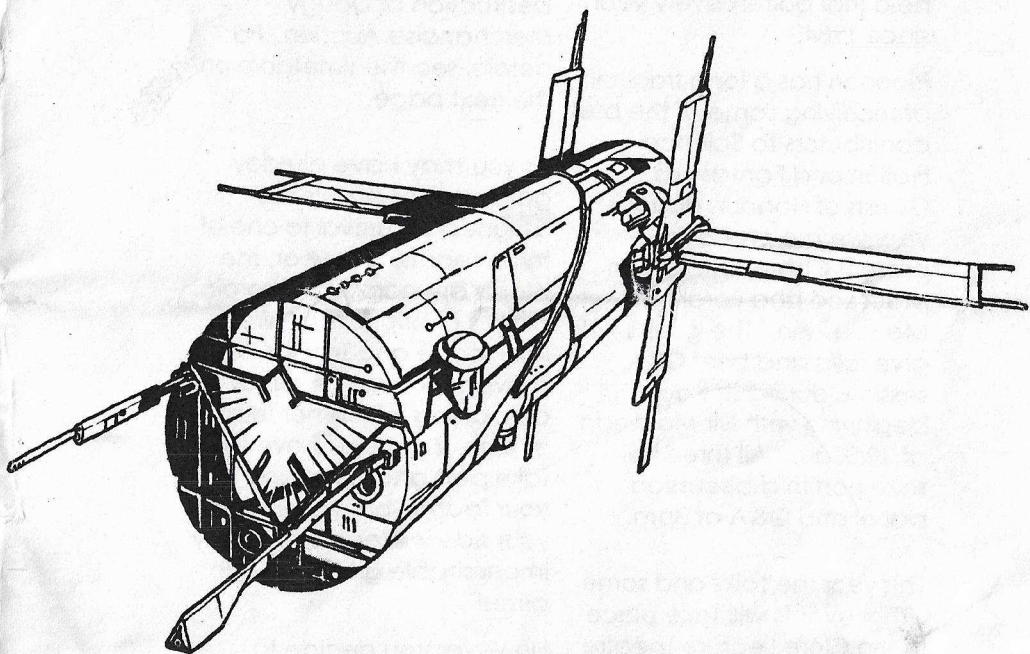


Wyntongue



Picocon 24

The Chair Entity Speaks

Welcome to Picocon 24! If you've attended a Picocon before, I'm delighted to welcome you back. If you haven't, I'll take a moment to let you know what's going on: Picocon is ICSF's annual convention, which has been held (not quite!) every year since 1984.

Picocon has a long tradition of receiving some of the best contributors to Science Fiction and Fantasy as Guests of Honour, and this year we are proud to present Charlie Stross, Ken MacLeod and Farah Mendlesohn. The guests will give talks and brief Q&A sessions during the day, beginning with Mr MacLeod at 10:30am. All three will take part in a discussion panel and Q&A at 3pm.

This year the talks and some other events will take place in the Clore Lecture Theatre in the Huxley Building. Please refer to the pull-out map and directions for more information, or ask a committee member. Committee members will be identifiable by their red

sashes, and will be happy to answer any questions about today's goings-on.

In addition to the talks, there will also be other events running through the day, including the (in)famous Destruction of Dodgy Merchandise Auction. For details, see the timetable on the next page.

As you may have already gathered, all guests are assigned on arrival to one of three teams. This year, the teams are named for heroic places of origin: the Shire, Melniboné and Trantor. A scavenger hunt will run all day, along with other team events. You don't have to take part and win points for your team – but victory for your side will lead to not only imperishable glory, but also prizes!

However you decide to spend the day, thank you for coming and I hope you thoroughly enjoy Picocon 24!

– 'Adventure' Dave Bartram, Chair Entity

Timetable

- 10:00 am** Doors Open
- 10:30 am** Chair's Welcome and Ken MacLeod:
Talk – topic TBA [Clore LT]
- 11:30 am** Farah Mendlesohn: Talk - "*Writing SF
whilst living through a singularity.*"
[Clore LT]
- 12:30 pm** Destruction of Dodgy Merchandise
[Beit Quad]
- 2:00 pm** Charlie Stross: Interview and Q&A
[Clore LT]
- 3:00 pm** Guests of Honour Q&A and Panel
Discussion - "*Science Fiction and Politics.*"
[Clore LT]
- 4:00 pm** Turkey Readings [Clore LT]
- 4:30 pm** Ministry of Silly Games - Just a Minute,
What's My Line and Mornington
Crescent [Clore LT]
- 5:30 pm** Absolutely and in No Way a Fish Duel.
[Nowhere near Beit Quad]
- 6:00 pm** Quiz [Da Vinci's Bar]
- 7:00 pm** Close

Guests of Honour

Charlie Stross



Born in Leeds, England, Charles knew he wanted to be a science fiction writer from the age of six. He made his first professional sale, the short story 'The Boys' to *Interzone* in 1986. He began writing fiction in earnest again in 1998, including titles such as the singularitypunk 'Accelerando', the cross-genre Lovecraftian SF spy thriller 'The Atrocity Archive', and the acclaimed space opera 'Singularity Sky' and its sequel 'Iron Sunrise'.

Ken MacLeod



Ken has studied Zoology, researched in bio-mechanics and worked as a computer analyst. Now a full-time writer, he has published several novels

including the politically-charged postcyberpunk Fall Revolution series, beginning with 'The Star Fraction', the post-singularity space opera 'Newton's Wake' and the UFOlogical alternate history/space opera Engines of Light series beginning with 'Cosmonaut Keep'. Ken's homeland of Scotland is portrayed in a variety of forms in his science fiction.

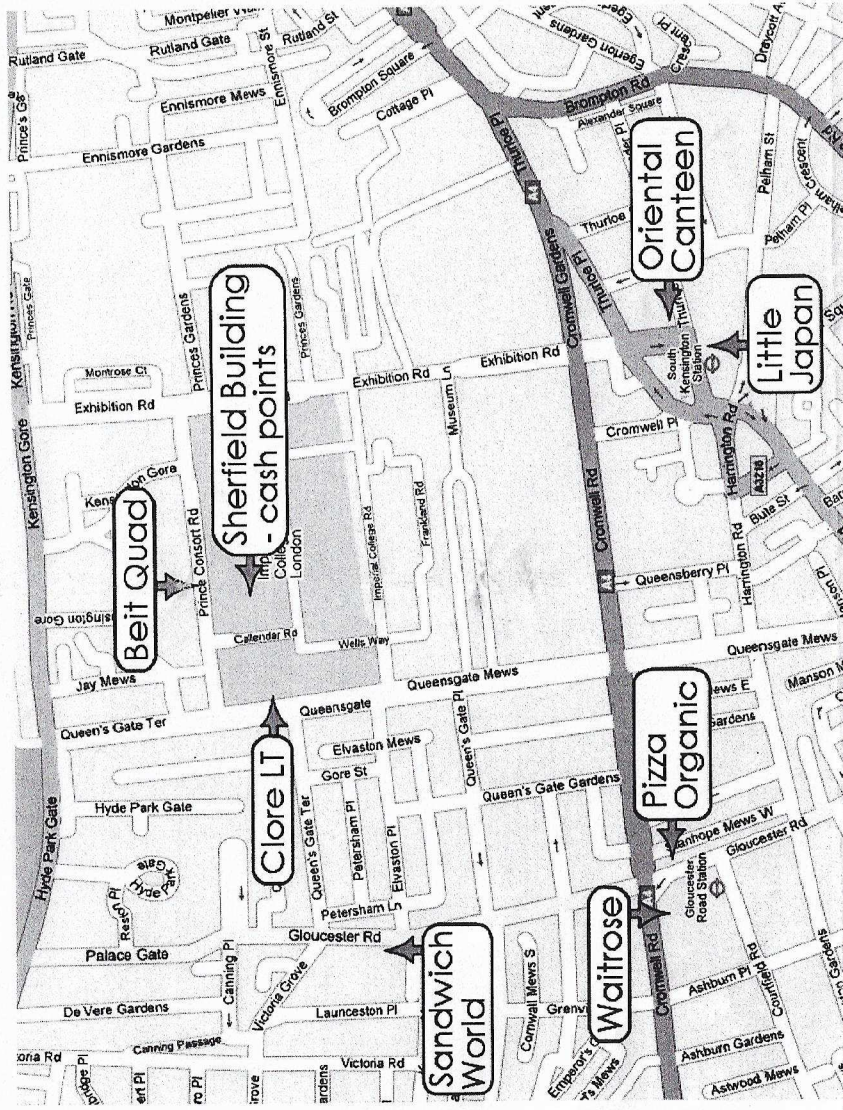
Farah Mendlesohn

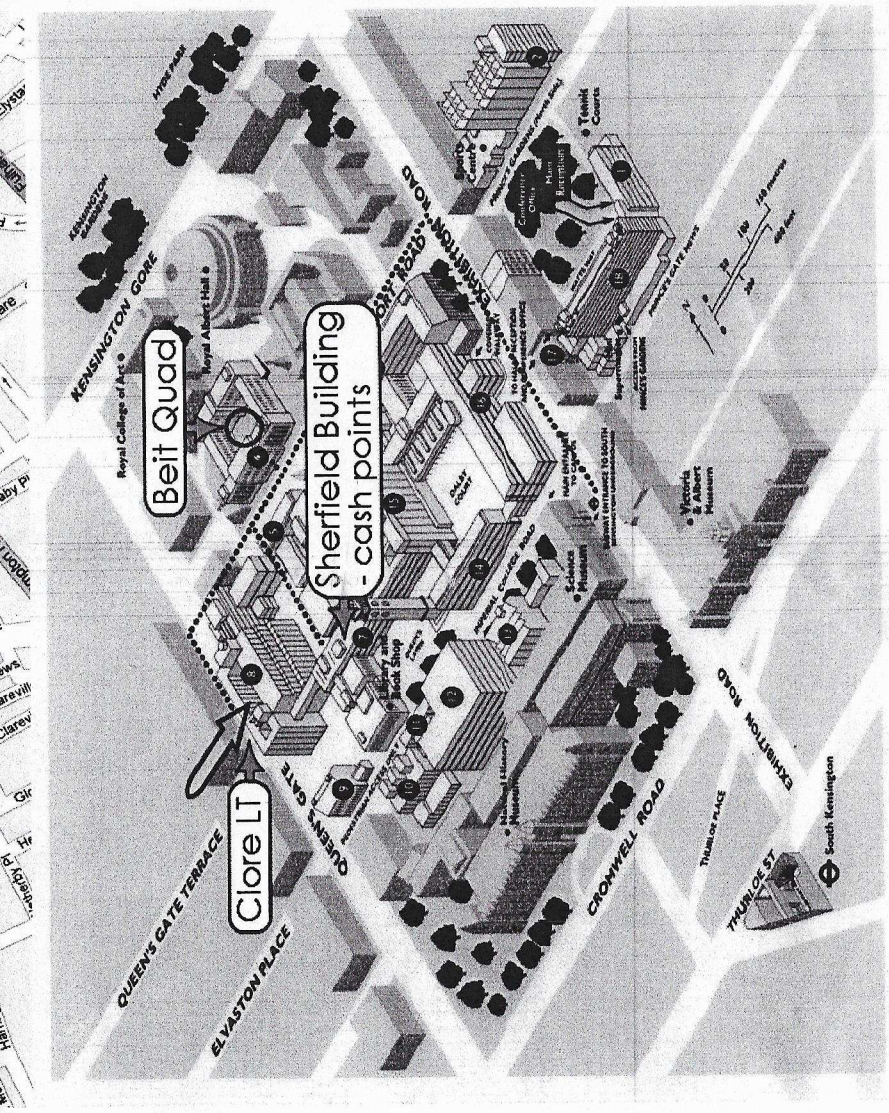


Farah is a lecturer at Middlesex University in London, a critic and writer on science fiction.

She has written and edited a number of titles on the subject, including *The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction* (co-edited with Edward James), which won the 2005 Hugo Award for Best Related Book. She is currently the editor of 'Foundation: The International Review of Science Fiction'.

Handy Pull-Out Map Sheet





Beit Quad

Sherfield Building
- cash points

Clore LT

MEXINGTON GORE
Royal College of Art
Royal Albert Hall

QUEEN'S GATE TERRACE
EVASTON PLACE
QUEEN'S GATE

ROYAL ALBERT HALL
ROYAL COLLEGE OF ART

Science & Pharmacy
Arts & Design
Business School

CHROMWELL ROAD
TAVISTOCK PLACE
EXHIBITION ROAD

South Kensington

TRAFALGAR ST

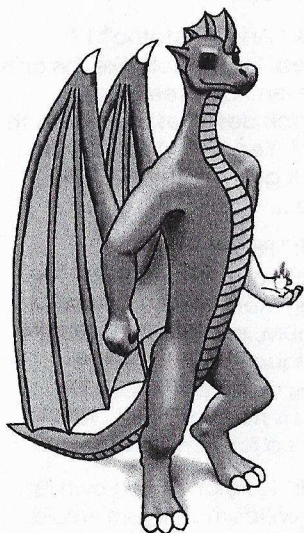
100 metres
50 metres
25 metres

What is this Badge Thing All About?

So, you've made it to Picocon, and you've been given a badge. What does this mean?

Firstly, it identifies you as a con-goer, so that the people on the Huxley Building door (where the talks are being held) will let you in.

Secondly, it identifies you as part of a team, for which you can score points throughout the day. This year our three teams represent the realms of The Shire, Melniboné, and Trantor.



Most of the day's events, with the exception of the talks, have some points attached to them. The winner of the LAN competition will win 100 points for his or her team, as well as unlimited glory, honour and status, and the silly games offer fame and fortune, and 150 more house points. There will also be opportunities to earn points through the day for completing various challenges. A full list can be found at the front desk. For these, bring the item in question, or a sufficiently close approximation, to the front desk to claim your points.

The team with the most points will be announced at the end of the day at the same time as the winners of the quiz. And as we all know, points mean prizes...

– Alex Trenchard, Picocon Sofa

Destruction of Dodgy Merchandise

Okay, you know the drill by now, but this, as they say, is for you new people. This is your chance to strike a blow, quite literally, against the ruthless evil of those people who think all they have to do is stick a "Lord of the Rings" sticker on it, and we'll buy anything¹. This...is the Destruction of Dodgy Merchandise Charity Auction! Each lot, a shameless moneymaking abomination, will be presented in turn, and bidding will begin. All the proceeds will go to charity, but most importantly of all the winner of each item will be given the choice of a lifetime - keep the travesty, or doom it to destruction!

We've destroyed everything from Jar-Jar Binks dolls, to Barney the Purple Dinosaur, and we've even Killed Bill...Shatner. Last year we raised a record sum for charity, putting other societies to shame. Take up a Sledgehammer, let the Liquid Nitrogen flow, and join us in our holy crusade!

¹ Yes, before one of you points it out, we recognise the fact that we DID in fact buy these things.

Lots up for Destruction

Lot#1: "The Ring-Bearers": We're starting off small this year, really small. You know, I always thought the best way to do "Invisible Frodo" would be an empty box. Now, with your help, and a little nitrogen, we can make this dream a reality.

Lot#2: "Wind-up Wolverine": Usually, that would be foolish notion, ending only in disappointment... and disembowelment. But now, in his miniature, bobble-headed incarnation, you can safely treat him to a well-deserved soak and smash.

Lot#3: "Artoo-Potatoo": I'll confess, I personally like this one, but even I can see when a gimmick deserves to die. Darth Tater? Yes. R2? That Nitrogen bath is going to feel far from good...

Lot#4: "Pirates of the Caribbean... talking pen": The talking monstrosity is a tradition of DoDM, and with a repertoire of misquotes from a voice-acting college dropout, this year's is no exception. Aye, I bet it's a rubbish pen too...

Lot#5: "Iceman": Even own its own, an Iceman figure would be tempting enough to

introduce to Mr. Liquid Nitrogen, but when it advertises the ability to change colour when frozen, how could we resist? More importantly...how can YOU resist?

Lot#6: "The Spot": This has got to be my favourite lot of this year. Imagine, if you will, that you are a scientist - nay, a "Respected Scientist!" Got that? Okay, now imagine that while working alone one night in the lab, you stumble upon the power to tear open inter-dimensional portals in the very fabric of the multiverse. I'm guessing you've managed that much, but now try to put yourself in the position where, having decided to use your

powers for awesome, you come to naming your supervillain alter-ego...and come up with "The Spot".

ICSF are dedicated to bringing you the best of the worst when it comes to supervillains. If you missed the opportunity to hammer DC's worst in "Combination Superman", then here's your chance to play hero against Spiderman's lamest foe. Even ignoring his terrible taste in names, the Spot's action figure is a shameless re-colouring of the Spiderman action figure... I could go on - make sure this travesty does not!

ICSF and Picocon: 1977-20??

I've been asked to write a short piece about ICSF and Picocon, with a brief that runs 'write about what we have been, what we are and where we are going'. This is obviously a little difficult for someone who has been here less than two years, but I'll give it a go:

In this auspicious year, The Imperial College Science Fiction, Fantasy and Gothic

Horror society celebrates its thirtieth birthday, and Picocon is about 24 years old (quite how old is not all that clear). When it was formed, all those years ago, the society kept its hundred or so books in a cupboard in a room at the top of the Union building, opened on Fridays so members could borrow books. There was also a strong tradition of showing SF films of, well, varying quality.

(The records for the year 1981-1982 list a film called 'The Wild Women of Wongo'. I rest my case).

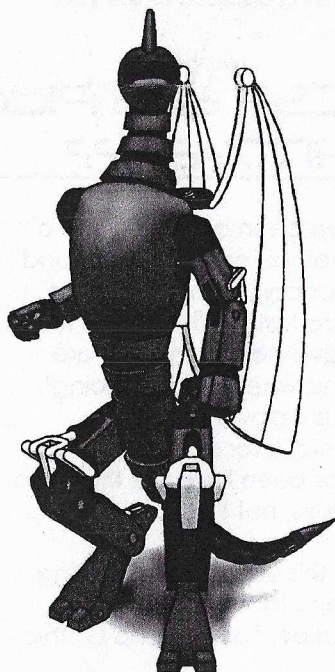
Now, the society is ensconced in its own room in the West Basement, where we are towered over by a collection of books, magazines, videos and DVDs that contains nearly 10,000 items (making it the third largest student run library in the world). The tradition of watching films on the big screen has passed with the years due to prohibitive cost, but the tradition of watching and reading total drek is, I'm glad to say, alive and well. We are also planning a second road trip to Hay-on-Wye and a team of elite technicians¹ are working day and night² on constructing our new Dalek mascot, Miranda.

As to the future, well, it's difficult to make predictions, but we are always expanding. My personal projects, as current Librarian, are to improve some of our less fleshed-out collections,

particularly the audio collection and our examples of Japanese manga and anime. But the Librarian and committee that comes after me will have their own plans and projects, so at least we'll never stagnate.

There is one thing that I'm fairly certain of: both ICSF and Picocon have a long future ahead of them.

– Peter Mabbott, ICSF Librarian



¹ Well, just John actually

² When he can find the time