

ORBITAL OBSERVER

2008 Eastercon News Zine

ISSUE 1 NOVEMBER 2006

CONVOY CANCELS

Brief Announcement on web site signals sad loss of 2007 Eastercon

On Tuesday 31st October the following announcement was posted on Convoy's web site <http://convoy.org.uk>.

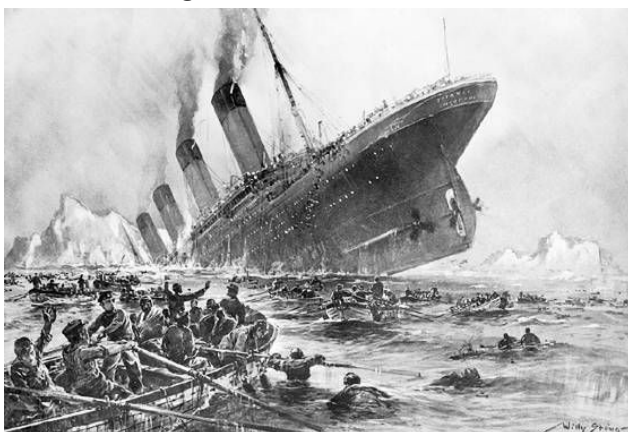
"The committee of the 2007 Eastercon regrets to announce that since Convoy cannot now be held at the Adelphi, this convention will not be taking place, and membership fees will be reimbursed by the beginning of December 2006 to those who had joined the convention."

The Convoy committee had bravely stepped in with a one year bid after none had been forthcoming at Paragon 2 at Hinckley in 2005. Their unopposed bid won, to the relief of those fans worried there might be no 2007 Eastercon, in the bidding session at Concusation in Glasgow.

Beds Needed Filling.

With only one year to run they faced an uphill task getting sufficient members, and particularly, getting enough rooms booked at the hotel so that they got the function space for free. With only six months since the bid they've had much less time than usual to publicise and sell the con.

The last membership list posted on their web site (which may not have been



Fans gasp in horror as Adelphi lounge sinks beneath waves

entirely up-to-date) listed 377 members, of which 283 were full attending members, and 56 still only pre-supporting, with the rest supporting, committee, guests, etc.

The Adelphi has hosted many Eastercons, but it is a polarising choice for some fans. While the Adelphi is certainly not the only Eastercon venue to have detractors, it has some vehement ones.

Concerns about security at the hotel were a big issue, and it appears that the hotel were not going to complete the security related changes they had promised in time. While this fact was not generally known, the existing concerns undoubtedly hit the numbers of room bookings Convoy

were receiving, making the finances, in the end, too risky to be viable.

What next?

Talk is already going on about possible replacement cons, all more-or-less along the lines of a smaller relaxation, which would simplify the hotel requirements and make many more venues viable. Since Eastercons are bounded by tradition rather than rules there are few constraints. Where to hold the bid session for '09 will need to be decided as some bids may not be able to wait until Orbital for a decision. This has already flushed out at least one bid for 2009, Concordia (<http://conbids.org/concordia/>) and there may be at least one other. ♣

INTRODUCING THE ORBITAL OBSERVER

This newsletter will run until the 2008 Eastercon, with a mix of Orbital news, SF news, fandom news and articles. At this stage there isn't an awful lot to report about the con itself, but memberships are coming in well, and we are already looking at programme ideas. In this issue Mark Plummer gives us a look into the past, and we can catch up with Pluto since his recent demotion.

I'm planning to put one of these out every 2-3 months until the con. Look out for the next issue early next year, available at fan meets, conventions, and online at the Orbital web site, <http://www.orbital2008.org/>

Progress Report One will also be out in November.

Eddie Cochrane

FANTASYCON GUESTS

The British Fantasy Society, organisers of FantasyCon, the annual British Fantasy Convention, have announced two Guests of Honour for 2007, authors Michael Marshall Smith and Stephen Jones. Master of Ceremonies will be publisher Peter Crowther. For more information about the British Fantasy Society (which enables you to vote for the 2007 British Fantasy Awards) and joining FantasyCon in Nottingham on September 21st-23rd 2007 see

<http://www.britishfantasysociety.org.uk>

FUTURE EVENTS

Orbital will have a presence at **Novacon**, 10-12 November 2006, Quality Hotel Bentley, see <http://www.novacon.org/>, **Redemption 07**, 23-25 February 2007, see <http://www.smof.com/redemption/> and **Picocon** in early February.

ORBITAL GUESTS: BUSY, BUSY, BUSY

At the British Fantasy Awards in October at FantasyCon 2006 Neil Gaiman won the Best Novel (The August Derleth Fantasy Award) for *Anansi Boys* (Headline). He can add it to the Mythopoeic Fantasy Award for Adult Literature which he won for

Anansi Boys in August, for which another of our guests, Tanith Lee was also nominated, for her novel *Metallic Love*. Neil accepted the BFS award at FantasyCon where he was a guest, and this was also part of his signing tour in the UK and USA for his short

story collection *Fragile Things*. Neil is currently on a campaign to get authors and other creative artists to get literary wills. Motivated by the recent death of writer and fan John M. Ford, he has had a template will created, all explained on his

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WHEN FAST MEANT FIRST CLASS POST

BY MARK PLUMMER

It's something of a conceit to run a column of fannish and science fictional news in a printed newsletter for a British Eastercon. What can I tell you here that you didn't read on the internet a mere 17.3 seconds after the reported incident took place? So I thought I'd try pointing you at some old news in a new form, which is also a reminder of—or, if you're young enough, an insight into—an era when fans learned what had been happening in their world from a periodic distribution of duplicated quarto paper and where fast meant first class post.

I suspect most Orbital members read Dave Langford's *Ansible* newsletter, and probably know that all of its 231 issues (as of October) are archived at <http://news.ansible.co.uk/>. But before there was *Ansible*—yes, I know, it seems as unimaginable as 'before there was James Bacon' but there really was such a time—there was Pete Roberts's *Checkpoint* (111 issues, 1968-1979) and before that there was Ron Bennett's *Skyrack* (96 issues, 1959-1971) and these are now both on-line at <http://checkpoint.ansible.co.uk> and <http://gostak.co.uk/skyrack> respectively. If you page through their archives, you might notice a few oddities—the strange absence of addresses prefaced with www for in-

stance—but there's plenty that'll be familiar because the concerns are so often the same.

There's lots of convention news, although there were fewer events to advertise and review. No *Year of the Teledu* (<http://www.yearoftheteledu.org/>), for instance, wikis not exactly being big in the 60s and 70s, but you'll find plenty about the precursors to Concussion and Orbital and Nippon (2007 Worldcon, <http://www.nippon2007.org>) while the 12th issue of *Checkpoint* proves its prescience by telling you that the first Novacon was an 'exceedingly fine innovation with a pretty good chance of continuing' (<http://www.novacon.org>).

The doings of the fan funds, notably TAFF, are also recorded in detail and that's a tradition that continues here in 2006 where nearly 200 European fans voted in the race that sent Bridget Bradshaw to the Worldcon in Los Angeles this summer. And by the time this sees print (or shortly afterwards) you should have a chance to participate in a vote to bring a North American candidate to Europe in 2007 (<http://taff.org.uk/>) and the one-off JETS scheme to send a European fan to Japan for the Worldcon (<http://astral.pole.org/display.php?id=12>).

Skyrack and *Checkpoint* are strangely silent on the subject of weblogs, but there are numerous fanzine reviews within their pages. Most of the titles—and some of the editors—are long gone now, but one survivor is the British Science Fiction Association (<http://www.bsfa.co.uk>) which still produces its journals *Vector*, *Matrix* and *Focus*, and which will be fifty years old at Orbital. And for a glimpse at the world of current fanzines you can check out the two-times Hugo-winning British fanzine *Plokta* at <http://www.plokta.com/plokta/> or, for a more general overview, try Eastercon regular Bill Burns's <http://www.efanzines.com/>.

And most of all you will, I hope, notice that many of the names remain familiar. Modern-day Eastercon goers will probably know or know of Ken Slater, Ina Shorrock, Peter Weston and indeed Orbital Fan Guest of Honour Rog Peyton, as well as sf writers such as Brian Aldiss, Harry Harrison and Michael Moorcock. Which is why I think you might want to have a look at those *Skyrack* and *Checkpoint* archives (and maybe page through some of the older *Ansibles* too): because, for all that the oldest issues tell of events from nearly fifty years ago, they're still all about us. 🐼

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blog at <http://www.neilgaiman.com/journal/2006/10/important-and-pass-it-on.html> with a sample will. Neil's illustrated novel *Stardust* is being re-issued in a new edition by DC in time for the release of the movie version next year, starring Sienna Miller, Michelle Pfeiffer and Robert De Niro.

Fans of China Miéville will want to get a copy of the November issue of *Locus* magazine, where he is on the cover with an interview inside. China Miéville's next book is *Un Lun Dun*, a novel for young adults which he's illustrating himself, which comes out in February from Del Rey in the US, and a couple of months after that in the UK from Macmillan. I look forward to the pictures of the river-dancing dustbins (see <http://www.randomhouse.com/delrey/unlun/dun/index.html>). A film script by writer Dan Kay based on China's short story *Details* has been bought by Paramount Vantage. The story can be found in China's collection *Looking For Jake*.

Charlie Stross is keeping to his usual leisurely pace. The hardback of *The Jennifer Morgue* came out a couple of weeks ago, *A Merchants Revolution*, a sequel to *The Clan Corporate* is due out in mid-2007, he's just finished the first draft of *Halt-ing State*, oh, and he's buying a new house. Buy him a drink at Novacon, he may need it. 🐼

Hey Pluto! Adventures of a former planet. Eddie Cochrane 2006

