



Novacon 45 Progress Report 1



"...AND TWO WHITE WINE SPRITZERS WID A SLICE OF LEMON.
DO YOU HAVE A VEGETARIAN MENU? VEGETARIANS AM SO TASTY."

Guests of Honour: Stan and Anne Nicholls



Park Inn Hotel, Nottingham
13th–15th November 2015
Guests of Honour
Stan and Anne Nicholls

Membership Rates

Adults: £45 13-16 years: £12 12 years and under: free
Rates apply until Easter 2015 and are subject to review afterwards.
Day rates will be available.

Hotel Rooms

Double: £43 pppn Single: £61 pppn Children 4-12: £22.50 pppn
Twin: £43 pppn Family room: £180 pn Children under 4 years: free
(ages at the date of the convention)

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Publication Supremo’s Disclaimer

Last time I was doing publications was at Novacon 43. I tried all the usual techniques – typos, late publication, insufficient numbers of copies, raggedly non-trimmed outside edges of the page – but here we are two years later, and they’ve foolishly appointed me with the same task once more.

Therefore it’s my duty to present, for the joy and delectation of you lucky fans, **Novacon 45 Progress Report 1**, wherein I can reassure you all that none of us are secretly orcs, our clothing is neither white and gold nor black and blue, and none of us have been forced to resign through weakness and old age (although that’s been the constant advice from the people who look after us). You can, therefore, proceed with confidence to join Novacon 45 if you haven’t done so already. If you got this PR in the post from us and you’re not already on our membership list for the forthcoming year, you’ll find a membership form in your envelope; if it’s there, I urge you to fill it in and send it off to Steve (see “contact details” on page 2) accompanied by a suitable payment. If you found this PR in the bar, or some eager person thrust it into your hand, a membership form is available from the website.

Heedless of expense, this year we have two guests of honour rather than the usual one, although to assist with costs they’ve offered to share a room.

Stan Nicholls, novelist, journalist and bookshop runner, is introduced by his wife (called, confusingly, Anne) in an article on pages 5-8.

Anne Gay, also a novelist, will be introduced by her husband (called, just as confusingly, Stan) in an article appearing in PR2.

Douglas Spencer

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Acknowledgements

Thanks to our contributors, as listed in the Table of Contents above.

Front cover illustration and caption by Dave Hicks.

Colouring-in image on back cover from <http://www.coloringws.tk/>

Chairman's Welcome

Hello and welcome to Novacon 45 Progress Report 1. I'm happy to report that there is progress. OK, can I go now? Apparently not.

We are back at the Park Inn Hotel in Nottingham, which has been our home for several years now, so they have a vague idea of what we do. I'll be wearing my Hotel Liaison cap later in this PR, but I'm sure you remember Novacon 44 getting off to a shaky start on Friday when the machine for programming the room keys packed up, resulting in people having to be let in to their rooms by a staff member. Worse still, the beer pump broke! Day one and I was already tearing out what little hair I have left. I trust such problems will not be repeated this year!

Our Guests of Honour are husband and wife team Stan and Anne Nicholls. Writing as Anne Gay, Anne published several critically-acclaimed science fiction novels such as *Mindsail* and *To Bathe in Lightning*, as well as the *Masked Rider* series for young adults. Stan is the author of the best-selling *Orcs* series, and the *Nightshade Chronicles*. I never knew this, but he also did *Spider Man*. He worked in fondly-remembered bookshop *Dark They Were* and *Golden Eyed*, and was the first manager of the London branch of *Forbidden Planet*. Between them they have a wealth of knowledge and experience of SF & F both as fans and authors, and we're looking forward to them joining us for the weekend.

Novacon is a single-stream convention with a mix of serious and fannish items, panels, talks, dealers' room, artshow and auction, and book auction (we're one of the few cons which actually hold a book auction these days). We like people to socialize, so we don't keep the schedule too hectic. There is one major change this year, which is regrettable but I guess a sign of the times, and is explained further on. The rest of the committee knows its way around a con, or at least the way to the bar, and I'm sure they'll do their usual excellent job. I hope to see you there.

Tony Berry

The Hotel

The Park Inn Hotel is situated on the Mansfield Road, a couple of miles from Nottingham city centre and about a mile from the train station. It has 170 rooms so we should all be able to fit in. Prices are £45pppn for a double or twin, and £63pppn for a single including breakfast. There are a couple of “family” rooms consisting of a double and a twin with a connecting door and these are £180 per night, so if you want one of these, get in quick. Children under 4 years old at the time of the con go free, and a cot can be put into the room. Those aged 4-12 years pay £22.50 per night (ask for a sofa-bed), and over 12 years pay full price.

The hotel has an adjoining leisure centre with pool, Jacuzzi, sauna and gym which guests can use free. No hot tub time machine I’m afraid. There is plenty of car parking but beware of the ANPR system! If this is switched on during your stay you must register your vehicle at reception to avoid a parking penalty.

Most of the convention facilities (programme room, dealers’ room, main bar) are on the ground floor. Downstairs is another bar which will be open occasionally, the Artshow, Lally programme and meeting rooms, accessible by lift. We’ve been promised a refurbishment of the main bar area for a couple of years now, so you never know ...

If you intend to arrive at the hotel later than 4pm on Friday you will need to ring the hotel direct to reserve your room, otherwise the automated letting system may flog it to someone else. The number is 0115-935-9988.

Tony Berry

Answers to Doug S’s Fun Page (back cover)

The words hidden in the word search grid were “please”, “supply”, “plenty”, “of”, “lovely”, “beer”.

The number of boxes ticked in the general knowledge question should be one. Or two, if you have a friend.

Nokudos solution

S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S

Introduction to Stan Nicholls, by Anne

Back in the days before box-sets became exercises in origami, back when CDs were 45s and a shag was a tobacco more often than a sea-bird, a nine-year-old lad from the Smoke wrote his first novel. It was science fiction, and although it wasn't very long it was very colourful. Each page was a chapter and each chapter was written in a different colour of felt tip pen. We all have to start somewhere. The trick with writing, though, is not to stop there.

Another trick is to have a great imagination. A way with words. A knack for telling a great story. And the courage to send things off to the shark-toothed world of publishing. By the time you've got this many tricks, of course, they're not just tricks. They're talents.

These are the talents that started Stan Nicholls on his road to international renown. The next layover on the chart of his success was a certain top-shelf magazine that men only buy "for the features". They ran a competition for a limerick on a contemporary topic. A limerick is what they got, and fourteen-year-old Stan was paid for it.

Ooh! Money for writing stuff! Obviously the lad had a bent. However, one of his school masters was not of the same opinion. When Stan wrote a short story on a set theme he was caned for plagiarism because in the master's view the piece was "far too good for the likes of you to have written it." Said teacher then insisted Stan take an IQ test because "that Nicholls boy" should by rights be sent to what we used to call remedial school. Stan took the test and scored 151. The teacher judged that a fluke and made young Nicholls take the test again under his personal supervision. Stan scored 152. All the same, when Stan said at his careers interview that he wanted to work in books or films the careers officer practically fell off his chair laughing at the idea that a working class boy could aspire to such things. Perhaps in a belated attempt at fairness, he sent the cherubic fifteen-year-old to an interview in London's west end. During the job interview it gradually dawned on Stan that the chappie in the blazer and handlebar moustache was casting for a gay porn film. About the same time it dawned on the chappie that Stan was not his man. Handing over half a crown by way of compensation, he said, "Sorry, son, we can't use you. Here, go and buy yourself a doughnut."

Stan spent many a year working in science fiction bookshops, including the legendary Dark They Were and Golden Eyed. The Forbidden Planet chain sent him to help set up their store in New York, where he worked on the project with one of the British owners. On the opening day, with the shop rammed with people and the boss out of sight, a colourfully dressed man and woman

entered. They were a singing telegram duo, secretly hired as a surprise by the co-owner's sister-in-law. Asking the guy at the till, "You English?" they rode right over Stan's "Yes, but -" and launched into an all-singing, all-dancing, congratulatory paean. As they finished down on their knees with jazz-hands and flashing paparazzi, Stan finally got them to understand that he was not the intended recipient. They declined to do an encore for the person it was meant for.

But these light-hearted snippets hardly served to cover the core of steely determination inside our Mr Nicholls. Stan never forgot that he wanted to be a writer. And a writer, as we know, is one who writes.

Which Stan did. Fanzines at first, and later journalism, freelancing and as a stringer for Fleet Street. Back in the 80s he sometimes earned more than a staggering £1000 a day, but his heart was really in fiction. He became a slush-pile reader for various publishers and agents, winnowing through unsolicited manuscripts in search of the elusive best-seller. Even though these were from adults, some of the MSS were in crayon while others were propped up by covering letters full of invective and death threats. For the publishers' eyes only Stan had to write a report on these scripts. But one publisher forgot to remove Stan's report and an agent saw it. She invited Stan to a meeting and then found him books to write. It wasn't long before Stan was writing books based on his own ideas. (He was later taken on by one of the industry's leading agents.) The *Nightshade Chronicles* and the *Quicksilver* books are still in print in various countries. Likewise the million-selling *Orcs* series continues to have a life of its own. Best-selling author Christopher Hardebusch credits Stan with kick-starting the highly lucrative fantasy market in his native Germany. Quotes from Stan's characters are used as puff-lines on the covers of series over there.

Stan's been Guest of Honour at events in England, France, the Netherlands and Italy. At the *Trolls et Légendes* festival in Belgium he was given a Lifetime Achievement Award. Last year at the *Pandino Fantasy Festival* held in a ducal hunting lodge (read medieval castle with loggias and courtyards) outside Milan they put him on a velvet throne on a red carpet. He's done several signing tours in France and has appeared many times on radio and TV. He was a panellist in the pilot for a TV show along with Craig Charles, Bill Bailey and Trisha Sullivan.

He's also Chair of the David Gemmell Awards for Fantasy. Now in their seventh year, the Gemmell Awards continue to recognise and promote the vibrant heroic fantasy scene. The Gemmells are truly international, with votes coming in from 74 countries so far. Because Stan believes in fairness, each of the Gemmell Awards - the *Ravenheart* for Best Fantasy Cover Art, the *Morningstar*

for Best Debut Novel in English and the Legend for Best Fantasy Novel in English - is shortlisted and chosen by public vote.

If ever someone deserved to be recognised for his contributions to F & SF, it's our Mr Nicholls.

PS: Thanks, Stan, for all the wonderful adventures as your entourage!

Anne Nicholls

The Novas

Since 1973 the Nova Awards have been presented at Novacon for work produced in fanzines. In the early days they were decided by a panel of worthy fans, but later could be voted for by all members of Novacon, organized by an administrator. The award for Best Fanzine was joined later by Best Fanwriter and Best Fan Artist, and more recently by a special Nova, "Best Fan", which is given out occasionally by the Novacon committee.

Times change, things move on. When I was administrator paper fanzines were still the norm and I would get a decent number of voters (70-80), but Steve Green's tenure has seen the rise of social media, e-fanzines and blogs, and I think fans have come to see the Novas as being somewhat old-fashioned. Despite Steve's best efforts – opening the awards to include e-fanzines and voting by any fan – interest has waned and recently the numbers of voters has started to look embarrassing.

Following discussions between past administrators and the Birmingham SF Group, which oversees Novacon, we have reluctantly agreed that the time has come to stop awarding the Novas for fanzines. We will however still consider giving the Special Nova to Special Fans! So don't fill up your mantelpiece with tat like Nebulas and Hugos, the Nova Award lives on.

Tony Berry

So, What's All This Social Meedja Stuff About Then?

In an ongoing effort to drag some of my fellow committee members into the twentieth century (the twenty-first may be a bit ambitious) I have bullied and bribed Tony into letting me set up a presence for Novacon on the three main social media platforms: Facebook, Twitter and Tumblr.

We've used Facebook before. All you have to do is like our page and we'll bring you news about Novacon, big items of Science Fiction news, and links to interesting stuff. You'll find information about our Guests of Honour and reviews of their work. If you're bored, drop in, scroll down our timeline, and check out what we think is interesting.

Twitter is wonderful for the immediacy of news and the spread of information. You can tweet us, or just follow us and we'll retweet any major pieces of fannish or science fiction news. We often livetweet committee meetings (be careful, the excitement can be intense...). Our use of Twitter is in a state of development. Hopefully in the future we'll be able to host Twinterviews with guests and Q&A sessions with the committee if we have the interest.

New this year is a Tumblr account. For anyone who isn't familiar with Tumblr, it's a microblogging platform that's becoming increasingly popular. It is largely, but not exclusively, image based and we thought it would make a great pictorial record of both past Novacons and current committee activity. You can just follow the link to view our blog, or you can sign up for your own blog.

All the platforms are free and we'd love it if you'd like/follow/retweet us. We'd also be delighted to publicise things for you, answer questions and display media for you. If you have photos/old Novacon con reports or anything else you think would be interesting to other Novacon members, just let us know and we'll arrange to put it on one or all of the platforms.

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Novacon-45/305443772807956?ref=h1>
<https://twitter.com/novacon45> <http://novacon45.tumblr.com/>

Helena Bowles

Diary of a Novacon Groover

Dear Diary,

It's that time of year where I'm quite involved with planning my Novacon 45 and looking forward to my favourite con of the year. I've started my weight loss regime so I can stuff myself silly at the Park Inn with their yummy breakfast, cracking bacon sarnies, and baguettes and lots of cider! Beer, after all, is an integral part of Novacon, especially the Sun eve beer tasting session.

But where did it all start? Well, for me it was the Novacon with the supremely entertaining Guest of Honour Iain M Banks, God rest his soul. Iain was an enigma, a fantastic writer, a fantastic man, and a great way for me to experience my first Novacon. I remember in particular the highly enjoyable Fri night slot with Iain and Steve Green, involving lots of alcohol and banter. I was blown away. I discovered something important - Novacon was a real con, a chance to enjoy panels (it was my first one so I attended the whole stream) eat, drink and be merry. But most importantly a chance to meet and make new friends. George Ternent, Chris Stocks, Linda and Calvin Ternent, Pat and Vernon Brown, Carol Goodwin, Pete Smith and his amazing pole dancing Mrs Tina Smith. I treasure those memories, those moments, and the chance to reconnect with people every year. And that is what keeps me coming back to Novacon year after year; not the cleverly planned programme, or the food, or the beer, or the nice hotel room, but my friends. So, I'll be there with bells on.

Theresa Derwin

Novacon 45 Members as at 1st March 2015 (112)

1 Stan Nicholls	93 Dave Hardy	98 Tony Rogers
2 Anne Nicholls	110 Mr. Peter Harrow	94 Steve Rogerson
28 ½r	11 Eve	72 Marcus Rowland
66 Michael Abbott	12 John	76 Sally Rowse
5 Brian Aldiss	25 Julian Headlong	77 Yvonne Rowse
63 Brian Ameringen	97 Julian	42 Jamie Scott
64 Emjay	10 Dave	57 Mike Scott
92 William Armitage	113 Penny Hicks	59 Alison Scott
104 Margaret Austin	20 Martin Hoare	22 Harpal Singh
69 Barbara-Jane	109 Dave Holmes	102 Martin
27 Minnow	99 Rob Jackson	103 Melica
81 Austin	21 Al	112 Luke Smith
6 Tony	71 Steve Jones	65 Adrian Snowdon
7 Helena	86 Sue Jones	15 Doug S
23 Claire Brialey	40 Tim Kirk	3 Kari
78 Pat Brown	111 Dave Langford	16 Richard
79 Vernon Brown	13 Alice	44 Tim Stannard
60 Steven Cain	14 Steve	73 Neil Summerfield
61 Jonathan Cain	39 Peter Mabey	31 George Ternent
8 Cat	100 Sue Mason	32 Linda Ternent
95 Eddie Cochrane	52 Pat McMurray	33 Calvin Ternent
18 Serena	53 Julie McMurray	70 Markus
17 Julia Daly	37 Mali Perera	68 Dave Tompkins
82 Christine	90 Pauline E Dungate	89 Tobes Valois
83 Michael	91 Chris Morgan	56 Jim Walker
85 Steve Davies	101 Johnny M	75 Peter Wareham
84 Giulia DeCesare	62 Caroline Mullan	34 Gerry Webb
9 Theresa Derwin	4 Phil	35 Alan Webb
55 Paul Dormer	51 James	88 Gary S Wilkinson
38 Steve	46 Omega	19 John Wilson
54 Roger Earnshaw	47 Murphy's Lawyer	67 Anne Wilson
105 Martin Easterbrook	48 Hal Payne	80 Caro
87 Sue Edwards	49 Jodie Payne	29 Alan Woodford
58 Flick	36 Mali Perera	30 Anne Woodford
74 Gwen Funnell	106 Rog Peyton	
50 Ron Gemmell	107 Catherine Pickersgill	
43 Angela Goodfellow	108 Greg Pickersgill	In PR2, your name
41 Niall Gordon	24 Mark Plummer	could go here.
96 Steve Green	45 Roger Robinson	

Doug S's Fun Page

Here is a picture of Novacon's publication supremo, Doug S, telling Julia that there's no need to be scared of all the white space on the inside pages of Novacon 45's PR1.

Why not colour it in!



Word Search

P L E A S E X X X X
 X X X X U X B X X X
 X X X X P L E N T Y
 X X X X P X E X X X
 L O V E L Y R X X X
 X F X X Y X X X X X

Cunningly concealed in the grid above are six words that can be re-arranged to show a vitally important part of Tony's negotiation with the hotel.

See if you can reveal the hidden contract term!

General Knowledge

Tick the correct boxes.

- I am already a member of Novacon 45
- I will be sending a membership form to Steve shortly

Nokudos

		5			
				5	
5				5	
	5				
				5	

Did you know that in a regular Sudoku puzzle, every row and column, and every 3x3 square, adds up to 45?

In this simpler puzzle, just place a 5 in every square to get the same result! We've put a few in to get you started.