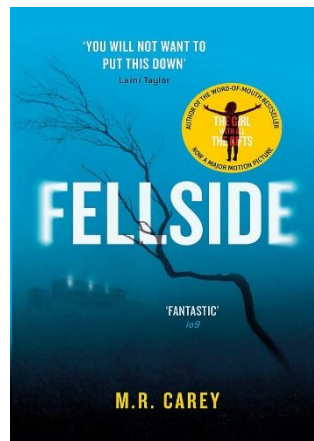
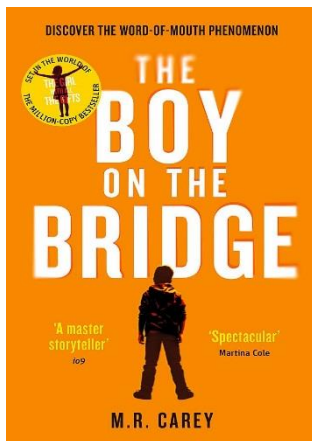


NOVACON 49

PROGRESS REPORT 2

8 – 10th November 2019
Nottingham Sherwood Hotel



Guest of Honour Mike Carey

The Annual Convention of the Birmingham Science
Fiction Group

COMMITTEE

Chair	Steve Lawson	chair@novacon.org.uk
Hotel Liaison, Dealers and Beer Memberships & Hotel Booking	Tony Berry	dealer_booking@novacon.org.uk
Treasurer	Steve Lawson	membership@novacon.org.uk
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Secretary	Maggie Standage- Bowles	socialmedia@novacon.org.uk
Committee Member	Cat Coast	secretary@novacon.org.uk
STAFF	Alice Lawson	
Art Show	Serena Culfeather John Wilson	artshow@novacon.org.uk
Additional Publications	Gary Starr	

A WORD FROM OUR CHAIR

Welcome to PR2. Nice to see that you have got this far, so please continue reading. I am happy to say that we are on track to provide yet another instalment in the continuing saga that is Novacon. It would be impossible to run this, or any, convention without a good committee and volunteers, both of which I am happy to say we have, as well as a great Guest of Honour, **Mike Carey**.

We are also pleased to announce that the Honorary President of the BSFG, **Christopher Priest** will be attending the convention as well as our guest from last year, the fabulous **Chris Beckett**.

On a sad note, we are sorry to announce that we have lost two of our long-standing staff members, **Al Johnston** and **Martin Hoare**.

Al was a member of staff for many years at Novacon, driving the van to collect art boards and helping set up the artshow. He was always happy to help with anything needed and will be sorely missed. Many of you will remember seeing him take pictures around the convention. He managed to capture people relaxed and his photos were amongst the best I have ever seen. We are planning to have a display of his photos, so if you have any that Al took that you particularly liked, please bring them along.

Martin was our tech guru for many years. Always ready to find a solution to a problem. He was also the person most conventions turned to when they needed a real ale bar sorting. Always happy to impart his vast knowledge of beers, my main memory of Martin will be in his white lab coat “testing” the merchandise at many conventions.



They will both be missed and Novacon will be that bit sadder for their passing.

In the meantime, I look forward to seeing you at Novacon.

Steve Lawson

HOTEL INFORMATION

The Nottingham Sherwood
Hotel
Mansfield Road,
Nottingham
NG5 2TB



Firstly, this is the usual reminder to book your hotel room now, if you haven't already. If you don't have a hotel form you can download one from the website (www.novacon.org.uk).

Rooms are £49 per person per night for a double/twin room
£67 per person for a single room

There are also a limited number of family rooms (2 adults and 2 children) available.

IMPORTANT: If for any reason you need to cancel your hotel room (or don't turn up for any reason), be aware of the hotel's policy. For any cancellation that is **less than one week** before the convention, the hotel reserves the right to charge you for one night's stay. Please bear that in mind.

As mentioned in PR1, the hotel has a new name and is under new management. We have been assured that most things should stay the same. The **good news** is that the hotel expects that most bedrooms will have been refurbished by the time of the convention. The **other news** is that rather than check in at the reception desk, members of staff will have hand-held devices to

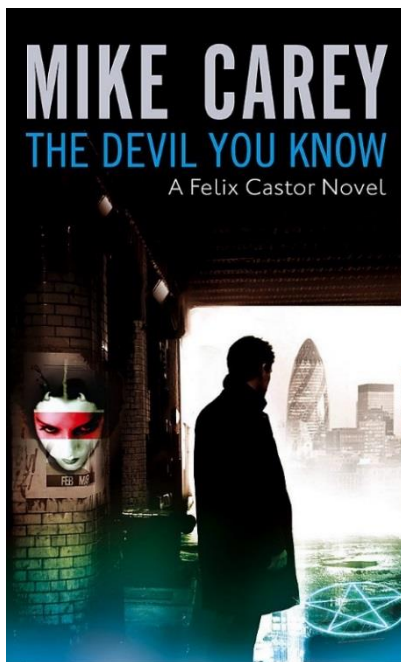
use to check you in. We'll have to wait and see whether that is an improvement or otherwise.

There will be the usual Sunday evening Banquet and Beer Tasting. The hot buffet meal is chosen by our Guest of Honour and you **MUST** buy a ticket for it by 12 noon on Sunday. If you just want to drink the beer, you can either bring 3 bottles/cans of interesting beer to registration to get your beer badge or just buy one for £6. A selection of soft drinks will be available to everyone free of charge

BUT I DON'T LIKE URBAN FANTASY - (DAMN YOU MIKE CAREY!) Peter Harrow, Esq

I am fairly set in my ways; I like my Science Fiction hard and my Fantasy epic. With the latter of course it started with Tolkien and carried through to Raymond Feist, Terry Brooks and of course George R.R. Martin. If a fantasy novel didn't have a map in it then I didn't want to know, and I was happy that way.

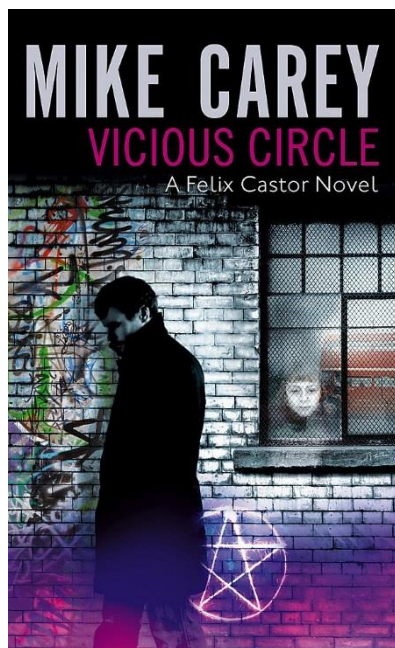
Then I met this thoroughly nice chap at one of the Fantasycons in Nottingham; he was doing a signing session so I humoured him and bought one of his books. It was the **DEVIL YOU KNOW** and the thoroughly nice chap was Mike Carey. I was pushed for something to read on way home to Sheffield, so I started it because I liked the cover art and had nothing better to read. All are absolutely terrible reasons to buy and read books.



I stayed up all night and read the entire thing. During my lunch break on the Monday I popped over to Waterstones (I worked just opposite Sheffield Waterstones in the Town Hall at the time, in the basement right next to the Dalek, but that's another story) and bought VICIOUS CIRCLE. I met John Richards at the pub on the Wednesday and pulled out my copy of DEVIL YOU KNOW as I was giving it a re-read. John pulled his own copy out of his voluminous bag and we both started raving about it. John Richards being a comics aficionado, of course knew all about Mike's previous work in the field of comics writing, to which I was oblivious. We both came at the same book from different directions and both had loved it and the world that it portrayed.

Then the depression set in; I had caught a good author at the beginning of his series rather than the end and it was a drip, drip, drip of waiting for the next book, then the next and so on, rather than the exhausting binge of going through the entire series. Brief interludes of joy with crushing months or even years of wait between books. I am still waiting for Book 6 after 10 years (come on Mike there is always more story to be told, you are a fantasy writer for goodness sake, you should be on the fourth trilogy or prequels by now), and I still hold out hope no matter how deluded people think I am.

It turned out however that Felix Castor was a gateway drug which led to Harry Dresden, October Daye and Peter Grant. I still like my fantasy novels to have a map in them, however it is now the Google Maps of Chicago, San Francisco and of course

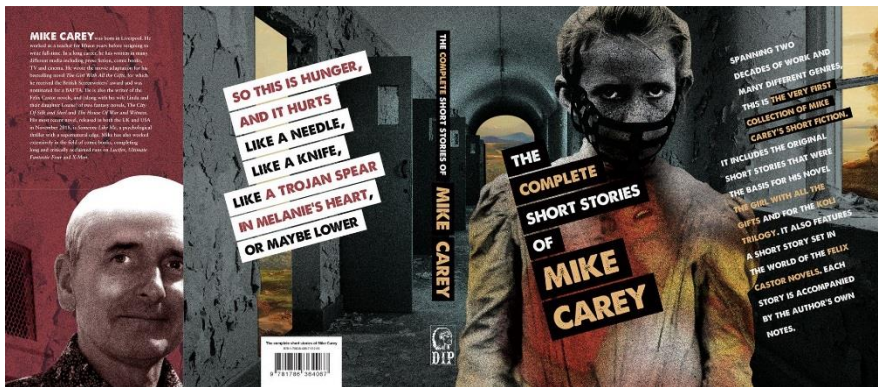


London, rather than something with "Here Be Dragons" on it.

Mike and Felix got a middle-aged, white, middleclass lawyer to change his mind and broaden his horizons whether he liked it or not. Damn you Mike Carey!

“Peter Harrow, Esq, has been attending Novacon for over a decade and in that time has won far too many free memberships in the raffle. A past Co-Chair of Eastercon and one of the founders of the Asylum, he is intent upon bringing steampunk to the wider SF and Fantasy fandom, whether they like it or not.”

THE COMPLETE SHORT STORIES by Mike Carey



In addition to the bibliography listed in PR1, Mike Carey had a new book released in July 2019. As it says on the cover, this is a collection spanning two decades of work and many genres. **THE COMPLETE SHORT STORIES** is published by PS Publishing and is available as either a trade paperback or as a limited edition signed slipcase set.

The collection includes the original short stories that were the basis for **THE GIRL WITH ALL THE GIFTS** novel and his upcoming *Koli* trilogy (which starts with **THE BOOK OF KOLI**

due out from Orbit in April 2020). It also features a short story set in the *Felix Castor* world. Each story is accompanied by the author's own notes.

Available from PS Publishing at www.pspublishing.co.uk/

Trade Paperback £12.99 / ISBN 978-1-786364-06-7

Limited edition. Signed slipcase (200 copies) £45 / ISBN 978-1-786364-07-4

CODE OF CONDUCT

The final form of the Code of Conduct will be fixed a couple of months before the convention. It will be published in PR3, the Programme Booklet and on the website. The most salient point at the moment is that there is an expectation that all members of Novacon agree with and accept the following three points. By taking a membership of Novacon 49, you signify your consent to be bound by that Code of Conduct.

1. They understand the Novacon Code of Conduct.
2. They accept the validity of the Novacon Code of Conduct.
3. They agree to be bound by the terms of the Novacon Code of Conduct, in the iteration that would be in force at the time of Novacon 49.

ON FANTASY FICTION **by Garry Kilworth**

We are living in an age of marvels. Those of you who sit down to read any anthology of short stories dealing with some kind of fantasy have recently become surrounded by devices that allow us to access audio-visual illusions. I am talking of television, film and computers. In the case of interactive computer games, we can even become involved and influence the outcome of the tale. We can follow the quest for treasure, or take part in it, become one of the searchers. This can be a wonderful and exciting experience.

However, because these new forms of entertainment are quicker and easier than reading, because they reveal too much,

they can just as swiftly become boring. Thus, fantastical new creatures are in demand all the time: even as we grow tired of last year's techno-wizardry we are looking around for something fresh to enchant us. They come and they go, absolutely magical for a time, but losing their lustre and glamour as quickly as they captivated us.

It's my belief that to starkly reveal our folklore creatures in audio-visual games we lose much of the mystery. These beings fascinate us as they did our grandparents because in the written word we keep them in the shadows, half-hidden from us, never really showing them completely in their full forms or colours. In print they remain in the twilight of the distant past, far from a world of devices and machines, and haunt us on the edge of our memories.

In our sensible moments we know that giants, dragons, elves, trolls, goblins and all the other mythical figures of fantasy tales are not real. Yet they must be vitally important to us or they would not have survived in our fiction. After all they have been with us from the stone age era, and certainly since THE ODYSSEY and through to SCHEHERAZADE. Mythological creatures and folk lore tales are or have been an undeniable part of every culture on the Earth.



If we did not need such beings, we would not write about them or want to read about them. We would cut them out of our stories and forget them. After all, if they are not important to us, what would it matter if we burned all the stories in which they appear and wiped them from our minds?

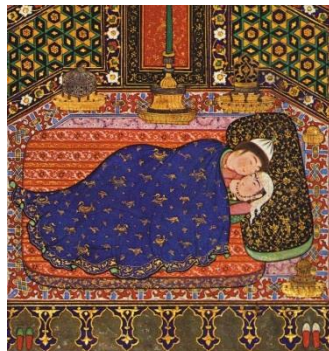
It would only matter if we felt we would lose something valuable by doing so; something we cannot properly name but

know is essential to us; some magical world just out of reach, some land within the shadows, some half-forgotten realm where strange beings sit and ponder on whether humans are real creatures or whether they have been invented by storytellers.

When we open the pages of a story we are going in search of those creatures. (At the same time, they in turn are searching for us, for they need you and I as much as we need them). We go on a voyage of discovery, into their various worlds, looking for excitement and adventure, not knowing whether around the next corner the heroes and heroines with whom we travel might meet some adversary. Sometimes our companions have to use magic, or trickery, or even force to overcome the odds. We are tied to them through the story, so their fate becomes our fate for the unfolding of the tale. We need them to succeed in their quest because we are with them and want to win too.

The quest does not need to be a physical one, travelling over land and sea, over mountains and through forests, to reach the desired object. It might be a spiritual quest, where the hero or heroine goes on a search for something missing within themselves - love, kindness, happiness - and becomes a better person at the end of the trail. Always, though, something wonderful happens on the road. Some marvellous creature shows us the path, or lights the way in the darkness, or gives us the strength to find courage in ourselves.

I have always loved reading fantasy stories because they come from deep within us, below our everyday ordinary thoughts, from some misty hidden sea of dreams. They take me closer to the soil, to the roots of the natural world, to the pungent woody, mossy, mushroomy, leafy mould out of which we first came onto the earth. Never, in this age of technology, has there been a more



PENGUIN CLASSICS

Tales from the Thousand and One Nights

urgent need to cling on to the creatures who live in the hollows of rocks, in the dark holes of trees, in the remote valleys and high mountains. These things are inside us, unlike the technological wonders which remain outside, and we can only find our way down to them through tales of wonder.

When you hold in your hands a book of fantasy stories what you have is a map and guidebook to fantastic places, weird landscapes, strangely familiar creatures.

Virtual reality is with us, we cannot send it back from whence it came, nor should we want to. Everything has its place in the world, whether newcomer or with us since the beginning of time. All should be treasured equally and we should not put aside one because the other has arrived. We need new fantasy fiction just as much as computer games. There are dark forests in our souls, full of fabulous beasts and exotic beings, and we should go inside and look for them occasionally.

That's what fantasy stories are for, to help you find your way into your dreams. © Garry Kilworth, 1996.

(Originally written as a Foreword for an anthology edited by Mike Ashley, published by Robinson Books).

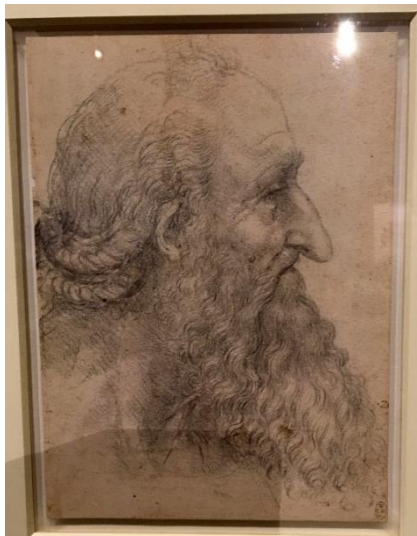
Garry Kilworth has been a professional sf and fantasy writer for over 40 year. He has won or been shortlisted for many awards during his writing career including winning the World Fantasy Award (Novella) and the BSFA Award. His most recent work is a collection of short stories to be published by PS Publishing entitled 'Elemental Tales' in which each story has at its heart a metal element.' Garry will be attending this year's Novacon.

LEONARDO DA VINCI – 500 Years Anniversary

In PR1 I talked about 2019 being the 50th year anniversary of Apollo 11's successful landing on the Moon and in July there were many events and celebrations of this event.

However, 2019 is also a significant anniversary year for another major figure important to science and imagination, as it is the 500th year since the death of Leonardo Da Vinci.

Leonardo was an Italian polymath who lived from 1452 to 1519. He is probably most well-known to the general public for his famous paintings such as the *Mona Lisa* and *The Last Supper* but only about 15 of his paintings survive (“about” as there is some dispute about the attribution of some of the works). As well as his artistic works, Leonardo was also a scientist, inventor and engineer. Many of his thoughts and plans in these fields are detailed in his various notebooks and drawings.



As well as being a well-regarded painter, he was also valued and employed as a sculptor, architect and an engineer during his lifetime; devising moveable barricades to protect Venice from attack, a scheme for diverting the river Arno, and for canals in Lombardy and the Loire region of France. Whilst some of his designs were clearly not practical at the time, he could almost be seen as an early science fiction enthusiast. He produced plans for an animated robot knight, an armoured car, scuba gear and a giant crossbow to name but a few. He also beat Jules Verne by several centuries with his sketches of a submarine warship!

He was also fascinated by flight and many of his designs reflect that interest. These included a parachute, an early version of a helicopter (ie a flying machine which used a screw to lift it into the air) and another flying machine with flapping wings (an “ornithopter”).

As well as his inventions and paintings he also made detailed and accurate anatomical drawings, especially of the human body, which were well ahead of his time. He also studied and made notes on other “scientific” subjects such as botany, palaeontology, astronomy and cartography.

To celebrate the anniversary, 144 of his drawings from the Royal Collection have been put on display. These drawings became part of the Royal Collection during the reign of Charles II and this is a unique opportunity for the public to see many of them for the first time. From February to May, 12 simultaneous exhibitions were on display at various museums around the UK. I was lucky enough to visit the selection on display at Birmingham Museum and the astonishing detail and intricacy of these drawings is incredibly impressive.



The various individual sets have now all moved and will appear as part of two larger exhibitions: the first is of over 200 of his drawings and is at The Queen’s Gallery, Buckingham Palace, London until the **13th October**; the second is of 80 drawings and is at the Queen’s Gallery, Palace of Holyrood House, Edinburgh **from 22nd November to 15th March, 2020**. The exhibitions will feature various subjects and a range of the different materials he used which range from pen and ink, watercolours, chalks and metalpoint. It also includes two sheets of what appeared to be blank pages but which under ultraviolet light show drawings which had become “invisible” over time. Details of how to book and prices can be found at <https://tickets.rct.uk/>

Carol Goodwin

Photographs taken by Carol Goodwin

DEALERS TABLES

Dealers' tables (6 ft) are available for £20 for the weekend. Dealers normally have to be a member of the convention but if you just want to come for the day, we can talk about this too. Either way contact Tony at the email address on Page 2

CONVENTION TABLES

These are free to anyone who is running a convention. Contact Tony for reservations.

ART SHOW

If you want to show your art it is free to convention members, but you will need to reserve space. So, contact us to discuss what you need and so that we can do a little planning. If you have any questions related to the art show, please contact Serena or Tony.



BIRMINGHAM SCIENCE FICTION GROUP
The Midlands' premier SF and genre fiction group

Image: Stefan Keller <https://pixabay.com>

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Visitors always welcome, come along to our next meeting

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NOVACON 49

1. Mike Carey
2. Chris Beckett
3. Adrian Tchaikovsky
4. Steve Lawson
5. Tony Berry
6. Cat Coast
7. Carol Goodwin
8. Eve Harvey
9. John Harvey
10. Alice Lawson
11. Douglas Spencer
12. Magdalen Standage-Bowles
13. Gary Starr
14. Serena Culfeather
15. John Wilson
16. Dave Lally
17. Steve Jones
18. Richard Standage
19. Steve Rogerson
20. Dave Tompkins
21. Peter Cohen
22. John Bray
23. Chris Stocks
24. Ron Gemmell
25. Rob Jackson
26. Tim Kirk
28. ½r
29. Harpal Singh
30. Harry Payne
31. Omega
32. Hal Payne
33. Jodie Payne
34. Steve Davies
35. Giulia De Cesare
36. Marcus Rowland
37. Neil Summerfield
38. Brian Ameringen
39. Caroline Mullan
40. Emjay Ameringen
41. Michael Abbott
42. Anne Wilson
43. Niall Gordon
44. Dave Hardy
45. Claire Brialey
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48. Julia Daly
49. Roger Robinson
50. Pat Brown
51. Vernon Brown
52. Alan Woodford
53. Anne Woodford
54. Jamie Scott
55. Tony Rogers
56. Steve Dunn
58. Morag O'Neill
59. Margaret Austin
60. Martin Easterbrook
61. Al Johnston
62. DC
63. AC
64. Bridget Wilkinson

65. William Armitage
66. Vanessa May
67. Adrian Snowdon
68. Michael Davidson
69. Christine Davidson
70. Simon Beresford
71. Peter Wareham
72. Gwen Funnell
74. Gerry Webb
75. Mali Perera
76. Alan Webb
77. Pauline Morgan
78. Chris Morgan
79. Sue Edwards
80. Dave Hicks
81. Penny Hicks
82. Paul Dormer
83. Steven Cain
84. Alison Scott
85. Jim Walker
86. Roger Earnshaw
87. Laura Wheatly
88. Pat McMurray
89. Julie McMurray
90. Hazel Ashworth- West
91. Yvonne Rowse
92. Ian Sorensen
93. Fran Dowd
94. John Dowd
95. Peter Harrow
96. Helena Bowles
97. Judy Perrin
98. Barbara-Jane
99. John Richards
100. Maerryn Richards
101. James Odell
104. Peter Wilkinson
105. Stan Nicholls
106. Anne Nicholls
107. Sue Jones
108. Helen Gould
109. Mike Gould
110. Bernard Peek
111. Mary Peek
112. Peter Buck
113. Alison Buck
114. Martin Hoare
115. Sally Rowse
116. Wendy Smith
117. Chris Priest
118. Nina Allan
119. Mike Scott
120. Tobes Valois
121. Fritz Urban Gunnaesson
122. David Tamlyn
123. Eira Short
124. Cuil Short
125. Smuzz
126. David Laight
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128. Pete Wright
129. Anne-Marie Wright
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131. Dominika Klimczak
132. Andy McKell
133. Jonathan Baddeley
134. Tony Keen
135. Greg Pickersgill
136. Catherine Pickersgill
137. Garry Kilworth
138. Annette Kilworth
139. Ian Maughan
140. Elizabeth Priest
141. Emma Leadley
142. Mike Leadley
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144. Jilly Paddock
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147. Andy Sawyer