

MabinogiCon

26-28 July 1991 Unicon 12

Neuadd Rathbone, UCNW Bangor



Progress Report 1

MabinogiCon

Progress Report 1: November 1990

ADDRESS TO ALL CREW MEMBERS STARSHEEP FLOSSIE.

FROM STARSHEEP CAPTAIN MARK BAILEY

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STARDATE 23/10/90

To all crew members of the Starsheep *Flossie*, may I greet you on behalf of your Command Crew. I trust you have all now settled into your allotted quarters and in this, our first ship's bulletin, I would like to draw your attention to the activities that we have been involved in to make your tour of duty with us all the more enjoyable.

But first, however, I would like to address the matter that I know most of the more experienced amongst the crew will be all too aware of. This is the first Starsheep ever flown by the "Flossie" Command Crew. And, as such, we are more than willing to accept any advice from more experienced enlisted ranks as regards flying the beast. We hope to have members of the Command Crew stationed at stops along our route to the Bangor Nebula (starting at Space Station Novacon where you will, hopefully, receive this transmission). Those of you temporarily disembarking at Space Station Armadacon, look around for us, we may have a recruitment/enquiries stand there too.

Anyway, it is with considerable pleasure that I can inform you that Chronicler of Dragons Anne McCaffrey has confirmed that she will be joining us for the duration of our voyage. Information as regards her written works can be found further on in this bulletin. Information pertaining to other Sheep's guests remains uncertain at the moment. Keep your eyes open for further bulletins.

In the meantime I, Captain Bailey, wish you all a pleasant voyage and I hope to see some of you fellow crew members at space stations around the Galaxy. Until next time, regards,

STARSHEEP CAPTAIN MARK BAILEY

Bangor: The Seething Metropolis

The first thing that hits you when you see Bangor is that for a city it's got a lot of greenery. Rather than the usual wall-to-wall urban sprawl of brick red and concrete, a variegated city dotted with open areas lurks between two wooded hills. These hills and the Menai Strait confine the city to a fairly compact area, so despite all the open space virtually everywhere in Bangor is within about five minutes' walking distance. Into small spaces, much may be packed, though, and since the main local industry is the university, Bangor is geared up to fleece the students--er, that is, to appeal to the congoer, with all of the essentials of civilised life--pubs, off-licences and a wide variety of fast food joints. It also has a fairly large number of shops, crammed into two shopping centres and along Wales' longest High Street, which is the home of among others two book shops and an internationally famous second hand record shop.

Then of course there's the culture and history oozing from the place. Virtually opposite Neuadd Rathbone is the Roman camp, a lightly wooded hilltop from which you can get a great view of Bangor with Snowdonia in the background, and where it is still possible to discern the shape of the ancient enclosure. However, the history of Bangor as a city really starts just off the High Street with the Cathedral which gives the city its status. The first building on the site was the monastery built by St Deiniol in the 6th century which established the community. The current cathedral's oldest elements are 12th

century, and the building was added to throughout Bangor's turbulent Middle Ages, reaching relative completion in the 15th century. A large part of the present structure, though, dates from the Victorian period when it was extensively restored. In a kind of echo of this, the pier, Bangor's main Victorian landmark, was restored after a period of dilapidation.

The 19th century had seen Bangor expand because of the two landmarks outside the city: firstly Telford's Menai Bridge, and then Stephenson's Britannia Bridge which, linking the mainland to Anglesey, formed part of a major route from Britain to Ireland. Later that century, the University College of North Wales was founded, and by the time of the First World War the present 'Top College' had been built. The college itself now takes up a large part of Bangor, with many of its buildings dating from the expansion period of the 1960s. Consequently Bangor has a unique atmosphere, combining the strong Welsh tradition of the mostly Welsh speaking heartland of Gwynedd with the cosmopolitan nature of an academic community which attracts a high proportion of overseas students as well as ones from all over Britain. The city has the relaxed charm of a rural area and the facilities of a large town: the best of both worlds, really.

Dave Baynham

Anne McCaffrey

We are pleased to announce that Anne McCaffrey has accepted our invitation to attend MabinogiCon as Guest of Honour.

As I'm sure most of you know, Anne is an author who commands great respect with her wide-ranging treatment of sf and fantasy themes. She is best known for her saga of Pern, the acclaimed Dragon books, of which the most recent is *Renegades of Pern*. However, she has spread her talents over a wider area to include harder science fiction based themes such as the merging of men and machines in *The Ship Who Sang* and humanity's first contact with an alien race in *Decision At Doorn*.

It will be interesting to hear Anne's thoughts on the themes we have chosen for MabinogiCon. There is a lot in her work that links our chosen topics of music in sf, and Celtic influences in fantasy. For example, there are few things more Celtic in origin than dragons. I'm looking forward to discussing the different treatments in mythology of dragons, and of their more modern day counterparts.

Music influences too, are felt throughout Anne's work. This surely links up with her early involvement with music, including opera and operetta which she has directed as well as performed. Her nine years studying voice no doubt brought inspiration for the heroine of *The Crystal Singer* and *Killashandra*. The problems of bringing such an immediate medium to life on the page have been encountered by any number of writers, and Anne has succeeded where an awful lot of others have failed.

For myself, I'm happy to be given the chance to meet in person the lady who began my interest in sf. Discovering my Dad's copy of *Dragonquest* at the age of ten was an event of importance in my life, but having it taken off me because it was too 'old' for me sealed my fate, I'm afraid. Anne also has the dubious pleasure of being the only author I've admired enough to write to, at the age of twelve, and great was the jubilation when I actually got a reply. Many thanks, Anne, for all the twelve year olds you have undoubtedly made happy over the years.

These, then, are some of the reasons that we are grateful Anne will join us at MabinogiCon. No doubt you'll be able to think of many questions that we haven't. After all, we've come up with the themes, about time someone else did some work.

Nickey Barnard

The Starsheep *Flossie* is designed and flown by:
Mark Bailey: chairman, memberships, guitar on *Star Trek: The Next Generation: The Musical*
Nickey Barnard: publicity, shrimp-looker-after
Dave Baynham: secretary, publications, sheep puns
Cath Bircher: site liaison, pretty pictures, penguin abuse
Nigel Evans: ops, programme, "deputy anything", large furry creature
Geoff "Jafo" Hale: treasurer, heroic finder of cat homes
Stewart Johnson: programme, menial labour, small furry creature
Ivan Towison: Wise Old Bird, talker to computers, programme
with help from the unofficial Harry, Birnie, the ICON and Spawn of Conine committees and numerous others as yet unsuspecting.

Not With A Baa-ing But With A Whimper

The Starsheep Flossie test-fired her warp drives at Chronoclasm in Derby, and was successfully launched on her one-year mission in the week leading up to Uniconze, with its tense, demanding bidding session ("It's a foregone conclusion," said Caroline Mullan reassuringly before adding, "but if it isn't then send someone over to the alternative programme so we can all vote for you..."), replete with potentially shattering news ("Is the committee aware," worried old Bangor hand Andy Morris, "that their site is sinking into the sea at the rate of six inches per year?") and vicious attempts to sabotage the convention from within ("Frankly," enthused Stewart Johnson, "the beer in Bangor is bloody awful."). Despite, or more probably because of, the rather short period in which the bid was put together, and the interesting fact that Sheep Captain Bailey went down with acute appendicitis shortly before Uniconze while Sheep's Computer Towlson cunningly cut his throat to rags scant days before the bidding session only to have it mysteriously recover mere hours afterwards, the bidding went well, with a misty-eyed John Richards, presumably thanking his lucky stars that somebody else was doing it instead of him, describing it as "what a bid should be like", though close textual analysis of the receipt book produces the interesting footnote that he was not so misty-eyed as to actually sign up... Steve Glover, in the grip of something that was either prophetic fervour or Irish whisky, acclaimed MabinogiCon as "the sheep of things to come", while Dave Langford was so horrified at his realisation of having joined the thing that he was driven immediately to seek the nearest party; others, less adventurous, settled for a few evenings to be spent trying to pronounce the convention name ("I'm just calling it the M-Con now," admitted a feeble-hearted Adrian Cox after a few short hours), while the ethnic contingent demanded the return of the name Sciffsteddfod and then were unable to agree on how to spell it. But it was Chris O'Shea who most successfully summed up the feelings of the committee, when he borrowed a sword from Frodo the bear and, before our very eyes, proceeded to spear the unfortunate Flossie upon its point, mercilessly and repeatedly. Still, she bore it with fortitude--and so, I hope, will you.

Ivan Towlson

Membership List as at 1 November

1 C Mark Bailey
2 C Nickey Barnard
3 C Dave Baynham
4 C Cath Bircher
5 C Nigel Evans
6 C Geoff Hale
7 C Stewart Johnson
8 C Ivan Towlson
9 P John Richards
10 P Mike Cheater
11 P John Botham
12 A Dave Rowley
13 P Phil Plumbly
14 P Steve Glover
15 A Gareth Rees
16 P Jonathan Coxhead
17 P Steve Rothman
18 P Chris Stock
19 P Dave Ellis
20 A Larry Van der Putte

21 A Rafe Culpin
22 S Alex Perry
23 A The Magician
24 A James Steel
25 A Michael Abbott
26 A Caroline Mullan
27 A Bridget Wilkinson
28 A Terry Hunt
29 A Paul M. Cray
30 A Richard Crook
31 A Paul Dormer
32 A Mike Stone
33 A Peter Wareham
34 A Gwen Funnell
35 A Ken Slater
36 A Joyce Slater
37 A Marcus L. Rowland
38 S Colin Wilkinson
39 A Andy Morris
40 A Dave Langford

41 A Hazel Langford
42 A Brian Ameringen
43 A Pat Brown
44 A Mary Morman
45 A Kent Bloom

Rates

Attending: £11
Supporting: £6
Conversion is always at
the current difference in
rates.

Room rates will be £10.52
per night (single rooms
only); details in PR2.

Mabinogicon

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