

The Kerosene Papers



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Compiled by Farey & Plummer
with Stuart Harris



Introduction

A Short History of “The Kerosene Papers”

The unusual discoveries of fragments of what appear to be a biographical index for an apparent biography titled “Cow Is Giving Kerosene” began to occur slightly prior to 2008. The first of these, covering partial entries for S-Z was, to quote the introduction to the page in BEAM #1, “found between pages 101 and 102 of a 1970 edition of ‘The Atrocity Exhibition’ in Fozzles Book Outlet, Pigeon Forge, TN, presumably having been used as a bookmark.” The find was implied to be attributed to Nic Farey, a notoriously unreliable narrator.

2008 itself brought a further find, a literal “message in a bottle” - in this case an empty Jim Beam fifth in the penthouse suite of the Plaza Hotel, Las Vegas, in circumstances described at the time by the much more reliable Mark Plummer as “shortly after the hotel had been occupied by a conference of lawnmower salesmen and before the building was abandoned after an unexplained chemical accident”, covering D-G. The proximity of that year’s Corflu to this discovery may or may not be related, yet this version suggests a British edition of the presumed full volume entitled “Cow is Giving Paraffin”.

These documents created an immediate but short-lived interest in what became known as “Kerosenology” (see Preface). However, no further whole pages were unearthed until 2016 when a fan driving to MAC2 (74th World Science Fiction Convention) was surreptitiously gifted with entries for A-B, the circumstances related by Plummer as follows: “(The fan) emerged from a gas station restroom in Topeka, KS to find an obviously aged and partially torn page tucked under the driver’s side windshield wiper underneath flyers for a local pizza delivery, a car detailing advertisement and a business card for a local gay escort service. Almost immediately recognising its significance, but wishing to remain nameless for fear of reprisals, the fan arranged for the manuscript - which was heavily stained with what appears to be pickling vinegar - to be left in the back of Nic Farey’s Las Vegas taxi. An accompanying note, written on the back of a flyer advertising The Distinguished Wakamba Cocktail Lounge of New York City, explained how it had come to light and begged the finder to bring it to the attention of the wider science fiction community.”

The pages noted above are transcribed within, reorganized, we hope usefully, into alphabetical order.

There have, whether surprisingly or not, been occasional additional finds as well as further reconstruction of obscured or partial entries from the known pages so far. New annotations and some analysis points have also been added for this collection.

We are not presenting this slim volume as a reference work as such, but given recent if highly sporadic addenda to the canon, it may be considered slightly useful, perhaps even mildly entertaining.

The Compilers*

October 2024

* With additional contributions from Stuart Harris, to whom thanks, we think

Preface

Kerosenology

As noted in the introduction, the original “Kerosene” discoveries inspired a certain amount of conjecture and even some academic interest, albeit at a very niche level.

Very occasionally the topic reappears, usually as an exercise in nostalgia, but often as mockery of fannish fads of bygone days when All Fandom was truly Plunged Into War for a week or two, although that doesn’t apply so much in the case of Kerosenology, which always was (and remains) a very minority interest.

As Plummer wrote upon the publication of the A-B fragment: “...its authorship and primary subject matter became a matter of furious debate in academic literary – and, oddly, naval architecture and marine engineering – circles. In ‘Fool as Fuel: cognition, estrangement and the Kerosene Conundrum’ (‘Extrapolation’, v51 #3), the critic Cosmo McKittrick presented a detailed semantic analysis proving that authorship lay with one, all or none of Bengo Mistral, Margaret Atwood and Graham Charnock, or perhaps somebody else entirely, sparking several supporting and refuting articles across multiple issues of ‘Vector’, ‘Foundation’ and ‘Golfing Today’.

“But interest in the topic soon faded. In 2015 the ‘Journey Planet’ team attempted to revisit the controversy with a theme issue guest edited by Colin Harris, Helen Montgomery and James Bacon’s moustache, but it was impounded by the Royal College of Nursing under the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 and never distributed. Of late, new theories have largely been confined to obscure Kerosenologist websites, most of which are hosted in Azerbaijan”.

Despite the source material’s general dismissal as being both trivial, unimportant but mostly unreliable, interest in Kerosenology has proved remarkably persistent, albeit among a very few practitioners. The seemingly global affection for conspiracy theories undoubtedly plays into the dedication and enthusiasm shown by devotees here.

As is so often the case with contentious or even (perhaps especially) trivial topics, opponents and would-be debunkers of Kerosenology are in some cases equally vehement. The introduction notes the apparent reluctance of the discoverers of the source material to publicly identify themselves, and have typically requested anonymity, if not actual witness protection. Despite reasonable evidence that the documents do exist, anecdotally provided by some detailed description of scribbles and stains thereon, no actual images of these pages have been made available - those purporting to be such on the Azerbaijani websites are all in fact theoretical reconstructions.

Another assertion is that more recent claimed discoveries (see Foreword) are forgeries, an attempt by some Kerosenologists to retain or even revive interest in the subject, even as some of their own number have cast doubt upon the authenticity of the newer material. The Compilers make no judgement on the veracity of either of these claims; readers and students can draw their own conclusions.

In fairness, we do point out that skeptics paint all “Kerosene” discoveries with the same broad brush, contending that the whole thing was made up to start with.

Foreword

New Discoveries

There have been four sources for additions to the material:

1) Forensic analysis of the primary sources.

The original documents have inevitably been described in a manner suggesting age and degradation, variously torn, stained and written upon. Those who claim to have access to these originals have used increasingly sophisticated methods not available at the time of discovery in attempts at reconstruction.

2) The “Belfast Trove”

For a few months at the end of 2022 and the beginning of 2023 it is now claimed that individual entries were contained in fortune cookies from the Sum Ting Wong Chinese takeaway in West Belfast. The recipient (who, as usual, has requested anonymity) stated that they did not initially realize the relevance of the seemingly incomprehensible “fortunes” and so at first discarded them. Thus, the earliest ones are recreated here from the finder’s memory alone and should probably be considered less reliable. Given the substantial difference between this method of discovery and previous finds, it isn’t surprising that the “Belfast Trove” has been most subject to accusations of forgery and fannish hoax.

3) P-Q

An envelope purported to have been received by a local fan near Chengdu, China in late September of 2023, the contents of which were transcribed (into both Mandarin and English) and distributed, although not widely. The source, rather unhelpfully, merely described the envelope itself as “postmarked Wales”.

4) List of Appendices

A reported flypost on the El Malecón beach promenade in Puerto Vallarta, Jalisco with the Spanish title “La vaca está dando queroseno : apéndices”, although the listing below the title was in English. Partially torn and weathered, this was photographed by an alert tourist before its removal.

The Kerosene Papers

Abigail Frost *Note 1*

(see **Frost, Abigail**)

Accidental overdose

594

Adelphi Hotel, Liverpool, UK

277, 404-11

Advil

1, 9, 82, 154, 202, 223, 281, 298, 342, 345, 377-9, 421, 444,

454, 482, 500, 582, 595

‘Aitch’

101, 121-7

(see also **Bell, Harry**)

Al Ghul, Ra’s

(see **Ra’s Al Ghul**)

All Good, It’s

(see *It’s All Good*)

Amell, Stephen

455

(see also **Arrows of Desire**)

Andiron

101, 228-31, 423

(see also *TAFF*)

Andrews, St (see **St Andrews** *Note 2*)

(see also *Bedouin Soundclash*)

Anion

311-2, 344-7

(see also *Onion*)

Ansible

3, 6, 9, 54, 221-4, 298, 334, 451-4, 476, 486, 505-6, 545, 554,
564-8, 609

(see also **Bradbury, Ray (Douglas)**; **Disch, Thomas M**
Note 2; *Prisoner*)

Ansible

2

(see also *Dead pool*; *Fanzines*; **Langford, David**; *TAFF*;

Thog; **Tontine**; **Transatlantic Hearing Aid, The**)

Apprenticeships

117, 246, 298, 338

(see also **Ra’s Al Ghul**)

Arrers, Good

1, 433, 601

(see also **Plummer, Mark**)

Arrows of Desire

56-7, 327, 544

(see also *Fanzines*)

Art Widner

(see **Widner, Art**)

‘Arseholes, bastards, fucking cunts and pricks’

(see **Dury, Ian**; *Fanzines*)

Notes:

¹ Throughout: In general, an entry in **bold** typeface will refer to a person. An entry in **bold italic** refers to a Fanzine (qv) or other publication. This italic format is reversed in in listings beneath the main entry. However, this formatting is not always consistent. Rather than attempt to “correct” anything which might seem wrong or misleading, we have simply reproduced the original here. This may be indicative of different editions of the original apart from the known US and UK versions.

² Cross-referenced entries in **red** (throughout) are thus far missing. It is unclear as to whether their inclusion implies (a) a later (or indeed earlier) edition, (b) deliberate misdirection by the author or (c) shoddy indexing. “St Andrews” is a borderline example, depending upon whether one considers the indexer would have listed this as though it were “Saint Andrews” or not.

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Askance

472
(see also *Fanzines*; *gerrymander*; **Purcell, John**; *TAFF*;
Texas Toast)

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letters to the editor 475-9
non-sequential version 480
sequestered 481
sequined jacket 474
sesquicentennial 641
squeezebox 485
(see also **Barmaid**; *Fanzines*; *Filk*; **Kaufman, Jerry**;
Purcell, John; **Savonarola, Girolamo**; *TAFF*; *Tex-Mex*;
Wanking Parrot)

Assassination attempts

11, 204, 368, 585
(see also **Bacon, James**; **Bond, James**; *CIA*; **Nixon, Richard Milhous**; *Ra's Al Ghul*)

Atatürk, Mustafa Kemal

career advice 504
DNA sample 505
final meeting 223
(see also *TARDIS*)

Attitude

517
(see also **Wells, Pamela** ^{Note 3}; *Fanzines*)

Avedon Carol

(see **Carol, Avedon**)

Bacon, James

assassination of (presumed) 204
career advice 202
career advice ignored 203
DNA sample 200
estrangement from 205
trouser press 204-9 ^{Note 4}
(see also *Fanzines*; **Garcia, Chris**; *Irishman For Hire*;
Journey Planet; *Sexual harassment*)

Ballard, James Graham

experimentation with 112-7
final meeting 367
ghost writing 291-9

Banana Skins

(see *Banana Wings*)

Banana Wings

325-6, 545
(see also **Brialey, Claire**; *Fanzines*; **Plummer, Mark**;
Shagging disclaimer)

Bananarama

career advice 19
DNA sample 22
experimentation with 24
(see also *Shakespear's Sister*) ^{Note 5}

Notes:

³ The misspelling of "Pamela" is disputed as to whether it is considered deliberate. Evidence for this is given by a further supposed entry for "Pamella Welles"

⁴ See also APPENDIX VI and note thereon. The general consensus is that there should be a cross reference here. Its omission suggests the "multiple edition" theory, among other possible explanations.

⁵ The cross-reference to "Shakespear's Sister" is recursive.

The Kerosene Papers

Notes:

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first meeting 68
royalty dispute 101

Bedouin Soundclash

career advice 255
DNA samples 312
(see also **St Andrews**) ^{Note 6}

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DNA sample 515
Ruby Murray 516-8
(see also **Lake, Christina**)

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Bodden, Bill

estrangement from 581
(see also **Benton, Tracy**)

Bond, James

career advice 266
DNA sample 270
familial connection 271
(see also *Assassination attempts*; **DeLancie, John**; **Dench, Dame Judi**) ^{Note 7}

⁶ See also Note 2

⁷ Entries for "DeLancie" and "Dench" would be expected to have appeared within or closely adjacent to the "Belfast Trove". We may never know.

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DNA sample revisited 414

Smoffing with 383

(see also 'Aitch'; Fanzines; **Quasiquote**; *Shagging disclaimer*)

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420

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estrangement from 122

translated into Celsius 121

Brialey, Claire

289, 324, 545

(see also **Banana Wings**; **Plummer, Mark**; *Shagging disclaimer*)

Note 8

Notes:

⁸ The line break here (and elsewhere) delineates separate "finds".

⁹ Entries in green are from the "Belfast Trove" (See Foreword). "Del Boy" and "Del Mar" appear only at the recollection of the finder, hence an unknown page reference for the latter. The cross-reference to Langford was clearly more memorable.

De Liscard, Sir James Theakston Watney *Note 9*

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Del Boy

(see **Langford, David**)

Del Mar

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(see also *Texas Toast*)

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312-15, 398, 536

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estrangement from 479

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(see also **Van Vogt, Alfred Elton**)

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and ribofunk 219

and steampunk 202

Trappist monk 305

¹⁰ D-G entries (partial at each end, it is inferred) were deduced to be from a British edition (see Introduction). See also Note 1 on formatting differences.

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Disaster Area
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“Disaster Area, The”
253, 257

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244, 313, 422, 444

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“Nichevo”; **“Singsing”**; **“This Here...”**; **“This Never
Happens”**; **“Tits, Sausages and Ballet Shoes”**; **“Trap
Door”**; **“Twll-Ddu”**; **“Warhoon”**; **“Yield It”**)

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Farey, John Sr.
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and the Smithfield Club 265
at Woburn 266
(see also **Farey; John Jr.**; *Farey Sequence*)

Notes:

¹¹ “Doctor Who” referring to “Who, Doctor” is recursive. A joke, perhaps, albeit a poor one.

¹² See note on APPENDIX III. Again we have a possible or even likely missing cross-reference here in an “Edwards” entry.

¹³ Given what we factually know about fanzines via other much more reliable sources, this listing seems woefully incomplete. APPENDIX II suggests a more comprehensive survey, which again perhaps should also have been cross-referenced here.

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Farey, John

Sly and the Family Stone 218

Farey, John Jr.

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estrangement from 289

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Farey, Nic Note 14

and alcohol 1-4, 6, 8-211 *passim*

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"The Radio Minds of Mars" 204

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598

Faster than spinach

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Filippo, Paul di (see **Di Filippo, Paul**)

First Thursday

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second visit to 158

removal from 159-62

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Floyd, Pink (see **Pink Floyd**)

Frost, Abigail

DNA sample 67

estrangement from 234

Gambia, The

flight to 360

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expulsion from 362

Good Arrers (see **Arrers, Good**)

Notes:

¹⁴ The quantity of "Farey" entries has led to a majority of Kerosenologists accepting as canon that they must be the biographical or autobiographical subject of "Cow is Giving Kerosene". However, the alleged subject has never commented upon this. Contrarian arguments inevitably exist, the most persuasive being that the actual biographical subject would either (a) not be mentioned at all in the index since their inclusion would be implied on all pages, or (b) if they were the subject, these entries might be expected to be much lengthier. A crucial sticking point is the lack of a "trouser press" cross-reference here, though see note on APPENDIX VI. The provenance of the D-G section, however, is generally considered the most "reliable" of the finds, having been related by Plummer.

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Peter Weston

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Plastic Man

(see **O’Brian, Patrick (“Eel”)**)

Platypus

DNA sample 44

(See also **“Banana Wings”, “Plokta”**)

“Plenty, Take Back” (see **“Take Back Plenty”**)

Plenipotentiary

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“Plokta” *Note 16*

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(See also **Bexhill, Hugo Awards, Scott, Alison, Tornado**)

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Quandary

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“Quandry”

22, 502

(See also *Hugo Awards*)

Notes:

¹⁵ P and Q entries are from a new discovery (see *Foreword*)

¹⁶ An inexplicably missing cross-reference to *Fanzines* (see also **“Quandry”** and several others elsewhere). This has led several experts to conclude that the P-Q find is a fabricated hoax.

¹⁷ The page is reported torn at this juncture, hence the presumed gap between **“Plokta”** and **Q**.

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1, 602

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Quark

4, 44, 272

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gardening 404

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¹⁸ *Recursive*

Spinrad, Norman

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Sterilization

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Tudor, Martin; **Wells, Pamela**)

TARDIS

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The Who

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(see also **Daltrey, Roger** ^{Note 20}; **Entwistle, John**; **Jones, Kenny**; **Moon, Keith**; **Starkey, Zak**; **Townsend, Pete**)

"This Never Happens"

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2, 544
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"Twill-Ddu"

97

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"Vagina Monologues, The"

289

Vagrancy

303-342, 520-542
(see also *Prison*)

Notes:

¹⁹ Cf Note 14 re: "Farey" entries. Detractors of the theory that any of them may be the subject of the book will point to the apparently extensively dealt with topic of TAFF candidacies, not a position in which they have ever been found.

²⁰ An entry for "Daltrey" would be adjacent to the "Belfast Trove", whereas "Starkey" is definitively missing.

²¹ Occasional commenters often ignore the presence of "non-fan" entries such as these whereas the possible connections implied are more studiously analyzed by others.

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DNA sample 444
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Vasectomy

361

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Vegrants

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Walker, Harvey Roy

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2

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Yount, Robin

DNA sample 14
(see also **Datlow, Ellen** Note 24)

Zelazny, Roger

DNA sample 244
estrangement from 244
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Notes:

²² From the original transcription: “This entry partially obscured by mold and/or an undetermined stain. “Warhoon” was inferred by the three clearly seen letters and by holding the page fragment up to the light.” Further forensic analysis has confirmed this, and the referring page number.

²³ Recursive. See Note 11.

²⁴ The nonexistent entry for “Datlow” also potentially falls adjacent to the “Belfast Trove”

Zelazny, Yves
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LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX I NON-LINEARITY OF NARRATION

APPENDIX II *Note 25* FANZINES: LISTING, DESCRIPTIONS AND FOCAL POINTS

²⁵ See various notes above. It is not known whether this appendix is comprehensive or not.

APPENDIX III *Note 26* [?] EDWARDS BIOLOGICAL HISTORY

²⁶ See Note 12. Damage and weathering of the alleged original makes the determination of which Edwards is deserving of an entire appendix unclear. It has also been suggested that a missing apostrophe would point to Saint Edward.

APPENDIX IV POLITICS OF THE ERA : TIMELINE

APPENDIX V [Missing]

APPENDIX VI *Note 27* [THE] TROUSER PRESS [INCIDENT]

²⁷ Although “trouser press” has a page reference (see Note 4) there is no specific entry for it. The alleged original is torn, but the spacing suggests the title quoted here. The five pages referred to (204-9) suggest an event of relative importance, but apparently not so much that it is mentioned again anywhere else. Accounts of what may have transpired during a known “trouser press incident” from 2003 are available elsewhere. It is possible that this may refer to a different trouser press entirely, though perhaps not likely.