "Vera"? ((No, 1 vp as above.))

...Some other obvious ones to narrow the field a bit: is she fictional? ((see Marcus' more specific question))
Was she born before 1st Jan 1901? Was she born in Europe? ((Yes then No for 2 further vps.))

Karen Day: *Hm, is Vera even human?* ((Yes I'd say so but I like your follow-up conditional question *If No [doubtless inspired by “See Emily Play”]*, i.e *is it Shelob*, so 1 vp)) *If Yes, anyone featured in OoH?*

NK: No, thus sparing yourself, Lorraine, Janey and the rest of the zine's female contingent. But again I like your thinking, another vp! As you'll see from the above, all your possibilities would have been eliminated by answers to the other questions anyway, but I still like the thinking.

Marcus again: *Incidentally, did Vera Lynn consort with Hawkwind as well as Motorhead?* ((She did))
*Concerning the Shameful Pink Floyd Reminiscence: at the time of its release all the ballyhoo hoo-ha promotion of this poorly conceived dinosaur concept album ((we speak here of **The Wall**)) seemed to denote the transmigration of the band's soul from Psychedelic Subversives to the Give Us Yer Money Brigade... and like Colston's Statue I dragged them off the pedestal that they had been put on by canny management.*

NK: While not going quite so far, certainly *The Wall* marked for me Floydian shift from Great to So-So. (So much So that I'm going to stick on Mason's Saucerful of Secrets. Again.) Okay, bonus vp to all four players for getting us started, so initial SCORES ON THE DOORS read:

Marcus 4, DaveB 4, KarenD 3, AndyL 2, everyone else 0.

“WHEN YOU'RE IN” (*Wish You Were Here*)**initial turn****(GM NickK)**

NK: This one I described as more a What/Where/When conundrum, but see response to SteveB's entry.

Dave Berry: *For a change, I'll skip the generic questions and play with the idea of being "in". Is this important to the answer? I'm guessing you didn't choose the song title at random.*

NK: In this case, absolutely correct for 1vp. And not only the song for the session title “When You're In” but also that for the game design “Wish You Were Here”, as again you'll see from Steve's submission below.

Dave: *Is the thing we're looking for an action? Specifically, is it about someone entering something? Or someone entering a place? Or about someone putting one thing into another thing (like a golfer scoring a hole in one)? Or does being "in" refer to being fashionable, or being #1 in a ranking? I'm sure there are other interpretations of being "in" but I'll leave it there for now, in case I'm barking up the wrong tree entirely!*

NK: This paragraph is more difficult to address, other than to say that (given my first observation) it's not about someone entering some thing or place, nor someone putting one thing into another thing unless you hold that someone to be the One God (or local equivalent, if that makes any sense at all). The “in” certainly doesn't refer to anything top-ranked or fashionable, however. So no vp for the latter but +1vp for the rest.

Steve Borndale: *The last time you used two Floyd titles for a game (Echoes/Endless River) they were both significant, so I'll start by guessing that the same is true here.*

NK: Correct for 1vp. But because it might otherwise mislead I have to add that in Wishing You Were Here the “Here” is not the same place as that where something is now “In”, although the one event takes place non-coincidentally at the same time as the other. Making this a What/Where & Where/When conundrum.

Andy Lischett: *When You're In: Has it anything to do with railroads?*

NK: No, but in context with Karen's question below this is actually such a reasonable guess that I'm going to give it 1vp too.

Karen Day: *Same question as for Vera, really: does When You're In have anything to do with what's been featured in OoH? If Yes, is that feature games or a game?*

NK: Yes to the first question but No to the second, note that this last eliminates a whole swathe of reasonable possibilities (such as Andy's railroads above, though it's been a long time since we ran anything like *Railway Rivals* in the zine or discussed say *Railroad Tycoon* or *Ticket to Ride*). So also score 1vp.

...and, as with “Vera”, each of the four players add 1vp for getting the game going, making the SCORES:
DaveB 3, SteveB 2, AndyL 2, KarenD 2, everyone else 0.

...as for the Knockout:

Andy Lischett: *I'm late! Well, yesterday was a holiday so I took it off. Besides, I wasted three days figuring out KSPFRF on Page 22...*

NK: i.e the Kinzett Shameless Pink Floyd Reminiscence Files **number 22** (took me a little while to figure what you were figuring). No worries about the late entry, Andy, especially as you're 5+ hours behind the UK – the deadlines are pretty notional and if I haven't adjudicated yet there's no reason not to include any submissions, particularly for the Word Games. That said, a couple of our regulars have been caught out by super-fast turnarounds of recent issues. Production of this one has been more sedate, it's my holiday too.

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still NK: But speaking of my Time Off, I must here record for the record (and at the insistence of my brother-in-law Paul) that my sister Michele (who'd never played the game before) “whopped my ass” (and presumably those of Lorraine and Paul himself) in our Covid-precautioned game of Xmas *Midnight Party*. Oddly enough Paul too chose to utilize the following paraphrase from Mr Wolstenholme:

W Marcus Arnold: *Just when you thought it was ALL OVER...*

*...the wurst is Yeti to comb, with sausage-themed abdominal snowmen migrants attacking our English yeoman yeo-person farmers-cum-agriculturalists. **WARNING** MAY REQUIRE GLAASSES. Do not open in a North Wind. Scissors if used should be non-shard to avoid potential mortality. Does not contain asbestos. Whale friendly. OPEN WHEN BORED.*

NK: Now whenever do I have time (even during “Time Off”) to get bored. Happy New Year to you too, Marcus. Nice card.

Marcus: *Seasoned Greetings to you O Heretical One, may your cluffs never be clinkered. Things are hotting up here on Planet Dirt, just as planned in your industrious revolution strategy (the worthy successor to your Promethean Project). Very soon now this prime piece of interstellar real estate will be perfectifico for all Six Foot Green Lizards, and McLizard's can commence construction of the new eccentric park's Happy Holiday And Retirement Home for the Discerning Sauropod. These dirtlings are responding well, and despite attempts by the Auntie Vax Terrorist Ninja Turtle Group (A.V.T.N.T.G) to subvert the Covid conspiracy our BIG PHARMA genetic remodelling 5G slave control project is making great progress in World Domination via the financial ecosystem.*

NK: In response to the above I just had to stick on the deck the 90s neo-punk Leatherface album **Mush** with its marvellously sarcastic line (one hopes it was sarcastic) “David Icke was right”. The above slice of Marcus in full flight is just accurate enough a parody of Mr Icke and fellow astral travellers (not forgetting the tendency of HomSap generally towards unintended consequences) to make its point.

Marcus: *With the passing of the season of good will and lapsed vegetarianism, and of the New Year's perennial cultural appropriation of ethnic Scots mysticism and whisky/whiskey/whiskers, might I humbly ((humbly?)) offer my list of Pet Hates that I have been assiduously collecting with malice aforethought...*

..One: Celebrity classical musicians. ((Ooh, harsh, I have reason to thank André Rieu.))

Two: Cheap(?) bacon pumped up to twice its weight with water. ((That's more like it.))

Three: Movies with cute animals. ((And that.))

Four: Disposable razors in any colour but yellow. Especially blue.

Five: Male grooming products apart from nail clippers and yellow disposable razors.

Six: Young people full of energy and enthusiasm but sadly lacking in cynicism.

Seven: Old people full of cynicism but sadly lacking in energy and enthusiasm.

Eight: Individual urinals instead of Mr Adamant's wall of porcelain.

Nine: Prophets of Doom (yeh we are all doomed, if Covid don't get you Old Age will).

Ten: Expecting politicians not to act politically and be honest God-fearing unprejudiced non-sexist paragons of whatever virtue is currently promoted and excoriated by media in which no one mediates a damn.

Eleven: Media teacup-storms of indignation.

*Twelve: Sentences that begin **Don't you just hate...***

NK: By this stage in his letter Marcus was illuminating its pages with cryptic and even amoebic doodles (“spot the happy amoeba”), plus other Lovecraftiana. So when it came to the giant caterpillar apparently devouring a stick-man I couldn't say I was entirely surprised.

Marcus: *Let it not be SAID, but can I get away with writing it... “Cancelling Christmas for Covid”. Get real Mr Middle Class, Christmas has always been cancelled for supermarket staff and warehouse workers who only get Christmas Day off.*

NK: Near enough true for them and others, eg care workers and co vital to a functioning health service, even when they're granted a day "elsewhen" to compensate for working Boxing Day (or Christmas Day itself) etc. And believe me I'm full of admiration for the care workers in particular, makes my occasional Year-End work obligations (between Boxing Day and New Year) look cushy by comparison. Especially when, as suggested, I haven't had to do even that for a couple of years. // But then like many the question of "cancelling Christmas for Covid" was to me/us an irrelevant consideration anyway. Like many (methinks Karen last time was one, so Col too) we've usually had to do what we had to do throughout the duration of Covid (and Covid sometimes notwithstanding, if you understand me). // Time for some (relative) sanity:

Gary Lyon: *Awake in the early hours – preambulatory nocturnal micturition (enough of dictionary corner) so onto balcony (suitably covered of course) to look for Geminid shower – but too cloudy. One of my teenage interests was astronomy – easy to build a radio telescope (2x4 & some chicken wire) but only picked up sun and background hiss. Helped friend build his own reflector – grinding by hand from a Lens kit & using candle to check focus. Still on my book shelves are an old star atlas and a Patrick Moore book from the 60s, most of my older books have been lost/recycled by now but those have survived. Others would be dictionary, atlas, but also old novels like Dune & Foundation trilogy. And old war gaming books by Featherstone. And histories like the Decisive battles from Fuller. And maps, OS. Still have the Isle of Purbeck map from Geography field course in the 70s. Old fashioned – sat navs & Google maps now. Still have a pocket London map priced in shillings from when I was about 12. At least two tube lines built since then but still use it in the big city – central streets haven't changed. // What an old fogey, eh?*

NK: Like I say, relative sanity, can always rely on Gary. I too partook of the grind of grinding a telescope mirror during my tender years, and of course I've never lost my enthusiasm for Outer Space, as *OoHers* will know from these pages. The collection of 60s/70s holdovers reminds me uncomfortably of what awaits when I get down to that Real World matter mentioned front page. But sticking to the Slightly Surreal World, if purportedly Real Universe, of Outer Space/astronomy:

W Marcus Arnold: *Tony, tell it like it is. To me the extremes of physics and astronomy are so far from the basic steps I was educated in that I am unable to judge whether they are justifiably derived. What gets to me is the confusion between Theorie ((sic)) and Pure Speculation. Renowned celebrity theoretical physicists speculating on multiple alternate universes is just that.*

NK: Again, agree, which is why I'm a little bit wary of what last issue I termed *Brian's style* (in perhaps going overboard on the speculation as distinct from the fairly well established). And speaking of basic steps one was educated in, Marcus, besides your long New Year communication you earlier sent another letter putting an alternative view to the Maths-is-Key outlook implied by Mark and myself last issue. Can't lay my hands on this earlier screed at the moment, must have left it at my other address. But if I remember aright you reasonably pointed out that while this was all very well (see e.g my citation of GaryD below), what Western Education could really do with is grounding folk in how to survive in Life Itself. Still, see on.

Mark Nelson: *I've never considered myself to be a "real mathematician" because my research has always been in "mathematical modelling". And the kind of mathematical modelling that requires computer simulation. The simulations may be guided by mathematical theory, but I've never published a theorem and I never will! Unsurprisingly, this is accepted as being part of mathematics in the UK and countries influenced by the British tradition. But, by-and-large, the British tradition of Applied Mathematics would not be considered to be mathematics in most US universities. A typical US mathematician would consider "applied mathematics" when you use a theorem from algebra to prove a theorem in analysis – because you are applying mathematics...*

NK: Sounds real enough mathematics to me. I once remember our other Gary (Duke) amusedly describing the relation of various disciplines to reality or anyhow soundness, with humanities *about here* (opens up hands some six inches) and putative physical sciences like astronomy and even physics itself *maybe there* (widens hands to approx one foot) but mathematics *WAY OUT THERE* (indicates the far end of the ManorCon gaming hall). I make a jest of this, but methinks there's a sober point.

PAGE EIGHT

Steve Jones: *Some very interesting points made by Mark Nelson on the state of education in my country Australia. It would seem that it has gone downhill since I went through High School and University education in the '60s and early '70s. In fifth form, I took the science curriculum which involved six subjects: English Expression, English Lit, Physics, Chemistry, Mathematics and Economics – the last was my Humanities choice of subject; it wasn't the one I wanted to do because my preferred subject (Modern History - of Europe) was not possible because of a timetable clash. Sixth form (or Matriculation) had four subjects – the compulsory English Expression, Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics. University education at Monash for a Science Degree involved four 101 subjects in first year (I took Physics 101, Chemistry 101, Applied Maths 101 and Maths 101), second year had a choice from 201 subjects (three fifths), 203 subjects (two fifths) and 205 subjects (one fifth) – I took Physics 201 and Applied Maths 203 – and third year was either a 301 (specialist) subject or two 303 subjects – I took Physics 303 and Applied Maths 303.*

So, you can see there wasn't a fixed number of subjects to take – some flexibility was allowed. Obviously, the situation has changed. I am surprised at the lack of mathematics requirements for Science degrees... I could understand no requirements for Chemistry when I was going through University, but these days I would have thoughts that mathematics was required for Chemistry and Biology seeing as they increasingly require the application of Quantum Mechanics and Statistics. From what Mark says about Physics degree requirements in Australia, it would seem that my old department of Physics at Monash has dropped a background in mathematics these days, which I find astonishing!

NK: Mark did observe that the Physics side wasn't quite as mathematically forlorn as the others, at least in his part of Aus. Of course his real argument was that the decline of mathematics *in the sciences* reflected a decline of mathematical literacy *in general*.

Steve: *If the state of mathematical literacy in the journalism profession is bad in Australia, I would say that it is as dire in the UK and USA. An excellent example of this state of affairs is the book written by Michael Blastland and Andrew Dilnot: "The Tiger That Isn't". The best description of this book is the blurb on the back cover from the New Scientist: "Every journalist should get paid leave to read and reread The Tiger That Isn't until they've understood how they are being spun."*

NK: Which is the point. Again, while I wholly appreciate the point of view of those to whom basic maths (counting, the basic functions and maybe percentages) are but necessary evils one needs in order to function in modern society (and higher maths therefore unnecessary to so function), it's rather concerning when those who seek to shape perceptions and opinion can't even get the basics right (or don't care that they aren't getting them right).

Steve Jones: *I more or less agree with you and Colin about Colonialism and HomoSap history. My take on this topic has a lot to do with why T.L. Sherred's "E for Effort" is my favourite Science Fiction novella. Damon Knight wrote in an introduction to this story something which is spot on: "What makes this story great, I think, is the fact that it is not just another intellectual exercise – it is deeply and honestly felt. Sherred is that odd combination, a hard-boiled idealist; or, if you like, a soft-hearted cynic. He passionately believes in the ultimate perfectibility of the human race, but as for its present state ..."*

Also, agree completely with what you said about the only long-term solution to the current state of the planet. ((Maybe I too qualify as hard-boiled idealist...))

In answer to Dave Berry, no I wasn't thinking of Persia when suggesting that "the Islamic world" is a better term than "the Arabic world". I was thinking more on the lines of the Islamic culture between Iberia and Persia emphasising, as you said, education and learning. The Islamic world view was superimposed by Arabs on the existing peoples that inhabited their "empire"; the same people inhabited it as existed before the Arab conquest. All that changed was the religion, culture and language, not the people themselves.

NK: Marcus here pointed out the additional role of the Jews in preserving and disseminating knowledge (notably during the conquest) which, he suggests, tends to get written out of partial histories. Point.

Dave Berry: *The lettercol covered a lot of interesting topics. I could wade in on "CF" or economic side of things, but I'll hold off because Steve's book reviews caught my eye... [The] discussion of Civilizations and the spread of trade in the Indian Ocean chimed with a book that I read last year:*

Book review *David Abulafia, "The Boundless Sea: A Human History of the Oceans"*

In this book, David Abulafia describes the spread of human civilisation across the oceans. He takes a global view, opening with a short section about the earliest known ocean navigators: the Polynesians and their migration across the islands of the Pacific. The next part is longer and looks at the spread of trade in the Indian Ocean and its neighbours – the Red Sea & Persian Gulf in the west and the South China Sea in the east. Part 3 is about the Atlantic, including early tin traders along the coast of Europe, then the Vikings, and the early exploration of the new world. Part 4 covers the spread of the European empires into the Indian and Pacific oceans, and the short final part bring the story up to the modern day.

Abulafia is primarily telling the story of maritime trade, and secondarily the story of seaborne migration. I found Part 2 the most interesting, as it explained how trading began along the coasts of Asia, bringing goods and civilisations into contact over substantial distances. I didn't know much about this aspect of history; indeed, it includes at least one nation (Sri Vitaja, in Sumatra) that I'd never heard of before. Abulafia includes the South China Sea and even the Sea of Japan in this part of his history, instead of treating them as part of the Pacific, because trade from those areas was primarily westward along the coast rather than into the main expanse of the Pacific Ocean.

The book does not discuss the Mediterranean Sea, because this was the topic of Abulafia's previous book. Adding some of that material into this book would have been repetitive and would have made the book even longer than its current 900 pages. So this book only covers Mediterranean civilisations when they interact with the wider oceans. (I haven't read the earlier book but it has received good reviews.)

Although Abulafia peppers the 900 pages with anecdotes, he doesn't spend much time on the human impact of the migrations. As one example, I'd like to have seen some discussion of the African diaspora created by the European slave trade, and how that diaspora now links people across continents.

He also says little about the impact of humans on the oceans themselves. I think it would have been worth adding a chapter about how we are over-fishing many species, how we are heating the oceans and affecting currents and ecologies, and how we are polluting them with plastics and other waste.

Still, I found quite a lot of interest in this book, and it gives a good global overview of the growth of trade and movement of peoples across the oceans.

NK: Many thanks to you also, Dave (these reviews and lists from you and Steve and Colin *et al* make my edit-crittur role so much smoother). Another tome, or rather two, to look up.

Dave: *I share Steve's admiration of Barbara Tuchman. In addition to the books that Steve recommended, I also enjoyed her history of the Zimmerman Telegram (when Germany offered Mexico an alliance against the USA during WWI). But the one that made the biggest impression on me was A Distant Mirror, which showed how differently people thought and behaved in the Middle Ages compared to modern Europe.*

I recall reading A Distant Mirror, along with a book about the Taliban, while the USA and UK were beginning our "nation building" activities in Afghanistan, and thinking that the descriptions of local nobles or warlords in the two books were quite similar. From which I concluded that if we went into Afghanistan with the expectation that people in their own "mental, moral and physical circumstances" would make the same decisions as Westerners, then the exercise would probably fail. I'm not saying the Afghani society is the same of medieval Europe, of course; there are many differences and each society and time has its own circumstances. It's just that the coincidence of reading the two books side by side triggered the thought that people's motivations and cultures can really be vastly different.

NK: Quite. And so last words on Tuchman must go to me via the ever-so-slightly caustic:

W Marcus Arnold: *Barbara Tuchman says “people of the Middle Ages existed under mental, moral and physical circumstances so different from our own as to constitute ALMOST a foreign civilisation.” Almost? Like them Middle Age Europeans didn't like watching telly and were sorta Chinese, Asian or African?*

NK: [grins] As a means of conveying that techno-familiar (or rather techno over-familiar) HomSaps might have some difficulty adequately grasping the conditions that others perforce had to endure, this notion of Tuchman's seems to me... unexceptionable. As you now even more caustically suggest:

Marcus: *I am surprised that survivors of the First World War after rats, gangrene, shell shock, syphilis, lice and a shortage of ice cream might consider the pre-war years as a Golden Age... You know what, history ain't what it Useter B. I am suspicious of reading into the past mystic beings like the USA losing its innocence. Countries/states ain't people, and extermination ain't innocence anyhow.*

NK: Oh I'm sure that Steve (and Dave) would agree. I think something else is being proposed: that up to the period in question it was still possible (even after traumas on both sides of the Atlantic) for the overwhelming bulk of people *and therefore their political representatives* to shut their eyes to what went on beyond their immediate experience. That's not to say that people and their representatives didn't thereafter go on doing so, just that countervailing views became more available, widespread, vocal, trenchant, incisive, *defensible* (choose according to taste or outlook). [This may now be the soft-hearted cynic coming out.]

Marcus ((abruptly changing the subject)): *And now my dear Kinzett we will insert the knife behind the eyeball and give it a good twist, am I not called Jekyll Holmes for nothing. Rocking the classics does indeed “go back to at least Love Sculpture's Sabre Dance.” But B Bumble & The Stingers' Nut Rocker ((also famously covered by ELP)) takes it back further: Chaikofski's Nutcracker Suite etc. Tin Pan Alley has always used unacknowledged classical ripoffs. At least ELP were honest in their versions. (I shall here smoke a Hamlet cigar that has turned A Whiter Shade of Pale, credit where credit is due say I. I do believe though that George Harrison was innocent...)*

NK: Actually on the original and some other issues of their debut album, Emeryboard Legbreak & Palmoff rather naughtily omitted to credit Bartók for “The Barbarian” opener, though this was corrected on most later versions (though I had to do so myself for the CD now in my collection). Forgiven, as this was one of the best ever ELP classics adaptations, indeed best ever ELP tracks *period* – Emerson with insistent penetrating Hammond backed by truly heavy bass'n'drums from Lake and Palmer, framing a lighter/faster middle section of piano/pattering rhythm before the absolutely manic bug-eyed finale which will even now induce me (at the sober age of 64) to get up and do the air-keyboard thing.

Pictures at an Exhibition (their best-known adaptation apart from Copland/ “Fanfare for the Common Man”) did of course give full credit to the originator. And I always regretted that Emerson & Co never did a version of Mussorgsky's other enduring work (via Rimsky-Korsakov) *Night on Bare Mountain* – perhaps the only classical piece by anybody anytime of comparable ELP-like drama using traditional instruments, just imagine what it'd be like with synths and booming bass and assault'n'battery. [Yes yes Marcus, sound system advert, I know.] Problem with ELP is that they went way *way* over the top in their live paraphernalia and general attitude. Also, despite storming or thoughtful(?) examples on the earlier albums, they proved in the longer run clumsy (or, in Lake's case, too often twee) at original composition. Their one step too far was in my view *Brain Salad Surgery*. Thus, full version of “Fanfare” apart, most of what happened post-*Trilogy* is for me discardable. Palmer, now the only surviving member, remained however a fantastic and powerful drummer, as I witnessed not so long ago (60th birthday). And speaking of longer-term survivors:

Marcus: ((referencing MarkN's Lady Eden example)) *...my surprise is always when Giants of Rock'n'Roll who have long departed stage or Elvish-like left the room are found to have just shuffled off this mortal coil after decades of not being in the spotlight. Those a generation younger than me might find surprising that Tina Turner, Cliff Richard, Ray Davies, Elvis Presley ((...)) and of course Too Good Johnson are still alive.*

still Marcus: *They may even never have heard Too Good Johnson's no.1 hit single "Shafted" which was used as the theme tune for Shaft's big score, Isaac Hayes being otherwise pre-occupied. Nay, have they even heard of the Watts Riots and the Pink Panther movement?*

NK: Stepping lightly around your reference to Elvis-is-Alive Conspiracy Theory, I note that by way of compensation you've gone into overdrive with this month's Obituary newspaper cuttings. Starting with Michael Nesmith (arguably the only serious musician of the one-time Monkees), John Miles (he of "Music" aka "Music Was My First Love"), Denis O'Brien (business partner of the aforementioned Mr Harrison and who therefore among other things helped realize *Monty Python's Life of Brian*), David Gulpilil (starring actor in *Walkabout* and others featuring Australian aboriginals in a big way), Michael Ferguson (TV director and *Dr Who's* first Dalek), Sir Martin Wood (physicist founder of Oxford Instruments, MRI scanners etc), Cedric Wood (to his advanced age Queen's Guide at the Kent Sands/Morecambe Bay), Hester Solomon (psychoanalyst and leading proponent of Jungian ideas), John Sillet (co-manager of Cov City FC when they famously won the 1987 FA Cup) and finally Anne Rice (author of *The Vampire Chronicles* etc) referenced last issue by Andy Lischett. Speaking of whom and things Coventrian...

Marcus: *Andy L rightly berates me for getting my "BSA motorbike" confused with the Triumph ridden by Mr McQueen in The Great Escape. Triumph is of course a great Jewish German firm by virtue of being founded in Coventry by Seigfried Bettmann of Nuremburg, who was (due to 1st World War anti-German prejudice) forced to resign from being Lord Mayor of Coventry despite being a naturalised Briton and supplying the War Department with machines. The first Triumphs were badge-engineered bicycles manufactured by the Coventry firm of Hotchkiss, Mayo and Meek.*

NK: Mildly surprised that ColinD or SteveB (educated hereabouts in matters engineering though only locals by [fairly distant] association) didn't pick this up for the "Take It Back" game, or is it only my oversights they'd be after? Anyway, we now seem to be into our regular RANDOM COMMENTS section, although without its usual backbone in the shape of ColinE, who beside his splendid seasonal e-card (thanks again Colin) has elected not to comment in depth this time. But we'll go with his *Life of Brian* paraphrase:

Marcus: *What did the Romans do for us? ...[not] forgetting that the best of the Romans was nicked from the Greeks. Even Christianity's best were Greek Philosophised rationalisations of Judeo Cultic offshoots. Eurocentricity is actually Archaeo-Hellenic-centricity, and we (Europe + America + much of Russia) are Greek cultured.*

Steve Borndale ((excerpted from his "Quicksilver" entry)): *...Think I mentioned before that I never got further than the first ((**Game of Thrones / Song of Fire & Ice**)) book. Bit peculiar I found it: trying to portray the nastiness of a 'medieval' world but with Fantasy trappings and without many of the things of the real medieval world, Europe/England and despite use of English-style terms and names.*

NK: I gather that Martin didn't bother to rationalize the latter *a la* Tolkien/Shire/Middle-earth?

Dave Berry ((ditto)): *It's a shame that George R.R. Martin hasn't finish the written series. The books are quite good – better than the TV series in terms of characterisation and plot – but the later novels seemed to get distracted by details and side stories, and then Martin himself got distracted by making that globally successful TV series. He is supposedly working on the next book now, but I'll believe it when I have the paperback in my hands.*

Karen Day: *You didn't get around to telling us how you celebrated your birthday either; Strike Two! (Strike One was if you remember Cov Cathedral but it wouldn't be fair to add this one to "Take It Back" as well.)*

NK: Very generous of you, Karen (especially as it's lost you the lead). Brief synopsis, Stratford for a couple of days/nights for the Avon and Ghost Walks etc, though not risking the theatre. And Lorraine and I were disturbed to see (in contrast to our much-needed break in June) most folk not bothering with Covid precautions – we were among the few sticking to them around the shops and in the hotel (staff included!).

PAGE TWELVE

W Marcus Arnold: *Here I take a break , as I write it is the shortest day of the year ((Happy New Astronomical Year, Marcus)). I thought I'd get outside and make the most of it before the tedium and tiresomeness of Christmas inactivities get me tearing the wallpaper off with my teeth, gnashing my hair, donning sackcloth and scattering ashes all over my fire which won't catch and demands a blood sacrifice from chopping firewood into smaller pieces. Roll on Summer, make Winter illegal. Support Winterexit for a better Britain.*

Liz Rhodes: *Merry Christmas, Happy New Year. We too got to see **Dune** in a nearly-deserted screening. end of the run I think. I understood it and enjoyed it and I hadn't expected to do either (not read the book nor seen earlier versions nor played the game).*

NK: What, you actually went to see it under protest, Liz? Tell me the secret! // Think that's it, apart from this truly random finale in the style of Colin hisself:

Mark Nelson: *A game that I came across... well, this morning in fact, is **Camel Up!** I wonder if any of your readers have played it?*

NK: Not come across it, I fear, and its Wiki entry is not exactly enlightening. Time to turn on the radio:

"PIGS ON THE WING" (Aquarius Football) League Game 14 (GM Tony Ross)

"League Division One. Burton Swifts **three**, Brentford Bees **three**. New World Order **four**, Hermits **four**. Perfidious Albion one, Barrow Infirmities **THREE**. Pinewood Old Boys **three**, Newcastle Utd...nil. Saffron Walden **three**, Middle Piddling Rovers...two. Shaddongate Utd **four**, Mankcaster Limited...one. Swaythlings Old Boys **three**, Ireteam of Overham...two. Wookey Wandrs two, Nottm Forest S&BC **SIX**."

<u>Table after fourteen games:</u>		W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Nttm Forest SBC	(Paul Ratcliff)	12	2	0	45	19	38
Barrow Infirmities	(Steve Titterrell)	11	2	1	48	31	35
Saffron Walden	(Brian Henstock)	7	7	0	39	28	28
New World Order	(Mike Parnaby)	8	3	3	53	33	27
Pinewood Old Boys	(Andy East)	6	5	3	51	39	23
Shaddongate Utd	(Ian Wilson)	7	2	5	41	41	23
Hermits	(Dave Harriman)	5	5	4	31	31	20
Ireteam of Overham	(Nick Kinzett)	5	4	5	40	39	19
Swaythlings OB	(Graham Staplehurst)	6	1	7	31	35	19
Burton Swifts	(Simon Drew)	5	3	6	27	34	18
Brentford Bees	(Richard Breese)	4	5	5	42	43	17
Wookey Wandrs	(Andrew Harding)	5	2	7	38	43	17
Perfidious Albion	("Sam Rollderdyce")	2	2	10	16	28	8
Mankcaster Ltd	("Ginger Solcounty")	2	1	11	16	33	7
Middle Piddling Rvrs	("Ecks the Unknown")	2	1	11	25	43	7
Newcastle Utd	("Ken Bruce")	1	3	10	18	41	6

(DIS)CONTENTS ((not really))

One: Nick/OoH not quite Lost in Time & Space. **Two:** initial lettercol bits and "**One Slip**" (*SLIDip*). **Three:** "**Quicksilver**" (*Just Who*) final turn, "**Take It Back**" (*Take it Back*). **Four:** "**Vera**" (*Who She?*). **Five:** "**When You're In**" (*Wish You Were Here*), lettercol proper resumes. **Six:** Seasonal Marcus. **Seven:** GaryL, Marcus, MarkN. **Eight:** SteveJ. **Nine:** DaveB inc **book review** (David Abulafia). **Ten:** more Marcus. **Eleven:** and still more plus Random Comments. **Twelve:** last RCs + "**Pigs o.t.Wing**".