

NOVACON 23

Progress Report One



NOVACON 23
Guest of Honour Stephen Baxter
Royal Angus Hotel, Birmingham
Friday 5th to Sunday 7th November 1993

COMMITTEE : Carol Morton is chair with Bernie Evans doing Registrations; Richard Standage as Treasurer; Carol Morton has taken on the Programme, with assistance from Tony Morton; Helena Bowles in charge of Ops and Tony Morton on Publications.

STAFF : Chris Murphy, responsible for the Bookroom; John Harold who will arrange the Artshow and Martin Tudor Hotel Liaison.

MEMBERSHIP and ENQUIRIES : This will cost £25 until 1st October when postal memberships close, then £30 on the door. Bernie Evans (121 Cape Hill, Smethwick, Warley, West Midlands, B66 4HS tel: 021 558 0997) is the person to send your cheques to and will try to answer any convention enquiries.

ROOM RATES : Twin/Double rooms will be £29.50 (per person) and Single rooms £33.50 per night.

ADVERTISING RATES : Advertising is welcome for the next Progress Report and the Programme Book at the following rates: Progress Report 3 (Professional) £22.50 full page, £17.50 half page, £7.50 quarter page £40 back covers; (Fan) £17 full page, £9.50 half page, £5 quarter page £30 back cover. Programme Book (Professional) £45 full page, £25 half page, £15 quarter page, £80 back cover; (Fan) £22.50 full page, £12.50 half page, £7.50 quarter page, £40 back cover. Anyone interested should approach Tony Morton at 14 Park Street, Lye, Stourbridge, West Midlands, DY9 8SS (0384 897206). Deadlines camera ready advertising copy is PR3 20 August and the Programme Book 17 September.

BOOKROOM RATES : Tables will cost £15 for a six foot table for the whole weekend however, if you are allocated a smaller four foot table the cost will be reduced accordingly. To book a table you must be a member of the convention and fill in and return your booking form (which is included with this PR).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS : Our thanks go to Stephen Baxter for the story and his bibliography, Dave Mooring for the cover art, Tony Berry for the Novas article and Sally-Ann Melia for the article on the Writer's Workshop.

IN PROGRESS REPORT THREE : The final instalment of Stephen's story, more from the committee, further details of the Programme.

MUMBLES FROM THE CHAIR.

I now know the words any convention chairman dreads hearing the most:

"Carol, I'm sorry but I've got to resign". Aaghh!

And when that person is your programming supremo the news is very bad. Andy Wright who had agreed to run the programme for me has had to resign due to an overload at work combined with the stress of a newborn baby in the house. Well congratulations Andy and Sharon on the birth of your son Aidan and Andy I'm sorry to have lost you off my Committee.

Well life and Novacon has to go on and as it is too late to draft anyone else in now and because I am a sucker for punishment and because I have a wonderful husband, Tony and I with of course the help of the rest of the Committee, will be overseeing the programme - are we mad or what?

When are they going to take me away and put me in that nice little padded cell? In the not too distant future if things go on the way they are. Talking of the Programme, we have decided to make the FORMAL programme items, panels, talks, auctions and the like, no-smoking, this does not include the panellists or indeed the tech crew - I think I'd have a mutiny on my hands if I asked them not to smoke. Incidentally this was Bernie's idea, so coming from a heavy smoker the notion has all the more impact, would you therefore please refrain from smoking if you are watching a programme item? Ta.

Well, after those bombshells I think I'll sign off, if you have any complaints, queries, comments or whatever, send them to Bernie and she'll pass them on to me. See you.

Carol

HOTEL FORMS AND OTHER SUCH STUFF

So, here is PR2, with its usual complement of dead trees. There's another All Purpose membership form, to use as you will. If you've changed your mind about what you put on the first one, convert supporting to attending, give your best friend one, etc and so forth.

The Really Important One, though, is the Hotel Booking Form.

Usual rules apply, basically first come first served, with the proviso that babies and other vulnerable souls don't get stuck in the overflow, and those who INSIST on a single might just HAVE to accept the overflow, availability being what it is. As before, I'm assuming you'll trust me to treat you fairly.

Those WANTING to share a twin MUST name their sharer, who MUST be a member.

Those WILLING to share a twin will be better served by giving as much information as possible, and as many choices as possible if naming names.

One point that seems to need clarification, if last year is anything to go by, is this:- If couples go in double rooms, this frees up twins. If singles go in twin rooms, this frees up singles. The more co-operative you all are, the more people I can get into the main hotel. So, YOUR SECOND CHOICES ARE VERY, VERY IMPORTANT - PLEASE FILL THEM IN, and PLEASE BE FLEXIBLE, think of your fellow fen.

OMEGATROPIC, Stephen Baxter (Continued)

The land, black and treeless, fell away beneath Angus' feet. The mountains were a saucer-rim around him; he felt as if he were suspended between a dome of bruised purple and the night-darkened sky. His body pressed flat against the muddy heather, his white Stuart cockade hidden beneath his plaid, he stared down over Culloden Moor.

The English had lit fires in their encampments beyond the Moor; the flames cast fragments of muddy light over the battlefield. The dead lay where they had fallen, and the cries of the wounded rose like smoke from all around the field. Royal troops stalked across the Moor, stilling the cries with bayonet trusts. Angus heard the troop' laughter. One man, a burly private, did a little jig for the benefit of his mates, splashing in blood pools.

Angus buried his face in the moist, cold heather. His father could be down there alive still, a toy for these barbaric English. He should go once more to the field, his broadsword raised in defiance, and -

"Well. Look what I've found. A fresh, ripe humblie, awaiting to be plucked."

Angus rolled onto his back. The Lobster stood over him, bayonet ready, powder-stained teeth glinting.

Angus reached for the basket-hilt of his broadsword.

"Angus. Stay where you are. Stay flat, you asshole!"

Tracy's whisper came from Angus' left. Both he and the Royal looked that way, startled.

A spot of red light, oddly speckled, appeared at the Lobster's throat. He gurgled, as if choking. Another spot shone over the centre of his coat. The Lobster stared down at Angus, looking surprised, and fell back into the heather.

Angus Ban staggered out of the heather, embarrassed.

"You did not need to do that," he hissed. "I would have-"

"Shut up," Tracy said reasonably. Her visor hid the square jaw, the cropped hair he remembered. She touched the fallen Lobster.

"You found your equipment," Angus said.

"It wasn't hard." She fingered the open mouth of the Lobster. She held her left hand out before his eyes, fingers spread.

Angus frowned. "What are you doing?"

She turned her hidden face towards him. "Robbing the dead of their souls. Seeking the Omega. It's why I'm here, Angus."

She jabbed a finger into each of the soldier's eyes. Dark fluid spurted over her silver gloves and ran down the soldier's cheeks. There was a purple flash, inside the soldier's skull; for an instant his head was transformed into a grotesque lantern.

There were shouts, rising like owls from the Moor. Tracy lifted her head. Soldiers were pointing at them; Angus heard the clink of muskets.

"We have been espied. What shall we do?"

"Run, damn it."

Tracy rose, her right arm dangling stiffly beside her, and folded into the darkness. Angus gathered up his grubby plaid and stumbled after her.

*

They found a cave. Tracy entered first, multidomain sensors livid before her face. The cave was about the size of a small car; it was cold, empty. She raised her visor. The cold air of the Highland night swept across her face and cheek; there was a musty, animal smell.

Angus sniffed loudly. "Cat. And a few earlier occupants, if I'm not in error." He kicked at darkened heaps of droppings. "But the stuff is stale. We'll not be disturbed; not by animals of the four-legged sort, anyway."

Tracy placed her visor in the ground, so that it formed a shallow bowl. "Get me some heather."

Angus hesitated. "We would be ill-advised to start a fire."

"Not a fire. Food. You'd like to eat, wouldn't you?"

He squatted at the cave's entrance, silhouetted against the blue-black sky. "But - heather?"

"Angus. Don't argue. Trust me."

He shuffled out of the cave.

He returned with a bale of moist heather, bundled into a fold of his plaid. Tracy fed crumbled fragments of the heather into the upturned visor. The device secreted its bioengineered enzymes, and soon a brownish liquid was pooling in the upturned faceplate.

Angus set up a length of stick at the back of the cave and lit it with a flint; it burnt, giving a smoky yellow light. "A little magic of my own: a resin-heavy fir twig for a candle."

She held up the visor. "Here. Drink."

He pushed away fragments of heather and stared into the liquid doubtfully. Then he raised the visor like a huge cup and took a healthy draught. "Good Lord," he said. "It tastes of chicken!"

Tracy took the visor and drank.

"The soldiers of your century are exceedingly well-equipped, Tracy Fernandez." "Yeah. Soldiers are expensive items in the twenty-first century, Angus. I'm thirty-eight years old; I was thirty-two - with fourteen years of training already behind me - before I was sent on active duty. So soldiers are an investment

worth protecting.”

“Friendly soldiers, at least, eh?” Angus leaned against the wall, spreading his kilt over his lap. His eyes were bright in the flame’s light. “Perhaps you have circled the globe, in the course of your service. Perhaps there are wars on the Moon or on the Sun, in the twenty-first century.”

She laughed. “Nothing so glamorous. I’ve done tours in the Sahel - in Liverpool and Marseilles and Bruges - in Edinburgh -”

“Wars in Liverpool and Edinburgh?”

“If you want to call them that, yes.”

“But with such equipment, such weapons as yours, surely any conflict could be settled in a snap.”

Tracy thought of days in the streets of Liverpool and Los Angeles... Standing in full body armour, with enough firepower to raze half a city... and yet helpless to act in the face of men who, driven by ethnic and religious tensions older than Culloden, hurled ripped-up paving slabs at her, and would have clubbed each other to death with their bare hands if she allowed them. “I’m afraid it’s not so simple, Angus. Guns don’t always help.”

Maybe not ever.

Anyway, humans didn’t need high military technology for the full expression of their brutality. She let her datastore whisper random fragments of post-Culloden history. *Some captive rebels were taken to London and - in public - hanged, and cut down alive; their bowels were hauled out and burned before their eyes, before final decapitation ...*

Angus said casually, “Still, with your remarkable light-gun, you could expel the soldiers of the German King of England from the Highlands in a trice - now, and forever more.” He seemed to be trying to inspire her with his vision. “Charles Stuart would tear up the Act of Union in the streets of Edinburgh, and -”

In the winter of 1746 the Highlanders starved. Families took to following the English soldiers on their missions of destruction, begging scraps of cattle gut and green hide, which they boiled for food. They were shot by the soldiers, for diversion and for wagers -

“That’s not why I’m here, Angus.” For a moment their eyes met, and she saw calculation in his face. “Believe me,” she said evenly, “I won’t let you come even close to my equipment again. I’ll kill you without hesitation, Angus Ban.”

The tension stretched between them; the resin candle hissed.

Angus seemed to relax; something of the tautness went out of the set of his bare limbs. “Then - if you are not here to fight - Madame Soldier, why have you graced us with your presence?”

“This is a special assignment. Scientific. They send soldiers, not to fight, but because we’re the best equipped to survive, in hostile and unpredictable circumstances.”

“And you are seeking numbers: magical, sacred -”

“Yes. Numbers from beyond the walls of this universe...”

Concluded in PR3.....

PROGRAMME NOTES

(Just a few words from Andy before I start to waffle on - Carol)

As has probably been mentioned elsewhere, unfortunately I've had to resign my post on the Committee 'to spend time with the family!' (an extreme underestimation of the work involved with a newborn child was the major cause). Finally I'd like to thank the Committee for their support (and for not slowly torturing me to death for dropping out at this late stage). Give them all your support, they are looking out for your interests.

Thanks Andy, now back to the programme in question:

We have had some response to the plea put out in PR1 for ideas for inclusion in the programme, these range from why are vegetarians cruel to animals? - we're going to try to include that one, to more rave/rap music at the disco - we are definitely NOT going to put that in. Your requests have been taken on board and considered, but we would like still more ideas from you. So if you want your input included the time to offer it is NOW, the Committee can only organise a programme based on what we think you want, if you don't tell us then the less likely we are to put on that Klingon cookery demonstration you've always wanted to see (that last little bit was from Andy - not me! Hmmm... it's a good idea though, does anyone have any Klingons we can cook?)

Now to what we are going to include in the programme - the usual auctions, once again any donations for the book auction will be gratefully received. Our Saturday and Sunday early morning slots will see Ian Stewart back by popular demand and Jack Cohen without whom Novacon would just not be the same. We are thinking of having a live band instead of a disco on Saturday night, this will be preceded by a type of Crystal Maze, hosted by Steve Green. There will be a panel on why there are so few representatives from the ethnic minorities in fandom, the panel will include Chris Baker, Bernie Evans and Graham Joyce, at this point I must stress we the Committee will not I hope, be accused of tokenism, this panel was in the most part Chris' idea and his response to this possible accusation was, well, ... you know Chris. As we are trying to give the majority of the programme a 'hard' science theme, we plan a panel on SETI, another on the lack of Brits writing about Mars - well it does seem to be flavour of the month elsewhere in the world, a panel on astronomy, a spoof tomorrows world, an item on futuristic medicine and just to get back to that thing closest to a fan's heart we are hoping to have a beer tasting, I say hoping as this needs to be cleared with the hotel. Just in case you think I've forgotten our Guest of Honour he will give his speech of course and we intend to ask him to take part in one or two other items, but I'm going to ask him first before I tell you.

Finally - and because I think you have had enough of my waffle, we come to the item that I am personally most chuffed at including, I have persuaded Bob Shaw to give us one of his Serious Science talks. It has been a long time since Bob gave a new talk and this one may be illustrated if my memory serves me correct. Bob has even given us a title "The First Irish Space Probe"!

Now this coupled with the rest of the splendiforous programme, real ale (maybe) and pleasant company surely deserves your attention. Tell your friends, tell the world and I'll see you in November.

Carol

Stephen Baxter - Bibliography

NOVELS

- RAFT, Harper Collins 1991 (UK); Penguin ROC 1992(USA);Harper Collins (Australia). To appear: German, Japanese editions.
TIMELIKE INFINITY, Harper Collins 1992 (UK); Penguin ROC 1993 (USA). To appear: German edition.
ANTI-ICE, Harper Collins 1993 (UK).
FLUX, Harper Collins 1993 (UK).
RING, Harper Collins 1993 (UK) (Projected).
THE TIME SHIPS, Harper Collins 1995 (UK) (Projected).

SHORT FICTION

All material is shown in order of first publication.

Xeelee Sequence

- The Xeelee Flower, INTERZONE 19, 1987.
The Bark Spaceship, DREAM 14, 1987.
More than Time or Distance, OPUS 4, 1988.
The Eighth Room, DREAM 20, 1989.
Blue Shift, WRITERS OF THE FUTURE Vol V, Ed Algis Budrys, Bridge 1989.
Raft, INTERZONE 31, 1989.
The Quagma Datum, INTERZONE 4th ANTHOLOGY, Ed John Clute et al, Simon & Schuster 1989.
The Switch, EDGE 2, 1990.
The Tyranny of Heaven, DREAM 24, 1990.
Vacuum Diagrams, INTERZONE 35,1990.
The Baryonic Lords, INTERZONE 49-50, 1991.
The Godel Sunflowers, INTERZONE 55, 1992.
Planck Zero, AZIMOV'S, Jan 1992.
The Sun-Person, INTERZONE 69, 1993.
Chiron, NOVACON 23,1993.

Unrelated

- On the Side of a Hill, JENNINGS 6, 1987 (SF contest prize winner).
The Space Butterflies, BACK BRAIN RECLUSE 13, 1987.
Something for Nothing, INTERZONE 23, 1988.
The Habitat, DREAMS 17, 1988.
The Jonah Man, INTERZONE 28, 1989.
The Droplet, OTHER EDENS III, Ed Christopher Evans and Rob Holdstock, Unwin Hyman 1989.
Journey to the King Planet, ZENITH 2 Ed David s Garnett, Sphere, 1990.
The Entopic Man (drabble), LYRE 1, 1991.
Traces, INTERZONE 45, 1991.
Before Sebastopol, NEW MOON 1,1991.
George and the Comet, INTERZONE 52, 1991.
Weep for the Moon, IN DREAMS, Ed Paul McAuley and Kim Newman, Gollancz 1992.
Orchards of the Moon, INTERZONE 60, 1992.

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Whose idea was it to plan the Writer's Workshop for 9am on Saturday? then 10am on Sunday?

Actually... erm yes, it was me.

I had this wonderful idea about not missing any vital programme items and it was a brilliant idea in theory. In practise, after first night of the convention madness, implementation was somewhat different. It was a steep learning curve to stumble and stagger to breakfast at 8:30. I was hanging on hard to the sides of the lift at 8:55, as I surged upwards to the board room, where six equally shaky but admirably eager writers awaited me.

Despite such an inauspicious start, the Writer's Workshop at Novacon 22 was a success. The Royal Angus Hotel which did the BRUM group proud with its hospitality and warm welcome, was also generous to us apprentice scribblers. We came together blinking in delight in the red velvet and dark board room. Room service was on hand to provide tea and coffee, a gorgeous Italian porter did our photocopying, carried messages and most things required by the creative process.

Such success bears repetition, so Novacon 23 proudly presents its second Writer's Workshop. The Writer's Workshop will meet on Saturday morning at ten o'clock in the 6th floor Board Room, this opening session is Instant Writing. *All writers must bring one or several newspaper clippings or photographs to this first meeting.*

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Sally-Ann Melia.

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Weep for the Moon, IN DREAMS, Ed Paul McAuley and Kim Newman, Gollancz 1992.
Orchards of the Moon, INTERZONE 60, 1992.

In the Manner of Trees, INTERZONE 62,1992.
Inherit the Earth, NEW WORLDS 2 Ed D Garnett, Gollancz 1992.
No Longer Touch the Earth, INTERZONE 72, 1993.
Paradox (drabble), DRABBLES vol 3, 1993.
Pilgrim 7, INTERZONE 67, 1993.
Downstream, INTERZONE 75, 1993.
Omegatropic, NOVACON 23, 1993.

Shared-World

The Star Boat, IGNORANT ARMIES (Warhammer), Ed David Pringle, Games Workshop 1989.
The Song, RED THIRST (Warhammer), Ed David Pringle, Games Workshop 1990.
The Strongest Armour, VILLAINS! (Midnight Rose), Ed Mary Gentle and Roz Kaveny,Penguin ROC 1992.
Imaginary Time, WEERDE 2 (Midnight Rose), Ed Mary Gentle and Roz Kaveny, Penguin ROC 1993.

NON FICTION

'Angular Distribution Analysis in Acoustics', Springer-Verlag 1986.
'Science vs Fiction', CRITICAL WAVE 1990.
'George Zebrowski', BSFA VECTOR 169, 1992.

NOVA AWARD PIECE.

So, here we are with Part 2 of the list of fanzines which are eligible for a Nova Award this year. Since PR 1 they have been pouring through my letterbox like the Mississippi river. OK, that's a lie, but numbers are still encouraging.

ALYSON WONDERLAND, Skel, 25 Bowland Close, Offerton, Stockport, Cheshire, SK2 5NW. ANSIBLE #70, #71, Dave Langford, 94 London Rd., Reading, Berks., RG1 5AU. BOB? #5, Ian Sorensen, 7 Woodside Walk, Hamilton, Scotland, ML3 7HY. DRIVEL & DROOL #1, Mike D. Siddall, 133 Duke St., Askam-in-Furness, Cumbria, LA16 7AE. ERG #121, Terry Jeeves, 56 Red Scar Drive, Scarborough, N. Yorkshire, YO12 5RQ (This zine is eligible these days because it is available for trade or LoC, 'cos I asked him). HORRORSHOW #2, Eddie Tr enchcoat, 163 Bromyard Rd., Sparkhill, Birmingham, B11 3AY. LAGOON #4, Simon Ounsley, 25 Park Villa Court, Leeds, LS8 1EB. THE OLAF ALTERNATIVE #5/ OUT-HOUSE #9, Ken Cheslin, 10 Coney Green, Stourbridge, W. Midlands, DY8 1LA. READING MATTERS, Tibbs, 1/L 30 Falkland St., Glasgow, G12 9QY. THINGUMYBOB #7, #8, Chuck Connor, Sildan House, Chediston Rd., Wissett, Suffolk, IP19 ONF. VILE ANCHORS #10, Simon Polley, 38 Bankfield Terrace, Leeds, LS4 2RE.

There we are then. If I've missed yours out, feel free to send me a copy at 55 Seymour Rd., Oldbury, West Midlands, B69 4EP.

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Sally-Ann Melia.

UPDATE OF MEMBERSHIP LISTING AS AT 17 JULY 1993

118	Mick Evans	133	Mike Gould
119	Iain Banks	134	Jonathan Wylie (1)
120	B A Blackburn	135	Jonathan Wylie (2)
121	Ian Stewart	136	John Edmund Rupik
122	Jack Cohen	137	Dai Walters
123	Jean Maudsley	138	Roger Hall
124	Alison Scott	139	Nosferatu
125	Mike Scott	140	Renegade
126	Vinc Clarke	141	Paul Allwood
127	Colin Langeveld	142	Eve Harvey
128	Catherine McAuley	143	John Harvey
129	Greg Pickersgill	144	Helen McNabb
130	Jim Barker	145	Brian Noyes
131	Bob Shaw (real)	146	Bob Shaw (fake)
132	Helen Gould		

STOP PRESS

Are you travelling up to the convention from Kent? Would you be willing to give car space to some fanzines? If so could you contact Bernie and she'll give you more details. Thanks.

Just a small reminder about Vernon Brown's
**GENERAL CERTIFICATE OF SCIENCE FICTION
EDUCATION**

The closing time for your entries is Saturday evening at 6 pm. Vernon also asks me to remind you not to forget your pencil !!

INTERESTED IN...

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