

38 NOVACON

We're putting fans in harm's way without being in full possession of the facts

Don't you worry about my committee, they're trained for exactly this type of con



Sorry Guv, did you say Novacon 38 or Gallifrey 2009?

Progress Report Three

Novacon 38

Date: 14th-16th November 2008

Venue: Quality Hotel, Bentley, Walsall, (off M6, Junction10)

Guest of Honour: Ian R MacLeod

Fan Guest of Honour: Vernon Brown

Membership & Enquiries: Attending membership costs £38 (or £42 on the door). Postal registrations should be received by 4th November 2008; after this date, please join on the door. Children under 12 attend free; 12-16, £10.00. Cheques and postal orders should be made payable to "Novacon 38" and sent with your completed form(s) to: **Steve Lawson, 379 Myrtle Road, Sheffield, S2 3HQ.** Further information is available at <http://www.novacon38.org.uk>

Room Rates: £38 per person per night for people sharing twin/double rooms and £50 pppn for single rooms (inclusive of full English breakfast). Hotel booking forms and deposits equivalent to one night's stay per person must be received by Steve Lawson no later than **4th November 2008.** Cheques made payable to "The Quality Hotel". Enquiries regarding hotel bookings should be sent to Steve Lawson.

Book Room Rates: Tables (6' x 2'6") cost £20 each for the whole weekend.

Committee: Our Glorious Leader Helena Bowles (chair), 38 Harold Rd, Smethwick, Warley, B67 6LJ (helena.bowles@tiscali.co.uk); Tony Berry (hotel liaison), 68 Windsor Road, Oldbury, B68 8PB, (morbius@zoom.co.uk); Alice Lawson (treasurer) and Steve Lawson (registrations), 379 Myrtle Road, Sheffield, S2 3HQ (xl5@zoom.co.uk); Richard Standage (programme), address as Helena Bowles above (richard.standage@tiscali.co.uk)

Look What They Done To My World, Ma!

Helena Bowles

It's been an interesting year so far and an even more interesting few months. While the Chinese became only the third nation to put a man in space and the Americans talked about returning to the moon the Republicans managed to nominate a vice-president hopeful who probably thinks God personally reached out a hand and dropped the moon into orbit like rolling a penny down one of those charity gravity well boxes.

The collapse of the US banking system and the ensuing global financial crisis must make SF fans sit up and take notice. Not only must we wonder whether space flight will continue in a global depression but, really, whether we are on the brink of one of the fifties' collapse-of-civilisation scenarios. One can imagine John Wyndham sharpening his pencils in anticipation of the domino toppling of interlinked national economies and of us all having to find nice cosy smallholdings to run with groups of appropriately skilled friends.

Our lifetime really seems to be one of unprecedented paradigm change but that may just be the inevitable anthropocentric view of the past. We have witnessed the end of the Cold War, the fall of soviet communism (although not the fall of communism per se as Chinese communism seems to be flourishing), the biggest terrorist event in the history of the world, and the most influential, leading to a scar that will deform western culture for decades, if not generations, to come. We *may* be seeing the fall of science in favour of belief systems, Richard Dawkins's valiant rearguard action notwithstanding.

Where does that leave SF? Assuming our artificial splitting of literature into genres continues - with the wave of intergenre books that has been building over the last twenty years we may well not be able to make any such assumption - I think we are already seeing our post-9/11 problems being a major force within the genre. SF by definition projects the problems of the present into the future (or the alternate universe/dimension) to enable us to look at a problem as an outsider.

But SF has already done terrorism. Consider the crashing down of the beanstalk space elevator in Kim Stanley Robinson's *Mars* books or, on a less literary level, the relevance of the politics in a show like *Babylon 5* to today's world even more than to the world of nearly two decades ago. How will we reference an event so huge that it is hard even to mentally encompass its influence upon the entire world?

On a more mundane note everyone knows (or should, by now) we are looking at alternate futures at Novacon this year. We have a short article from Vernon Brown, our Fan Guest of Honour looking at this idea. Richard has some notes on our programme and there's the usual directions on how to get to the hotel etc.

Sadly, we also have two obituaries in this Progress Report. It is with deep sadness that we commemorate the lives of two Novacon stalwarts: Ray Bradbury, who has entertained us many times with professional calibre magic shows and who has been responsible for the Nova Award Trophies and Ann Green, artist, art show runner and presence in the bar. In their absence this year I'd like you to raise a glass in their honour.

Who Stole My Future?

Vernon Brown

When I attended Eurocon '76 in Poznan, Poland, many shop windows carried posters bearing words to the effect that "Science Fiction is the future. The future is Communist. Therefore Science Fiction is Communist". Which neatly illustrates the idea that many non fans have that SF is about the future or about predicting the future.

Of course much SF is set in times to come, and if it is well constructed it will not stray too far into what is currently believed to be impossible, although a certain suspension of disbelief is usually permitted. In addition, no matter how far a story is set in the future, it must be presented in a manner understandable by the reader. David Drake makes the point well in his "Authors Note" preface to several of his books, that languages, weights and measures all have to be of the present day otherwise they would be unintelligible. So a thoughtful reader of a well written story will probably always wonder just how much of what he is reading may come to pass.

Although we are less than a century from the first great wave of SF it is feasible to speculate how much of what SF spoke of then could have and has happened in the interim, not forgetting that anyone in the 30s and 40s who could extrapolate the driving forces of the near future would have probably become a multimillionaire not an author. Having said that, the shotgun effect means that a few at least of the multitude of stories set in the not too distant future should contain features of what has, in fact, happened, but it's important to remember that people tend to remember positive things and that a fair amount of SF concerns the not-so-good.

So perhaps we should consider whether the reality, on balance, outweighs the fiction, rather than wonder what has happened to the bright visions of tomorrow that we remember.

A major theme of post WWII SF was WWII, either by accident or design. Many reading this will not remember the Iron Curtain/Cold War but in the 60s & 70s the prospect of nuclear war was always in the news: artificial satellites meant orbiting bomb platforms and rockets meant ICBMs. Luckily, and I mean luckily, this has not happened, although in 1983 it came within seconds of doing so twice, once through computer and once through human error. We have missed cosmic catastrophes, although Shoemaker-Levy had a go at Jupiter in 1994 and, judging by past events, we may be overdue a collision, nor have we been invaded by aliens, wiped out by plague or had our food sources destroyed. So reality, thus far, is preferable to fiction.

The trouble now is that instead of a few relatively stable countries having nuclear weapons, the technology is available to a variety of organisations who are less hesitant about using them. Viruses have escaped from research facilities, so far without major loss of life, although there are worries about the remaining stocks of the lethal smallpox virus. And the climate is definitely changing - I can remember when Winter meant a couple of feet of snow and sledge runs that lasted for weeks. So perhaps SF will hit one of these targets yet.

Personalised transport such as helipacks haven't materialised, which is just as well considering some of the people on bicycles or in mobility scooters who charge around the pavements. We have a few undercover slidewalks and, outside the UK at least, a fair number of high speed trains. We did have cheap high speed air

transport but that bubble has burst. A major problem here is cheap clean energy for manufacturing and powering, something not often considered by authors. Personal entertainment and communications are with us though, and so unfortunately are massive public entertainment and advertising.

Robots are not feasible on our timespan nor is interstellar flight, although by now we could have small colonies on the Moon and Mars. The huge expensive and labour intensive computers so beloved of authors were another blind alley, although I remember one short story where the computers containing all the world's knowledge became smaller and smaller until everything was contained in a computer the size of a suitcase, which someone then lost. Not quite a bulls-eye but near enough.

Another major aspect to compare with SF is the society in which we find ourselves. SF has written of utopias and dystopias of all sorts but few are set in the timespan we are considering. Separating society from technology, no reader would be interested in a 'comfortable' society little different from his own so any 'future-society' based story will tend to be dystopian in nature. And that is the direction our real society is taking. Not a humanity moving towards a healthy, cooperating and forward looking society or set of societies but a world full of groups and individuals fighting among and between themselves. Perhaps this is inevitable and will just get worse, one reason often given for our not having been contacted by aliens being that any society that reaches the stage we have will probably destroy itself. So SF was there first.

Thus, many of the features/futures depicted in the SF of our childhoods have not been realised or have not had time to be realised, which may well be a good thing because so many of them were undesirable, although there is still time for them to happen. Some, for better or worse, have taken on substance but overall today's reality is preferable to yesterday's SF futures because we are still here to read the stuff instead of being dust motes, radioactive or otherwise, floating in space.

PS: There is a possibility that you may not be reading this article after all. Another SF scenario is the one where scientists blow up the world by mistake during an experiment and nine days after I type this sentence the Large Hadron Collider will be switched on to recreate the conditions that existed a fraction of a second after the Big Bang, which some scientists believe will create a black hole that will swallow the Earth. So for a microsecond or two SF will have hit the target.

New Members

Since June 2008

129	Chris Murphy	142	Linda Ternent
130	John Jarrold	143	Calvin Ternent
131	Mark Slater	144	Jack Cohen
132	Peter Weston	145	John Bray
133	Christopher Brooks	146	Martin Easterbrook
134	Laura Wheatly	147	Simon Bradshaw
135	Wilf James	148	Harry Payne
136	Jose Llarena	149	Omega
137	Zoe Parsons	150	Hal Payne
138	Wendy Graham	151	Jodie Payne
139	Michael Davidson		
140	Christine Davidson		
141	George Ternent		

The Programme

Richard Standage

Much of our programme this year is inspired by Our Guest of Honour Ian R Macleod's recurring theme of alternate histories, which we've turned around to look at different views of the future. We've planned a number of panels to look at this from various angles, so come along and be prepared to give us your views.

We open as usual on the Friday where we will introduce both Ian and our Fan Guest of Honour Vernon Brown. There will of course be ample opportunities to get to know them over the weekend, from either the programme stream, or simply catch them in the bar and buy them a drink!

On the Friday night we will also be hosting a launch party for Ian's new book, *Song of Time*. Come along and partake of some wine and nibbles and be the first to own a copy.

We have two excellent science speakers lined up. Dr Jack Cohen, a Novacon favourite who we haven't seen for a number of years will be talking about matters Darwin in honour of the anniversaries next year. In addition Dr David Evans from the University of Birmingham will be bringing up to speed on the Large Hadron Collider.

As you would expect we have all other regulars. Come and show off your knowledge on Saturday night at the pub quiz. Come and spend lots of money at the art and book auctions. And just when you thought it was all over, come and wind down and sample our range of unusual beers, soft drinks and food at the Sunday evening Beer and food tasting. See you there.

The Looking Glass War

Helena Bowles

House of Storms is MacLeod's second novel set in the alternate England of *The Light Ages*. Opening over a hundred years later than events of that book it details the end of the next Age of history: the age that was ushered in at the end of *The Light Ages*. While the subject of aether and its history is dealt with in more detail in *The Light Ages*, *House of Storms* is essentially a stand alone story that can easily be read independently of the previous novel.

At the start of the story we meet Alice Meynell, the pivotal character of the book. She is a desperate Mother taking her dying son, Ralph, to Invercombe, an estate in the west of England, an enclosed valley where the weather can be influenced to provide a suitable climate to inhibit Ralph's tuberculosis. We feel a ready sympathy for Alice, particularly as we are immediately made aware of her abusive childhood and climb to high status via the particularly female route of richer men's beds. We understand her love for her son and the fear that drives her to Einfell, a refuge for the "changelings" - people whose bodies have been twisted and reformed and whose humanity has been leached out of them by over-exposure to the magical power source aether. Like so many before her Alice approaches Einfell because of stories about the powers of the most changed, the Shadow Ones. Seated in an old telephone booth in the woods inhabited by the Shadow Ones, with the mystical, magical communication mirror of the telegraph system in front of her Alice experiences the reality of her Faustian deal as an exchange takes place and part of her enters the mirror.

With Ralph miraculously cured we begin to see Alice in a new light. Freed of her overwhelming fear for her child, Alice's need for power and control becomes apparent. We learn of her willingness to remove any perceived threat to her status and then of the history of blood that underpins Alice's position and relationships. She encourages her son's liaison with the shoregirl, Marion Price, to the point that it could be called pandering. Marion will educate Ralph before he leaves to take his place the educational system for high ranking sons of the telegrapher's guild.

With its repeated use of mirror imagery and the new-found ability of Alice's to enter the telegraph network via the telephone mirrors it is unsurprising that thematically *House of Storms* owes much to *Alice Through the Looking Glass*, not least the name of the central character. Alice Meynell, however, is the Red Queen not the White. That honour goes to the girl Marion Price, the white pawn who like *Alice* is set on her journey by the Red Queen, only to attain royal ranking by the end of the book.

The closeness to *Looking Glass* is interesting. Chapter three of *Looking Glass* contains the line "She must be sent as a message by telegraph". Chapter five of *House of Storms* describes Alice's first foray into the disembodied world of the telegraph system:

"*There*. As lightly as a diving swimmer submitting to the will of gravity, she felt herself being physically pushed towards the mirror. She and the emptiness within joined, embraced, and she poured along the networks which fanned across Bristol. Unanchored as she was by the normal safe protocols which governed telephone communication, it made an exhilarating ride."

Equally the later song of the Walrus and the Carpenter contains the paradoxical lines

"the sun was shining on the sea
Shining with all his might...
And this was odd, because it was
The middle of the night."

These lines seem to be echoed in the thoughts of Weatherman Ayres just as he prepares to explode the evidence of smuggled aether:

"But the fog was definitely clearing. The wet cliffs were glinting as the ship rose and fell and brightness was gathering at her stern out towards the entrance of the cove - gathering so strongly that he'd have said it was dawn if he hadn't been certain it was the middle of the night."

Invercombe's gardens are reminiscent of *Looking Glass's* Garden of Live Flowers and the description of the aether-bred insects echoes the descriptions of the monstrous insects Alice sees there. These insects are also instrumental in Ralph's study leading to the theory that we would call evolution and Ralph and Marion term Habitual Adaption.

It is surprising how well *House of Storms* can be mapped onto *Looking Glass*. Even the end where Marion returns to Invercombe with her army of camp followers, all of whom almost worship her for their perception of her role in the war, shows Marion taking Alice Meynell's place in the best rooms and as head of the household. She has become the White Queen, as *Looking Glass* Alice did.

MacLeod's writing is complex and elusive. Incidents have many different resonances from literature and the real world. The fall of the Telegrapher's Guild building in London, engineered by Alice Meynell, which sparks the

bloody, futile war between East and West is, obviously, a reference to the fall of the World Trade Centre but at the same time it is a *Looking Glass* reference to Humpty Dumpty and the following chapter about the Lion and the Unicorn "fighting round the town".

The war that Alice starts has many references in our history. There is the obvious suggestion of the post 9/11 culture wars - East and West England are shown as culturally very separate - but also the culture wars of the American Civil war as slavery - "bonding" - and sugar (as opposed to cotton) are the ostensible reasons for fighting. There's even what seems to be a reference to the cultural influence of Coca Cola in the Eastern manufactured drink "Sweetness" which uses an aether-grown herb to replace sugar and which affects the ports of the West's lucrative import trade in sugar from the bonded plantations in the Pacific.

After her relationship with Ralph is crushed by his mother, Marion bears a child. Believing the child to have died she forges a career in nursing. With the advent of war her skills in organising and administration turn her into a Florence Nightingale figure, sentimentalised and adored by the common soldiers of both sides. Ralph, meanwhile, has found new purpose in the War and rises to General of the Eastern forces. By now he has gained some realisation of what his Mother is and her role in breaking up his relationship with Marion. He has even realised that Marion was pregnant and now, increasingly disillusioned, he searches for her even as he plans and prosecutes the Eastern war plan.

Meanwhile Ralph and Marion's child has been given to the changelings at Einfell who do their best to rear the child. Exposed to their physical forms and the mental song of the aether, Klade grows up a strange child. How much of

this is due to the changelings and how much to the chronic aether poisoning experienced by his grandmother, Alice Meynall, and her use of aether-impregnated cosmetics to retain her youth and beauty and secure rich, high ranking Tom Meynell as her husband is unclear and meant to be so. Klade is the nature/nurture debate made plain. Even his name has Darwinian resonances: a clade, a group of animals all descended from one common ancestor.

Klade is also the personification of the idea that the sins of the fathers are visited on the children. Klade suffers for Alice Meynell's ambitions for herself and her son. He is placed with the changelings because one is Alice's ex-lover, possibly aether-poisoned by her. He grows up separate both from the changelings - he isn't one - and from humanity who despise and fear them because he is not adapted to the general run of English culture.

Religion, or rather belief, is another strong theme of *House of Storms*. Ralph's and Marion's studies lead them to a theory of evolution, one that they eventually discover has been formulated many times before but has been suppressed to maintain the status quo.

"...our study of the how the natural world functions must reflect the real needs of human society. A hothead, for example, might use your theory to argue that we humans are descended from apes. And where would that leave the unique concept of the sacred human soul, and our beloved church, and people's dearly held beliefs?"

Despite Ralph's determination to continue he is helpless in the face of his mother. His peculiar passivity is a function, one presumes, of his long illness and of his function, in the *Looking Glass* chess game, of the King. *House of Storms* is a novel of strong women and weak

men. Ralph's father tamely submits to his death at his wife's hands requiring of her only that she swear never to hurt Ralph before taking the poisoned chalice from her hands. Ralph rejects the concept of God but is helpless in the face of his mother's desires that he live the life of a high Guildsman. This is interesting as it is possible to read in Alice Meynall a metaphor for an interventionist God. A God who has the power and the will to order the lives and affairs of individuals or nations but who gets things wrong. This is like the Old Testament God who is considered omniscient and omnipotent but who still finds it necessary to raze cities and renew His covenant with mankind because we didn't do quite what he wanted or expected.

Ralph's and Marion's discoveries are a metaphorical fall, not the simplistic reading of the Adam and Eve story where eating the apple causes the discovery of sexuality - there is already sex in Invercombe's Edenic gardens but the more sophisticated understanding that the fruit eaten was from the Tree of Knowledge. That knowledge made Adam and Eve like Gods, or so the serpent claimed. Ralph's and Marion's knowledge renders the idea of God unnecessary but they are still subject to expulsion from the gardens of Invercombe and the memory of that gentle, warm summer of physical, emotional and intellectual discovery will remain until they return, many years later, battered and weary from life and war.

There are many other themes in this complex book: identity and its loss, Alice as personification of social Darwinism, power and its abuses... All this is interesting but equally important is MacLeod's trademark literary, dreamy lyrical prose. MacLeod paints with words and the hazy elusive, allusive result is some of the finest writing within the SF/F genre.

Ian R. MacLeod Bibliography.

Books:

Voyages By Starlight (Arkham House, 1996). Short Story Collection

The Great Wheel (Harcourt Brace, 1997). Novel.

The Light Ages (Earthlight/Ace, 2003). Novel.

Breathmoss and Other Exhalations (Golden Gryphon, 2004). Short Story Collection.

The House Of Storms (Simon & Schuster/Ace, 2005). Novel.

The Summer Isles (Aio, 2005). Novel.

Past Magic (PS Publishing, 2006). Short Story Collection.

The Summer Isles and Other Stories (Hayakawa Publishing Japan, 2008). Short Story Collection.

Other Selected Short Stories:

Through (Interzone, Jul/Aug 1989)

The Family Football (Interzone, Nov 1991)

The Dead Orchards (Weird Tales, Spring 1994)

Sealight (F & SF, May 1994)

Swimmers Beneath The Skin (Asimov's, Oct/Nov 1996)

The Roads (Asimov's, April 1997)

Chitty Bang Bang (Asimov's June 2000)

Taking Good Care Of Myself (Nature, May 2006)

The Master Miller's Tale (F & SF, May 2007)

The Hob Carpet (Asimov's, June 2008)

Ray Bradbury: 1950 - 2008

Rog Peyton



Birmingham fan and NOVACON regular Ray Bradbury passed away in hospital on Monday March 17th. He would have been 58 on March 29th.

Ray turned up to his first convention - the 1971 Eastercon at Worcester - and entered the Saturday night Masquerade Party as a character from Keith

Laumer's WORLDS OF THE IMPERIUM. I was one of the judges and I remember thinking that it was as if the front cover of the paperback had come to life and as such was an obvious winner. But one of the other judges was convinced it was a professional piece that had been hired from a shop and was therefore ineligible. Along with the other judges, I bowed to his superior knowledge. Afterwards, Ray told us that it was home-made and not hired; he had made every piece himself over several months. Ray was a perfectionist and incredibly talented which was why his costume had looked so good.

Ray and his wife Carole for many years worked in the licensed trade and when he ran the Ivy Bush in Edgbaston, the Brum Group moved into the upstairs lounge. For many years we had our monthly meeting there. I well remember the Sunday afternoon barbecue special he arranged having the barbecue on the top platform of the fire escape. When it started raining Ray moved the barbecue into the doorway. That was fine until the wind changed direction and blew all the smoke into the room where we were!

Ray was a person with immense talent and perfected everything he turned his hand to. He was a professional engraver by trade but had several other 'jobs'.

He was a professional magician, being a full member of The Magic Circle. He entertained us with his sleight of hand at many Novacons.

He was a first class artist whose incredibly detailed sculptures were a joy to have. We're all aware that he designed and made the Nova Awards every year, but he also made a healthy living designing and selling sculptures showing famous scenes of magicians' tricks. Beautifully detailed models that revealed hidden details months after you thought you knew the model. He made sculptures for many other clubs as well - cricket clubs, golf clubs, etc., You name it - Ray did it.

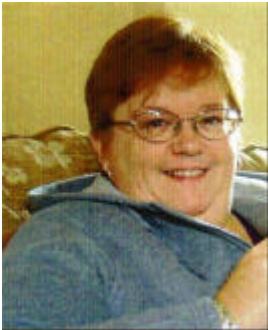
He was an excellent cook and if you were lucky enough to have been invited to Ray and Carole's home for a meal, you know how true that was. When you sat down at the table there was always a place card clipped into one of his many tiny sculptures which he invariably insisted that you keep afterwards. Their hospitality was boundless.

He also had his Equity Card and over the years he appeared as an extra in many Midlands TV shows such as Boon and Crossroads.

A man of many talents. It's difficult to imagine the future without his beaming smile. I know we all will miss him.

Ann Green (1961 - 2008)

Martin Tudor



Most of you reading this will have known, or at least have heard of, Ann Green. But you'll probably only have known her as the wife of Steve Green and, for a number of years, the organiser of Novacon's Art Show. But Ann was, of course, so much more. She was a dear and treasured friend, an artist, a poet, godmother to my daughter Heloise, a nurse, a manager, a superb cook,

a WAVE widow, a boozier, fanzine writer, but most of all a voice of reason, source of common sense and a force for good.

I first met Ann back in the 1980s when she chose Steve to be her husband - I don't think Steve had much choice in the matter, but I doubt he would've chosen differently if he had. Since then she has been one of my closest friends. We worked on conventions together, drank together, got lost in the Netherlands and Scotland together whilst attending worldcons, shared her wonderful spicy rhubarb crumble, worked together on far too many WAVE tables... Throughout the 25+ years I knew Ann she proved a loyal, sensitive and reliable friend, a constant source of good humour, support and common sense.

Just over 11 years ago my wife and I chose Ann and Steve to be the godparents of our daughter Heloise, they have proved again and again since then what an excellent choice we made. Heloise loves them both and they have demonstrated their love for her constantly. In recent years the bond between Heloise and Ann became even closer through their mutual adoration of Captain Jack Harkness -

according to Steve it was difficult to tell which of them most enjoyed the experience of last year's pantomime at the Hippodrome in Birmingham as they were both totally star-struck, drooling over the impressive Mr Barrowman!

I do not know much about Ann's professional life in the NHS, but the vast numbers of her colleagues who came to her funeral speaks volumes of the impact she had made there. I can't think of a single manager or colleague I've encountered in my working life who would inspire me to eulogise them - but two of Ann's colleagues did just that in a moving and eloquent tribute to Ann's work in founding the new department at Solihull Hospital.

It is very difficult to come to terms with the suddenness of Ann's illness and death. On the 28th of March this year we met up at a special MiSFITs meal in honour of TAFF winner Chris Garcia in a Chinese restaurant in Birmingham. Chris was staying with Steve and Ann and they told us all of the sight-seeing they had done during the day. Chris raved about Ann's wonderful cooking and generous hospitality, it was a lovely evening. Despite the recent diagnosis of her diabetes, high cholesterol and high blood pressure Ann was in good spirits and we joked that she was rushing to catch up with me - but whereas I'd taken 15 years to develop the same three conditions she had done it within weeks... On the 29th of July she died at the age of 46 having contacted C.diff (clostridium difficile) whilst undergoing treatment for an infected toe which wouldn't heal.

The last time I saw Ann was in her hospital bed in the Intensive Care Unit of Heartlands Hospital less than two weeks before her death. It was typical of Ann that despite her illness, and the fact that she was so heavily dosed with painkillers that she was drifting in and out of consciousness, her only concern was about Heloise and how the breakdown of my marriage was affecting her - the world is a much poorer place without Ann Green.

How to Get There:

By Car

The hotel is right next to J10 of the M6 but is not visible from the motorway.

From the North exit at J10 and turn right heading for Wolverhampton but DO NOT enter the left hand lane. (This will take you down the Black Country Route which you don't want and it is a long way to the next roundabout!)

Stay in the right-hand lane to the traffic lights and take the second exit signposted "Buses and Hotel" and then immediately the first right into what looks like a small service road. Follow this and you will come to the hotel.

Go in through the car park barrier. When you leave remember to pick up an exit token from reception.

From the South, come off at J10 and keep to the *right-hand lane*. Stay in lane as you go up the slip-road to the lights. Then follow directions as above.

By Public Transport

The fares on all local buses are £1.50. Exact change is required on the buses listed. Taxi fares are approximate.

By Train via Wolverhampton

The nearest intercity station to the hotel is Wolverhampton. Exit Wolverhampton station on to Railway Drive where you can pick up a taxi to the Quality Hotel (at J10 of the M6 in Bentley). Expect to pay about £7.00 for a journey of about 10 minutes. If no taxis are available try Associated Taxis on (01902) 425591.

There is also the 529 bus to the hotel. Most of the vehicles on this route are wheelchair/buggy friendly with "kneeling suspension". They run every six minutes during the day and every twenty minutes in the evening. Walk past the taxi rank down Railway Drive to the clock and turn left past the bus station. Cross at the first crossing and continue through the rows of shelters until you find stand F on the right. The 529 takes about twenty minutes

depending on traffic. Get off after the Lane Arms pub and walk past some houses towards the motorway junction bearing left down the Wolverhampton Road West access road to the hotel.

By Local Train via Walsall

Exit the station following signs to the taxi rank on Station Street. The five minute journey should cost about £6.00.

Alternatively walk down Station Street past the side of Marks and Spencers to Park Street and cut through Butler's Passage (the alleyway near Littlewoods) to St. Paul's Bus Station and catch the 529 from stand M. (See above for details).

By Bus from Birmingham

Catch the 51 from Carrs Lane (facing the side of Marks and Spencers) in Birmingham to St Paul's Bus Station in Walsall. The 51 runs every seven minutes during the day and every twenty minutes in the evening. The journey lasts approximately forty minutes. Disembark at stand G and cross the bus station to stand M where you will catch the 529. Follow earlier details.

By Bus from Sutton Coldfield

Catch the 366 from Lower Parades. The journey will take about 35-40 minutes. Disembark at Walsall (stand G) and cross the bus station to stand M where you catch the 529. Follow earlier details.

From the Airport

Birmingham New Street Station is only ten minutes away by train from Birmingham International. A shuttle bus called Air Rail Link connects the Airport directly to Birmingham International Station. This runs approximately every ten minutes from outside Terminal 1 (Main Terminal) and International Station. It is a two minute journey and free of charge. From New Street you can pick up trains to either Walsall or Wolverhampton and follow instructions from there. The 966 service from Bus Stop H links Walsall.

Operations:

As we are sure you are aware, Novacon, like most conventions in Britain, is run by volunteers and we can't have too many of them. So, if you are willing to help out at the convention - anything from moving chairs to helping with tech ops or working on the programme - please contact: Steve Lawson (see page two).

Children's Facilities:

Although, as in recent years, Novacon 38 will not be organising an official crèche, we will have a room set aside for younger members to amuse themselves. Please note any use of this facility will be strictly the responsibility of their parents.

Artshow & Auctions:

Novacon will once again be running a packed artshow, with many of the items featured in Sunday's arts and crafts auction. Do contact us at once if you want to exhibit your artwork. Members can also enter items in both the Novacon book auction (Saturday) and the Novacon arts & crafts auction (Sunday). Please advise the Registrations Desk immediately upon arrival if you have items for auction. A 10% commission is charged on all sales. For full details, contact Steve Lawson (see committee contacts).

Novacon's RNIB Raffle:

As usual, we will be selling raffle tickets to raise money for the Royal National Institute for the Blind's "Talking Books for the Blind" project. If you have anything you would like to donate as a prize for the raffle, please contact Helena Bowles (see committee contacts). Make sure you buy a ticket or two from the Registration Desk as well!

Dealers' Room:

If you wish to book tables in the Dealers' Room, please complete the relevant section of the membership form enclosed with this PR and return it to Steve Lawson. If you are already a member of Novacon 38 simply endorse the form accordingly and complete the appropriate section.

The Ray Bradbury Art Show

Rog Peyton

As many of you will already know, Novacon regular Ray Bradbury died in March. Ray was one of the few people who had attended every single Novacon and was the person who designed and made the Nova Awards every year. But many did not know that he was a sculptor and artist outside the SF field as well, particularly in the world of magic. Most of his work was in limited edition form and was sold in the USA.

As a tribute to Ray there will be a display of his work in the Art Show at this year's Novacon. Arline and I own about a dozen pieces and I'll be bringing those to Novacon 38. I know of a few other pieces out there but only a few. If you own a piece of artwork, a piece of sculpture or one of the past Novacon Awards, I'd like to hear from you. It would be particularly nice to see all the different designs of the Nova Awards all lined up!

Would you consider bringing your piece for the display? Please contact me - rgp@rogpeyton.fsnet.co.uk - describing the piece you own and whether you are able to bring them to Novacon 38. I look forward to hearing from you and hope that we can get a display together that will be a fitting tribute to Ray.

2008 Nova Awards

Steve Green

In 1973, Novacon instituted the annual Nova Awards to celebrate achievement in British science fiction fanzines. Originally handed down by a panel of judges, these accolades are now decided by Novacon members who can demonstrate a basic knowledge of current fanzines.

Following Novacon 32, the three categories - best fanzine, best fanzine writer, best fanzine artist - were extended to cover fanzines produced in Eire. In addition, electronic fanzines are now eligible, provided a hardcopy is lodged with the current administrator at 33 Scott Road, Olton, Solihull, B92 7LQ, UK.

The following fanzines have been received by the Nova Awards administrator since 1 October 2007 and are eligible for the 2008 awards, which will be presented at Novacon 38:

Ansible #243 [10/07], #244 [11/07], #245 [12/07], #246 [1/08], #247 [2/08], #248 [3/08], #249 [4/08], #250 [5/08], #251 [6/08], #252 [7/08], #253 [8/08], #254 [9/08, all 2pp, all A4], Dave Langford, 94 London Road, Reading, RG1 5AU - download from www.ansible.co.uk; *Banana Wings* #32 [32pp, A4], #33 [32pp], #34 [36pp], #35 [48pp, A5], Claire Brialey & Mark Plummer, 59 Shirley Road, Croydon, CR0 7ES; *Brum Group News* #433 [10/07], #434 [11/07; both 12pp], #435 [12/07], #436 [1/08; 8pp, all A5], William McCabe (for the Birmingham SF Group); *Motorway Dreamer* #5 [34pp plus binding, A4], John Nielsen Hall, Coachman's Cottage, Marrison Hill, Ramsbury, SN8 2HG; *No Sin But Ignorance* #47 [12pp], #48 [14pp, both A4], Claire Brialey, address as above; *Outlaw Mutation Boogie* #65 [12pp, A5], Mark Plummer, address as above; *Plokta* #38 [14pp, A4], Steve Davies, Alison Scott & Mike Scott, 13 Collette Court, Eleanor Close, London, SE16 6PW; *Prolapse* #9 - #11 [all 40pp], #12 [44pp, all A4], Peter Weston, 53 Wyvern Road, Sutton Coldfield, B74 2PS - download from www.efanzines.com/Prolapse/index.htm; *Procrastinations* #5 [20pp], #6 [16pp, both A5], John Coxon, 14 Chapel Lane, Peterborough, PE4 6RS - download from www.efanzines.com/Procrastinations/index.htm; *Quantum Bullocks* #0 [A4, 2pp], Jinnie Cracknell, 100 Balsall Heath Road, Birmingham, B5 7NQ.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to Vernon Brown, Rog Peyton, Martin Tudor and Steve Green for their written contributions to this progress report. Thanks also to Steve Green and Kevin Clarke for running the Novacon website.

Rog Peyton's obituary of Ray Bradbury first appeared in the April edition of the Birmingham Science Fiction Group's monthly newsletter. The BSFG meets on the second Friday of each month at the Briar Rose Hotel, Bennetts Hill, Birmingham City Centre. Membership costs £16 per year which includes a monthly newsletter. For further information write to 5 Greenbank, Barnt Green, Birmingham, B45 8DH, or visit www.bsfg.freesevers.com

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