



Sparrowgrass & battle-twigs #77

Sparrowgrass & battle-twigs is a small fanzine produced by Roman Orszanski primarily for the assorted members of ANZAPA. This is intended for the December 2021 mailing. I can be reached at PO Box 3231 Rundle Mall, Adelaide SA 5001, or electronically via email at websmith@internode.on.net

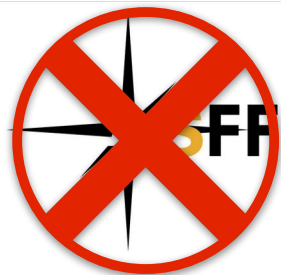
In The Real World

Frankenstein's *Burlesque* reading was cancelled via an email from the ASFF president received at 8:20am Saturday, six days before the ASFF Awards ceremony. Apparently they had simplified the event, dropping the reading of the burlesque but keeping some musical events. *Yes, I know, a burlesque — in the 1860s — is a musical event.*

But frankly, having an event cancelled on us with less than a week's warning was a shock, and I certainly didn't feel like chatting politely via an email with the President. Particularly when they couldn't even be bothered to ask us what we thought about this. I phoned a few people who were involved in the production, to discuss what we should do. While we were tempted to go ahead on the Crit Mass zoom account, we decided that would be rude to those organising other breakout rooms at the ASFF event. We decided we'd postpone the event to early in the new year, and I emailed/phoned the various people who were taking part in the event to let them know what had happened.

It wasn't until the following Thursday, a day before the event, that we heard the whole event had been cancelled! Lucy and Danny, who were to host the award presentations, found out about this via a twitter post! *No-one had bothered to contact them about the decision.*

Ironically, this event which was designed and promoted to publicise the ASFF has succeeded in its cancellation to make the ASFF *notorious* throughout fandom. Maybe they should consider a new logo? 🐾



COP26¹ is the gathering of parties who signed the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, and the current (early November) meeting in Glasgow was planned as the moment when countries update their commitments to the Paris Accords in the hopes of keeping global warming to 1.5 degrees. Scummo's commitment to net zero by 2050 was the *least* he could do; the 15 page leaflet he took to Cop26 as our plan for reduction was totally ridiculed.

So what, you might ask, is our Energy Minister, Angus Taylor, doing at the event? he's fronting a booth at Glasgow, *spruiking for countries to invest more money in Australia's fossil fuels.* 🐾



IPERFORMED A READING FROM Edgar Allan Poe's *The Raven* as the opening to a night of Halloween stories on Saturday, October 30th. Items included a fine selection from *Dracula*, read by Ewart Shaw, whom some of you may remember as toastmaster at *Conjecture* in 2009; a performance of Shirley Jackson's *The Lottery*; a selection from *Frankenstein*, a lovely reading of Burns' *Tam O'Shanter* in a broad scottish accent; Amrose Bierce's *An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge*; ending with Lovecraft's *The Outsider*. The venue was a large hall above the Central Markets.

An entertaining night, replete with wine (red, of course) and snacks. 🐾

¹ The Ministry for the Future was created at COP29

A COMMUNITY STEAMROLLER Print Event took place last Sunday (Nov 14th), the third of a series of such events at 6 Manton St, Hindmarsh. I booked for the noon session, and hopped on my bike at 10:30 in the morning, thinking I might arrive in time for a quick eat at the Pony & Cole cafe at the front of the workshop. Alas, the place was packed, so I had to settle for a take-away tea. There was a display of prints in the workshop, as well as the production line to print bags, towels and shirts.

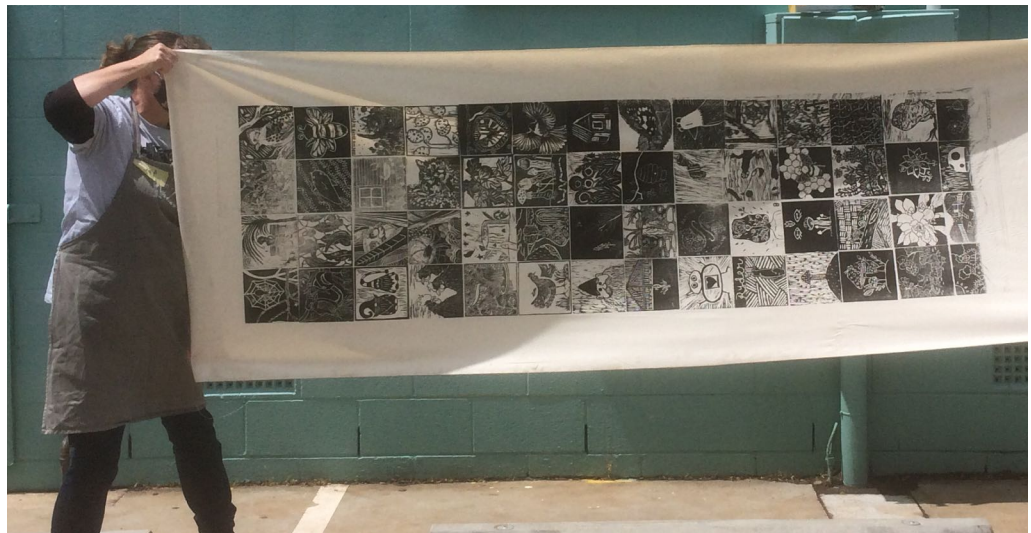
The steamroller action was in the car park, with Damien Warman driving the steamroller along a track upon which were placed the inked lino cuts.

A large cloth was placed on the inked panels, covered with a heavy rubber mat. Then the steamroller was slowly driven over the track, covers removed and the resultant print carefully lifted for display to the assembled audience, before being taken into the workshop and laid out to dry on a rack.

The whole process took about twenty minutes, from arrival of the inked plates to finished print. Careful handling required to ensure a clean print, and no smudging as the cloth was lifted. 🐼



Careful placement of the inked plates, face up, along the bulldozer's running track.



Culture Consumed



SOMETIMES YOU GET LUCKY. Last week, I discovered that the ABC was airing season 2 of this wonderful show. Appropriately enough, it's dealing with a parliament that doesn't want to act on important issues. Our Senator Alex Irving (Debra Mailman) crosses the floor, bringing down the government headed by PM Rachel Anderson (Rachel Griffiths). Unfortunately, the new government seems reticent to take up the cause of indigenous Australia. The ex-PM has become *persona non-grata*, and is forced to retire by her party. Alex is having problems with the Sydney seat she's trying to win...

It's only the first episode, but already we're getting hints the two women may end up helping each other. Good story, great cast, I'm hooked. 🍷



Bullets (SBS) is an interesting series about refugees coopted into smuggling drugs into Helsinki. Except the courier isn't who she claims to be, but turns out — as we discover via a series of flashbacks to the war in Chechnya — to be a terrorist who apparently died seven years ago in Paris.

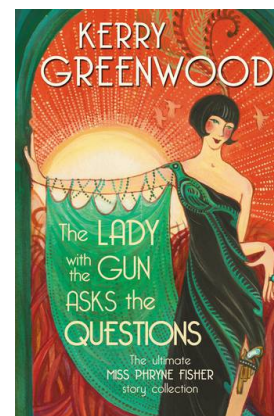
The opening scenes are in a large hall which I'm sure was the venue of the 2017 worldcon in Helsinki. Two women are chatting, notice a drugs exchange, then chase the dealer through the building,

only to emerge in the carpark where one of them is shot by the dealer, dying in the other's arms. A nearby cop arrests her, but she refuses to answer any questions, and is eventually released by the police in response to a request from higher up. It turns out the other woman is part of the security forces: she goes undercover as a social worker, and meets the refugee who carried drugs into Finland, and saving her life when the parcels burst in her stomach.

Why is the refugee in Helsinki? Why has she a false passport? Is she really the terrorist who died? Will the cop who arrested our undercover operative cooperate to uncover the plot? Who is the mysterious ghost who is stalking both of them, armed with high tech that scrambles any TV footage, and how does he relate to the terrorist?

The story has lots of twists and turns, and we slowly discover the roles of various players via flashbacks and memories of the players. Are the policeman, the spook, and the refugee who they claim to be? And what are they all up to? Can we trust any of the main players? Our sympathy for them waxes and wanes as we learn more about their stories.

An interesting look at how terrorists *might* be groomed to blow themselves (and others) up. 🍷



A collection of short stories centred around the wonderful Phryne Fisher, including four new stories in this reprinted volume. A nice way to revisit the extraordinary, delightful detective

and feminist. Lots of fun with our favourite stylish flapper. 🍷



THE NEW SERIES FROM MARVEL, *hawkeye*, tells the story of how Kate Bishop meets Clint Barton six days before Christmas and gets targeted by the local Russian mafia. She grabs the Ronin outfit which was up next in the secret auction, dons it and whips the mafia mob who disrupted the auction. Clint is watching tv with his kids and sees footage on the news of *that costume*. As you might expect, he tracks Kate down and reaches her at the same time as the mafia do...

Unlike many Marvel series, this one seems to have a lighter touch: there are some nice humorous exchanges between Clint and Kate as their relationship develops. 🍷



A Darker Shade of Magic

I ADMIT I PICKED up this volume because of the cover. An interesting tale of four intersecting Londons (Black, Red, White & Grey), with various

amounts of magic. Our hero, Kell, is one of the remaining few with the ability to move between the worlds, acting as a courier for the King to his counterparts elsewhere. Things start to get interesting when Lila, a street thief and would-be pirate in a magic-less London, steals one of his baubles. She seems to have some affinity to magic, and ends up travelling with Kell between worlds — a feat thought impossible. Unfortunately, they are followed by a magical incursion which threatens to destroy Red London. They manage to overcome it, at considerable cost. We discover more about Lila's pirate prowess in the second volume, which (warning!) ends on a cliff-hanger. An easy, entertaining read. 🍷

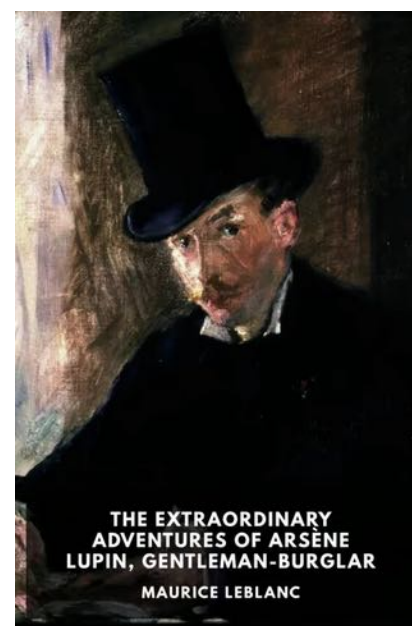
The Extraordinary Adventures of Arsène Lupin, Gentleman-Burglar

IT WAS WITH GREAT DELIGHT that I browsed the Standard Ebooks website to discover a dozen volumes of tales about this thief. This is a collection of short stories featuring Lupin, from his first (unsuccessful) theft to his meeting — and outwitting — Sherlock Holmes. A witty distraction from covid concerns and the real world. I'm looking forward to reading the rest of the set!

Thanks to David Grigg for the heads up! 🍷

Tea & Sympathetic Magic

I'D ALREADY HEARD THIS STORY on Tansy's podcast, *Sheep Might Fly*, but it was fun to re-read the story. Other stories following the same characters are also available. The action takes place in a world where magic exists, usually at a small domestic level. Social roles similar to those in Victorian England, with much drinking of tea and playing of magical croquet. Our heroine has to stymie a wedding forced on her cousin via magic. 🍷



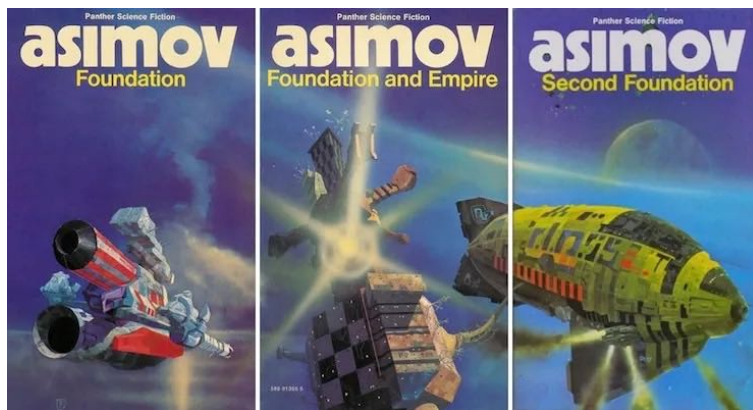
OBO 323

Again, a nice cover. The price of *https* is well worth it. I would have thought keeping track of page counts would be simplest with a spreadsheet, with a separate column for each mailing. perhaps auto-highlighting those who are falling behind the average requirement each mailing? Congrats to Claire, our new President. (Does she prefer “Madam President” or “Prezzo” as a form of address?)

Chez Ashby #3

I downloaded the *Sa* album by Parvyn Kaur Singh from Amrap² (where I have an account as a presenter on 3d radio), and added the album to the station’s catalogue. Nice sound!

Thanks for the comments on *Foundation*, the TV series. I read the original trilogy so long ago, I only have a vague memory of the story. I did notice the addition of women to the story, and the robot — which I’m sure didn’t appear in the original trilogy. I haven’t read any of the



The Chris Foss covers for the version I read these many years ago – a nice image

additional four novels, which might explain why they need 80 episodes.

RYC to me on the Coalition’s election prospects: currently, the polls are against them federally, and it’s quite clear they seem to fail on the COVID front (as opposed to the State Premiers).

The response from Glasgow has been contempt at Australia’s lack of effort, and it’s not clear the public will buy into the nuclear submarine “defence election”.

I strongly suspect the election will be fought on climate change, and the fact that many businesses now want action³ may turn the tide against the do-nothing stance of the coalition.

Quoz #79

Mark: Congratulations on escaping the 2.5 mile bubble! (Is it odd that I want to convert that to 4 km?)

It makes me wonder what the average distance between stations on the line is. Usually you worry more about the time the rail journey takes, not the distance travelled.

Sounds like you had a nice expedition to the brewery taproom. We have similar restrictions: wear masks unless seated and eating/drinking.

I can sympathise with those wondering why they can’t continue to work from home. I’m currently reading another interesting book from David Graeber, *Bullsh*t Jobs*. He starts by noting:

² <https://amrap.org.au/artist/parvyn>

³ <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-10-09/business-council-australia-new-ambitious-carbon-emissions-target/100526742>

“In the year 1930, John Maynard Keynes predicted that, by century’s end, technology would have advanced sufficiently that countries like great Britain or the United States would have achieved a fifteen hour work week. [...] And yet it didn’t happen, Instead, technology has been marshalled, if anything, to figure out ways to make us all work more. In order to achieve this, jobs have had to be created that are, effectively, pointless. Huge swathes of people, in Europe and North America in particular, spend their entire working lives performing tasks they secretly believe do not need to be performed.”⁴

Not that I’m suggesting that *your* jobs are of this nature; rather that, if we were all instead doing productive work for 15 hours a week, it would be far more sensible to do much of it at home. Go to the office maybe two days a month, just to socialise and arrange those things requiring physical presence.

As regards typefaces, I suspect the preference for Cambria is because it’s one of the typefaces Microsoft commissioned specifically for on-screen work. It was designed by Dutch typeface designer Jelle Bosma in 2004, with input from Steve Matteson and Robin Nicholas.

(You may recall earlier typefaces such as Verdana, Tahoma and Georgia designed by Matthew Carter in the mid 1990s for Microsoft). Of course, nowadays the resolution on modern devices is so high that most fonts work quite well onscreen.

Claire: It wasn’t until you mentioned the author, Blunt, was a scriptwriter that I twigged: I’ve seen, and enjoyed, the TV series, *Cardinal*, based on the book *Forty Words for Sorrow*.

Your mention of recent V I Warshawski novels reminded me that I’ve got a recent

“Brillig”: four o’clock in the afternoon — the time when you begin broiling things for dinner. “Slithy”: lithe and slimy. ‘Lithe’ is the same as ‘active’. “Toves”: **curious creatures that are something like badgers, something like lizards, and something like corkscrews.** — Georgia, 11/16pt

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Some of the online fonts commissioned by Microsoft



⁴ p xiv, David Gaeber, *Bullsh*t Jobs*

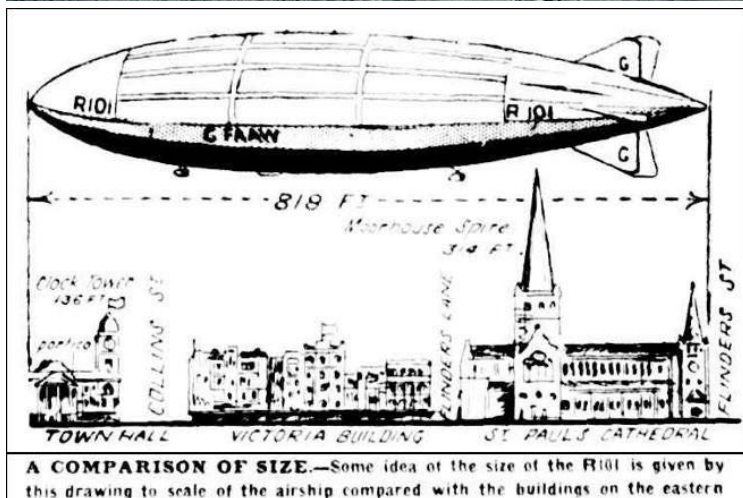
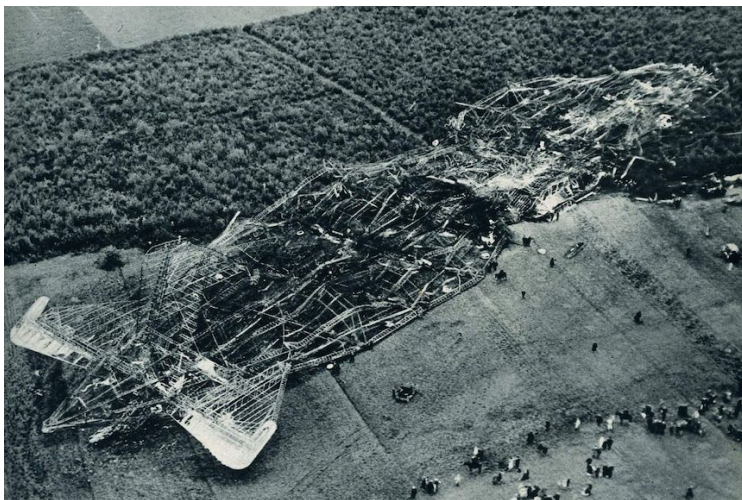
one waiting to be read — ironically titled *Critical Mass* (the 16th in the series). I shall start it on the morrow!

I enjoyed *Ring Shout*, read as part of our review of Hugo nominees. It felt incomplete, as it left me wanting to know more about our heroes and the fight against the Klansmen. I too noticed the thematic link to the *Watchmen* TV series.

If you enjoyed the Cairo Djinn stories, you'll probably enjoy P Djèlí Clark's "If the Martians Have Magic" in the latest *Uncanny Magazine* — available online⁵.

The Fiery Participle 47

RYC on the Imperial Airship Route: it was the R101 which crashed on October 4th, 1930, while flying near Beauvais, north of Paris, en route to Karachi.



There was much enthusiasm for the proposal, particularly in Melbourne...

Aboard the R101 was First Officer Lieutenant Commander Noel Grabowsky Atherstone. He was the only British airman to sink a German submarine from an airship in World War I — leaning over the side of a gondola to drop a mine on it!

Despite retiring to become a pig farmer in Australia, he was lured back to Britain by the Imperial Airship scheme. He was one of the 48 killed in the disaster; only 6 survived.

RYCT me on ePub: I suspect it will become more popular because it is basically the same format as websites, and can be designed to look like an a4 PDF if that's what's wanted.

Since many fans have moved to the web, a tool which saves web pages as epubs (already 70% there) might dramatically increase the popularity of the format. [Kudos to Mark, who creates ePubs of *Banana Wings* separately]

BRG 118

A nice shot of Judith, but I suspect it's her back garden, not the allotment (which is far bigger).

Enjoyed the Books Column discussion with Dennis Callegari.

If you enjoyed P Djèlí Clark's Cairo stories, you might want to have a look at the story in the November *Uncanny*, "If the Martians Have Magic", set in a similar universe.

The Guardian apparently make a good profit from donations; Australians are happy to contribute to decent investigative reporting, rather than shell out money on Murdoch trash. (It's one of

⁵ <https://uncannymagazine.com/article/if-the-martians-have-magic/>

the reasons I hold out hope for the continuing existence of the *SF Encyclopedia* online.)

Snippets 13

RYCTo Me: I thoroughly enjoyed *The Ruby's Curse* and Ms Kingston's performance. Glad to hear your health is (sort of) OK. Sorry to hear your bike excursions are restricted due to limits as to how far you can travel from home, but happy that you still manage the rides to nearby cafés.

The Fretful Porpentine Issue +40

Sapiens sounds interesting, but I think I'm more likely to search out the Claire North, *The End of the Day*. It sounds very interesting indeed.

RYCTo Eric about graphics in ePubs: inline graphics in text could be handled by including a reduced graphic (say 2 lines high) that you could click to fill the e-reader screen with an overlay for detailed inspection, then return to the small graphic when you wish to continue reading. Similar to the way you can have "popup" footnotes. [Of course, it's not an issue if the ePub is fixed format and the screen is a reasonable size.]

Re *Arsene Lupin*, I've downloaded the first four Standard Ebooks and thoroughly enjoyed the stories in the first volume. *Enjoyed the gardening tips from Dan Dare!*

Necessity 162

Some very nice shots of birds (love the wattlebird).

RYCTo Kim that "Labor needs to win seven seats for a majority in its own right": I wouldn't be surprised if the next federal election becomes a climate election, with the possibility of Labor reaching an

accommodation with The Greens to take government to act on [ie *fighting*] climate change. There's also a strong chance we will see more independents (either via the *Voices of...* model, or because of backing from Climate 200) who want action on climate.

RYCTMe about *Danger Man* links to *The Prisoner*: there was one episode of *Danger Man* that is mimicked in the first *Prisoner* episode: he wakes up in a room to discover he's been kidnapped. I recall being startled how similar it was to the *Prisoner* story line.

Gaston J. Feeblehare #21

Nice cover illo! Enjoyed *The Baker Murder case*.

Sketchy 9

Glad you managed an enjoyable summer, minus covid. Like the cycling motif on your mask!

Kingdom of the Bland

I doubt that Small Modular Reactors (SMRs, which are nuclear) will gain a foothold in Australia: they turn out to be even more expensive than traditional reactors, and as yet untested in the real world. By the time anyone managed to build one in Australia, the amount of renewables in the grid would make them obsolete. This is just bullshit from the fossil fuels industry claiming that we need "baseload" as a way to suggest a continuation of coal/gas reactors.

Labor have finally announced a target of 43% renewables (pitifully low, less than targets suggested by industry, and likely to be easily reached) *though they have suggested* that they would tighten the emissions limits on Co₂, unlike the current federal

government which just keeps increasing the limits for any companies which might go over the allocated amount.

There's a nice piece by Sharan Burrow (*general secretary of the International Trade Union Confederation*) reprinted in Pearls and Irritations, "Jobs and a just transition can deliver climate ambition"⁶:

- *investing in photo-voltaic solar energy creates 1.5 times as many jobs as investing the same amount in fossil fuels;*
- *improving the energy efficiency of buildings creates 2.8 times as many jobs as fossil fuels per dollar;*
- *mass transport creates 1.4 times as many jobs as road construction and repair; and*
- *ecosystem restoration creates 3.7 times as many jobs as oil and gas production.*

From the LAIR of the LYNX #119

Hmm. "Lync the Great" has a nice ring to it, doesn't it?

Crash of the Hard Disk 56

Ah yes, the Australian *Superman* radio serial. It went to air four nights a week (Mon-Thurs) in the early evening (6:30pm in Sydney). I was too young to hear the first broadcast, but I do remember listening to a few episodes — probably repeated sometime in the seventies.

I think we basically used the original American scripts, though Macquarie radio hired a New Zealander, Michael Noonan, to edit out americanisms in the scripts.

Re *cartoonists always being around when robots go into bars*, I suspect it's a natural

consequence of cartoonists spending most of their time in bars, irrespective of whether the robots are there or not.

YOU REALLY KNOW YOU'RE HOME WHEN YOU FIND A WOMBAT IN YOUR BED #195

Nice x-rays of your hands. They look very elegant! Glad things are going well, but I'm sure that the tripping on the front steps is in contravention of the ANZAPA no more falling rule! All the best.

KNOT KNEADED

I can also recommend *Doris Brett's Australian Bread Book*. It was of particular use one winter when I spent the weekends baking as a distraction from a broken heart (my first serious relationship had broken and I was *so* distraught). I'd pick a recipe Sunday morning, and by mid-afternoon would invite friends over to enjoy freshly baked breads.

Re: ammonia production, there's an interesting new process from Monash uni :

"scientists at Monash University have developed new, innovative processes for the production of ammonia that utilises electricity, allowing it to be produced using zero emissions renewable energy and eliminating the traditional dependence on fossil gas as a feedstock"⁷

Note that ammonia can be used directly as a transport fuel, and the CSIRO is working on efficient methods to extract the hydrogen via a reverse-faber process using their new membrane⁸.

⁶ <https://johnmenadue.com/jobs-and-a-just-transition-can-deliver-climate-ambition/>

⁷ <https://reneweconomy.com.au/monash-grants-licence-to-fossil-free-ammonia-breakthrough-to-new-start-up-company/>

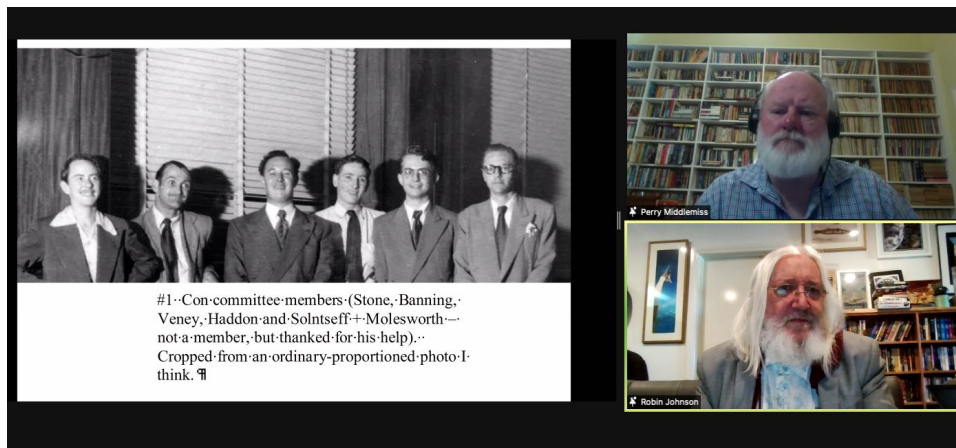
⁸ <https://reneweconomy.com.au/csiro-cracks-barrier-to-export-hydrogen-fuel-to-power-cars-79439/>

Fannish Gatherings

Sunday, Dec 5th: A zoom gathering at 10:30am (Adelaide time) organised by fanac as part of their fan history series: Leigh Edmonds on the early years of Aussie fandom, focussed mainly on Sydney. Leigh was having problems with his camera, so he dashed down the road to join Robin Johnson as his place. This left Perry explaining Aussie fandom and its isolation between capital cities because of the distance between them (basically a day's drive) to American fans until Leigh re-appeared. The big surprise was the British fans such as Claire, who joined the zoom at midnight (after a night out) and stayed to the end at 2am her time. Edie Stern was the FANAC Zoom host. The recording will end up on the fanac.org site in due course.

Wednesday, Dec 8th: 12:30pm and I join Adam in his car for a lift to the Tea Tree Gully Library, where Karen J Carlisle is launching her new book. We need to get there by 1:30, as I am introducing Karen and she wants to make sure everything runs smoothly. [We zoomed a week ago, so that I knew what she was going to talk about. I promised to keep the intro to under 2 minutes, though she had generously offered me 5 minutes. I was sitting in Kappy's that morning, drafting the intro when Kate Treloar from the Orchid bookshop wandered past. I tried out the intro on her, and it ran 1:43, so I knew was ready for the book launch].

We had a vague idea where the library was, and Adam pulled into a car park near the oval. I glanced across at the building nearby and lo, it had a giant sign saying "Tea Tree Gully Library". We entered, found the relaxed reading area, and settled in to await Karen's arrival. I nipped to the adjured cafe at 1:30 to grab some lunch (very tasty it was, too) and returned to find Karen and her partner, David, setting



up the projector and merch tables.

At three past 2, I delivered my intro, and gave Karen the stage to deliver her talk (with slides).

Her new book was the second of the Aunt Enid mysteries, and I knew she was referring to Arthur Conan Doyle's visit to Adelaide in 1920. I finished my intro (after a warning not to trust the fae) with the words "*Karen decided Doyle's visit was worth further investigation; luckily Aunt Enid was there at the time...*"

Though she was a bit nervous, Karen gave an entertaining talk about Conan Doyle's visit, the photos of young girls playing with fairies in which he was interested, and photos of the "fairy doors" which appeared in Adelaide.

Adam and I left after the talk, book sales and prize lottery around 3:30, to drive back to Adelaide by 4pm.

That meant I had a couple of hours; time to unwind before the Critical Mass dinner at *La Trattoria* at 6:30. Karen and David said they'd join us once they'd packed up and dropped their gear back home.



Wednesday, Dec 8th: 6:30pm:

La Trattoria is a family run Italian restaurant conveniently located fifteen minutes leisurely stroll from home.

I got there at 6:30, struggled with the check-in app and was led to the back room, where Adam and Ruth were already seated at our table for twelve.

By 6:45, we had our full complement: Kathrine Marshall, Kate Treloer, Jeff Harris, Andrew Vincent & Beata Sznajder, Karen & David, Karen Anderson & Gerald Smith, Adam & Ruth and I were celebrating the end of year at the Critical mass dinner. After a bit of discussion over wines, we ordered bruschetta for the table, and main courses. We had an attentive waitress helping with orders, explaining sauces and



The owners, Andy & Chris.

Not sure who the fellow between them is...

providing suggestions.

The food was excellent, the conversation delightful and the evening most pleasant. Most of us were full after the main course, but Karen and Katherine stayed for coffee and affogato. By the time we left, it was 9pm. An excellent evening. 🍷



As part of the campaigns for climate action, my Super Fund, *Australian Ethical*, invited us to contribute our names to full page ads encouraging meaningful targets at COP 26. At left is a copy of the ad which appeared during the discussion over targets for action on climate. 🍷

The green highlight (left) shows where my name is on this ad

Last page typed 12:46pm Dec 10th 🍷 *Happy Solstice! Roman*