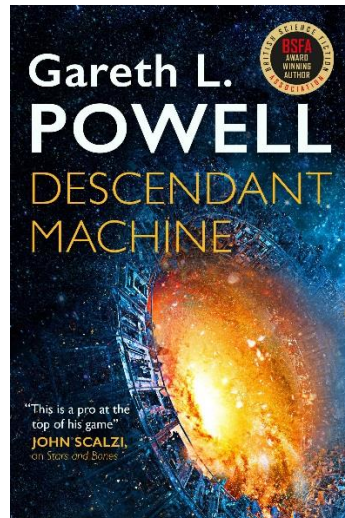
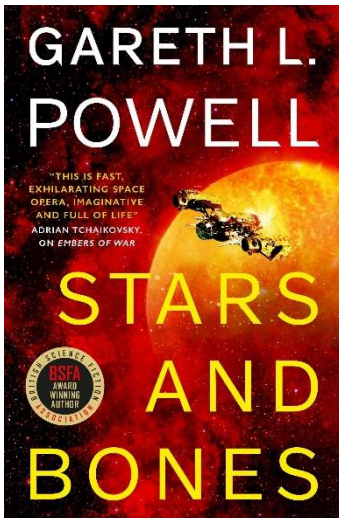




NOVACON 51

PROGRESS REPORT 2

Guest of Honour
Gareth L Powell



11 – 13th November 2022

Palace Hotel Buxton

COMMITTEE

Chair: Carol Goodwin
chair@novacon.uk

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Hotel_liaison@novacon.uk

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Art Show Logo/Website: Alex Storer
blog@novacon.uk

STAFF

Dealer Bookings: Tony Berry
dealer_booking@novacon.uk

Cover Images: Books 1 & 2 of The Continuance series

A WORD FROM OUR CHAIR



Welcome to PR2 – how time flies when you’re ... having fun? The committee are continuing to work hard, despite a blip earlier in the year when many of us finally succumbed to the dreaded Covid – though we are now all thankfully recovered, and are looking forward to seeing you back at the Palace hotel in Buxton again this November with our

great Guest of Honour, **Gareth L Powell**.

Unfortunately, there have been some changes on the Committee this year. Phoenix Alexander, who was running Social Media had to step down as he re-located to California. However, he will still be very much involved with Science Fiction as in his new role he will be responsible for the Eaton Collection of Science Fiction and Fantasy. Rather than try to replace him at this late stage, other committee members will hold the fort but if anyone wishes to volunteer for next year, they will be very welcome.

Similarly, we have not been able to find additional help to assist John Harvey with the website so progress has been slower than hoped though we hope to have an updated website soon.

Despite these hiccups, we are on track with the convention. There will be all the usual features including Programme, Dealers’ Room and the Art Show (back in its lovely light-filled room) and we look forward to seeing you in November.

Carol

HOTEL & CONVENTION INFORMATION



Palace Hotel Buxton
Palace Road
Buxton
SK17 6AG

Firstly, this is the usual reminder to book your hotel room now, if you haven't already. To book, please fill in the hotel booking form and send it to the address on the form. The form can be downloaded from the website (www.novacon.uk/n51/). Once complete, send it to Steve Lawson at the address on the form as soon as possible for processing. Please note on the form if you have any special requirements. In particular, although the hotel has a lift, as it is an old hotel some of the rooms still involve a few steps, so if this will cause you difficulties, please let us know and we'll pass it onto the hotel, who will do their best to accommodate you.

We are pleased that we have managed to keep the Room rates the same as last year and that Room rates include breakfast.

Convention room rates

Rooms are: £45 per person per night for a double/twin room
£60 per person for a single room.

There are also a limited number of family rooms (2 adults and 2 children) and a few accessible rooms. There is ramp access at the rear of the hotel for those with difficulty with steps. Please note if you have specific requirements, don't hesitate to contact the hotel directly at 01298 22001 option 6.



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



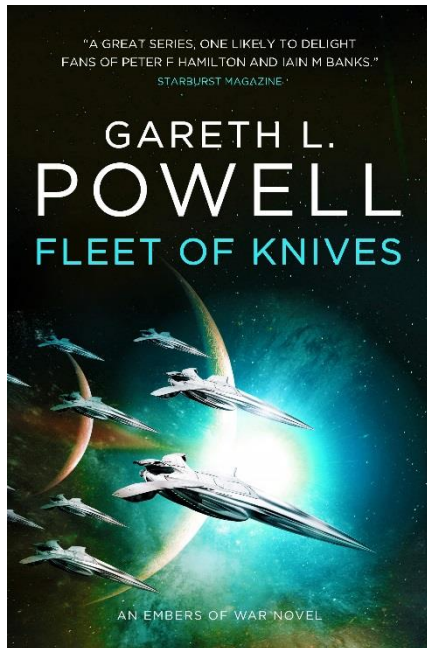
interesting beer to registration to get your beer badge or just buy one for £6. A selection of soft drinks will be available to everyone free of charge

For those who didn't attend last year, the town centre is only a short walk away. There are plenty of cafes, restaurants and pubs to choose from. There are also banking facilities, pharmacies and supermarkets nearby (Waitrose, Aldi & Sainsburys Local). More information can be found at www.visitbuxton.co.uk.

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.

FLEET OF KNIVES (Embers of War 2) – Reviewed by Carol Goodwin



This is the second novel in Gareth Powell's *Embers of War* space opera series. As in the first novel (*EMBERS OF WAR*) it concentrates on the intelligent spaceship, *Trouble Dog* and her crew. Unlike many SFF novels, the story is set not during but after a massive interstellar war. The characters are emotionally damaged by their actions during the war and this focus on consequences makes for an uncommon and more profound story than many other space operas.

In the first novel, *Trouble Dog* and her crew had joined the House of Reclamation, an organisation devoted to rescuing people in distress. During one of their rescue attempts, they awoke an ancient fleet of self-aware spaceships and *Trouble Dog* convinced them that humanity was worth saving.

As *Trouble Dog* and her crew embark on another mission, this time to rescue a group stranded on an ancient asteroid spaceship, the alien fleet starts to implement its mission to “protect” humanity from itself. Aided by a fugitive Admiral responsible for a major war atrocity, the fleet commences enforcing peace by confining people to planets and destroying any vessel or installation that possesses weaponry. Despite their former acquaintance, that unfortunately includes *Trouble Dog* and her crew.

As they attempt to retrieve the remaining members of the *Lucy's Ghost* crew from the asteroid, they have to contend with

multiple threats; ships from the fleet, an unknown alien menace which caused the crash of the *Lucy's Ghost*, and ships from the custodians of the asteroid (which is also an ancient spaceship), who regard it as a sacred relic.

The second book in a trilogy is always difficult as the author has to build on the events from the first novel and also set up things for a climactic conclusion in the third book. If handled badly, it can seem just like shuffling a lot of pieces around on a chessboard, which makes for a very dull read. Thankfully, this novel is very much not of that mould. It is a great story in its own right and really ratchets up the tension and pace.

As well as excellent storytelling and worldbuilding, it is the depth of characterisation that makes this book really stand out. The individuals are distinct and have realistic personalities and roles. I particularly liked that the non-human characters, such as the ship Minds and the alien engineer, Nod are clearly different yet still relatable. Events in the book have a real emotional impact on the individuals something which often gets forgotten in many space operas. The real costs to people of the events in the story also means that the reader cares far more about what happens to them. Also, although the fleet and the admiral are clearly the “villains” of the piece, the author takes the time and care to let the reader see some of their motivations and self-justification. This again makes for a more interesting and nuanced take than usual, and adds to the enjoyment of the book for me.

All in all, I thoroughly enjoyed this book and recommend it to anyone who likes a rare combination of thoughtful yet exciting SF storytelling.

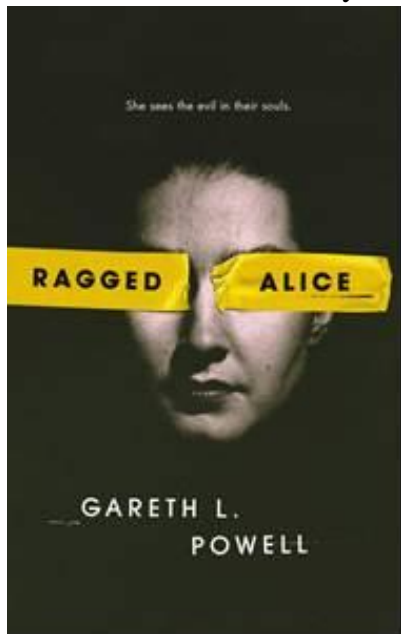
Published by Titan Books / 400 pgs / Ebook or paperback / ISBN 978-1785655210

***RAGGED ALICE* - Reviewed by Chris Morgan**

Not SF, this one, but a cross between police procedural and supernatural horror, set in a small seaside town in present-day Wales. The main character is DCI Holly Craig, only thirty-two

and back in the place where she grew up and hasn't seen since she left for London (college and the Met) fifteen years earlier.

The plot has a lot of murders, most with very nasty, ritualistic details. Are they being committed by the same person?



How are they connected with the DCI, whose mother was similarly killed when Holly was a small child, some twenty-five years before? How much old business is going to be resurrected in a place where everybody knows everybody else?

Powell writes well except for an annoying habit of changing point of view for the occasional sentence. His details of character and police procedure and his descriptions of the Welsh countryside are very well done. If you enjoy reading supernatural horror, you'll enjoy this. Will

Powell write another novel about his fascinating, flawed policewoman? I hope so.

The oddest fact about this novel is that it seems to have been published only in the US, despite its strong and very convincing Welsh setting. So there are several questions here to be asked of our Novacon 51 GOH.

Chris Morgan

Published by Tor.com / 202 pgs / Ebook or paperback / ISBN 978-1250220189

DEALERS' TABLES

Dealers' tables (6 ft) are available at £20. Dealers normally have to be a member of the convention but we are happy to talk about this. Also, we are open to discussion if you wish to only come for one day. Contact Tony at the email address on Page 2

COVID POLICY AT NOVACON

While there are no official government coronavirus restrictions at the moment, we cannot be clear about what the situation will be in November, or what the government or the venue will require then. Therefore, we can't produce a risk assessment or policy until much closer to the day. We are monitoring the situation and will liaise with the hotel as well. When we have clearer information, we will assess and inform you if any restrictions are needed.

CONVENTION TABLES

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

RIP Dave Tompkins

We've decided to abandon the usual art show report for PR2 for a tribute to our dear friend Dave Tompkins who passed away recently.

Not sure of the name? You would certainly recognise Dave. He has been instrumental in the design of many an art show in the UK and beyond for what seems like forever. He has been as much a part of the art shows as is the art and the artists and rarely didn't work through the night and up early again to get everything just right; he wouldn't accept anything short of perfect. It won't be a surprise to know he was a recipient of the Doc Weir trophy, an Eastercon award for those who work behind the scenes and give that little bit extra to the conventions.

Dave didn't just enjoy the engineering side of art shows, he also loved and appreciated art and was a collector himself. He enjoyed mixing with the artists and was always encouraging to



those new to exhibiting, happy to help them make the most of their work.



With an impish sense of humour Dave was also a very good teacher and mentor and was generous with his time. He was a teller of tales and having travelled widely for his work as well as to conventions, he was always interesting to listen to.

At Novacon, Dave liked to tease us for the rather “fluid” approach to layout planning in the art show and he was always happy to discuss our new and often rather odd ideas. His T-shirts were a good daily read and the familiar tune of his medication alarm meant he wasn’t far away. We shall miss him so very much. We will do something to celebrate Dave at this year’s Novacon art show although not sure what yet so if you have any ideas for this do let us know.

John Wilson & Serena Culfeather
(Photos courtesy of John and Serena)



MEMBERSHIP LIST AUGUST 2022

- | | |
|----------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Gareth L Powell | 36. Harry Payne |
| 2. Carol Goodwin | 37. Hal Payne |
| 3. Phoenix Alexander | 38. Jodie Payne |
| 4. Helena Bowles | 39. Martin Smart |
| 5. Serena Culfeather | 40. Melica Smith |
| 6. Steve Lawson | 41. Christine Davidson |
| 7. Helen McCallum | 42. Michael Davidson |
| 8. Alex Storer | 43. Vernon Brown |
| 9. John Wilson | 44. Pat Brown |
| 10. Tony Berry | 45. Morag O'Neill |
| 11. Alice Lawson | 46. Vanessa May |
| 12. Nick Mills | 47. Tim Kirk |
| 13. Marcus Rowland | 48. Chris Morgan |
| 14. Jim Walker | 49. Pauline Morgan |
| 15. Simon Dearn | 50. James Odell |
| 16. Luke Smith | 51. Roger Robinson |
| 17. Adrian Snowdon | 52. Mike Scott |
| 18. Anne Woodford | 53. Flick |
| 19. Alan Woodford | 54. Alan Bellingham |
| 20. Steve Dunn | 55. John Harvey |
| 21. Niall Gordon | 56. Eve Harvey |
| 22. John Coxon | 57. John Dowd |
| 23. Chris Stocks | 58. Fran Dowd |
| 24. Rob Jackson | 60. Angela Rosin |
| 25. Caroline Mullan | 61. Douglas Spencer |
| 26. Brian Ameringen | 62. Pete Randall |
| 28. 1/2r | 63. Jackie Burns |
| 29. Dave Hicks | 64. Colette Reap |
| 30. Peter Hicks | 65. Mark Plummer |
| 31. Cat Coast | 66. Claire Brialey |
| 32. William Goodall | 67. Eira Short |
| 33. Charlotte Bulmer | 68. Smuzz |
| 34. Jamie Scott | 69. Cuil Short |
| 35. Omega | 70. David Langford |

71. George Ternent
72. Linda Ternent
73. DC
74. Jean Thompson
75. Harpal Singh
76. Yvonne Rowse
77. Ian Sorensen
78. Sally Rowse
79. Ron Gemmell
80. Hazel Ashworth West
81. Steve Davies
82. Giulia De Cesare
83. Alison Scott
84. Steven Cain
85. Pat McMurray
86. Julie McMurray
87. Kate Solomon
88. Malcolm Davies
89. John Bray
90. David Cochrane
91. Claire Wardell
92. Henrick Palsson
93. Ian Roll
94. Mike Richardson
95. Sue Edwards
96. Alexander Clarke
97. Kevan Grayson
98. J Dianne Dotson
99. Katherine Franklin
102. Emjay Ameringen
103. Ian Maughan
104. Geoff Ryman
105. Esther MacCallum-
Stewart
106. Stephen Cooper
107. Bridget Wilkinson

108. Peter Harrow
109. Julia Daly
110. Neil Summerfield
111. Farah Mendlesohn
112. Edward James
113. Penny Hill
114. Laura Wheatly
115. Judith Mortimore
116. Paul Dormer
117. Sue Jones
118. Gary Swift
119. *Dave Thompkins*
120. Suzanne Barrett
121. Willow Cooper
122. Ian Warner
123. Alison Buck
124. Peter Buck
125. Tobes Valois
126. David Cartwright
127. Margaret Walty
128. Roy Harling
129. Michael Horsfield
130. Mary Horsfield
131. Bianca Greenhalgh
132. Charlie Sheppard
133. Robert Day
134. Simon Beresford
135. Christopher Jones
136. Noel Chidwick
137. Helen Gould
138. Terry Jackman
139. Peter Wareham
140. Gwen Funnell
141. Andy McKell