

Wooden shoes and Cotton t-shirts

Some fans really believe that Holland is the place for the 1990 worldcon. They had so much faith in us that they gave us money before we had anything save our name to give back.

Don't Panic ... Get Your Button!

That's now changed. Annemarie has already mentioned in an earlier article that we have goodies like buttons with our brave mouse sailing in front of our slogan 'Don't panic - Holland in 1990!' on a field of red, white and blue. Or little wooden shoes to hang beneath the button. Or even t-shirts, for which we do have to ask for money, pity.

We'll be giving out the buttons and wooden shoes to presupporting members of Holland in 1990 at the conventions where the Dutch committee members themselves can be present, either at parties or at booths set up near the registration desk. Be sure to look for us if you don't have your button or your wooden shoes yet.

We'll meet you at...

We know a fact that at least one committee member will be attending the following conven-

tions: Confederation, in Atlanta, Georgia, USA, 28 August - September 1986; Perry Rhodan Weltcon, Saarbrücken, Germany, 6-7 September 1986; Boskone, in Boston, Massachusetts, USA, 13-15 February 1987; and of course Conspiracy '87, Brighton, England, 27 August - 1 September 1987. Currently on our 'possible' list is - Coloniacon, Cologne, Germany, 14-15 June 1986; Ballcon, Zagreb, Yugoslavia, 10-13 July 1986; Science Fiction Club Deutschland Jahrescon 1986, Saarbrücken, Germany, 25-27 July 1986. Still others can be added, and there are always the conventions covered by our agents, where you can convince a friend to take a supporting membership.

T-shirts coming up...

T-shirts are available in various sizes. They can be picked up at conventions where you can get your buttons and wooden shoes, or you can order them directly from us for \$10.00 US, £6.00, or f25.00, return postage included. The t-shirts are 100% cotton, so no matter how hot it gets, you'll be comfortable declaring your support for Holland in 1990.

High Tide

Stichting Worldcon 1990
Postbus 95370 - 2509 CJ
Den Haag - Nederland

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED
RETURN POSTAGE GUARANTEED

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Greetings from Holland in 1990 to:

NOVACON 28

Progress Report 1



NOVACON 28

Date: 13-15 November 1998.

Venue: The Britannia Hotel, New Street, Birmingham.

Guest of Honour: Paul J McAuley.

Membership & Enquiries: Attending membership costs £28.00 until 14th April 1998 when it rises to £32.00. Postal registrations should be received by 1st November, after this time please join on the door - where the price of admittance will be £35.00. Supporting membership costs £15.00 throughout. Cheques/Postal Orders should be made payable to "Novacon 28" and sent with your completed form(s) to: Carol Morton, 14 Park Street, Lye, Stourbridge, West Midlands, DY9 8SS.

Room Rates: £35.00 per person per night for people sharing twin/double rooms, £30.00 pppn for those sharing a triple room and £40.00 pppn for single rooms (inclusive of full English breakfast). NB: Hotel booking forms, and deposits of £20.00 per person, must be received by Carol Morton no later than 30th September 1998. Cheques for room deposits should be made payable to "The Britannia Hotel". Enquires regarding hotel bookings should be sent to Carol at the address above or you can call her on 01384 825386 (before 9pm).

Advertising Rates: Advertising is welcome for both the next three Progress Reports and for the Programme Book. The rates are as follows (fan rates in brackets):
Progress Reports - Professional £25.00 (£13.00) full page, £14.50 (£8.00) half page, £8.50 (£5.00) quarter page.

Programme Book - Professional £60.00 (£31.00) full page, £32.00 (£15.50) half page, £18.00 (£9.50) quarter page.

Anyone interested in advertising should contact Martin Tudor at 24 Ravensbourne Grove, (off Clarkes Lane,) Willenhall, West Midlands, WV13 1HX (e-mail martin@empties.demon.co.uk). Deadlines for camera-ready advertising copy are detailed below.

Deadlines: Progress Report #2: 2nd May 1998, to be mailed late May 1998.

Progress Report #3: 18th July 1998, to be mailed early August 1998.

Progress Report #4: 12th September 1998, to be mailed mid October 1998.

Programme Book: 26th September 1998, distributed at Novacon 28.

Book Room Rates: Tables will cost £15.00 each for the whole weekend. To book a table (or tables) you must be a member of the convention and complete and return the booking form enclosed with this Progress Report.

Committee: Martin Tudor (Chair & Publications), 24 Ravensbourne Grove, (off Clarkes Lane,) Willenhall, West Midlands, WV13 1HX (e-mail martin@empties.demon.co.uk); Steve Lawson, 379 Myrtle Road, Sheffield, S2 3HQ (tel: 0114 281 1572, e-mail dream@net.comuk.co.uk); Carol Morton (Hotel Liaison) and Tony Morton (Treasurer), 14 Park Street, Lye, Stourbridge, West Midlands, DY9 8SS; (tel: 01384-825386 - before 9pm); Pat McMurray (Programme), 28 Plaistow Grove, Bromley, Kent, BR1 3PB e-mail pat@cooky.demon.co.uk; Chris Murphy (Operations), 126 McKean Road, Oldbury, B69 4BA, (e-mail CSHM@compuserve.com).

Acknowledgements: Tony Berry, Helena Bowles, Pat McMurray, Carol Morton and Chris Murphy for their articles and Dave Mooring for his splendid cover. All uncredited contributions have been written by Martin Tudor. This Progress Report was printed on the CRITICAL WAVE photocopier, contact Martin Tudor at the above address for details of WAVE's competitive prices.

Chairman's Bit by Martin Tudor

On the 28th November 1997 the Abbey Hotel, our first choice hotel and the venue we had provisionally booked, told us that they would be unavailable throughout November 1998 due to major refurbishment. We started to seriously search for another hotel (prior to this, as the Abbey had been hedging a bit before accepting our booking, I'd made a few general enquiries). Since November 1997 we've approached 17 hotels.

Initially, until February 1998, only two hotels confirmed they were available on the 13-15 November 1998: The first to reply was the Albany (Forte Posthouse) in Birmingham, which is the venue for Fantasycon this year - they asked £11,000 for function space (- the most Novacon has ever paid is £2,100 and we're used to paying £600-£900). Eventually they dropped their price from £11,000 to £5,000 - still too expensive.

The second hotel to confirm it was available was the Regency Hotel, a one-time Gentleman's Club on the Stratford Road on the outskirts of Edgbaston, housed in a modernised regency style building. An AA 4 star, RAC 3 star, English Tourist Board 4 crowns, hotel with a bedroom rate that, usually, is no less than £90 per person per night - this was probably going to be beyond our budget as well. As it happens it was nice but the function space was totally unsuitable - the bar would not work, with live music and 200+ outside patrons every night Thursday through to Sunday night!

Of the other hotels considered:

- The Chamberlain, Birmingham wanted £6,600 for less than two-thirds of their function space (we used pretty much all of it for £2,100 at Novacon 25) and refused to negotiate.
- The Burlington, New Street, Birmingham - dropped their price from £10,600 to £4,000, still too expensive.
- The Holiday Inn, Leicester failed to include their tariff sheet, wanted £50.00 pppn for singles, and although doubles were £34.50 and twins £30.00 pppn, they wanted to discuss whether these rates would include breakfast. These extra conditions, combined with various other rules and regulations regarding bar opening times which were very off putting and this, combined with the less than ideal function space, made it an unacceptable option.
- The Abbey Hotel, there was no weekend in October or November where both the function space and the hotel bedrooms we needed were available.

- Incredibly only one of the Hotels who asked for alternative dates was actually available on an alternative date! (That being the Britannia in Coventry - which we eliminated because in its previous incarnation, as the DeVere, it had been one of Novacon's most unpopular venues and because we arranged the deal with the Britannia in Birmingham the same week!)

The only other serious contender for a Novacon 28 hotel, in the end, was the Grand Moat House Hotel, Colmore Row, Birmingham. They made an offer of £1,800 for the required function space £40.00 pppn in singles, £32.50 pppn in doubles/twins. However, after viewing the hotel on Friday 13th February, Carol and Tony Morton and I agreed the Britannia would be better. On the practical side - access to the Britannia is easier (it has a dedicated loading bay outside its entrance on New Street, whereas to gain access to the Grand you have to park on Church Street - if you can find an empty pay & display space, there were none at 6pm on Friday when we were there and I doubt if there are ever any except on Sundays!). The other "practical" factor was that we will be "taking over" the whole of the Britannia, where the Grand will still have bedrooms and function space being used by other parties - this usually leads to difficulties. But the main reason was the fact that the Britannia really WANTS our business, the Grand was only going through the motions, they didn't send a floor plan as requested, only a sales person was available to show us around (rather than managerial) etc.

But, of course, the final, deciding selling point was personal: the General Manager of the Britannia is David Welch, manager of the Excelsior for Novacon 19 (which I also Chaired), who was instrumental as a referee for Novacon 25 (helping us get £7,000 knocked off the price the Chamberlain were trying to charge). He has already started working on his bosses to close the Britannia to all other business for the Novacon 28 weekend, and has confirmed he can get real ale for us....

Finally, at the end of March 1998, after we had confirmed with the Britannia Hotel we received a phone call from the Abbey Hotel - their refurbishment has been postponed, they are now available are we still interested? "No" we replied, "we have a deal with another hotel".

I'm happy, but then I'm easily pleased - however, Carol Morton, who is Chairing Novacon 29 is not so easily satisfied. She is still holding open the option of the Abbey, as well as the Britannia - so let her know what you think as soon as possible!

Hotel Bookings by Carol Morton

Mr Tudor has relinquished his role as Hotel Liaison for Novacon and "passed the baton", so to speak, on to me. He thinks that registrations and Hotel Liaison at a Novacon would be too much for any one person to handle.

He has a point.

Registrations for Novacon in the past few years has not been the easiest job in the world, what with the constant change of site and the problems of sorting out hotel bookings, it has put more than a few grey hairs in my head, but don't get me wrong I have, in the main, enjoyed the job - well there must be a bit of a masochist in all of us.

So this year Steve Lawson is looking after Registrations, but you still need to send your forms, money and whatever to me at the "usual address", Steve will then be given the onerous task of sending out all the necessary information to you.

To this year's con. As you will have read from Martin's piece we have a hotel for Novacon this year back in Birmingham, part of a chain that knows conventions, with a Manager that has already experienced Novacons, and a hotel that made us so welcome on our first visit that we wondered if we were all dreaming.

The hotel's room rates are £40.00 per person per night in a single room, £35.00 per person per night in a twin or double and £30 per person per night in a triple all inclusive of full English breakfast. The enclosed hotel booking form explains all this. We also require from you a £20 per person deposit for your rooms. So please enclose a cheque made payable to "The Britannia Hotel". The balance of your room costs will have to be paid on arrival at the hotel, for those of you who have been to the Adelphi in Liverpool for an Eastercon this will not come as much of a surprise as it is standard policy at Britannia Hotels.

If you are not yet a member of Novacon 28 you will find a membership form in this PR1 package, please fill it in and send it to me with the appropriate remuneration.

Well, we are coming home this Novacon and I hope to see you all again soon, please send in those forms and maybe I won't have to nag you quite so much as in previous years.

SECRET HARMONIES reviewed by Martin Tudor

Paul J McAuley's first novel, *FOUR HUNDRED BILLION STARS*, won the prestigious Philip K Dick Memorial Award - this is a hard act to follow. But with his second novel, *SECRET HARMONIES*, McAuley pulled it off.

Along with *FOUR HUNDRED BILLION STARS* and *ETERNAL LIGHT*, *SECRET HARMONIES* is set in McAuley's "Golden Universe" - a beautifully developed setting, with at least as much potential as the universe of "The Culture" by Iain Banks. However, unlike his first and third novels, *SECRET HARMONIES*, concentrates on just one planet, Elysium.

SECRET HARMONIES is set a long time before the other two "Golden Universe" books - in the early days of the colonisation of space. The planet Elysium is, in many ways, an unspoilt paradise - because the first colonists who are based in the planet's only city, Port of Plenty, govern the later colonists with an iron hand. The city dwellers (the first colonists), having kept all the new technology brought by later ships to themselves, are able to control "the settlers" (the later colonists). They refuse to allow the settlers to spread out across the planet - where they would be beyond the control of Port of Plenty. Although the settlers are on the verge of revolution they are reluctant to move against the city while Port of Plenty is their only contact with Earth, "the Wombworld". Instead they complain about the restrictive laws and campaign for separate government.

All this changes, however, when the regular colony boat fails to arrive and rumours are rife that the Wombworld has abandoned Elysium. In the midst of the panic which ensues the revolution begins.

Although the human characters are not as well developed or as believable as those in his first novel, McAuley more than makes up for this with an abundance of mind-boggling ideas and the creation of the wonderful, totally alien, "aboriginals". These factors combined with the novel's breakneck pace sweeps the reader across the galaxy to Tau Ceti into the minds of the colonists on the planet Elysium.

This is a tightly plotted, well-written novel. McAuley's depiction of the Aborigines, the native inhabitants of Elysium, is fascinating and he resists the temptation to supply pat explanations of their obviously alien nature and behaviour. However, despite this *SECRET HARMONIES* is the weakest of the three "Golden Universe" novels, the human characters fail to engage and the

scope of the novel is not as grand. Still, below par McAuley is still far superior to most genre writing and well worth reading.

ETERNAL LIGHT reviewed by Chris Murphy

ETERNAL LIGHT is the story of two women, Dorothy Yoshida and Suzy Falcon. Dorothy is a "talent" with psi powers, Suzy a pilot. They live in a future universe where Earth has colonised the worlds of the Solar System and some more distant ones. A great war has been fought against the Alea, the only other intelligent species encountered by humans.

Most societies are controlled by the authoritarian ReUnited Nations. Their economies are dominated by the "Golden", a class of wealthy entrepreneurs who have achieved near-immortality through advanced medical techniques. A cartel of these decadent tycoons draws Dorothy and Suzy into a secret project. They plan to investigate a star with a single planet which is apparently on a course to intercept the Sun. The ReUnited Nations' space navy is also interested in this star, as are the Witnesses, a religious cult who regard aliens as gods.

From this beginning unfolds a tale which encompasses vast swathes of space and time, without ever losing its focus on its leading figures. Suzy, confident and inclined to action, contrasts with the initially resigned and haunted Dorothy. Other prominent characters are Robot, a bizarre performance artist who is mostly human in spite of his name, and an embittered "Golden" called Talbeck. A large cast of minor players is moved deftly in and out of the plot. These include one of the Alea, who appears as a secondary personality in Dorothy's head, and the megalomaniac leaders of the Witnesses.

What most of these people have in common is that they are looking for something. Dorothy wants answers to the mysteries of her own mind, Suzy wants a purpose, Robot is looking for perfect self-expression and Talbeck seeks revenge for the killing of his father. Even the secondary characters have clearly defined motives. Perhaps this book should be considered as a quest story, but the quest is not straightforward or fully resolved. Much turns out to depend on the "angels", beings who can only communicate with humans through a kind of virtual reality. They provide an almost mystical element in what is otherwise a very physical reality.

In fact a lot of physics is discussed in this book. Although some of the trappings of space opera are present, much of it is very "hard" SF indeed. Where explanations are offered, they feel convincing. There is little of the STAR TREK-style response to "How does it work?" ("Very well, thank you"). On the other hand this is not like some of Michael Crichton's novels, where the plot keeps pulling over to let juggernauts of fact go lumbering past. If the characters start talking about astronomy, you can expect the conversation to end in something more exciting than a chapter break.

ETERNAL LIGHT reminded me of both the Iain Banks "Culture" stories and Greg Bear's EON series. The author shares with these writers a gift for breadth and thrust of narrative, and a concern for the preservation of individual identity. The use of female protagonists plays up the latter theme, since they often have to contend with men who want to exploit or abuse them.

I did wonder at one point if references to THE WIZARD OF OZ were being dropped. "Dorothy" is only one letter away from "Dorothy", the home dimension of the angels looks rather like the Emerald City (complete with a yellow approach road) and Robot combines some characteristics of the Tin Man and the Scarecrow.

The plot concludes with a number of loose ends, links to other works in the series which began with FOUR HUNDRED BILLION STARS. Dorothy still has unanswered questions, and Suzy is missing after attacking an Alea stronghold. Long may the story continue....

THE KING OF THE HILL reviewed by Martin Tudor

If having read McAuley's first three novels you find yourself yearning to learn more about their interstellar setting in his "Golden Universe", treat yourself to THE KING OF THE HILL the first collection of McAuley's short fiction.

Although this short story collection contains some works which are not set in the "Golden Universe", several are. So "The Heirs of the Earth" reveals more about the fanatic Witnesses, who have inherited the spent power of Earth. We are introduced to one of the key characters from ETERNAL LIGHT, Talbeck, Duke Barjstilkon V, a renegade director of the Fountain of Youth Combine and one of the "Golden". Best of all we learn even more about the incredibly rich, virtually immortal "Golden" in "The Airs of the Earth". KING OF THE HILL is an

impressive and varied collection, which gave us our first inkling of the range, variety and power of McAuley's future work.

(Paul J McAuley's more recent works will be reviewed in the next three Progress Reports.)

The Programme History - Past, Future and Alternate by Pat McMurray

SF conventions of the past had a very simple structure - a single stream with lunch and dinner intervals, tea and coffee breaks. This civilised pattern allowed and encouraged the engagement of the entire membership with the convention. Of course, Novacons have drifted away from this type of involvement, but it's still possible to glimpse an alternate Novacon with a structured pattern. We're considering giving Novacon 28 this pattern of involvement in the hope that the course of future Novacons will be improved.

If we do this the programme will run from after dinner to late on Friday, all day Saturday and until before dinner on Sunday. Time will be left free for lunches on Saturday and Sunday and for dinner in the evening on Saturday. There will be tea breaks in the mornings and coffee breaks in the afternoons. We would appreciate your thoughts on the matter, the contact address is below.

The programme will include the opening and closing ceremony, the Guest of Honour speech, book and art auctions, quizzes, panels, and the like. There will be silliness and fun in the evening, serious and interesting stuff during the day.

Some programme ideas we're kicking about include:

The Drunken Lackwits Show - This really doesn't need much explanation, but note that gender isn't specified.

Alt.history.medieval - A look at some alternate alternate histories - World War Two and the US Civil War shall not be mentioned.

Next Bloody British Bloody Worldcon - A Folkestone fan explains how something that brings fun and involvement to thousands of fans is a bad idea.

Next British Worldcon - KIM Campbell discusses the conference facilities of Folkestone.

FanFare - Favourite foods and restaurants in Birmingham, just before Saturday Dinner.

What the hell is wrong with Eastercons? - A good title, now all we have to do is think of an idea.

The Corflu papers - Organisers, attendees and survivors of Corflu UK discuss The Experience.

Big Dumb Objets d'art - Riverworlds, ringworlds and the end of the Universe. Just because we've been daft enough to think of these ideas, doesn't mean we're going to go through with any of them. We really want your involvement, we want your ideas, we want you to volunteer to be on programme.

The best way to provide a better, tighter, more enjoyable programme is for you, the member, to get involved with your ideas at an early stage. Please feel free to contact our programme organiser, Pat McMurray at pat@cooky.demon.co.uk or 28, Plaistow Grove, Bromley, KENT BR1 3PB. If you see him in a pub, you're welcome to discuss this, but no guarantees of consistent memory are provided.

NOT the Creche: A Baby Sitting and Child Minding Service by Helena Bowles

Richard Standage, registered nurse working at the highly prestigious Birmingham Children's Hospital, and Helena Bowles, registered nurse at the totally non-prestigious Birmingham Heartlands hospital, will both be attending Novacon with their four-year-old son and one-year-old daughter.

Whilst recent government legislation decrees that they cannot provide a creche, both are willing to provide baby sitting/child minding on a privately arranged basis. This requires parents to contact them in advance on 0121-558-7591 (or in writing to 116 Shireland Road, Smethwick, Warley, West Midlands, B66 4QJ). They will be caring for their own, and any other children with whose parents a private arrangement has been reached, in an allocated suite in the hotel which will have a bed, a cot and a kettle. They recommend all children be supplied with a selection of carefully labelled favourite toys/books. Babies will require nappies and changing equipment in a carefully labelled bag. Recently potty trained children will require a change of underclothing and trousers or skirt.

Richard and Helena will be happy to feed babies/young children if milk and baby food is supplied. Baby milk/food must be in pre-packaged bottles, as refrigeration facilities may not be available.

As there is no charge made for this service, extra pairs of hands on a voluntary basis will be greatly appreciated.

(As this service was not used last year it is worth pointing out that unless it is used this year we will not be offering it again. As ever, feedback is invited to Martin Tudor at 24 Ravensbourne Grove, (off Clarkes Lane,) Willenhall, West Midlands, WV13 1HX or via e-mail martin@empties.demon.co.uk.)

The Nova Awards by Tony Berry

Created in 1973 by the late Gillon Field, the Nova Awards are presented annually for work in fanzines. Until 1981 only one award was presented, to "Best Fanzine" and decided by a committee of well-known fans. In 1977 voting was extended to all "Active Fans" who were members of Novacon, and then in 1981 two further awards were added: "Best Fanwriter" and "Best Fanartist".

For a fanzine to qualify for the 1998 award, one or more issues must have been published between 1st October 1997 and 30th September 1998. For a writer or artist to qualify, they must have had at least one piece of work published for the first time between those dates.

A "Fanzine" is defined as an amateur publication which is concerned with sf, fantasy, sf and fantasy fans and related subjects, copies of which may be obtained in exchange for other fanzines or in response to letters of comment. An "Active Fan" is defined as someone who has received six or more different fanzines during the year (different publications, not different issues of the same publication. The various official organs of a group, society or convention do not count as different fanzines).

Voting is open to full or supporting members of Novacon 28 who meet the requirements above, and can be made by post (ballots will go out with the fourth progress report) and at the convention itself.

[If you have any enquiries about the Novas or you want a copy of the Rules (50p to cover copying and postage), contact Tony Berry at 55 Seymour Road, Oldbury, West Midlands, B69 4EP.]

Novacon 28 Members as of 1st April 1998

001 Paul McAuley
002 Martin Tudor
003 Tony Morton
004 Carol Morton
005 Steve Lawson
006 Chris Murphy
007 Pat McMurray
008 Friend of Paul McAuley
009 Sherrie Powell
010 Alison Cook
011 Dave Hardy
012 Roger Robinson
013 Wendy Graham
014 Pat Brown
015 Vernon Brown
016 Ina Shorrocks
017 Norman Shorrocks
018 Ken Slater
019 Lynn Edwards
020 Mike Ford
021 David Thomas
022 Julian Headlong
024 John Rowbotham
025 Paul Dormer
026 Marcus Rowland
027 Chris Bell
028 Arthur Cruttenden
029 Niall Gordon
030 Tony Rogers
031 Roger Earnshaw
032 Peter Mabey
033 Peter Wareham
034 Nancy Tucker Shaw
035 Doreen Rogers
036 Alex McLintock
037 Caroline Mullan
038 Brian Ameringen
039 Peter Weston
040 Eileen Weston
041 Elaine Coates
042 Mark Slater
043 Steve Mowbray
044 Lesley Swan
045 Claire Brialey
046 Noel Collyer

047 Pauline Morgan
048 Chris Morgan
049 Sue Dawson
050 Guy Dawson
051 Bridget Hardcastle
052 Simon Bradshaw
053 Stuart Capewell
054 Simon Dearn
055 Bridget Wilkinson
056 Freda Warrington
057 Mike Llewellyn
058 Paul Oldroyd
059 Chris Donaldson
060 Anne Woodford
061 Alan Woodford
062 Alice Lawson
063 Sue Oliver
064 Gwen Funnell
065 Tim Stannard
066 Sue Jones
067 Huw Walters
068 Peter Hamilton
069 Ian Sorensen
070 Sue Mason
071 John Harrold
072 Adrian Snowdon
073 John D Rickett
074 Robbie Cantor
075 Peter Dunn
076 Simon A Hovell
077 Neil Tomkinson
078 Alison Tomkinson
078 Barry Traish
080 Tara Dowling-Hussey
081 Lisanne Norman
082 Mick Evans
083 Bernie Evans
084 Ian Stewart
085 John Dallman
086 Janet Wilkins
087 Maureen Speller
088 Paul Kincaid
089 Billy Stirling
090 Al Johnston
091 Dave Lally
092 Ray Bradbury
093 Nic Farey
094 Alison Scott
095 Steven Cain
096 Yvonne Rowse