

EASTERCON 22 PROGRESS REPORT 1

WORCESTER IN 1971!

120 members join science fiction convention by June

By Peter Weston, Convention Chairman

NEXT YEAR'S Easter convention will be held at the Giffard Hotel, Worcester, a location chosen after exhaustive (or do I mean exhausting?) investigation of very nearly every other large hotel in the Midlands.

The Giffard was built in 1967, and is a six-storey block with an adjoining multi-storey car-park, in the centre of the town facing the 14th Century Cathedral. It can accommodate some 150 people, and has been entirely reserved for the use of the convention.

Our committee has taken some time to select a hotel; this has been because we wanted the right hotel for the convention. Now this is settled we can concentrate on organising the programme and other events in more detail. We want this to be the first truly international British S.F. convention, with visitors from Europe and from the United States. We hope to make a special effort to attract American fan and professional visitors.

I think it is extremely encouraging that even at this early date we have received 120 paid registrations. This could be the largest-ever British convention, and I see no reason why we should not reach the 300-mark with memberships and maybe attract 200 actual visitors on the weekend.

As many of you will recall, I left the London Sci-Con this year with a number of promises. We said that the 1971 convention would be held in either Birmingham or some other nearby Midlands town, and we also said that there would be a return to an emphasis on science fiction itself, and on S.F. fandom, a topic neglected during recent conventions.

How these promises finally work out will remain to be seen, but I am very pleased with the limited progress we have been able to make so far. I would like to take a little space to discuss the general arrangements which face convention committees, particularly with regard to choice of hotels, in order to give you some understanding of the nature of the problems.

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First, our committee. This comprises Vernon Brown of the University of Aston S.F. Group; Roger Peyton of the BSFA Management Committee; Bob Rickard and myself. You'll notice that we all live reasonably close together, which means that we can have frequent meetings to discuss convention plans.

We have also been able to take a joint look at the various possible hotels in the neighbourhood, and this is where delays have occurred. We have investigated hotels in Birmingham itself, Leamington, Coventry, Solihull, Leicester, Stratford, Wolverhampton, Bromsgrove and Oxford, before deciding upon the Giffard itself. I really think that we must have gone more deeply into the requirements of a convention at a hotel than any previous committee!

Perhaps we went too deeply into the problems; but at least we have encountered most of the obstacles now, rather than later in the year or - horror of horrors - at the convention itself. Memories of the Royal Hotel hovered over our shoulders, making us very cautious, and in the end most of the possibilities dismissed themselves. Some were non-starters. Others had good facilities but were out because of price or a 'difficult' management. One hotel in particular would have been almost ideal if the management had shown any real sign of actually wanting our convention.

To digress for a moment, I am a little disgusted with the apathetic attitude of most British hotels. I had supposed that the Eastercon would be an attractive financial 'package' to any hotel manager, but in fact it seems that they just don't want to know. To be told that they are not really interested in letting out 150 beds for 3 nights - over Easter, their quietest period - because "We don't make much money out of accommodation", or because "the staff look forward to the holiday" is hardly inspired salesmanship!

But as we progressed through our list, it became pretty obvious that fandom in the past has often tried to do things "on the cheap". But the sheer size of present conventions, and the generally inflationary situation of the hotels trade means that it is very nearly impossible to continue doing so. I am afraid that if fandom wants a comfortable, large hotel with a co-operative staff, then we shall have to pay economic prices.

Which does not necessarily mean that conventions must pay through the nose. At the Giffard we were offered very attractive special rates, and this combined with the nature of the hotel itself enabled us to make up our minds.

PRICES, PAST AND PRESENT

The Giffard is one of the Trust House Group, as was the Randolph at Oxford and the Royal at Yarmouth. We appear to have reasonably good references with the Group as a result (and as a matter of fact the Randolph was our second choice, one that would be popular with most attendees of the 1969 event, I imagine).

The hotel is a modern 6-floor block with really excellent convention facilities. It has one large, airy room for programme events and Banquet, and a number of smaller meeting rooms. The lounge is particularly spectacular, being a 120-foot expanse on the first-floor with a picture-window view of Worcester itself. Bedrooms are fully-equipped with radio, telephone, and all have fitted private bathrooms. The town is adjacent to the M5-M6 Motorways and is on a main rail line with a 2-hour train service to London.

But what will this cost, will probably be the question you will ask. I would like to take a few lines to discuss this point, because it is rather interesting to compare the 1971 prices with those asked at previous hotels.

In 1965 at the WorldCon at the Mount Royal, a single room cost 65/-. In 1970 at the Royal Hotel, a single room cost 45/-. We know what sort of standard we received in return, and yet for the Sci-Con, George Hay was specifically asked to find a "cheap" hotel after the Randolph in 1969.

The cost of accommodation at the Randolph at Oxford certainly did not deter anyone; some 160 people stayed at the hotel. Since the management offered to have the convention back in 1971, it was seriously considered by our committee and we were offered very similar prices to those in 1969.

These prices, for a single room with breakfast, were £4 plus 10%. Or a total of £4.8.0 per person per night. As an alternative rate we were offered a much more attractive full-board tariff of bed, breakfast, lunch and evening meal for £5.10.0 plus 10%, or £6.1.0 total. As a matter of interest, in 1969 some 90 people took full board, while 70-odd had bed & breakfast.

At the Giffard, by comparison, we will actually pay less. The rates for 1971, for single room with breakfast, will be £4 with no service charges. An alternative rate is available, for bed, breakfast and dinner, at £5 nett. However you look at it, you can spend up to 21/- for lunch and still come out ahead, and, as a bonus, all rooms at the Giffard have fitted bathrooms at no extra charge. Double & twin rooms are proportionately cheaper (see below).

To summarise, then, (and to any millionaires and Americans amongst us I must apologise for our excessive British concern with money), rates for 1971 will be as set out below. These include all service charges, etc, and take into account a general 10% increase in rates which is expected to apply to the UK Hotel trade from this autumn onwards:

Rates per person, all rooms with private bathroom

Single (bed & break.).....£4	Double/twin (bed & break.)....£3
Single (b & b, dinner)....£5	Double/twin (b & b, dinner)..£4

My only remaining fear is whether or not the Giffard will be large enough. Obviously the meeting rooms will accommodate more than 150 people, but so far as bedrooms are concerned it will be a case of first-come, first-served. There are 60 single rooms, and twin rooms will be offered to those who are prepared to share at the reduced prices. An overflow hotel has been arranged and will be available if required. Hotel booking forms will be sent to registered members of the convention only, later in the year.

PROGRAMME PLANS

In the absence of any plans that I know of for another British World Convention in the next few years (but my suggestion of Elmdon, site of the National Exhibition Centre, should be taken seriously), it is my intention to make the British Eastercon into a fully international event. With so much globe-trotting being done by science fiction people these days, I see no reason why we should not be able to attract a good number of American and European fans and professionals in 1971.

I would like those of you reading this who live outside England to think about the idea very seriously; not only will this be an enjoyable convention but the town of Worcester is in an extremely attractive part of our country should you want to take a European holiday next year.

So far as programme items are concerned, it is early days yet. However, Brian Aldiss of course will be Guest-of-Honour; there will be a Fancy-Dress Ball, a St. Fanthony ceremony, and a full-scale Banquet and presentation of awards. In addition there are plans for John Brunner to conduct a session for would-be writers, on "How to write SF", Ethel Lindsay to conduct an item on fandom, and Philip Strick to arrange and talk about films. We also hope to persuade a cinema to show 2001 as a late-night performance, and to get a speaker from NASA this year.

I would like to thank the former committee of the Sci-Con for their help so far, and their generosity in making a contribution to our funds. Those of you who have not as yet registered, please do so now. You will receive all convention literature, including programme booklet, even if you do not attend the convention. Registration is 10/- to the address shown. Postal orders, etc, made payable to: "22nd British Science Fiction Convention".

MEMBERSHIP LIST FOR EASTERCON 22, as of June 20th, 1970. (** address req'd)

1. Brian W. Aldiss	39 Peter Barrow	77 Diane Ellingsworth	
2. Gary Kluepfel	40 Diane Barrow	78 Ted Tubb	
3. Bill Burns	41 Mike Ashley	79 Harry Nadler	
4. Andrew Stephenson	42 Bob Smith**	80 Marie Nadler	
5. Dave Kyle	43 Keith Bridges	81 G.P. Cossato	
6. Ruth Kyle	44 Jill Bridges	82 John Brunner	
7. Norman Shorrocks	45 Martin Bullen	83 Marjorie Brunner	
8. Ina Shorrocks	46 Bob Shaw	84 George Hay	
9. Vernon Brown	47 James White	85 Norman Weedall	
10 Darroll Pardoe	48 Vic Hallett	86 Ted Ball	
11 Rosemary Pardoe	49 Ken Bulmer	87 Mark Adlard	
12 Peter Roberts	50 Pam Bulmer	88 Richard Doron	
13 Bryan Bird	51 Dan Morgan	89 Avril Barnes	
14 Roger G Peyton	52 Georgie Morgan	90 Anthony R. Lewis	
15 Peter R Weston	53 Archie Mercer	91 Susuan Lewis	
16 Eileen Weston	54 Jill Adams	92 Ethel Lindsay	
17 Gerald Bishop	55 Michael Moorcock	93 Tony Sudbery	
18 Roy Kettle	56 Frank Herbert	94 Waldemar Kumping	
19 Ken Eadie	57 Bob Parkinson	95 Graham Boak	
20 Phil Rogers	58 Jack Cohen	96 Harry Hodson	
21 Bob Rickard	59 Keith Freeman	97 Michael Kenward	
22 Mario Bosnyak	60 Wendy Freeman	98 Tim Stannard	115 Walter Gillings
23 Molly Auler	61 Eddie Jones	99 Alan Donnelly	
24 Phil Harbottle	62 John Ramsey Campbell	100 Richard Geis	116 Chas. Winstone
25 Pauline E Dungate	63 Jenny Chandler	101 Peter J Wilde	
26 Horst Evermann	64 Steve Moore	102 Peter Mabey	117 David Sellars
27 Jeff Hacker	65 Donald Wollheim	103 Frank Wyers	
28 Doreen Parker	66 James Blish	104 P.B. Williams	118 Phil Spencer
29 Roje Gilbert	67 Judy Blish	105 Jim Linwood	
30 F.J. Stewart	68 Bram Stokes	106 David Sutton	119 Martin Pitt
31 Arthur Cruttenden	69 Diane Lister	107 Carol Sutton	
32 John Newman	70 Jim Marshall	108 Paul Shackley	120 David A. Austin
33 Joan Newman	71 Tony Walsh	109 Ian Williams	
34 Daphne Sewell	72 Christine Priest	110 Stan Nicholls	
35 Jean Muggoch	73 Eric Briggs	111 Audrey Walton	
36 J. Michael Rosenblum	74 Alan Denham	112 David Redd	
37 Betty Rosenblum	75 Graham Hall	113 Dave Griffiths	
38 Howard Rosenblum	76 Dick Ellingsworth	114 E.R. James	