

PICOCON 36

I N T R I G U E

THE KING'S SPEECH

Welcome Guests!

So, it's that time of the year again. Picocon is here, hurray! The initial pitch I was given for this convention was **Picocon On Fire**, however I put my foot down and now we have the marvellous **Picocon Intrigue** instead – A decision that I'm sure won't result in my deposition later today. My sincerest thanks to our Sofa and his Beanbag minion, Ed and Harry, for all their work: I've been assured that this'll be the best and least on-fire convention we've run in recent years. We have some fantastic guests lined up for you, a stash of the world's worst merchandise just asking to be dipped in liquid nitrogen and smashed with an oversized hammer, no fish anywhere, and I've been told there's a statue being erected in my honour.

It's been a good year for the society, and certainly one with less water than last year. We started using more social media platforms and had a large number of successful events. You'll no doubt see me around chaperoning Andrew Bannister, so feel free to approach me if you have any questions/complaints/urgent philosophical quandaries. Other than that, relax, take in the talks, play some games, smash tat, and have a great day! $\Psi\Phi$

HENRY WILD
ICSF Chair



icsf.org.uk



facebook.com/groups/ICSF.Imperial
Sci-fi talk, news and events, entertaining links.



@Picocon
Announcements and hype for our annual convention.



@Imperial_SciFi
Rejoice; we now have an official twitter.



@Imperial_SciFi
Visions from the library.

THE SOFA'S RAMBLINGS

This time last year, both Sofa and Beanbag shared a first name and many amazing jokes were to be had, and the committee screamed at us. Alas, that is no longer the case, so you won't be regalEd with too many puns. I should probably Harry up to the main content of this rant –

Welcome one and all to **Picocon 36 Intrigue!** I was asked to share a bit about the theme, our guests, and to add to the comedic tradition of what came before, so sorry in advance for failing.

Picocon Intrigue is so named because I was told I couldn't organise **Picocon On Fire**. This is a tragic loss to us all, for which I am sorry. **Intrigue** was my second idea for a theme for many reasons: the most important of which was a dice roll, and second-most important was the way in which it can mean so many different things. Is this Picocon spy themed? Lovecraft themed? Lovecraftian Espionage Erotica themed? Even I cannot truly give you an answer.

If you're tired of my terrible humour, may I interest you in some words on our Guests of Honour before you run away screaming? This year we are bringing you five GoHs to give intriguing talks, and to justify the entrance costs, so a warm thanks to Andrew Bannister, Lottie Bevan, Alexis Kennedy, Simon Morden, and Gavin Smith for all being more entertaining than I am, and for coming to speak here.

We'll also have many of our whacky and crazy traditions as ever! We most definitely will not be engaging in a fight with fish, and I most definitely didn't delegate the not-purchasing of these due to hating the smell of fish. One thing we **will** be doing is to smash some strange merchandise for charity, with the help of a hefty hammer and a vat of liquid Nitrogen.

So come and enjoy the madness (I promise it's not infectious,) and most importantly – have fun! **ΨΦ**

EDWARD PICKUP
Picocon Sofa

A WORD FROM THE BEANBAG

The first thing I would like to put out there is that this Beanbagship has not been at all what I expected. Our glorious Sofa this year was somewhat expected (at least by me) to be a tyrannical overlord, delegating tasks to me for the sake of it. Imagine my surprise when not only has he done a simply spectacular job putting together this year's Picocon, but I've also had to harass him into giving me tasks to do!

After scraping into the Beanbag position by accident in much the same way Ed did last year, I really wasn't sure what to expect, and as I write this I fear the worst (in terms of stress and amount of work) is certainly yet to come. The reassuring — if shocking — fact, though, is that I cannot think of a single person I'd rather have been working as the Sofa this year. Don't tell him I said that ...

Of course, I must also send a huge thank you to everyone who is volunteering to assist us on this magnificent day. No matter how far away you come from — whether that is Corellia, Runeterra, or even (shudders) UCL ... Welcome all to our most **Intriguing** Picocon yet! ΨΦ

HARRY BLACK

Picocon Beanbag

WHAT'S ON

To returning guests and Picocon first-timers alike: welcome! Here's a summary of what lies in your exciting day ahead:

Throughout the day will be talks from our illustrious **Guests of Honour**, as well as a Guest Panel followed by book signings.

The afternoon begins with the **Destruction of Dodgy Merchandise (DoDM)**, in which bidders contend for the right to rescue misguided pieces of merchandise from terrible death — or to personally exact their destruction by way of liquid nitrogen and giant hammer. All proceeds go to charity, in collaboration with RAG.

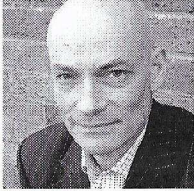
Join us during **Silly Games** and experience amusement and general hilarity. We aren't sure why you would want to subject yourself to the horror of the **Turkey Readings**, but uh, that's a thing that's happening, too. There is an event later in the evening and it is known as **Harmless Fun**, which does not at all sound vaguely ominous.

Imperial Tabletop & Gaming return this year with entertaining diversions — find them in Blakett 1004. Alternatively, search vendor stands in the Blakett Foyer for books and other things, or visit the cosy **Sci-Fi Library**, open throughout the day in Beit's West Basement.

SCHEDULE

-
- 09:00 Front Desk / registration opens
-
- 09:30 Guest Talk: **Lottie Bevan & Alexis Kennedy**
Blackett Building LT1
-
- 10:00
-
- 10:30 Guest Talk: **Gavin Smith**
Blackett Building LT1
-
- 11:00
-
- 11:30 Guest Talk: **Andrew Bannister**
Blackett Building LT1
-
- 12:00
-
- 12:30 **Lunch**
Imperial College Union, Beit Quad
- 13:00 **Destruction of Dodgy Merchandise**
Queen's Lawn (starting 13:15)
-
- 13:30
-
- 14:00 Guest Talk: **Simon Morden**
Blackett Building LT1
-
- 14:30
-
- 15:00 **Guest Panel**
Blackett Building LT1
-
- 15:30
-
- 16:00 **Turkey Readings & Silly Games**
Blackett Building LT1
- 16:30 **Tabletop & Video Games**
Blackett Building 1004
- 17:00 **Harmless Fun**
Queen's Lawn (starting 17:30)
-
- 17:30
-
- 18:00 **Pub Quiz**
Blackett Building LT1
-
- 18:30
-

GUESTS OF HONOUR



**ANDREW
BANNISTER**

Andrew Bannister grew up in Cornwall and spent far too much time reading science fiction. He studied Geology at Imperial College and went to work in the North Sea before becoming an environmental consultant. He now pretends to work in the construction industry while spending far too much time writing science fiction.

He lives in an ancient cottage in the middle of nowhere, next door to an abandoned iron mine. He has an excessive collection of vinyl records. He also likes cheese very much.

Andrew's Spin Trilogy (**Creation Machine**, **Iron Gods** and **Stone Clock**) is published in the UK by Bantam Books, in Germany by Piper and (from March 2019) in the USA by Tor in print and ebook formats, and by MacMillan as audiobooks. He finds all this rather exciting and is currently working on a novella and on his next trilogy.

Andrew is represented by the John Jarrold Literary Agency.



**SIMON
MORDEN**

Simon Morden, based in Gateshead, trained as a planetary geologist, realised he was never going to get into space, and decided to write about it instead. His writing career includes an eclectic mix of short stories, novellas and novels which blend science fiction, fantasy and horror, a five-year stint as an editor for the British Science Fiction Association, a judge for the Arthur C Clarke Awards, and regular speaking engagements at the Greenbelt arts festival.

Simon has written ten novels and novellas. The wonderfully tentacular **Another War** (2005) was shortlisted for a World Fantasy Award, and 2007 saw the publication of **The Lost Art**, which was shortlisted for the Catalyst Award. The first three books starring everybody's favourite sweary Russian scientist, Samuil Petrovitch (**Equations of Life**, **Theories of Flight**, **Degrees of Freedom**) were published within three months of each other in 2011, and collectively won the Philip K Dick Award. The fourth Petrovitch, **The Curve of the Earth**, was published in 2013.

In a departure from the usual high-tech mayhem, 2014 saw the arrival of **Arcanum**, a massive (and epic) alternate-history fantasy, which not only has flaming letters on the cover, but the story inside is "enthraling", "intelligent", "impeccably rendered" (**Kirkus**), and "engrossing", "satisfying" and "leaving the reader craving for more" (**Publishers' Weekly**). Which was nice.

Lottie's a producer and big advocate for women in games. She started out working on client-led indie titles and went on to join Alexis at Failbetter in 2015. She worked there on **Fallen London**, **Sunless Sea's** Zubmariner expansion and **Sunless Skies**. She's spoken internationally on production and game development.

She's been a games consultant for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and is now a BAFTA Crew member, a STEM Ambassador and a WISE Awards finalist for women in STEM.



**LOTTIE
BEVAN**

Alexis is an acclaimed writer and game designer. He founded Failbetter Games, where he built **Fallen London** and was creative director on **Sunless Sea** (plus **StoryNexus**, **Machine Cares!**, **Night Circus**, **Black Crown** et al). He speaks internationally at conferences and universities on interactive writing and narrative design.



**ALEXIS
KENNEDY**

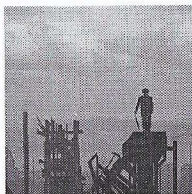
Gavin Smith hates writing about himself so he has chosen not to preserve the mystery. Only you can decide if it's working. Turn to page 80. He also misses Fighting Fantasy novels, though Deathtrap Dungeon was too hard.

Other than that he was born in Dundee in the same year that Iron Butterfly recorded **Inna-Gadda-da-Vida**. He has also lived in Camberley, Hayling Island, Portsmouth, Hull, Leamington Spa and is currently living a near feral existence in Leicester (if you see him in the streets he will write science fiction for sweeties). Anyone who has been to any of these places will understand why his fiction is like it is.

He has a degree in writing for film and a Masters in medieval history. **Veteran** is his first novel but he is patiently waiting for one of the 2.5 scripts that have been optioned to be turned into films.

He likes to travel and dive when he can afford it and in his free time he enjoys getting the s**t kicked out of him whilst practicing Silat. He is hoping that the book does well so he can buy a motorbike.

- He should not be approached after 8pm at conventions.
- It is true that he has never seen The Great Escape.
- His power animal is also a penguin.



**GAVIN
SMITH**

TABLETOP & GAMING

Imperial College Gaming is not officially affiliated with ICSF, but the Venn diagram has practically been a circle for the past couple of years. So we're back this Picocon to provide another set of distractions!

Our consoles will be set up in Blakett 1004 from 4pm into the evening, running some of our most popular games. Whether you're a hardcore gamer or just fancy something a bit different to do, drop in to the session and I'm sure you'll have a lot of fun – there's a good reason why video games are one of the leading causes of procrastination in the country.

For any Imperial students who have just realised how much they've been missing gaming from their lives, the Gaming Club meets regularly on Wednesdays from 2pm, with details distributed on the mailing list. 🎮

CAROLINE LARKIN

Chair, Imperial College Gaming

VENDORS

PAUL COUPER

A reader/collector of SF/Fantasy, selling at Picocon to clear duplicates built up whilst collecting and upgrading. My collection is now over 12,000 paperbacks, but still has many gaps: if anyone has collectables for sale, or wants to buy, or indeed just wants a chat, stop by during the day.

CLOCKWORK FIREBIRD DESIGNS

I am a self-taught, ever-evolving tailor, leather worker and costume maker with a penchant for creating monsters. I attend Live Action Role-Play (LARP) events and Anime/Comic conventions as both a trader and attendee on a regular basis. I've been doing leather work since 2008, and selling since 2011. I recall learning to sew when I was 6 years old and I've not really stopped since. Within the shop you may find armour, masks, trinkets, painted artworks, soft toys ... anything I bring to mind or feel like turning my hand to! I am still finding my feet, and I am always learning new techniques.

BOOKS

Several publishers are bringing our speakers' books to Picocon: Penguin Books (Andrew Bannister) and Orion Publishing (Simon Morden, Gavin Smith) will be in the Blakett Building Foyer in the afternoon. Discover there exciting new things to read, or pick up a copy for author signings.

QUEST OBJECTIVES

On your way in, you should have been assigned to one of three teams – **Detective Pikachu**, **Commander Riker**, or **Cthulhu** – and given a sticky badge to wear with newfound pride. If somehow you slipped through the net, or misplaced your badge, then go and politely berate the receptionists until they give you one.

On the next page, you will find a list of dangerous, potentially impossible items. Find any of these items, bring the evidence back to the front desk, and win fabulous prizes ... in the form of points for your team. Whichever team ends up with the most points will be declared the finest, the greatest, and most importantly, the winners!

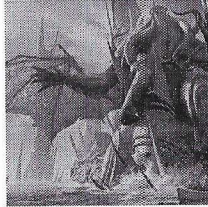
Now go for great justice.

This year's teams are (drumroll):



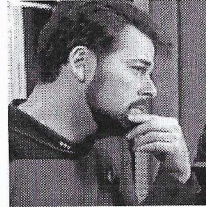
THE PIKACHU*

'Pika pika' is the sound of
~detective work~
happening.



THE CTHULHU†

Iä! Iä! Cthulhu fhtagn.



THE RIKERS

[swings leg over chair
and sits down.]

- Items can be submitted to the Front Desk for Fun Points™ after 11am.
- Pictures are (usually) not admissible.
- Objectives involving people must only be undertaken with the person's permission.
- The front desk reserves the right to keep the submitted items.
- Unless otherwise noted, each faction may claim an item on the list only once.

*Pretty sure the plural of Pikachu is still Pikachu.

†But what is the plural of Cthulhu?

LIST OF DANGEROUS, POTENTIALLY IMPOSSIBLE ITEMS

1	Little Green Pygmy Solders ^E	1	The solution to the next item on the list ^E
1	Hugs (per person)	-1	The solution to the previous item on the list ^E
30	Picocon	10	Donations of a themed plastic abomination
20	A non-ICSF fresher at Picocon	5	A demon bear (bonus points if fluffy)
Age+5	Ex-ICSF Chair ^M	5	A member of the Family of Blood
Age+5	Ex-ICSF Librarian ^M	5	A little fall of rain
Age+5	T-shirts from Picocons past ^M	5	Origami
10	Previous Guest of Honour ^E	20	Dinosaur origami
10	Half of one (1) Dave	8	A Non-Euclidean triangle
5	The blood of a Picocon first-timer	5	A snake eating its own snake tail, or snail.
20	The Mabbott set	5	Tribble
8	A phylactery	60	Tribble (functional)
80	Dave Clements' phylactery	5	A nanosecond
100	The Picocon Sofa, frantic	10	An accretion disk
50	The Picocon Beanbag, calm	30	A terrifying technological terror
15	Tea, Earl Grey, hot	3	A good hat
25	A good drink ^{FD E}	5	A correctly fitted top hat
10	A less good drink ^{FD}	5	Convincing closet cosplay
-5	Unsatisfactory drink ^{FD}	10	Convincing actual cosplay
5	Delicious blood ^{FD}	10	Pretty trinkets ^{FD}
15	Spirits from beyond	3	The start of something beautiful
1000	£100 ^E	30	The phone from a castle
7	The contents of my pocketses	20	The phone from a police box
5	Good news ^{FD E}	50	Happiness, $\geq 0.1M$ concentration
-5	Bad news ^{FD E}	$n(n-1)$	n Interlocking cogs (functional after being poked) ^M
1	A funny joke ^{FD E}	10	Out of place kerning
-1	A bad pun ^{FD E}	20	An unaired TV pilot
25	A competent barbershop quartet ^{FD}	20	An untelevised air pilot
5	Any song sung in the style of William Shatner	30	A control crystal (with demonstration)
50	A barbershop quartet in the style of William Shatner	40	Three quarters of a planck length
50	Any door to London Below	20	A demonstration of Zeno's paradox
3	Newly acquired merchandise		
5	A teleological proof of the existence of a higher power		

10	An aesthetically pleasing key ^{FD}	5	A working AI (demonstrated)
14	A clowder of one cat	10	A working AI (safely demonstrated)
5	The man they call Jayne (or his hat)	1000	Time machine (points were awarded 15th Feb 6pm, ICSF Library, password is "arpeggio")
-50	The source of the mysterious ticking noise	25	A swordfish
400	The World Turtle	35	A fishsword
800	The World Turtle, with orbiting bodies	10	A Swan
10	A surviving member of the Imperial Steampunk Society	4	Nerf Guns
50	A book ICSF lacks (and wants)	3	NERV guns
1	The light at the end of the tunnel	10	Lab stuff
5	A crowning moment of awesome	-50	Per fatality
17	Proof humanity's reach extends beyond its imagination	10	The Staff of Ra
70	A lost Doctor Who episode	3	Positronic brain
3	Famous last words (subject to checking)	3	Observable Brownian Motion
-1	Anything irrelevant ^E	5	A fluffy dragon
-5	Anything irrelephant ^E	7	A plasma generator
4	An Ed (picked up)	5	Ion cannon (demonstrated)
3	Galaxy	-20	Spontaneous combustion whilst dancing ^E
2	A practical application for General Relativity	5	A Henry ^E
4	Transcendent understanding	10	A Wild Henry
10	A point in the complex plane	10	A completed nonogram
		15	A completed crossword

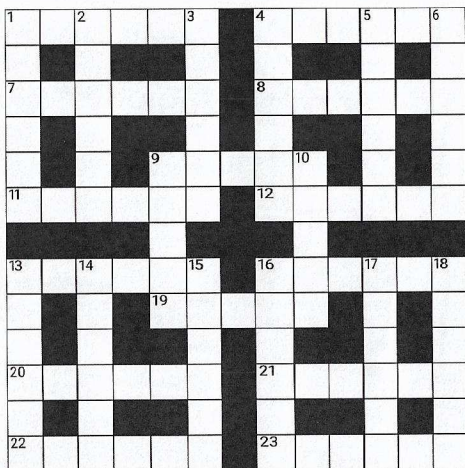
^{FD} Front Desk Person's Discretion[†]

^E This item may be claimed multiple times per faction ("each")

^M For each faction, the highest of their scores will be used

[†]This actually applies to everything; where it is noted, it indicates that you're unlikely to change anyone's mind with your cunning arguments.

CROSSWORD



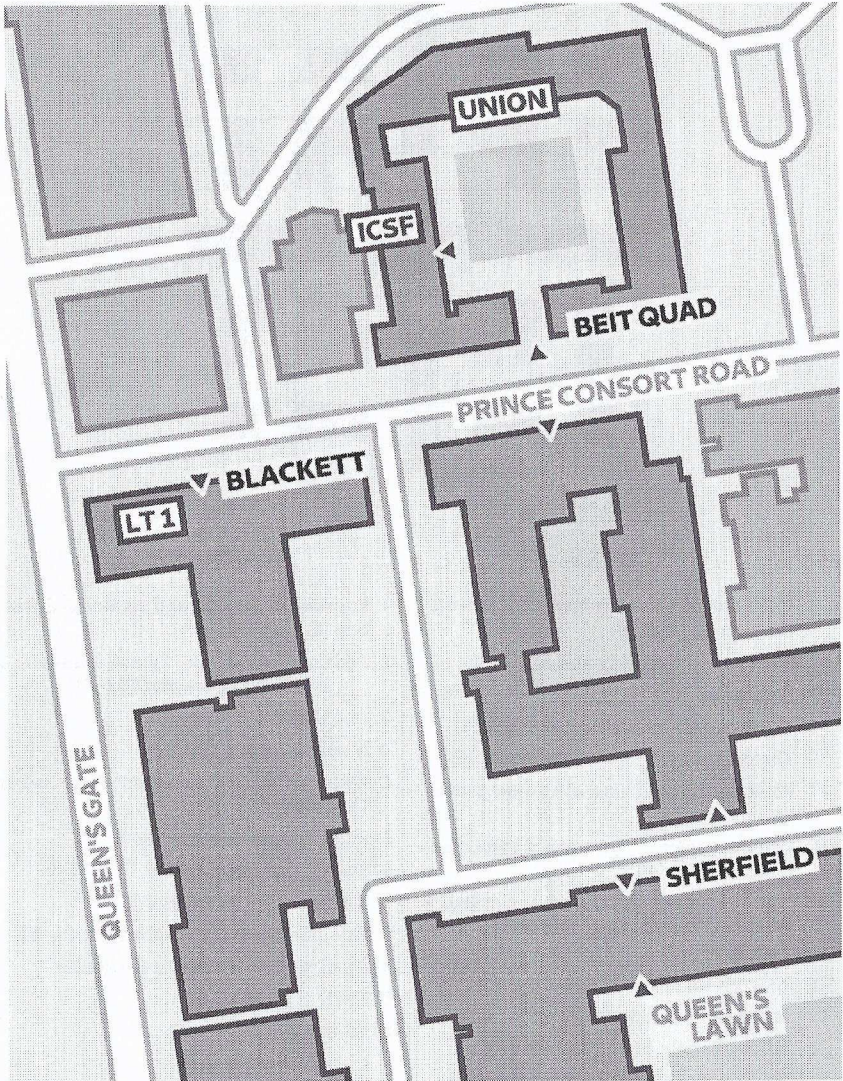
ACROSS

- 1 The Fantastic Four gained their powers through ___ rays (6)
- 4 Renowned Brightlady and Artifabrian (6)
- 7 Prepare for trouble, and make it ___ (6)
- 8 ___ Savage, immortal supervillain (6)
- 9 The only thing of worth on Arrakis (5)
- 11 What the Silmarillion makes most people (6)
- 12 The Pevensies ___ our world through a wardrobe (6)
- 13 Colloquial name for the setting of **Neuromancer**, **Count Zero** and **Mona Lisa Overdrive** (6)
- 16 Disney's version of **The Snow Queen** (6)
- 19 Japanese covert agent (5)
- 20 Joffrey Baratheon in a nutshell (6)
- 21 The Vogons turned the Earth to this (6)
- 22 Belgium's greatest reporter and adventurer (6)
- 23 221B Baker ___ (6)

DOWN

- 1 Founder of Thebes and creator of Super-boy (6)
- 2 Podrick Payne was Tyrion Lannister's ___ in **A Song of Ice and Fire** (6)
- 3 The Uncanny Valley (6)
- 4 A wizard's apprentice (6)
- 5 What aliens do to cows every other Thursday (6)
- 6 Roke, Azkaban, Númenor (6)
- 9 Star-___ of Cthulhu (5)
- 10 E.T. The ___-Terrestrial (5)
- 13 Tatooine has two of these each day (6)
- 14 Bradley Cooper's Space Rocket (6)
- 15 Hey! ___! : Navi (6)
- 16 Pining for the ___ (6)
- 17 Classic Apocalypse (6)
- 18 Jodie Foster is the ___ Doctor (6)

DIRECTIONS



NOTES AND STUFF