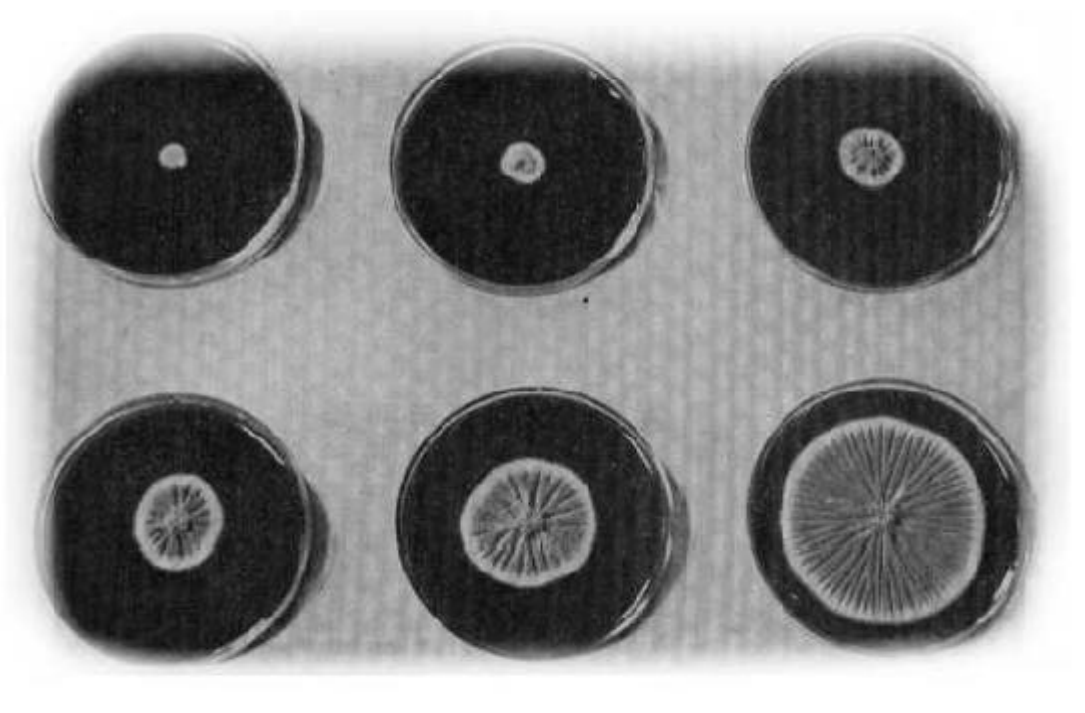




Progress Report 2

April 2002

54th National British Easter Convention



GUESTS

(IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER)

CHRIS
BAKER
(Fangorn)

CHRISTOPHER
EVANS

MARY
GENTLE

Hanover International, Hinckley
18-21 April 2003

THE COMMITTEE & CONTACTS

Paul Oldroyd	Co-ordinator & Programme (he's the very annoying 'completer-finisher' – don't you just hate that type of person?)
Ped Badlan	Minister without Portfolio – keep us on the straight and narrow
Tony Berry	Hotel Liaison ("Who volunteered? Oldroyd threatened to tell everyone that I enjoyed . . .")
Noel Collyer	("No, no, no, no... yes!") Operations
Chris Donaldson	Memberships (bung her loads of money)
Julian Headlong	Science programme and interesting minutes supremo
Eve Harvey	Publications & Finances ("OK Paul, I can't think of any other excuses not to take on this job")
John Harvey	Publications & Communications – oh yeah, just try to get him communicating!
Yvonne Rowse	Programme and doyenne of fun

Other Conscripts

Claire Brialey & Mark Plummer	Fanthology
Tim Broadribb	Tech Manager.
Tanya Brown	Website
John Dallman	Publications
Vincent Docherty	Finances
Dave Hicks	The Return of Elmer T Hack

Membership Rates to 1/11/02

Full attending	£40	US\$60	Euro 70
Supporting	£22	US\$35	Euro 37
Child rates (ages at time of convention)			
Infant (up to 5)	Nil		
Child (5-11)	£6	US\$9	Euro 10
Junior(12-15)	£22	US\$35	Euro 37

Contact Addresses

Post:	Seacon 03 8 The Orchard Tonwell Herts SG12 0HR UK
E-mail:	memberships@seacon03.org.uk info@seacon03.org.uk programme@seacon03.org.uk
Website:	www.seacon03.org.uk
eGroup:	This is for members of the convention only; if you want to join contact john@seacon03.org.uk and quote your membership number

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Front Cover - Dr Alexander Fleming's petri dishes (Why? Read Julian's piece.)	
Artwork page 3-----	Jim Barker

PAUL'S PIECE

Sometimes it's difficult to know where to start introductions to Progress Reports, particularly when the convention is still over a year away and there's very little happening. Unfortunately, this time it's not. Rog Peyton has had to resign from the committee due to the problems he has had in keeping Andromeda afloat.

As many of you will know by now, Andromeda ran into serious difficulties earlier this year, and has now had to close. I can't imagine what that must feel like to Rog, but I feel like a part of my life has vanished. I first stumbled across Andromeda at Summer Row in the early '70s after seeing an ad at Birmingham University. Since then (apart from a brief flirtation with Amazon, which could never guarantee a first edition) it has been my first place of call when looking for a book. Rog himself says that life on the dole is not much fun: he's spending much of his time at Andromeda carrying out a stock take. He says he would like to put on record his thanks to the Andromeda staff who – even after they were made redundant – came into the shop and helped him prepare for the receivers. All of us on the committee wish Rog all the best for the future, and hope to see him at Seacon.

The better news is that Tony Berry has volunteered to take over hotel liaison duties from Rog. Thanks, Tony, and welcome. His first task is to carry on negotiations with the hotel to get the bar prices down and a decent beer in!!

The programme sub-committee has put a rough draft of the programme together – it's always amazing to me how much of the programme writes itself! We will of course be holding all the expected "events", and hope to repeat the fireworks that were so successful at Paragon. (Julian Headlong promises to put on an alternative programme item for the people who wish to Avoid Big Bangs.) At present the programme is simply a series of boxes that have labels such as "light media SF item" or "Serious heavyweight SF lecture". By the time of the next PR we will have fleshed this out much more.

We have invited all of our Guests to be involved in drafting the programme, and are holding a weekend in the summer when committee and guests can start seriously planning programme content. If you have an interest in contributing to the creation of the programme, please send an email to programme@seacon03.org.uk with your suggestions. Remember – we are particularly looking for items to do with Milestones in SF (in any media) and Cutting Edge Science. We also have a programme strand for meetings or events that you or your group would like

to run. Let us know what you would like to use this for, and if you have a day/time preference for when it is scheduled.

Noel is starting to put his Ops team together – Tim Broadribb has agreed to act as our Tech Manager. Again, thanks and welcome Tim. Volunteers for the Ops team will of course be very welcome. Volunteering forms will be available in the next PR, or you can visit our website at www.seacon03.org.uk where an electronic form will be available.

I hope that we will see most of you at Helicon or Novacon this year – come and see us at the Registration desk if you need anything, or would like to put in a request to the Committee (now, did I really mean to say that?).

Paul Oldroyd

The Return of Elmer T Hack

Back in the 1970s a much younger Christopher

Evans, ably assisted by a much younger Jim Barker, introduced to the wider world a certain Elmer T Hack. Elmer was one of the most prolific and controversial writers in the 1970s when, at the age of 35, he'd already published 64 novels and innumerable short stories. His early exploits were seen in the BSFA's journal VECTOR; an interview with him conducted by Chris Evans was published by



Christopher Priest in Deadloss 2, and the BSFA published the complete story in 'The Best of Elmer T Hack'.

Not much has been heard from him in the intervening years, but now, in the 21st century, a much older Dave Hicks has, with the kind permission of Chris and Jim, decided to revisit Elmer to see how the years have treated him. In this and future Progress Reports, we are hoping to bring you up-to-date with Elmer. You never know, if there is enough support out there, we might be able to persuade him to come to Seacon03!

CHRISTOPHER EVANS

Good God! It's a quarter of a century since I met Chris Evans for the first time. I'd wondered why we looked so different. We met in the crowded One Tun, a pub in London, at a once-a-month SF gathering. We both had more hair then. He wore a leather jacket and blue jeans, me an anorak and cords.

Damn, we were sharp! We discovered we had Offa's Dyke in common: he'd been born on the side generally associated with the Welsh; me on the side that is more English. Being Europhiles, then as now, the only enemy was the divide itself, which we bridged quickly. We shared childhood stories of our up-bringing, he in the Tredegar Valley, me on the Romney Marsh. These reminiscences did not raise a lot of laughs. But we certainly laughed when we talked about adolescence and first love. The central section of Chris's 1985 novel *IN LIMBO* contains some of the funniest writing about early (hilarious) romance that it's been my pleasure to read. I can't be sure, though I think I'm on the right track, but it feels personal. Then, as now, he can easily out-write Martin Amis when it comes to relationships.

We founded and edited four issues of the BSFA's *FOCUS* magazine for writers, bullying friends and others for articles, anecdotes and insights. That was great fun. In the late-80's we edited *OTHER EDENS*, tales of the fantastic. We had our agreements and disagreements, but the only time I recall our sitting staring at each other in utter confusion was when reading a 'thesaurian' submission by John Clute.¹

"What in God's name is an 'entablature of salamanders loosed suddenly into a myoclonic can-can'?"

"I have no idea. Let's publish it and see if anyone else does."

Chris's novels have always been surprises and

delights; he catches you off guard. After the grim Orwellian study of alienation, *THE INSIDER* (1981), he produced *IN LIMBO*; you feel for Carpenter, its narrator, as you feel for a friend in trouble, but a friend with a sense of humour. It's a remarkable novel. Then a different sort of creativity: *CERI* (1985)², who would grow into the image of his father! (Just kidding, Ceri.) After that he wrote a dazzling series of stories, *CHIMERAS* (1992), in which he indulged fully his love of politics and the exotic. With *AZTEC CENTURY* (1993) the exotic came from Mexico to Europe in the form of Aztecs in flying balloons, conquerors from a world never conquered by the Spanish. Princess Catherine's story – she narrates it herself – is delicate, poignant, heroic and bloody

chilling! Alternate histories old hat? Read this one! Chris's last published novel *MORTAL REMAINS* (1995) takes you to Pluto, to other spacey places in very strange ways, and back to an astonishing vision of Earth. It does what he so often does: leaves you with images that you want to go back to. You want to know what happens *NEXT*. I feel this about *Da Capo*, his 2001 Interzone novella. The story weaves together several strands of bio-technology, and asks questions that leave you gagging to see what other insights the writer has. Chris doesn't write a lot, but



With this amazing levitating loaf, we can make the US space programme obsolete!

The Return of **Elmer T. Hack**

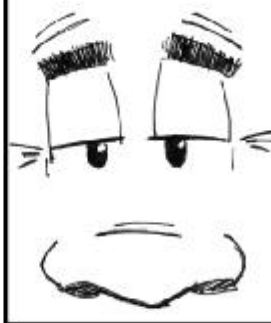
**AFTER 23 YEARS HE'S
BACK ON THE SCENE...**



**...THE SAME WINNING
SMILE...**



**...THE SAME STEELY
GAZE...**



**...YEP. HE HASN'T
CHANGED A BIT!**



he makes everything count. I like that.

Why doesn't he write a lot? Well, one reason may be his best production of the 90's: GWEN (1999)! (Yes, the sparkling Fiona had a little something to do with it). Strong-willed, funny, watchful, drop-dead gorgeous. Gwen? 75% her father's child.

There are writers whose words matter, and writers who natter with words. Chris Evans is of the former class, and class it is, so if you don't know his work already, you have a year to seek it out and treat yourself!

Rob Holdstock, 2002

¹ *Eden Sounding: Other Edens 2*

² *Production Manager: Faith Brooker*

As part of our Milestones in Science and SF theme, Julian looked back to 1903 in PR1 to the birth of powered flight. Now we move on 25 years to see what happened in 1928.

JULIAN'S PIECE

An Enquiring Mind and an Untidy Life

Scientific progress isn't always nice and tidy. Sometimes it's a thing of procrastination, messy laboratory benches and contaminated glassware.

In 1928 in St Mary's Hospital, Paddington, a rather untidy man made an interesting discovery while throwing away some smelly agar gel. He noticed that the glass plates he was growing bacteria on had also started growing mould. Nothing strange there, the plates had been sitting around for a while. But he noticed an odd thing – the bacteria next to the areas of contaminating mould had all died.

A simple observation, but an acute one made by a gifted and enquiring mind, that gave the world penicillin, and a certain Dr Alexander Fleming fame, a Nobel, and a knighthood. Not bad for a mouldy plate. A little later he commented "One sometimes finds what one is not looking for". Something I try to bear in mind whenever I work at St Mary's, and

spend ages not looking for a parking space.

As well as kick-starting the biotechnology business, 1928 also saw the birth of space opera, that Buck Rogers stuff, the publishers Gollancz, Philip K Dick, Kate Wilhelm, Jim White and Robert Sheckley. A pretty good year.

The first space opera was published in *Amazing* – EE "Doc" Smith's "The Skylark of Space". Before the Skylark, most spatial adventures took place within the confines of our solar system, as did the first Buck Rogers story – "Armageddon 2419" by Philip Frances Nowlan, again in *Amazing*.

Smith used the whole galaxy for his stage. And sometimes one or two others. And sometimes had fun smashing them together. One little solar system was way too small for the ambitions of a high-flying chemist like Smith.

The Skylark starts in a surprisingly earth bound manner, in the laboratory of a rather untidy government scientist working at his messy laboratory bench with his strangely contaminated glassware. The gifted and acute scientist, Dr Richard Seaton, notices something odd about his glassware when his apparatus lifts off from his bench, flies out the window and leaves the earth heading for outer space.

He, of course, observes this singular event with the pair of binoculars that all good chemists keep close at hand for occasions like these.

Having discovered a working faster-than-light reactionless spacedrive in his electrolytic bath, the acute Dr Seaton goes on to acquire in quick succession: a super-explosive, a starship, and an arch-enemy. And all without the use of a government grant.

Those were the days.

Penicillin can cure those that are ill, Spanish sherry can bring the dead back to life.

Sir Alexander Fleming

The Return of Elmer T. Hack

FIRST I'M INVITED TO BE
A GUEST OF HONOUR AT
SEACON '03...



...NOW 'NADIR CLASSICS'
WANT TO REISSUE ALL
MY 'GOODMAN OF THE
GALAXY' NOVELS.



IT ALL CAME AS QUITE A
SURPRISE...



...I DIDN'T THINK THE
POST OFFICE DELIVERED
TO CARDBOARD BOXES!



YVONNE'S PIECE

'Well people, the next PR's out for Eastercon and since we don't want to report in detail on the programme yet, we need something else. Any suggestions?'

'We could do an item on the social side of committee life. That'd be interesting to various people; those interested in running a convention and wondering if it'd be fun, those who like human interest and the scurrilous-gossip-mongers.'

'Hm. Perhaps. I'd have to vet it first.'

'What, and edit out all the scurrilous gossip? No chance mate. You won't get to see this until way after it's too late. You know. When the proof-reading takes place. Two days after it comes back from the printers. So. Who is going to produce this fine piece of writing?'

< Hard stares from all round the table (full of cleaned plates and empty wine bottles). >

'Me. Oh no. I've got a fanzine to get out for Eastercon. And I only have vague recollections and, and...oh alright then. But it'll be late. Just see if it isn't. You'll regret it.'

Um. Let's see. The Social Side of Committee Life . It all seems to revolve around the Oldroyd/Donaldson dining room table. Lots of good food. Huge quantities of wine. And ten minutes worth of minutes. My first meal there was wonderful. I got the vegetarian meal plus most of the rice because the rest seemed to be on the pernicious low-carb diet. And as I remember, Chris was labouring in the kitchen under the burden of the Most Appalling Hangover the World Has Ever Seen. Caused, I might add, by the low-carb diet. Really. You see, the night before we had met at the Arthur C Clarke awards.

I was very impressed when my invitation turned up. 'Gosh,' I thought. 'I've really arrived now. I've been invited to the Science Museum for a gathering of real sercon people. There'll be authors there. There'll be proper BSFA fans there. There'll be nibbles on plates and wine and everything.' Were there nibbles on plates? I don't think so. But there were some very nice, very attentive young people who kept topping

the glasses up.

I look back on the evening through the mists of time and too much wine and try to remember pertinent happenings. I crashed the queue (carrying a hat in a box) to join Paul, Chris and Julian. Almost immediately they told me about The Diet. This sad failing is obviously a failing of all dieting people. I've done it myself. I've stood there and droned on endlessly about what I've eaten that day and how good it makes me feel (through teeth gritted to breaking point) whilst watching disapprovingly as other people tuck into proper food with lascivious gusto. Harumpf! Am I by any chance on a diet at the moment? Well, yes. A bit. I ate five plums for breakfast then...what? Oh yes. To the point. Which was that it really didn't take them very long to tell me what they'd eaten all day. Two eggs. Each. For breakfast. Which was a long time away at that point.

They let us into the building eventually where we wandered around saying 'Hey, look at this. Wow.' And other such erudite comments. We followed people who seemed to know where they were going until we reached the barrier formed by people giving out glasses of wine. 'Oh yes please,' we all said inadvisably, with all the enthusiasm of the sort of people who don't get offered free glasses of wine very often. And then we drank them. And then helpful people came along and topped them up again. And again. For goodness sake. Who organised this shindig? Don't they know what fans are like? Oh. Yes. They do. They just hadn't counted on people drinking on completely empty stomachs.

So anyway. We mingled merrily. We chatted intently to people we only usually see at conventions. We even chatted to people we don't see at conventions anymore. The technical name for those people being authors. Generally they seemed to be quite a nice bunch. Ken MacLeod, who is after all one of our favourites, ended up doing sterling babysitting service with Jonathon Cain. I was astonishingly impressed.

The Return of Elmer T. Hack

**FOR YOUNGER READERS,
DR MANDY FARRELSOHN
OF THE SF FOUNDATION
WILL REVIEW ELMER T.
HACK'S WORK...**



**...COMPLETE CRAP! HE'S
THE WORST SF WRITER
EVER! HOW DARE THEY
REISSUE THIS HACKNEYED
DRIVEL!**



**IT'S AN OUTRAGE! THE
IDEA OF HACK IN PRINT
AGAIN MAKES ME WANT
TO STRANGLE SOMEBODY!**



**DR FARRELSOHN, THANK
YOU.**



He didn't drop the child or anything. I like a competent man.

After the mingling and the wine drinking came the awards, with a video of Arthur. A very few people became tense. The rest of us were quite happily relaxed. The winner was announced as China Mieville (do I really need to get my character map out? I suppose so. Seeing as Pan managed to. Let's see. Ah yes.) China Miéville. All the authors relaxed, smiled, did the usual good loser thing, China spoke briefly (what about? No idea. I have a vague recollection that he was a jolly fine chap) then we went back to socialising and the helpful people went back to glass topping duties.

And then, alas, alack, far too soon, before pub turn out time even, they politely asked us to leave. It took a lot a careful ushering, with fans darting off in all directions ('I never noticed that before' and 'Ooh, just a second' and 'Isn't the exit over here?') but eventually we were left standing on the pavement outside the fabulous Science Museum, longing and longing, like those stood outside Faerie, for the free wine and exotic pleasures now denied us. 'Oh well. Might as well go to the pub then.'

Before we did, however, the final evil enchantment was performed. Full of Award Wine, empty of food, Chris was ready to weave her spell. She draped herself elegantly over Noel and whispered sweet promises in his ear. Noel resisted gallantly. 'No, no,' he protested. 'I will never do that. Don't ask it of me.' Julian and Paul looked at me expectantly. I put my scruples away in my hatbox to keep them fresh for when committee duties are over and attached myself somewhat less elegantly to Noel's other side. 'All she says is true,' I cooed. 'Everything can be yours. Just promise us one thing. Be Ops for us and you can have anything. Anything.'

Of course later he denied ever having said, 'Oh all right then, I suppose,' which, in the circumstances was much more enthusiastic than we had any right to expect. But by then it was too late. We had him inked in on the committee and there was no escape.

And then Chris, Paul, Julian and I went back to Chris and Paul's house in a taxi that took us over every single speed bump in the whole of London, took hours and cost a fortune. But that was fine. Our machinations had succeeded. We had Ops.

Eastercon GOH Fanthology

As we mentioned in the last PR, Seacon03 is planning, a fanthology featuring relevant fannish writing from past Eastercon guests of honour. If you've got any queries or suggestions, contact

Mark Plummer & Claire Briailey
(email: banana@fishlifter.demon.co.uk), or write to
14 Northway Road
Croydon
Surrey CR0 6JE, UK

Advertising Rates – Progress Reports

The following rates will apply for any adverts placed with us and paid before 1 November 2002, even if it is for publications after this date. Camera ready copy is assumed (preferably on disc). If we have to do any additional processing work, this will be charged extra.

	Fan	Professional
Full page -----	£30	£100
Half page -----	£15	£50
Quarter page-----	£8	£30

The committee will decide at its own discretion (and the view of the judges is final!) on what is fan or professional. Colour will be quoted separately. Rates for inserts will be quoted individually depending on the size and weight.

Rates for the Programme Book and for flyers to be included in the Membership Pack will be published in the next Progress Report.

For further information, or to place an advert, contact John Harvey at the convention address or via e-mail at john@seacon03.org.uk.

Progress Report 3 Copy deadline 1 October 2002

Hotel Details

Hanover International Hotel, Hinckley.

If you want to get more information about the hotel - Hanover International Hotel, Hinckley - you can find them on the web: www.hanover-international.com/hinckley.

Hotel booking forms will come with PR3 in November 2002

Room Rates: Per Person Per Room Per Night

Single rooms ----- £45.00

Double/twin rooms----- £32.50

Triples/family rooms----- £25.00

For those who find even these rates too much, we are undertaking a review of alternative hotels and will publish a list, with costs and location, in the next PR, which will contain the hotel booking form for the Hanover.

MEMBERSHIP LIST

As at 1 March 2002 (all Attending except where marked (S) for Supporting)

GoH Chris Baker	115 Janet Figg	74 Andrew Patton	190 Chris Southern
GoH Christopher Evans	116 Mike Figg	172 Mali Perera	87 Andrew Stephenson
GoH Mary Gentle	54 Colin Fine	8 Rog Peyton	67 Susan Stepney
1 Ped Badlan	69 Brian Flatt	18 Philip Plumbly (S)	55 John Stewart
2 Noel Collyer	167 Susan Francis	14 Mark Plummer	56 Barbara Stewart
3 Chris Donaldson	156 Alison Freebaird	105 Silas Potts	95 David Stewart
4 Eve Harvey	46 Anders Frihagen	143 Kelvin Proctor	188 Mike Stone
5 John Harvey	31 Gwen Funnell	144 Judith Proctor	195 June Strachan
6 Julian Headlong	140 Carolina Gómez Lagerlöf	65 Colette Reap	83 Lars Strandberg
7 Paul Oldroyd	141 Niall Gordon	145 Thomas Recktenwald	43 Kathy Taylor
8 Rog Peyton	121 Robert Gorman	109 Trevor Reynolds	44 Ian Taylor
9 Yvonne Rowse	157 Steve Green	110 Pat Reynolds	138 David Thomas
21 Michael Abbott	158 Anne Green	187 Julie Rigby	160 David Thomas
185 Andrew A. Adams	114 Steve Grover	72 Roger Robinson	80 Tibs
25 Paul Allwood	81 Urban Gunnarsson	50 Tony Rogers	84 Dave Tompkins
29 Brian Ameringen	153 Helen Hall	86 Mic Rogers	124 Barry Traish
142 Kevin Anderson	166 Dave Hardy	48 Steve Rogerson	30 Paul Treadaway
168 John Anderson	139 Colin Harris	89 Howard Rosenblum	132 Jan van 't Ent
169 Diane Anderson	53 Andy Hayton	90 June Rosenblum	47 Larry van der Putte
22 Margaret Austin	192 Dave Hicks	91 Michelle Rosenblum	68 Mark W. Waller
82 Mark Bailey	173 Sue Hobson	159 David Row	32 Peter Wareham
147 Barbara-Jane	174 Andrew Hobson	39 Marcus Rowland	170 Gerry Webb
58 Trevor Barker	59 Valerie Housden	150 Jim Samuel	171 Alan Webb
27 Chris Bell	42 Tim Illingworth	99 Mark Sinclair	103 Nik Whitehead
64 Alan Bellingham	111 Marcia Kelly Illingworth	176 Sally Sinclair	66 Charles Whyte
49 Michael Braithwaite	10 Rhodri James	62 Mark Slater	135 Bridget Wilkinson
125 Jaap Boekestein	146 Wilf James	35 Martin Smith	112 Anne Wilson
133 Hans-Ulrich Boettcher	165 Richard James	75 Roger Smith	129 Martin Wisse
182 Simon Bradshaw	199 John Jarrold	198 Frank Smith	11 Alan Woodford
183 Bridget Bradshaw	180 Ben Jeapes	179 Robert Sneddon	88 Anne Woodford
100 Michael Braithwaite	196 Jeremy Johnson (S)	164 Adrian Snowdon	108 Ben Yalow
77 John Bray	155 Neil Johnstone	113 Ian Sorensen	104 Mark Young
12 Claire Brialey	175 Sue Jones	92 Jennv Southern	
93 John Brown	131 Amanda Kear		
78 E.D. Buckley	97 Tony Keen		
51 Mary Burns	163 Paul Kincaid		
52 Bill Burns	162 Maureen Kincaid Speller		
184 Robert Burton-West	19 Dave Lally		
149 Kim Campbell	45 Dave Langford		
191 Cat Coast	16 Alice Lawson		
76 Elaine Coates	38 Steve Lawson		
33 Felix Cohen	161 Judith Lewis		
63 Chris Cooper	126 Colin Lilley		
94 Steve Cooper	127 Katherine Lilley		
117 Jane Cooper	148 Oscar Logger		
118 David T. Cooper	178 Gavin Long		
119 William Cooper	177 Caroline Loveridge		
189 Baby Cooper	40 Peter Mabey		
151 Del Cotter	98 Ian Maughan		
194 Gail Courtney	120 Rory McLean		
193 Cardinal Cox	186 Alex McLintock		
60 ½r Cruttenden	13 Pat McMurray		
107 John Dallman	102 John Meredith		
197 Julia Daly	122 Ray Miller		
41 Steve Davies	123 Andrew Miller		
181 Peter Day	70 Pauline Morgan		
28 Giulia DeCesare	71 Chris Morgan		
57 Zoe Deterding-Barker	101 Tim Morley		
26 Vincent Docherty	36 Tony Morton		
154 Tara Dooling-Hussey	37 Carol Morton		
24 Paul Dormer	20 Caroline Mullan		
17 John Dowd	85 Andrew Norcross		
73 David Drysdale	130 Gytha North		
128 Stephen Dunn	136 Andrew O'Donnell		
61 Roger Earnshaw	106 Roderick O'Hanlon		
23 Martin Easterbrook	137 Ken O'Neill (S)		
15 Sue Edwards	34 Krystyna Oborn		
152 Lynn Edwards	134 Brian Parsons		
96 Herman Ellingsen	79 Joan Paterson		

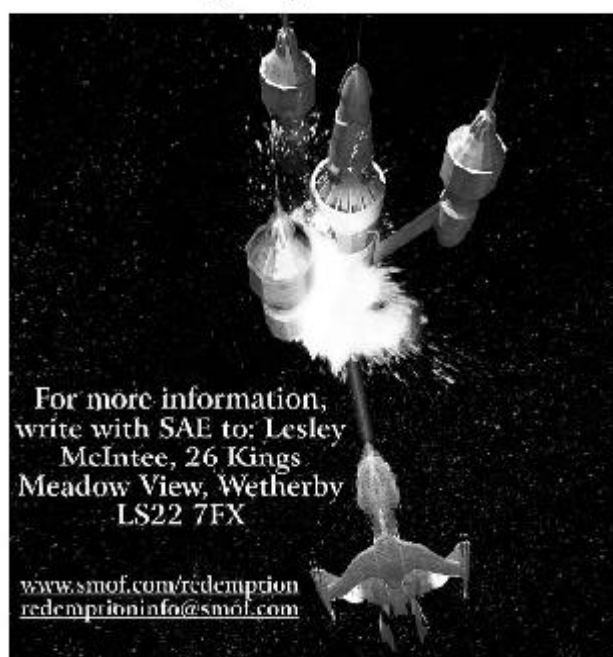


REDEMPTION '03

21 – 23 February 2003

Ashford International Hotel, Ashford, Kent

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For more information,
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Meadow View, Wetherby
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