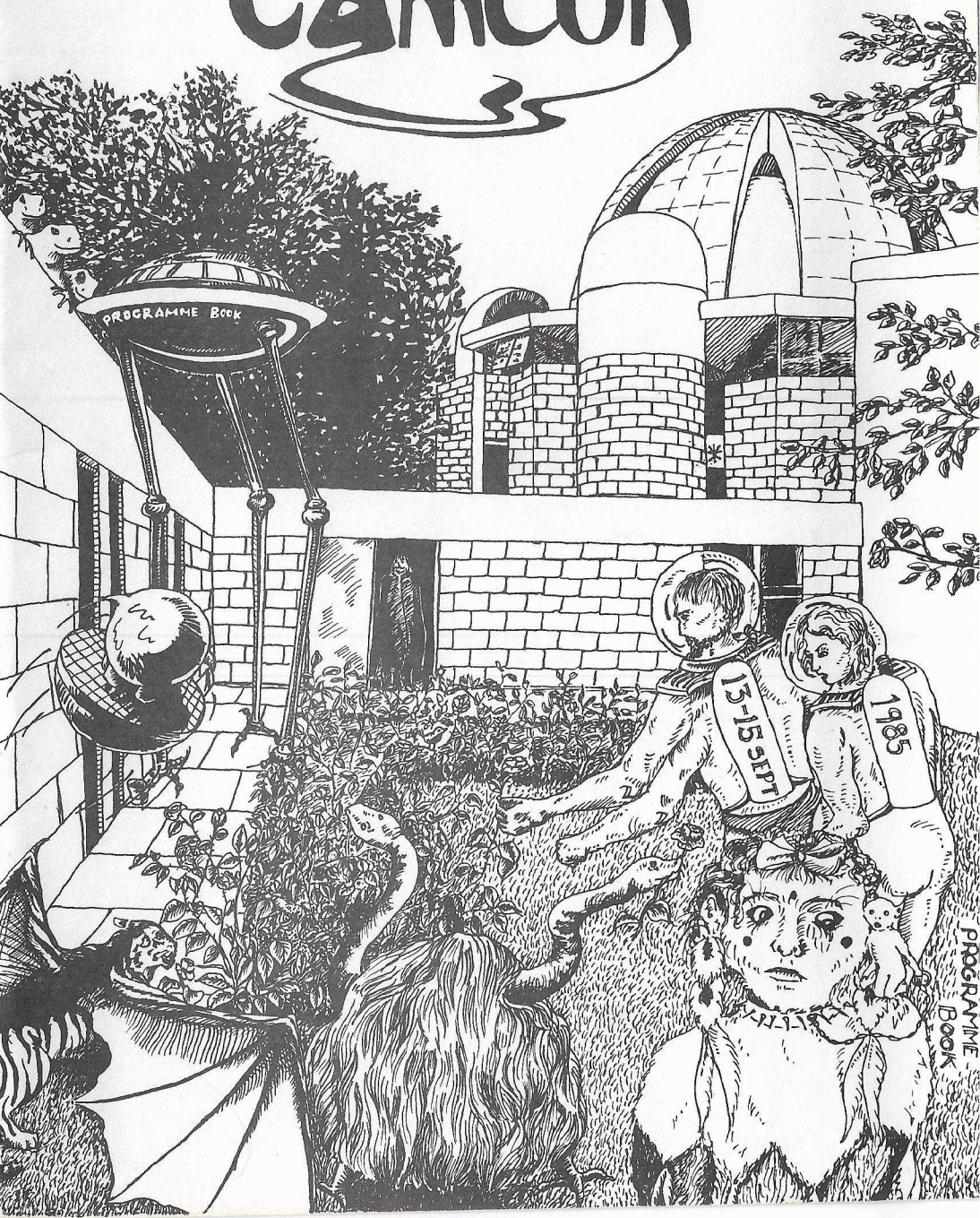


Camcon



PROGRAMME
BOOK

In the seventh month of the year of the belching penguin, the Jomsvikings gathered under one roof for a feast to end all feasts. Many even had taken time off from being in exile to attend and had brought with them a great multitude of The Men Who Cannot Say No Quick Enough and The Men Who Do Anything When Drunk. And so they gathered at a suitable market town by a bridge to eat their fill; sing appalling songs and drink too much.

For some time that great warrior and geld-exile, Bui-the-thick-enough-to-need-widened-doors had been conspicuously absent. Even the rumours about disappearing slave girls and the local mead shortage could not account for this. Something was obviously wrong. Bui's non-appearance at the feast caused some consternation among the toastmasters, whose job it was to see that the jam never ran out, since he had agreed to give a great oration about the quality of pine resin for the sealing of barrels. Every one else had said how much they wanted to hear this especially when Bui promised to bring a few barrels in to demonstrate. There was a low murmuring from the assembled company.

Suddenly Sigismund-the-Impatient stood up. "Vikings," he shouted, "this is just not good enough. We were promised Bui and what do we get? Rancid hot air from the fetid fire (since animal dung was still the only fuel in the Borg)."

"Seems like we've lost nothing," observed Sven-whose-tongue-cuts-like-acid-rain. "However, what is to be done?"

The toastmasters were lost for words and looked from one to another in search of inspiration (or was it Bui). No-one could think of anything to say or do. Things were looking disasterous. As if this was not enough a large pile of earth was forming in the middle of the floor.

"Regulation 4, Regulation 4," shouted the Tavernkeeper. "All residents must enter and leave by the marked doors. Not allowed, not allowed."

The mound of earth heaved and a furry head emerged. "My name," said the Head Gopher (for it was he), "is Consec Urity and I know where Bui may be found. In fact I will bring him here if I am allowed to wander around and be thoroughly annoying for the rest of the feast."

"OK," said the toastmasters seeing an easy way out.

So the Head Gopher disappeared and pretty soon returned with Bui who had been lying face down in a puddle in the dark so no-one could recognise him. And indeed Bui talked and the Vikings all agreed that it wasn't worth waiting for but they were easily placated by the barrel of resin sealed 'Old Hagar's Thrice-distilled Dragonbreath'. In fact after this barrel had done the rounds a multitude of well-satiated Jomsvikings could be seen lying comatose in every available room and corridor.

And the Head Gopher. Well he wandered round being a thorough nuisance, ordering everyone around 'till he was blue in the face. But the Vikings had drunk so much they didn't notice. So everyone went away happy.

Introduction

It's over a year now since a group of inebrates put together a con bid over breakfast and found themselves landed with organising the thing. Things have changed a bit since then, we've got the venue, the G.O.H., the films and constructed a programme - and learned a lot in the process. As with any other con committee we have had a number of problems ranging from the withdrawal of a film from circulation after we had announced it, to the seemingly amazing lengths that the Post Office went through to lose a number of important letters for us. Such are the problems you have to meet!

CAMCON is the result of a years hard work, of committee meetings that the chairman never seemed to be able to get to, of hours spent reading Tim's library trying to avoid deciding anything, of tramping round looking for printers, looking at colleges and wondering how we were ever going to get enough money to pay for everything. But that's all over now leaving only the hardest part to come.

We must thank those people who helped along the way:-

Ken Slater for putting us in touch with our Guest Of Honour.

John Christopher for being Guest Of Honour.

The BECCON Committee for help and advice.

Shelagh Lewins for the Programme book cover.

Everyone who agreed to run and be on programme items.

The contributors to this programme book (and Piggots for printing it).

Granada for lending us the video.

Finally thanks to everyone who gave us money without whom this con would not have been possible.

INDEX

Some Novel Applications of Catastrophe Theory - Mike Moir	3
John Christopher Speaks	7
John Christopher - A Bibliography	16
Programme	19
Chips Off the Pedestal - John Dallman	22
Cambridge - Tourists Paradise? - Steve Bull	25
Pub and Restaurant Guide	26
The CAMCON Committee	28
Jomsborg, An explanation	29
Membership List	29

Some Novel Applications of Catastrophe Theory

An Appreciation of the Adult Science Fiction of John Christopher

By Mike Moir

From the late '40s until the mid '70s Samuel Youd was a very prolific author, writing under a number of different pseudonyms and in many different genres. To write an appreciation of all his work would fill this programme book many times over. As the occasion is a Science Fiction Convention I have restricted myself to SF, and perhaps somewhat more arbitrarily, I have further restricted this appreciation to his adult SF. So much for the formal rationale, the real reason for the choice is that I believe, in his John Christopher guise, he wrote some marvellous adult SF and played a key role in the development of the English SF novel.

Since H. G. Wells wrote books like The War of the Worlds in the 1890s, there has continued to be a great tradition of the English Disaster novel. Unfortunately, even with the advent of John Wyndham, with his Kraken and Triffids in the mid '50s, the English Disaster Novel was suffering from a bad case of delayed development. Its standard ingredients are: an externally caused catastrophe, preferably with its instigators bug-eyed and green. The hero is terribly English, complete with a stiff upper lip and an uncanny ability to rescue his heroine in the nick of time (i.e. still with her knickers on). The ending is normally the miraculous overcoming of the intrusion or, at worst, extreme optimism about a soon expected deliverance.

John Christopher, in 1956, produced The Death of Grass and the English disaster school graduated. Later authors, most notably J. G. Ballard, were to go on and reform the disaster novel out of all recognition. John Christopher made the first important leap.

There is no denying that disaster novels, in any form, are an acquired taste. Apparently the reason that they developed here, but not in the US, was that John Campbell considered that they did not fit in with the optimistic outlook of his magazines. Disaster novels are the classic examples of Hubris being well and truly clobbered by Nemesis. Academics have wildly suggested that they are a decadent literature indicative of declining empires. Whatever they are, they are about man doing his best (however bad that is) to survive against extreme adversity. Either you like them or you do not.

The first and perhaps most famed of the disaster cycle, The Death of Grass, was filmed quite successfully under its American title No Blade of Grass. The novel, like much of Christopher's work, recounts the brutalising of a small group of people set against the breakdown of society. The major element that makes this and the subsequent disaster novels different from Wyndham and Co. is that the stories and the characters portrayed are not 'nice'. Unfortunately for us, the whole world is made up of Christopher's characters. They are unlike anyone that trod Wyndham's England.

The Death of Grass is not a pretty tale and only a few pages separate the group's convivial bridge evenings from the first time they have to kill innocent people. Christopher never lingers on the violence, he just uses it to chart the decline of his characters. Wyndham's heroines were never raped; for Christopher's heroines, in all too reasonable situations, rape is often unavoidable. This is neither in the style of 'Boddice Rippers' nor 'Slice 'em and Dice 'em', but just mankind presented coldly by a talented storyteller.

The Death of Grass has often been used as an example of the basic difference between SF and mainstream fiction. A novel about your neighbours grass dying is mainstream fiction, a novel about all grass dying is SF.

Christopher's second standard disaster novel The World in Winter is on a grander scale, taking in more geographically, temporally and disaster-wise. A larger than normal decrease in solar radiation causes the onset of a new ice-age. The central characters start off in London, become refugees in Nigeria and finally return to London. About a year and a half is covered in detail, starting with normal London and ending well after total social breakdown. Although similar on the surface to The Death of Grass, The World in Winter is quite a different novel. The story concentrates on personal relationships rather than group interactions. The central characters determinedly continue to follow their desires and obsessions despite the events of the freeze.

The last of the disaster novels, A Wrinkle in the Skin, deals with an almost instant catastrophe: global earthquake. Perhaps such an event would today be considered scientifically impossible, but this should only spoil the enjoyment of the determined pedant. With an instant catastrophe, gone is the gradual social breakdown, instead there is shock followed by slow acceptance of what has happened. Only a few survived the 'quake and they all suffer from psychoses with varying degrees of dysfunction. These range from extreme claustrophobia (no-one will sleep under cover again) to complete withdrawal from reality. The world has changed faster than its inhabitants. Its skin has considerable wrinkles and the seas have shifted. The exotic scenery of dried-up sea beds and washed-out lands peopled with unstable characters gives John Christopher great scope to show his narrative skills. He handles the bizarre and incongruous well.

The central characters in each novel react differently to the catastrophes. In The Death of Grass the central characters almost plan their slow decline into barbarism. In The World in Winter, although the characters accept the disaster, personal desires are paramount. In A Wrinkle in the Skin they close off parts of their minds and become automata, until reality is forced upon them by the sequence of events. Perhaps the major strength of these and all his novels is the combination of good storytelling and a host of different, believable characters. He has a knack of painting his people with an impartial brush. The bad are as understandable as the good, and the good can be unbelievably stupid.

It is interesting to observe Christopher's use of plot mechanisms in these novels. The careful way he lays ground for future revelations; why the hero of The Death of Grass is the only one to know the secret way into the valley or why the hero of The World in Winter can get a job in Nigerian TV. They are all important plot developments that need careful preparation. All are handled well, you can find them if you look, but they slip well into the flow of the novel.

Not all of our Guest of Honour's SF is in disaster novel form. Probably his first entry into the SF field was The Winter Swan, the only novel written under the name Christopher Youd. Alas I have never found a copy. His next two of relevance were the first appearances as John Christopher: The Twenty-Second Century, a short story collection, and The Year of the Comet, a novel. These two books are partly linked, as they contain all his Managerialist stories. Managerialism is the 'ism' of his post Capitalist/Communist world. Earth is, with the exception of Israel, under control of the giant corporations. Israel hangs onto its old ways simply because it got its own land so much later than the rest. Here we find Christopher's strong ability to create societies and groups within them. Groups that are microcosms mirroring or counterpointing the State. The Year of the Comet is especially pertinent considering developments since its publication (1955). The rise of the multinationals was quite an astute piece of prediction. If you work in either research or management be sure to read this. The Twenty-Second Century is a fine short story collection and it is a great shame that it is his only one.

Pendulum was the last adult John Christopher to appear. It is my favourite of all his novels partly because it has themes of both the true disaster novels and the management stories. Pendulum is a beautifully observed novel of the decline of the English society. A society that goes out not with a bang but with a whimper. The bug-eyed monsters here are inflation and unemployment. In some ways the novel is grossly out of date (massive inflation takes the cost of whisky to £7 a bottle!) in others it has not dated at all. The novel opens in a national slump and the government has just decided not to give students their promised grant increases. After rioting and the slightly dubious affiliation between the students and the 'yobs', the government capitulates and gives them their grant increase.

Not exactly a standard plot for an SF novel, in fact a number of people may consider that this is not SF at all. The government collapses, the young take over and things get bad. But, never fear, eventually the church, in the form of a new religious sect, takes over and things get better. Do they hell? The pendulum swings, destroying all in its way. To a certain extent this is one of the nastiest novels I have ever read. You could call it a horror novel, except horror fans would get a surprise if they read it. The novel painfully and relentlessly catalogues the decline of English society in a way that, allowing for the slight dating of the novel, is all too real, too plausible and uncomfortable. If you read only one John Christopher make it this one.

The remainder of John Christopher's novels are on a less grand scale. Not in terms of stories, but in that he restricts himself to the breakdown

of groups in isolated situations. The Little People has perhaps an overworked idea at the centre of the novel; namely miniature people living in Ireland. How they got there is almost as daft and a little disappointing. However, the group of normal people that the novel concentrates on react almost as we would to such preposterous revelations. The end of the novel is extremely powerful as the little people try to take control. The nightmare unfolds and reality breaks down, but Christopher never loses his control. The Possessors is in a similar vein but space precludes its detailed consideration.

There are four remaining John Christopher novels A Scent of White Poppies, Cloud on Silver, The Long Voyage and The Caves of Night. I have never found a copy of the first; I am not sure of its content but am informed it is not SF. The final three are more traditionally mainstream but still consider group interactions and breakdown. To the characters and to the reader the SF content is uncertain. This fact is important because the groups cannot be sure that during their isolation the outside world is still intact or even that their own environment is safe. In some ways they are adult variations on Lord of the Flies.

Undoubtedly the saddest thing about John Christopher's adult SF is the difficulty in finding it. This is true of almost all of Sam Youd's books. Apart from some of the more recent juveniles and the much earlier 'Tripods Trilogy', buying his books is nigh on impossible. They saw hardback publication in the '50s and '60s and saw one subsequent paperback edition. Then in the late '70s four or five John Christophers saw a paperback revival. I have been collecting him for nearly 15 years and I am still missing a couple of key 'Christopher' titles and most Youd and the other pseudonymous ones. Go find his books, go pester booksellers and publishers. At his worst John Christopher is a good storyteller, at his best he can be a fine author.

As a final word, it is frightening how, when reading disaster novels, certain elements ring true and you begin to believe you are in the middle of an approaching disaster. Many of Christopher's descriptions of famine bring to mind the pictures we have seen recently from Ethiopia. One of the signs of advanced decline that Christopher uses in his novels is the takeover of BBC radio by something like the 'Citizens Emergency Council'. They broadcast important messages, interspersed with recorded music, instead of the normal programmes. After days of happily reading John Christopher Novels, this morning I woke to my radio alarm tuned to Radio 4. It was playing recorded music, interspersed with important announcements. Thank goodness it was only the BBC news strike. Or was it

[REDACTED]

This programme book was produced by Steve Bull. Thanks to Mike Moir and John Dallman for Articles; John Christopher, John Dallman and Peter Wareham for the interview; Tim Illingworth for the Bibliography. Artwork; Cover Shelagh Lewins, P24 Steve Bull. Printed by Piggott Printers Ltd., Anderson's Court, Newnham Road, Cambridge.

JOHN CHRISTOPHER SPEAKS

An interview with John Christopher (JC) by John Dallman (JGD) and Peter Wareham (PW).

JGD: How did you first get involved in SF?

JC: Oh, the usual way I suppose, early in adolescence or pre-adolescence in my case. You meet this SF magazine, and there it is, instant love. It lasts for quite a long time, longer than most love affairs, at least in my experience it did, lasted until near the end of my teens. Some people go on as lovers for ever, Arthur Clarke, for example, who is exactly the same as when I first knew him - hasn't changed a bit. This is not mocking, he got it right first time. He's Arthur, and magnificent as Arthur.

JGD: He's criticised just for that, of course. Certainly his fiction hasn't progressed, except technically, since his very early days.

JC: I remember he wrote me a letter in the thirties, describing the difficulties of writing a book with dramatic elements, the problems of dramatic sidelights like a carpet fading in the sunlight over a thousand years. That's Arthur! I suppose it would be a preliminary version of Against The Fall of Night.

JGD: You were involved with fandom during and before the war, I understand.

JC: Yes, before, and a bit during. Not after the first couple of years of the war.

JGD: The only traces we've found of your fanwriting, is a note that you did a couple of supplements for The Futarian War Digest.

JC: I did publish a fanzine, called The Fantast. I haven't got any copies now, but an early fan, Julian Parr, offered me a set when he went to live in Germany nine years ago. He put them into safe keeping with the Science Fiction Foundation as I didn't have room to store them at the time.

I published The Fantast for a couple of years, and then handed it over to Douglas Webster who did it much better, from Scotland. It was, I think, one of the best after Douglas took it over.

JGD: The Fantast ? Ken Slater ??

JC: I didn't sue him for copyright, but I was first on the scene.

JGD: Were you in service during the war ?

JC: Yes - I fought and fought, but they got me in the end. I was Signals 42-46. When I came out, I started writing. I was given some money to write, which I thought was incredible. The Rockefeller Foundation were doing a sort of Marshall Aid for the arts. They handed out what they

called Atlantic Awards, to young writers, and what you had to do was convince them that you could do something. The only thing you had to promise was that for a year you'd do nothing except write. Good scheme really. It wasn't much money, but you could just about live. But when the money ran out, I had to find a job.

PW: So that gave you a real spur to write, being able to live, admittedly not well?

JC: Oh yes, a real spur. You have to balance this very carefully, giving some help to writing, but not too much, ever. For a writer, the wolf should always be fairly close to the door.

JGD: You were writing science fiction then?

JC: They asked me what I had to show, and I showed them a bit of a novel I'd written before I went into the army, and they asked for something more recent, so I did two or three chapters of another novel, which was again general fiction, rather than science fiction. So the first book I wrote was a general novel.

I knew that all young writers start by being autobiographical, so I thought I'd fox that one, and wrote about an elderly lady, and took her back from the grave to childhood, just to make it more difficult.

JGD: That was The White Swan?

JC: No, The Winter Swan ((it emerged that the listings are wrong)).

JGD: It's also usually described as a fantasy novel.

JC: It's amazing what you can describe things as. I started the book with the funeral of the main character, and then it goes on back through various episodes in her life as seen by different people she's known. There is also something of she herself observing this, after death, and at the end of the whole thing she is meant to have learned that you can't exist without relating to people. Her basic problem is that she's a self-contained and powerful character, who cannot really take other people into account. She hasn't worked this out, so at the end of the book she goes back again, and she's now in the body of someone who was at the funeral, in the first chapter. It seemed OK at the time, but it didn't work. Somebody could call it fantasy, but it isn't really fantasy.

JGD: You spent up to about late '53 or '54 writing non-SF novels, and a lot of short SF?

JC: Well, I had a family, and had to earn money. As I said, a lot of it was accidental. As far as stopping writing short stories, I had got used to writing long stories, and it's a different rhythm. Also, I'd fallen out with my agent. While without an agent, you can write novels, it's very difficult to explore the possibilities of short stories.

JGD: You were still working, and writing in your spare time?

JC: Yes, and then I had a break with Death of Grass.

JGD: Death of Grass was successful straight away then ?

JC: Well, no. Not straight away. The book was taken in England by Michael Joseph, a respectable publisher, and then it did nothing in the States. My agent, Scott Meredith, wrote that Ballantine would do it. They were a very small paperback house in those days, and wanted me to re-write the whole thing, as it was not orthodox science fiction, and were going to tell me exactly what to do! Scott said I hadn't got a publisher, unless I co-operated. I thought and told him no, I really couldn't do this. Then an editor for Simon & Shuster came over on one of his buying trips, and happened into Michel Joseph, asking if they had any storytellers on their lists. MJ said they had me, and gave him a look, and he took it with just one change - the title. Serialisation in the 'Saturday Evening Post' and the film sale to MGM followed.

JGD: Did you know John Wyndham ?

JC: Yes, but not well. He was an immensely nice man, and one of the regrets I have in life is that after he left London, and went down to live near Petersfield, it was very difficult for us to phase in, as I didn't get into London much. I think I was living in Gurnsey by then. Our contacts were basically through Leslie Flood, who had this little bookshop in Sicilian Avenue, called 'Books and Music'. We would meet in Carwardine's Coffee Shop, Ted Carnell, and Les Flood, and John and myself. Eventually I did make a special arrangement to meet him in a pub in Soho ((discussion among the many experts on the pubs of Soho present revealed that it was the Crown and Two Chairmen))). A few other people I knew were there too, and I went on with one of them thinking that I'd have liked to talk to him some more, but before the next time, of course, he was dead.

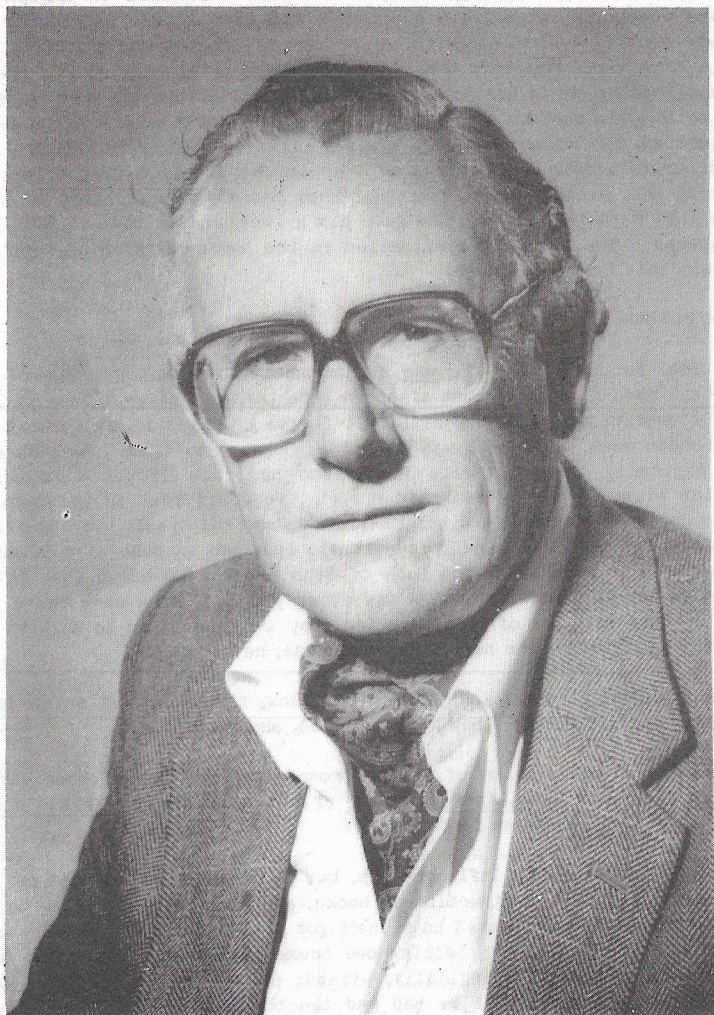
He was a very nice man indeed, but you know, that was what bothered me about some of his books - they were too nice, short of bite.

JGD: Yes.. There's a lot of common ground between some of your work - Death of Grass, World in Winter and some of his later works - Kraken Wakes, Day of the Triffids and so forth.

JC: I certainly didn't influence him, but he probably influenced me. We would talk about the construction of books, and I remembered saying to him that with Triffids, it seemed to me he'd got it wrong. Nicholas Fisk once told me that he believed in telling one thumping lie, and then after that the book's got to follow logically, without deviation. I felt that what John had got wrong was that he had had two things, not one. In fact, he agreed. If he'd somehow tied the Triffids in with the blindness, it would have been better. They were unrelated incidents, and unrelated incidents make it difficult to suspend disbelief.

JGD: I wouldn't like to say you have a predilection for disaster, but most of your best-known novels are disaster novels.

Photograph courtesy A. Vaughan Kimber, Tooth House, Rock Channel, Rye, Sussex.



JC: What you're overlooking is all the other things I've done. For instance, the detective thrillers.

My tendency as a writer has been to do things that worked, and when they didn't work, to forget them. For instance, the cricket novels. I originally wrote one about an overseas Test Tour. That got taken by the Sportsmans Book Club, would you believe! I felt it would be interesting to do books about the other two kinds of cricket, village cricket and county cricket. I did the second, which was village cricket, and Michel Joseph published it, called The Friendly Game, and I was going to do the third, but the response wasn't good enough. Despite the fact that John Arlott had met me, and said that if I wanted to, he'd take me round the circuit of county cricket and show it to me. It would have been fascinating to do that but I couldn't be bothered to write the third book.

Similarly, I did the three Peter Graaf detective novels, on the purely practical basis that I found that a lot of American film companies were coming over here to use an American star, in a cheap London setting. So I did these three books, centered round an American private eye - real Chandler stuff - operating in London. But they didn't buy it!

JGD: In your earlier SF, in The Twenty-Second Century and The Year of the Comet, you introduced the concept of 'the Managerial society', a society without governments as such, but with it's social groupings run like large companies. This seems quite an interesting idea, but you didn't persist with it?

JC: It was James Burnham who introduced that idea. He was an economic philosopher, and he had this notion that the world would be taken over, not by Marxism or Capitalism, but by Managerialism, that the managers were the ones. I think it's worked out roughly that way. When I was with the Diamond Corporation, a chap there who'd been on a trip to Russia came back full of admiration for their organisation. They were organised to such a pitch that the factory shifts would just take over from each other - somebody blows a whistle once, and the shift at the belt steps bok, and it blows twice, and the next lot steps in. Fantastic, incredible - he was really high on the Soviet Russian thing...

JGD: How did you come to start writing children's fiction ?

JC: I was asked to. A chap called Richard Hough, who was then children's editor at Hamish Hamilton, got in touch with my agent. He'd read my adult stuff, and thought it might be interesting for me to try my hand. He wanted to commission me to write a children's book. I can't stand commissioning, it's awful. You commit yourself, both sides commit themselves, and if it doesn't work out right, the publishers are obliged to go through with it, or to pay you off, and that's all wrong. The thing about writing is that you are in a market, you do something, and then you say, well, what will you bid?

I didn't take the commission, but I thought I'd have a go at it and wrote The White Mountains. Then I found that writing for children was more attractive than the adult field, for a number of reasons. One, of course,

was that the editing was so much better. You got better advice. The most recent book I've done, I sent to my American editor, and she did her usual thing, saying that it was marvelous, but there were just one or two things. The one or two things really crease you. It meant a complete rewriting. But by the end, you know you've got a much better piece of work. So, from that point of view it's better.

PW: So children's editors are better than those for adult work ?

JC: Much, much better. There may be the exceptional editor in adult writing. John Braine got started because Room At The Top, after going to a lot of publishers, got to one who could see that there was a book in there. By the time the two had worked together, they got a book out of it. It happens, but it's rare. In children's fiction, it's commonplace; the editors do work very well in co-operation with writers. It helps a lot.

PW: Do you think people are more worried about children's books, the effect that they have on children, and so they take more trouble?

JC: I don't know why it is, really. The audience is perhaps more discriminating, you can get away with an awful lot of rubbish in adult fiction that you can't in children's fiction. They are more practical in their approach to things, and certain things will not work.

Also, of course, the other thing about it is that in children's fiction unless you can tell a story, you had better get out of it. Whereas the last thing you want to do in writing for adults is tell a story, unless you're writing a genre story, like detective or adventure stuff. E.M.Forster said - terrible words - "The novel tells a story? Oh dear, I suppose it does." How precious, and how ridiculous! If it doesn't tell a story, it doesn't tell anything!

JGD: How about the Hilary Ford novels ?

JC: Oh, they were Gothic. Pure genre stuff. It was interesting though, my agent suggested to me that I should have a go at gothic, and I asked him what it was. He said:

"Gothic is a girl in danger and a smell of money."

Oh well, I thought... The extraordinary thing is, the first one worked terribly well. Then I did the second and the third, and the usual diminishing returns set in. I suddenly came to the realisation that he'd got it wrong, and I'd hit on the right formula by accident. Gothic isn't a girl in danger and a smell of money, it's a girl degraded and a smell of money. The whole thing is back to Jane Eyre. In the first one, I had this girl imprisoned, and, raped. I remember when it went to America, I saw a report which said that unless the genre had taken leave of it's senses, this would never do! You couldn't have that. In fact it did work, as far as the market was concerned. I felt at the time that she was a bit wet, and in the second and third ones, my female characters had much more guts. The books didn't do nearly so well. I learnt a bit about writing for that market that way. I liked the second and third ones much better than the

first, but the market didn't want to know. They wanted the girl degraded.

JGD: There's another Hilary Ford book, A Figure In Grey. Is that separate?

JC: Yes, that's quite separate. It's a children's book. I'd started doing children's books, and had one review that got under my skin. It said that there weren't any female characters in John Christopher's children's books, because he obviously couldn't handle female characters. I thought sod that for a lark.

PW: Sounds like a challenge.

JC: Yes, it was a challenge. So I set out to write a children's book, which would be purely to do with girls, where males only impinge briefly. It was a fantasy, shall we say, in that it involved a ghost. Not SF. I wrote it, and I had this very good relationship at the time with my editor in London, but I thought I wouldn't tell her anything but send it in through my agent. I thought it would take a bit of time to get through the mills to her, but I was going to London anyway, and having dinner with her that evening. I went in to see the agent in the afternoon, and found she'd turned it down already! I saw her as arranged, and talked about all sorts of things, and, quite late, she mentioned that she'd had a book in that morning, which she'd read under the dryer at the hairdressers, and turned down straight away. It had just crossed her mind: could it have come from me? Well.. Yes, I said. She took another look at it, and didn't like it the second time either. It got published, but didn't do very well.

JGD: And the Felix novels?

JC: Those were the first Hilary Fords. They were light romantic comedy. At the time everybody was full of the Angry Young Men business, and what I did was to write a couple of books about a girl who gets mixed up with an Angry Young Man, falls in love with him, and has lots of children. That's where I got most fanmail, the only fanmail I've had on adult books really. I got a letter from one chap who said he was a mate on an ocean-going liner, and wanted me to know that there was one person in the world who worshipped my every fault and failing. Magnificent, to know he loved me for myself alone. Somebody else wrote from a very impressive address in Westminster, and asked me to dine. And I'd introduced in the book, an antique motor-car called the Trojan, and got another invitation from the secretary of the Trojan owners club!

JGD: What about the later Samuel Youd novels - Messages of Love, The Summers at Accorn and The Burning Bird?

JC: Messages of Love was my first attempt at something quite long. My American editor had said they wanted a big book, and I worked out he meant something big enough to break at least one wrist as it went through the office. I did a long, long book, actually it was quite fun. I wrote about a family, slightly saga-ish, starting them off in Switzerland, in the 1910's and carrying them through to what was then the present day, switching viewpoints. In one case, I had the same scene from three points

of view.

The main thing is to find something that interests you. I did some writing for English as a Foreign Language (EFL), which was quite interesting. Longman were adapting books and had done the Tripods trilogy. They asked if I were willing to do originals, and I felt that if I could use them again as children's books, I wouldn't mind trying. The first one worked quite well, In the Beginning, which became Dom and Va as a children's book.

EFL demands a quite different attitude towards writing. Longmans used to do them on the basis of six levels, where level one was very limited, and you only had the present tense and limited syntax. It went on from there to level six, which was almost, but not quite, English. They had worked out the business of remembering, so that while you had a basic vocabulary, you could use any other word, take 'cybernetics' as a difficult example, providing you repeated it within a couple of sentences, and then again within a couple of pages. The learning theory they had worked out was such that you needed an initial re-inforcement, and then a secondary one. That pinned it in.

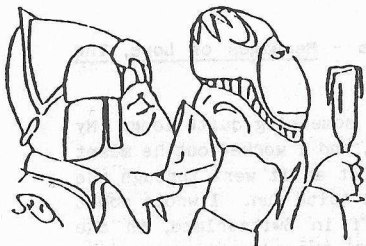
NOVACON

Fifteen GUESTS OF HONOUR:

1st - 3rd November 1985
De Vere Hotel
Coventry

Dave Langford
James White

REGISTER NOW!! SEND JUST £7.00 (CHEQUE OR PO MADE PAYABLE TO NOVACON 15) TO:— GRAHAM POOLE, 86 HERWOOD FARM ROAD, WILDE GREEN, SUTTON COLDFIELD, WEST MIDLANDS, B72 1AG...OR IF YOU'RE STILL IN DOUBT JUST WRITE TO GRAHAM AND HE WILL SEND YOU FULL DETAILS.



NOVACON IS AN ANNUAL SF CONVENTION FEATURING TALKS BY FAMOUS AUTHORS, FILMS, DISCOS COMPETITIONS, PARTIES, QUIZZES REAL ALE AND LATE, LATE BARS. NOVACON IS BRITAIN'S LONGEST RUNNING 'REGIONAL' CON & THE FIRST 'REGIONAL' CON TO 'GO NATIONAL' AS WELL AS BEING ONE OF THE LARGEST CONS IN EUROPE AND AS SUCH IT ATTRACTS NOT ONLY SF FANS FROM ALL OVER EUROPE, BUT ALSO A LARGE NUMBER OF WELL KNOWN AUTHORS. NOVACON REMAINS BRITAIN'S CHEAPEST FULLY PROGRAMMED SF CON AND HAS KEPT THE SAME £15 ROOM RATE SINCE 1983 (RATE PER PERSON IN TWIN ROOM WITH FULL ENGLISH BREAKFAST). NOVACON THIS YEAR CELEBRATES IT'S FIFTEENTH ANNIVERSARY AND WE INTEND TO CELEBRATE IN STYLE...IF YOU WANT TO FIND OUT JUST WHAT WE MEAN BY THAT YOU'D BEST REGISTER NOW SO THAT YOU WILL BE ONE OF THE LUCKY PEOPLE WHO CAN—

COME TO THE PARTY!

It sounds easy, but try it with a word like 'cabbage'. The first repeat is not too difficult, but two pages later cabbage has got to come in again. This can be extremely tricky! It was quite fun to do, and the first one worked quite well. What I did was to take Robert Ardrey, who was one of the first to popularise anthropology and had this idea that we started in Africa, and that we came from a tribe of killer apes. There was also supposed to have been a more cultured tribe, tool-users, who were destroyed by the other tribe. So I did an Adam-and-Eve story, of a boy from the killer tribe, meeting a girl from the tool-users, and him saving her from the massacre. He still represents the tribe who killed her family, and she hates him for it. Even when he saves her from a leopard, she hates him. At the end of the book, she has a child by him, and still hates him, yet totally dominates him. They are reconciled at the end, after he saves her from members of his own tribe, and in the EFL version of the book, the closing line is something like "Half a million years ago he was our father, she was our mother. They changed that when it was published in America, because 'mother' is such an obscene word there, they say you can't use it.

But the American publishers had omitted to get me to sign a contract before they did the book, so as I had them over a barrel, I made them change it back in the next version.

JGD: Have you moved on from EFL ?

JC: A long time ago. It's killing for you as a writer, and a lot of very hard sweat for very little return. You have to do it as a charitable exercise. It's not Shakespeare, but it makes you feel you have a social function, doing something.

JGD: And where are you going ?

JC: I've got a lot of things that I want to do, so I have no shortage of ideas, thank God. One thing I've wanted to do for a long time is based on the Arthurian period, which fascinates me.

Many years ago I met a chap called Beram Saklatvala, who also wrote as Henry Marsh, who'd written a series of books on that period. He had some fascinating ideas on, for instance, Excalibur. He'd worked out that 'cale' and 'burn' are both the same thing, one Celtic and the other Saxon. Thus Excalibur, dropping the final 'n' means from water-water. He had the idea that this was not about an individual sword, but a foundry. If you had good iron ore, near a running stream, and you married the daughter of the local chief, you could have access to good swords.

He came up with all sorts of things like this, which I found fascinating, and I would like to tackle that whole thing, on a fairly realistic basis.

That's a longstanding project, and if I got down to it, it would take a long time. I spent a lot of time trying to work it out as a children's book, or a series, and it doesn't work. One thing you cannot have with children's book is a downbeat plot, and there is no way that the Arthurian business can be anything other than downbeat. In the end, he lost. There was a very subtle way in which he won, but you can't bring that into a

children's book. He lost. I see him as somebody who was striving very hard to restore, or to hold, the Roman vision. He couldn't, in the end, do it. He could hold it for a time, but not long. I suppose that's what appeals to me.



SCIENCE FICTION FAN?

The British Science Fiction Association is an organisation for anyone interested in SF.

The Association regularly produces:

VECTOR – a journal about SF with reviews, articles, interviews and letters.

MATRIX – a forum for members with news, informal articles and letters.

FOCUS – a writers' workshop magazine with articles, queries and market news.

The Association provides many services, including – the world's largest SF lending library, with over 3000 books; a magazine chain from which all the leading American publications can be borrowed; an SF enquiry service to help in answering your queries on science fiction.

Membership costs only £5 a year, or you can try a sample mailing first, containing Vector, Matrix, etc., for £1 (deductable from cost of membership if you join).

If writers such as Aldous, Brunner, Clarke, Coney, Cowper, Harrison, Holdstock, LeGuin, Priest, Shaw, Watson and White (to drop a few names) think it's worth being members, perhaps you will, too.

The British Science Fiction Association

Further details from:
The Membership Secretary, Sandy Brown
18 Gordon Terrace, Blantyre, G72
Lanarkshire, Scotland

President: Arthur C. Clarke

bfa

John Christopher – A Bibliography

This bibliography covers both the Science Fiction and other novels and short stories written by Christopher Samuel Youd under his real name, as John Christopher and under other pseudonyms. Wherever possible the dates quoted are that of first publication although this may be inaccurate for the short stories.

SF or Fantasy Novels

Year	Aut	Title
1954	jc	The Twenty-Second Century (coll)
1955	jc	The Year of the Comet (Planet of Peril USA)
1956	jc	The Death of Grass (No Blade of Grass USA)
1958	jc	The Caves of Noght
1960	jc	The Long Voyage (The White Voyage USA)
1962	jc	The World in Winter (The Long Winter USA)
1964	jc	Cloud on Silver (Sweeney's Island USA)
1965	jc	A Wrinkle in the Skin (The Ragged Edge USA)

1965	jc	The Possessors
1967	jc	The Little People (serialised in F&SF Jan-Mar 1967)
1967	jc	The White Mountains
1967	jc	The City of Gold and Lead
1968	jc	The Pool of Fire
1968	jc	Pendulum
1969	jc	The Lotus Caves
1970	jc	The Guardians
1970	jc	The Prince in Waiting
1971	jc	Beyond the Burning Lands
1972	jc	The Sword of the Spirits
1972	jc	In the Beginning (USA - revised as Dom and Va UK (1973))
1974	jc	Wild Jack
1977	jc	Empty World
1981	jc	Fireball
1983	jc	New Found Land

Other Novels

1949	csy	The Winter Swan
1951	csy	Babel Itself
1952	csy	Brave Conquerors
1953	csy	Crown and Anchor
1954	csy	A Palace of Strangers
1955	csy	Holly Ash (VT The Opportunist)
1956	ar	Giant's Arrow
1956	wg	Malleston at Melbourne
1957	pg	Dust and the Curious Boy (Give the Devil his Due USA)
1957	wg	The Friendly Game
1958	pg	Daughter Fair
1958	hf	Felix Walking
1959	hf	Felix Running
1959	pg	The Sapphire Conference
1959	jc	Scent of White Poppies
1961	sy	The Choice (VT The Burning Bird)
1962	pg	The Gull's Kiss
1962	csy	Messages of Love
1963	csy	The Summers at Accorn
1965	pn	Patchwork of Death
1965	hf	Bella on the Roof
1973	hf	A Figure in Grey
1974	hf	Sarnia
1975	hf	Castle Malindine
1976	hf	A Bride for Bedivere

Key to names: jc - John Christopher; hf - Hilary Ford; wg - William Godfrey; pg - Peter Graaf; csy - C. S. Youd; cy - Christopher Youd; sy - Sam Youd; pn - Peter Nichols; ar - Anthony Rye.

Short Stories

Mag	Date	Title
asf	Feb49	Christmas Tree (as Christopher Youd)
asf	Apr49	Colonial (as Christopher Youd)
sfb	Sum50	Monster (as Christopher Youd)
wbd	Jan51	Tree of Wrath (VT The Tree)

nwb	Spr51	Balance (VT In the Balance)
gal	Mar51	Socrates
gal	May51	Man of Destiny
sfb	Spr52	Resurrection
nwb	May52	Breaking Point
sfr	Jan53	Mr. Kwotshook
sfq	Feb53	Aristotle
spf	Feb53	Relativity
gal	Mar53	The Drop
nwb	Mar53	The Prophet
sfr	Apr53	The Rather Improbable History of Hilary Kiffer (as William Vine)
isf	Jun53	Death Sentence (as William Vine)
spf	Jul53	Explosion delayed (as William Vine)
aut	Aug53	Planet of Change
aut	Nov53	Blemish
isf	Feb54	Rocket to Freedom
nwb	Apr54	Museum Piece
nwb	Jun54	Escape Route
fsm	Sum54	The New Wine
wif	Oct54	The Name of this City
wif	Nov54	Vacation
fau	Dec54	Talent for the Future (VT Talent)
err	1954	Rich and Strange
esq	1954	Begin Again
22c	col54	Christmas Roses
22c	col54	A Time of Peace
22c	col54	Rock-a-bye
22c	col54	The \$64 Question
22c	col54	Weapon
aut	Jan55	Conspiracy
nwb	Mar55	Manna
sfs	Jul55	Decoy
fsf	Oct56	The Decline and Fall of the Bug-Eyed Monster
sfs	Jan57	Occupational Risk
tof	Spr57	The Gardener
inf	Apr57	The Noon's Repose
sat	Aug57	Year of the Comet
sat	Oct57	Doom over Kareeta
fau	Jun58	Science and Anti-science (article)
sat	Mar59	A World of Slaves
fan	Oct59	Winter Boy, Summer Girl
fsf	Nov65	A Few Kindred Spirits
bdi	Dec67	Communication Problem
fsf	Dec72	Specimen
taw	1978	Of Polymuf Stock

Key to Magazines/Collections: asf - Astounding Science-Fiction; aut - Authentic Science Fiction; bdi - Beyond Infinity; err - Courier; esq - Esquire; fan - Fantastic; fau - Fantastic Universe Science Fiction; fsf - Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction; fsm - Fantastic Story Magazine; gal - Galaxy; inf - Infinity Science Fiction; isf - Imagination; neb - Nebula Science Fiction; nwb - New Worlds; sat - Satellite Science Fiction; sfb - Science Fantasy; sfq - Science Fiction Quarterly; sfr - Avon Science Fiction and Fantasy Reader; sfs - (Original) Science Fiction stories; spf - Space Science Fiction; taw - The April Witch and Other strange Tales (Ed. Barbara Iveson, 1978); tof - Tales of the Frightened; wbd - Worlds Beyond; wif - Worlds of If; 22c - The Twenty-Second Century.

PROGRAMME

Friday 13th September

Main Programme

- 6 pm Committee welcome - then DINNER
- 7 pm Childrens' Fantasy - A panel
chaired by Peter Wareham
- 8 pm Jeopardy 1st round - A quiz
- 9 pm "The Films at this con aren't
worth the paper they're printed
on!" - chaired by Alex Stewart
- 10 pm FILM - Charly
- 11 pm
- 12 pm

Alternative Programme

Sprodzoom Workshop - Colin Fine

Charades

Saturday 14th September

Main Programme

- 10 am
- 11 am FILM - Things to Come
- 12 am Jeopardy 2nd Round
- 1 pm "So you think you want to
be a costume Fan?" - talk
by Kate Davies
- 2 pm Book Review Panel - chaired
by Caroline Mullan
- 3 pm G.O.H. Speech
- 4 pm University Challenge- Oxford
vs Cambridge
- 5 pm "Where God went wrong!"
- a panel chaired by
Steve Bull
- 6 pm DINNER
- 7 pm Auction

Alternative Programme

Call My Bluff - silly game

Food Tasting

"Well Padded Heroes" - a
Treasure Trap Demonstration

8 pm Masquerade

9 pm

Storytelling

10 pm

FILM - The Falls

11 pm

Filking in the Music Room

12 pm

Sunday 15th September

Main Programme

Alternative Programme

10 am

FILM - Old Mother Riley Meets
The Vampire

Fandom through the Ages
-a panel

12 am Unicon Business Meeting

1 pm "Well that just about wraps
it up for God!" -a panel
chaired by John Dallman

"APA's - How not to do
it!" - chaired by Augustus

2 pm Jeopardy - The Final

3 pm Paul Dormer's Worldcon
Show

Role Playing Games Panel

4 pm Fit For Fandom - a competition
of extreme silliness.

5 pm "Welcome to the Datalink
Society" - a panel chaired
by John Stewart

Auction overflow

6 pm DINNER

7 pm "Arms Control" - a talk by
Hugh Mascetti

8 pm "Jews in Space" - a panel
chaired by Tim Illingworth

9 pm Committee Farewell

10 pm

11 pm FILM - Doc Savage

12 pm Convention ends

The Film Programme

The Big Film as reviewed by Paul Dormer

The Falls GB 1983 195m

Directed by Peter Greenaway

The Falls was the film that Peter Greenaway made before he made The Draughtsman's Contract, and an unusual film it is too. Its style may be called 'experimental' or 'avant-garde' - it is presumably only its great length that is preventing Channel 4 from showing it late one Monday night - but it is also enjoyable to watch.

Made in the form of a documentary, it examines 92 victims of a Violent Unexplained Event (VUE). At the end of three hours you may be none the wiser as to what the VUE was, as it is assumed that you have the background information that would be common knowledge to the audience in the fictional world in which the film is set, an SF concept if ever there was one. There also seems to be a complete irrationality in the choosing of the 92 lives to be documented but it does give the film its name.

Certain ideas and themes run through Greenaway's films, and this one is no exception, with its allusions to numerology, water and ornithology. Certain characters recur as well, especially Tulse Luper and the Dutch zoo keeper van Huyten in the film A Walk Through H. Also, near the end of The Draughtsman's Contract, a character called van Huyten is introduced as an artist; it is not clear if this is the same person.

At one point in The Falls, a character is seen watching a film called Vertical Features Remake. This is an earlier Greenaway film.

The music for the falls is by the British Minimalist Michael Nyman, who also wrote the music for the Milton Keynes balloon advert, and often works with Greenaway. Listen out for the haunting Bird List Song; you could find yourself singing it for the rest of the convention.

Greenaway and Nyman are now at work on A Zed and Two Noughts, being filmed at a Dutch zoo. We may yet learn more about van Huyten.

The rest as reviewed by Steve Bull

Charly US 1968 106m

Selmur/Robertson Associates

Directed by Ralph Nelson

New methods of surgery cure a mentally retarded young man who becomes a genius. However the effects soon wear off and he goes into a rapid decline. Based on the book Flowers for Algernon by Daniel Keyes the film fails to recapture some of the feeling of the book but still leaves you with a lasting impression.

Things to Come GB 1936 113m b/w

London Films

Directed by Alexander Korda

War in 1940 is followed by plague, rebellion, a new glass-based society and the first rocket to the moon. The film features some chilling vignettes of mankind's future. Although the quality of the script and acting is a little variable the sets and music are magnificent. Based on The Shape of Things to Come by H. G. Wells this film is far superior to the more recent remake.

Doc Savage, Man of Bronze US 1975 100m

Warner

Directed by George Pal

A thirties superman and his assistants, The Amazing Five, fly to South America to avenge the death of Doc's father. Stolid humorous adaptation from the comic strip but somewhat lacking in panache.

Old Mother Riley Meets The Vampire GB 1952 85m

Directed by Maclean Rogers

This Irish washerwoman with flailing arms and a nice line in invective was a music hall creation of Arthur Lucan, a variation on the pantomime dame. The films (this is the last of 12) were very cheaply made and full of padding but Lucan is a superb comedian and there are moments of comic brilliance.

Chips Off the Pedestal

....hi-tech disorganisation for conventions

by John Dallman

Computers seem firmly entrenched in the organisation of conventions. Most committees keep membership lists in them, they star in programme items, teletext systems are used instead of blackboards to announce programme changes, and, of course, rooms are kept full of them so that people can blow BEMs away. There isn't any point to all this. At all. They are sapping our time and energy. Take them away!

Membership databases have one big advantage, in printing mailing labels, and a smaller one, telling you who hasn't paid. Several are in use that won't do either. They're less flexible than a paper system, more cumbersome, and usually only usable by a few people.

Technophilia usually carries them into use, used by one person. They usually have a machine at home or work, bought for things other than the convention. If they aren't available, nothing can be done with the lists, and if you lose them from the committee, you're in deep trouble. This doesn't compare with the trouble if the database fouls up - the one we used for Camcon tried to make several memberships with the same number.

The database is useful for the person who set it up, and runs it. At least, they won't admit to having any trouble, because they'd look so foolish if they can't do it with a computer. All's fine, until they leave, go on holiday or start a rival convention. Anybody who takes it over temporarily is unlikely to know how to use it. If they take it over permanently, unless they have the same sort of computer, it will probably be necessary to type the whole lot in again.

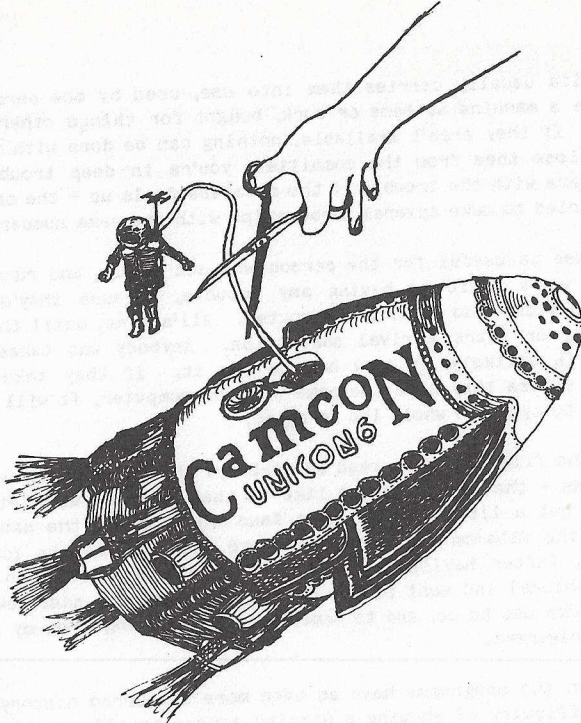
On paper, the files could be read by anybody. Most computers won't talk to other types - the manufacturers like it that way, and we're stuck with it. It does get a little easier when fans start using the same micro-computers - the Albacon III committee were able to use the Yorcon III mailing list, (after having to keep several Albacon lists on several different machines) and most of the Beccon group use the same make, which has been of some use to me, and to Camcon, but I digress, from my assigned task of disparagement.

Computers on the programme have an even more chequered history, mostly due to the difficulty of showing a display screen to 100 people at once. It's also a certainty that any 'demonstration' that has the scope to go wrong, will, while any that can't will be boring after five minutes. Used as props, they have been more successful.

The buzzer system that the Camcon committee created, with a little help from John Stewart, in a previous incarnation as University Challenge runners, works quite well now. However, in spite of hours of testing, the first use was a nightmare. It took a dislike to Ashley Watkins, and crashed every time he tried to answer a question. This was due to an obscure fault that couldn't possibly have occurred - until we looked at it the right way, and spotted a basic difference between test and use conditions. The room at Seacon was so hot that the extra heat in the control box made a bit of it overheat. This caused a current leakage at 12 volts into the poor, delicate, 5 volt computer, etc, etc.

An electromechanical system would have worked as well, and been more predictable. The micro-computer was used because we'd had a good idea about how to use one, and the fun of technology for its own sake kept the project moving. Now it works, I suppose we'll keep on using it, but the scoring can't be as flexible as a human with a bit of paper. The best buzzer system for 'naturalness' I've seen was in the contest Alan Dorey ran at Yorcon III, where you 'buzzed' by thumping the table and shouting. Not all that good for serious quizzes, but much more fun, and it won't break, unless you smash the table in frustration.

The computer as noticeboard made a first appearance at Seacon '84, and was a bit of a failure, owing to nobody being able to read the display



ANOTHER COMMITTEE MEMBER BITES THE DUST

screens round the hotel. Beccon's CONFAX made a much better impression at Yorcon III, and pointed out the problems of such a system even better. It was fine. Anybody could read it, after being told how by the people minding it, who also knew all of the information on it. And if it hadn't gone wrong, which it did sometimes. The disadvantage, compared to a blackboard, was that so few people could put things on, and that you had to guard it in case it was stolen.

Notes on a board can be scribbled in seconds, and rubbed off just as easily. To change something on a teletext system, you have to use a not-too-simple computer program, and have another computer to run it on, or stop all the displays that people are reading at the moment. It can be in many places at once, with enough screens and could be much more useful if plugged into a hotel's piped-video system. Even then, you can't scan it by eye like a blackboard. You can't draw cartoons on it, either.

To be fair, they have their uses. Some fans are taking to word-processors, even if some condemn them out of hand. They're nice, but they don't increase writing ability. The Camcon budget was done with a financial program. This was very useful for telling us how much we are going to lose, but we could have done without it. As for the databases I've mentioned..... Down with them! Abolish them! Keep them out!

CAMBRIDGE

TOURISTS PARADISE?

by Steve Bull

One thing you cannot avoid in Cambridge is tourists. Unlike most seaside resorts where there is a noticeable seasonal change in the number of visitors, there always seems to be a large number in the city whatever the time of year. Because of this Cambridge has developed a thriving tourist industry. Colleges that have been kept in penury by having to accommodate students during the winter, open their doors to hordes of fee-paying foreign language students charging as much as £60 a day for full board and limited tuition. They are always full. Summer brings out the icecream vendors and chauffeur punts, the pavement artists and buskers, all hell-bent on relieving you of hard-earned cash. You learn to avoid them.

Most people are drawn to Cambridge by the architecture. Since the University was founded in the 13th century (by people fleeing from Oxford, as ever) the amount of building has been phenomenal. Although little remains of the earliest buildings, most colleges can boast courts that are several hundred years old, and some have buildings that are famous the world over. If you ask an American what his or her memory of Cambridge is, it is likely to be Kings College Chapel, the landmark that, to a large number of people, is Cambridge University. Most tourists are thus drawn to the colleges that adjoin the Cam ('The Backs') as a focus for their visit. Indeed, some of the finest views are here. Few people, however, get to hear the more interesting stories that are associated with these colleges.

The work on Kings College Chapel roof at the moment has been necessary for some time and it took a nationwide appeal to raise the million pounds needed for its repair. One of the 'greatest' student pastimes in years gone by used to be nightclimbing - that is to say climbing over college buildings at night trying to avoid Porters and reaching hitherto unvisited parts of college. In the late 1960's a group of Kings undergraduates managed to scale Kings College Chapel and hang a banner between two of the minarets advocating withdrawal from Vietnam. This made the National Press. What was most interesting though was the letter these undergraduates sent to the college bursar telling him how dangerous the college roof was. It is this that is apparently supposed to have stirred the college authorities into doing something about repairs.

Anybody who has seen the film 'Charriots of Fire' will probably remember the restaging of the Trinity Great Court Run. It is interesting to note that when the film-makers approached the college for permission to film this they were refused outright because Trinity didn't want to associate itself with what it thought would be an unsuccessful film. Thus the scene was filmed at Eton and is nothing like the real thing. The Run still happens every year after the Trinity Matriculation Dinner. However the chance of a large number of extremely drunk freshers staggering around Trinity Great Court before the clock finishes striking midnight is minimal

unless someone modifies the clock so it does not stop striking as was done recently.

Another college that has stories told about it is Clare. On the bridge across the Cam that separates the old part of Clare from the more modern Memorial Court there are a number of stone spheres. One year one of these came adrift from the bridge and was replaced by an authentic looking polystyrene model by a group of Clare undergraduates. These people stood beside the sphere and when a punt-load of Japanese tourists was going underneath the bridge they pretended they were pushing a heavy stone sphere off. The tourists, of course, quickly jumped out of the punt not wanting to be hit by such a heavy lump of stone, only to see the sphere fall gently into the water and float away down the Cam. They were not amused and the undergraduates in question got sent down.

Stories like these are seldom told to tourists. After all the colleges want the money that the tourists bring in and thus their reputation is critical. But if you are bored by the 'Trinity Library was built to the designs of Sir Christopher Wren in' style of tourist information, there are still a number of interesting, if sometimes apocrophal, stories to hear!

Pub and Restaurant Guide

There are enough pubs and restaurants in Cambridge to fill a publication the size of this programme book, catering for a range of tastes and clientelles. Those that have been mentioned below are not necessary the best, but for been chosen for closeness, quality, price and editorial whim. Things change very quickly in Cambridge and what was good two years ago may be very bad now! You have been warned.

Pub Guide

Cambridge's pubs tend to belong to two breweries on the whole namely Tolly Cobbold or Green King. In both cases the ordinary bitter is drinkable if inferior to the more expensive special beers Green King Abbot and Tolly Original. The quality of the pubs serving these (and anything else) is also very variable and hence it is quite difficult to construct an accurate pub guide without a little subjective personal preference.

Of the pubs around New Hall two stand out. The Castle (Castle Hill) and The University Arms (Castle Hill) are two of the nicer pubs in the northern part of Cambridge. The food in The Castle is probably the best pub fare in the city and is both cheap and extremely high quality. At the other end of the scale The Grapes (Histon Road) and The Isaac Newton (Castle Hill) have little to recommend them unless you like smokey workingman's pubs with little real character. Off the main roads there are a number of smaller pubs with their own 'local' clientelle which can be

a little standoffish but are generally quite good. These include The Merton Arms (Northampton Street) and The Rose and Crown (Northampton Street). Northampton Street is also graced with a cocktail bar called Crusts which caters for those people who want to have their eardrums blasted while they sip their ludicrously expensive drinks.

In the centre of Cambridge the pubs are more tourist-orientated and hence tend to be packed. Of the two pubs on Bridge Street, The Mitre is by far the best choice, since the only major attraction that the Baron of Beef can claim is the boxing matches between Cambridge Computer Entrepreneurs. By far the best drinking street in Cambridge is King Street where there are at least six pubs within staggering distance of each other. A famous passtime in days gone by used to be the King Street Run where you drink a pint in each of the pubs and run to the next (there used to be many more in the street). The only running that you are likely to do nowadays is to the toilet as the watery beer in the Kings Arms is famous. For this reason few people get past The Cambridge Arms at the start.

Further afield can be found the best pubs in Cambridge. For the Real Ale Drinker a trip to The Salisbury Arms will find the best ales in the city. This Tenison Road pub is owned by CAMRA and hence is fairly good if inclined to be crowded at the weekends. The Alma Brewery and The Panton Arms (Panton Street) are also worth visiting as is The Ancient Shepherds at the village of Fen Ditton (strictly for those with a car).

Of course by far the best way to find a decent pub in Cambridge is to try a few of them. Only then can you decide which ones are best and which are to be avoided. On this note one need only consider The Pickerel (Magdalene Street) which is known, at least during term time, as the haunt of the rich and thick. If this is how you like your beer then this is the pub for you.

Restaurant Guide

Any tourist centre will have a large number of eating houses geared to a large range of tastes and pockets. Cambridge is no exception although it does seem to have a surfeit of Indian and Greek restaurants at the expense of some of the more traditional European ones. An advantage that tourists don't have is being able to eat in college. New Hall food is both good and cheap and is likely to be the best value for money you will get in Cambridge. It is also where you will probably find the committee at meal times. What more recommendation can I give!

With the death of The Whim this year (a kind of inferior McDonalds) the standard of Cambridge food has definitely improved. The only remaining fast food chain is Wimpey and this seems enough to cater for the foreign language students and leave the rest of the restaurants to those people who at least attempt to appreciate their food. The Market square in the centre of town boasts a couple of Italian restaurants though The Italian Kitchen is the only one to offer anything like value for money (if you can avoid the 'Eurogrub' chips with everything). The remaining European restaurants seem to be very expensive (if also very good i.e. Jean Luis).

Cambridge Kebab Houses are also variable in quality. The Gardenia (Rose Crescent) is the pick of these although The Oasis comes a close second. At the other end of the scale The Eros (St. Johns Street) is known to serve the worst take-aways in Cambridge but has the advantage of being open late into the night. A similar range can be found in curry houses from the excellent Mumtaz Mahal (Hills Road) through the adequate Curry Centre (Castle Hill) to the frankly uninspiring Bombay (Bridge Street). Cambridge curry houses boast anonymous staff and a range of bland overpriced lagers that are generally only best consumed within a large party of people hell bent on having a good time. Nuff said really.

One thing that always seems to be good is Chinese food. At the cheaper end of the market, The Jade in Mill Road is well worth a visit. For those people who choose where to eat from Egon Ronay guides The Peking (Burleigh Street) is ideal. In the latter the eagerness of the owner to make people leave once they have finished eating is renowned. Such is the pressure of a good recommendation.

People always have special recommendations about local restaurants and thus I feel duty bound to mention three. For the Vegetarian, Nettles (St. Edwards Passage) is well worth a visit. Also Aunties, the tea shop in St. Mary's Passage has so much character (and serves Earl Grey) that it makes an ideal place to stop in the town centre if you can get in. Finally, of course, there is Waffles - the place to eat in Cambridge. See you there.

The CAMCON Committee

Tim Illingworth:- the man whose breakfast conversations produce trouble at 5000 miles. Who has famous authors (well Larry Niven) falling over to meet him. As a book something large and uncompromising like Dhalgren.

Neil Taylor:- the person unfortunate enough to be sitting next to Tim at breakfast on Sunday at Oxcon, after Hugh had persuaded him to run the convention. Works too hard to attend committee meetings. As a book, something interesting, like The Last Dangerous Visions.

Steve Linton:- the man who thinks he knows where the money is - I hope! Fulfills the traditional treasurer's role of saying 'we can't afford it'. Has 'the weight and texture of Dune.'

John Dallman:- the other man who knows what's going on (oh yeah???). General committee dogsbody and Useful Person as a result of being the only London committee member to own a word processor. As a book, something long, complicated and in several volumes such as The Riverworld Saga.

Peter Wareham:- the man who thought that being in Los Angeles would keep him out of anything that Tim could invent. Suffers from an inability to say no to anything that seems like a good idea at the time, or even a stupid one. As a book something lasting like Islandia.

Steve Bull:- the noble person responsible for the progress reports and other publications and productions. Suffers from an inability to spot and

correct typos and is known to musspel the occasional wurd. As a book, something busy and technological like The Ringworld Engineers.

Karen Naylor:- official committee secretary and occasional speaker-to-college. The only committee member with an in depth knowledge of college short cuts and hidey holes. As a book something rare and underated like Something About Eve.

Jomsborg, An Explanation

Some people may be wondering about the foretelling at the begining of this programme book. In order to explain this it is necessary to know something about Jomsborg and how the society was founded.

Jomsborg was founded in 1975 in Cambridge by David Gress-Wright as a fantasy discussion society. Although its roots are in other student societies such as CUSFS (Cambridge University Science Fiction Society), Jomsborg has attracted members from outside the University and still flourishes today.

It was named after the Jomsvikings whose tale is related in the Jomsvikinga Saga and in E.R.Eddisons novel Styrbiorn the Strong, although the latter is somewhat difficult to find. Basically Bui-the-thick (one of the few named vikings) and his compatriots lived in the Borg of Jom which was destroyed by violence in AD984. All but twelve of the Jomsvikings proved to be cowards or were killed and took their place in Valhalla. Since twelve people do not make a town, Jomsborg was dissolved.

Then on 31st January 1975 at 9:50 GMT New Jomsborg was founded. With this new foundation came the Thingar (discussion meetings every fortnight), the Afmaelisdagur (when Jomsvikings assemble before dawn to raise the sun and ensure that it continues to do so for another year), the Vierzla (an annual feast) and of course the New Chronicles from which the foretelling at the begining of this programme book is taken.

Many things have developed from the society during its lifetime. Jomsborg-in-exile continues the traditions for people who have left (or never went to) the university. The society also has a flourishing writers workshop that is soon to produce an anthology. If you want to know more, then talk to the current Reeve (Karen Naylor) or any of the exiles.

Memberships

This is the membership list current to 17th August 1985.

a - Attending s - Supporting p - Presupporting d - day

1a Tim Illingworth
2a Neil Taylor
3a Steve Linton
4a John Dallman
5a Peter Wareham

6a Steve Bull
7a Karen Naylor
11a Susan Francis
12a Alex Stewart
13a Kathy Westhead

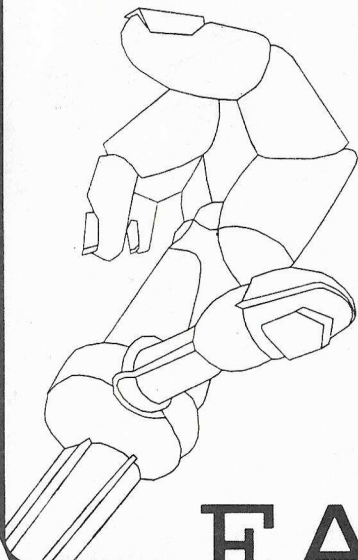
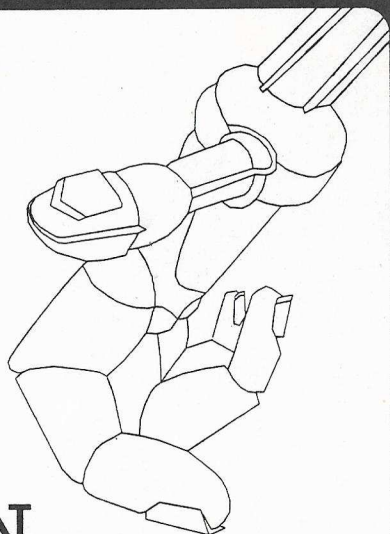
14a Martin Hoare
15a Katie Hoare
16a Roger Robinson
17a Dave Power
18a Mike Westhead

19p R. Meechan	81a Paul Dormer	143a Cardinal Cox
20a Animal	82a Barbara Kitson	144a Tom Beamont
21a Mike Sandy	83s Mike Hardy	145a Philip Palmer
22a Marcus L. Rowland	84p Rachel Hopkins	146a Malcolm Davies
23a Mike Figg	85a Roger Dearnaley	147a Paddy Leahy
24a Zoe Deterding	86s Bob Jewett	148a Dave Hodson
25a Trevor Barker	87a Oscar Dalglish	149a Morag Kerr
26a Martin Wheatcroft	88a Vince Docherty	150a Gary Bilkus
27a Gwen Funnell	89s Dave Ellis	151a Rod McBan
28p Michael Jones	90p Fox	152a Bob Bellis
29p Keith The Green	91a Peter Mabey	153s Edgar Belka
30a Mary Wheatcroft	92a Roger Perkins	154a PPL Nazgul
31a John Stewart	93a Stephanie Bell	155s Brian Aldiss
32p Catherine Watson	94p Keith Hayton	156a Streetzy
33a Caroline Mullan	95a Rhodri James	157a Pope Snake I
34a Maureen Porter	96a David Blackmore	158a Mike Moir
35a Steve Davies	97a David Blackmore's friend	159a Debby Moir
36p Tim Breslain	98a Mike Scott	160a John Pickering
37p Elfquest Fan Club	99a Alison McDonald	161a Fran Pickering
38p JFW Richards	100a Alan Braggins	162a Matthew Kelland
39p David Ulmick	101a Simon Middleton	163a Bernard Leak
40a Ken Slater	102a Jonathon Coxhead	164a Graham Ruston
41a Joyce Slater	103a Mike Abbott	165a David J. Clayworth
42a Wendy Glover	104a Pete Windsor	166a Gytha North
43p Robert Eaglestone	105a Austin Benson	167a Steve Lawson
44a Barbara Rochford	106a Vicki King	168a Andrew Kelly
45a Martin Easterbrook	107s Mary Lee	169s Peter Fenman
46p M Steven Dolan	108a Ros Pardoe	170s John Style
47a Steve Rothman	109a Darroll Pardoe	171a Robert J. Sneddon
48a Colin Fine	110a Phil Allcock	172a Martin Tudor
49a John Botham	111a Ruth Le Sueur	173s Pam Wells
50p Mark Bravington	112a Howard Chalkley	174s Andrew McFarlane
51a Jonathon Pickles	113a Jane Butterworth	175a Anne Wilson
52p John Bark	114a James Steele	176a John Wilkes
53a Ken Lake	115s Kevin Rattan	177a Gary Stratman
54a Jan Lake	116a Andy Bray	178a Mike Cule
55a Brian Ameringen	117a Kevin Reader	179a Dave Turtle
56a Hugh Mascetti	118a Chris Cooper	180p Mick Rogers
57a Simon de Wolfe	119a Christina Lake	181a Peter Cohen
58a Captain Thug	120a Nick Trant	182d M. Dickson
59p Susan Tonbein	121a Edward Welbourne	183s Dov Rigal
60a Peter A. Tyers	122a Jackie Hawkins	184a Lin Morris
61a Bridget Wilkinson	123a Jon Fairbairn	185a Phil Masters
62a Bernie Peek	124a Stuart Wray	186a Angela Masters
63a Simon Beresford	125a Sarah Woodall	187a Norman Baxter
64p Ken Brown	126p Pete Hutchison	188a Susan Thurston
65a Graham Head	127p Dee Hutchison	189a Dave LLOYD
66a Mike Damesick	128a Bill Williams	190a Sue
67a Joy Hibbert	129a Dave Beasley	191a Tony Hammond
68a Dave Rowley	130s Phil Chee	192a Kim Whysall
69p Dave Langford	131a Julian Headlong	193a Mike Christie
70p Hazel Langford	132a Paul Kincaid	194a Chris Potter
71a Chris Suslowicz	133a Robert Sneddon	195a Joel Feinstein
72a Tibs	134s Marina Holroyd	196a Undepoldus
73a Joan Paterson	135a Kate Davis	197a Jeremy Henty
74a Nick Lowe	136a Barbara Conway	198a Mike Whitaker
75s Elda Wheeler	137a Mike Gould	199a Mike Stone
76a Ye Gerbish	138s Mike Molloy	200a Maria Hamilton
77p Richard Vine	139s Chris Walton	201a Alan James Sullivan
78a Duncan Booth	140a Roger Campbell	202a Shelagh Lewins
79a Judy Booth	141a Denise Atkinson	
80a Peter Smith	142a Mary Carmichael	

BECCON

87

A Bid to
hold the
1987
EASTER
CONVENTION
at the METROPOLE
BIRMINGHAM NEC



If you wish to support this bid then;

Either give us your name and address at
the registration desk together with £1 or
send us £1 and your name and address to

BECCON 87

191 The Heights, Northolt, Middx. UB5 4BU

THE EASTERCON