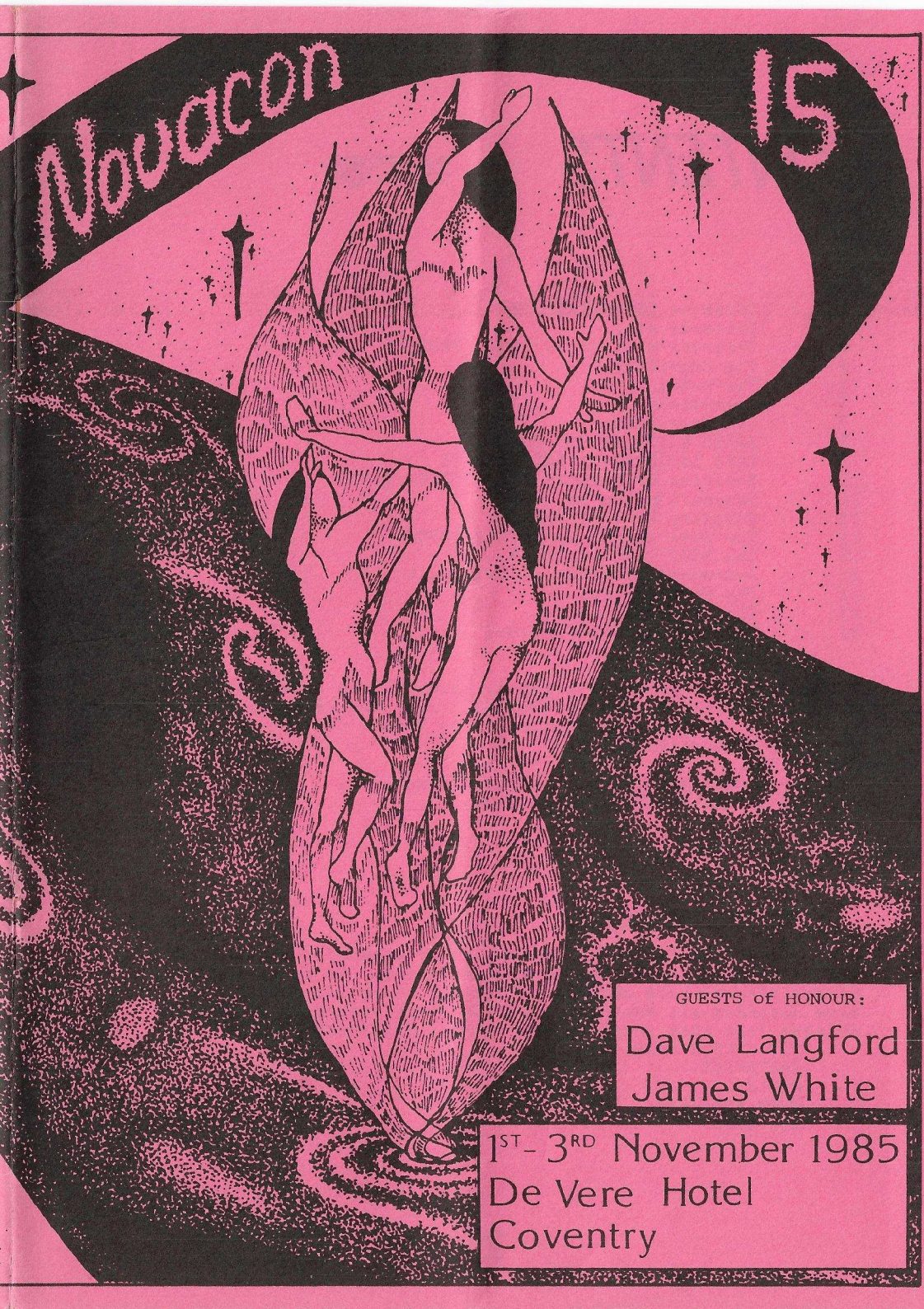




GUESTS of HONOUR:

Dave Langford
James White

1ST - 3RD November 1985
De Vere Hotel
Coventry

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This progress report was written, except where otherwise stated, and put together by EUNICE PEARSON. Many thanks go to Phill for putting up with me, and especially to Martin for the use of his gorgeous typewriter.

March 1985.

(c) The Birmingham Science Fiction Group 1985.

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* * * *

REMEMBER THE OLD DAYS?

Were you at all fourteen Novacons as an attending member? If so, STAN ELING would like to hear from you. He is making up, or may already have made up, a list of those who he believes have attended all Novacons. If you think your name should be on that list then write to him without delay at:

124 GALTON ROAD,
SMETHWICK,
WARLEY,
WEST MIDLANDS,
B67 5JS.

NOVACON

Fifteen

1ST - 3RD November 1985

GUESTS OF HONOUR:

De Vere Hotel
Coventry

Dave Langford
James White

"It is a sobering thought that it all started fifteen years ago, with a virtual unknown in the Goh spot, and an attendance of something like seventy-three-and-a-half fans (one couple had a baby there -- no, not as part of the programme, they brought it with them) and every one was sure that it would be a one-off, (the con, not the baby) and november conventions were a ridiculous idea. Ah yes, I remember it well." JAMES WHITE.

Like the baby, Novacon has grown into something far larger! As chairman of the Novacon two years ago, I wrote how being 13 was a difficult time for the convention. At the time I didn't realise how prophetic my words were. The following Novacon shocked a number of people who were quick to chastise its actions. However, looking at it from a different point of view, what teenager doesn't shock and offend when it tries out new ideas?

This year Novacon must grow. We can not let the convention run on its own reputation, for there lies stagnation. Novacon must try out new ideas and attitudes, however it must learn that there are some things that are not suitable for its continued growth.

Novacon fifteen sees a dramatic new step. For this year the convention will be held in Coventry. Personally, the De Vere combines the best qualities of the Royal Angus and the Grand Hotel. Likewise, having two guests of honour is a new step. These new ideas will not please everyone, I'm not saying they will. What I am saying is that Novacon must justify itself in the face of increasing competition and it is my hope that this year I will be able to do this.

A seven pound registration fee is due to the fact that the progress reports, (three this year) will not be printed as economically as last year's and also we plan to have a very full programme.

So, as chairman of Novacon fifteen, I hope you will want to attend the party and look forward to seeing you there.

Phill Probert

the committee.....

PHILL PROBERT -- Chairman -- editor of one fanzine, (Hot Waffles) with Zoltan the wonder dog; served on four Novacon committees; is reputed to be pretty well harmless; duplicator-extrordinaire; likes chocolate cake; was chairman of Novacon 13. A nice person.

EUNICE PEARSON -- publications and fan programme -- editor of six fanzines, (Calaban, Brigante, Egregious, Gloria Mundi, Hybrid and Ichthyosaurus) and four apa-zines; has been on three Novacon committees; likes chocolate cake and cats; writes lots of letters. An odd person.

MARTIN TUDOR -- hotel liason and operations -- editor of Empties; has served on one Novacon committee and Seacon '84; might just like chocolate cake; has a wonderful typewriter; likes real ale. A kind person. PS. Is in charge of advertising as well!

GRAHAM POOLE -- treasurer -- an old fan from way-back-when; likes chocolate cake and cats; may just get around to doing a fanzine one day; was an attendee at that first Novacon. Another nice person.

KEVAN WHITE -- films -- is a relatively new fan; this is his first time on a convention committee; has gophered a lot. A pleasant person.

CAROL PEARSON -- art show -- member of the woman's apa; adores chocolate cake and cats; was persuaded into fandom by sister; first time on a convention committee; is a student of enviromental studies; plays the church organ. A Pearson-type person.

LAWRENCE LAMBOURNE -- 'sporting events' -- produced one fanzine and has been wanted by the hit squad ever since; first time on a convention committee; has an inquisitive sense of humour. An unconventional person.

The Hotel

After Novacon 14 the committee of Novacon 15 sat down and began to plan.....and came up with their first obstacle -- the hotel. The Grand Hotel had been, well, a grand hotel, so the committee assumed it would be the venue for this next year. Which just goes to show that you shouldn't take anything for granted, especially in regards to a Novacon. The Grand Hotel quoted ridiculously high room rates for this year, and refused to negotiate at all. So the Royal Angus was approached next, and surprise surprise, but their room rates were remarkably similar. There was nothing for it but to look outside of Birmingham, and finally the DE VERE HOTEL in Coventry was found.

The De Vere combines the grace of the Grand and the experience of the Angus. Star Trek conventions have been held here and the 1975 and 1977 Easterrcons. All the rooms, including the bedrooms, are very large, so there is enough space to spread ourselves out in while not being too ramblly. There will be a fan room as well as the main hall, with the usual art room, book room and creche. One of the rooms contains two pool tables and a darts board for possible tournaments!

ROOM RATES: £17.50 per person in twin or double room
£22.50 per person in a single room

The De Vere also has family room and suites; details will be in the next PR. There are twenty single rooms altogether, nineteen doubles and one hundred and sixty-five twins, so early booking will be appreciated when the forms are sent to you. Please remember that rooms are allocated on a first-come-first-served basis, so do not blame the registrations person if the room you want has gone by the time you get around to book.

The overflow hotel will be the LEOFRIC, situated a few minutes walk away from the De Vere. The same room rates apply there.



Advertising

We will be taking adverts for inclusion in progress reports two and three and the programme book. These will be produced in A5 size. You may submit adverts in A5, though we would prefer them to be A4 size to be reduced. Rates are:

PROGRESS REPORTS

	<u>Full page</u>	<u>Half page</u>	<u>Third page</u>	<u>$\frac{1}{4}$ page</u>
Professional	£19	£11	£8	£7
Non-professional	£13	£8	£6	£5

PROGRAMME BOOK

Professional	£26	£15	£11	£9
Non-professional	£17	£11	£8	£7

COPY SIZES:

Full page = 7" x 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ "

Half page = Landscape 7" x 5 $\frac{1}{4}$ " *

Portrait 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ "

Third page = 7" x 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ "

Quarter page = 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 5 $\frac{1}{4}$ "

In all cases, dimensions are width x height. All copy should be black on white and camera ready. Half-tones will be charged £4 extra per advert. Please ask for quotes for special requirements, such as bleeding-off, reversals, etc.

If you have any queries please address them to MARTIN TUDOR. (See below)

DEADLINES FOR ADVERTISING:

Copy must be received no later than these dates:-

PROGRESS REPORT TWO: (published early june) - May 15, 1985

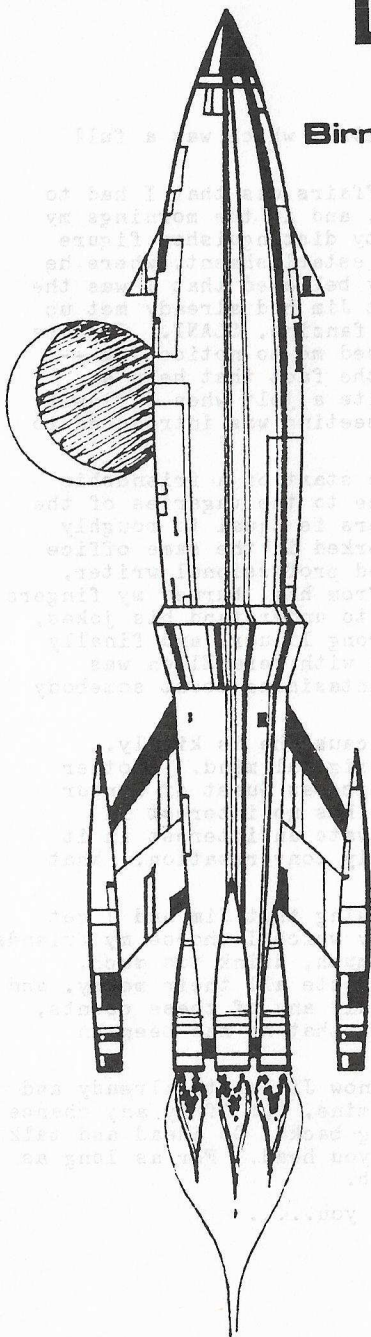
PROGRESS REPORT THREE: (published early october) - September 1, 1985

PROGRAMME BOOK: (issued at Novacon 15) - September 15 1985, but space must be booked by september 1, 1985.

Please send all copy to MARTIN TUDOR
845 Alum Rock Road,
Ward End,
Birmingham.

NOVACON

is run annually by the
Birmingham Science Fiction Group



HONORARY PRESIDENTS:
BRIAN W ALDISS and
HARRY HARRISON.

FUTURE MEETINGS:
April 19th,
BRIAN W ALDISS.

May 17th,
MAXIM JAKUBOWSKI.

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JAMES WHITE

BoB Shaw

I first got to know Jim White in 1949, which was a full year before he got to know me.

The reason for that odd state of affairs was that I had to cross central Belfast on my way to work, and in the mornings my attention was always caught by this lofty distinguished figure waiting outside the door of a tailoring establishment, where he obviously worked. At that time I firmly believed that I was the only science fiction fan in Ireland, but Jim had already met up with Walt Willis and was working on his fanzine, SLANT. Perhaps it was some wisp of telepathy which caused me to notice Jim -- or perhaps it was something to do with the fact that he's a couple of yards high. Anyway, I got quite a jolt when I finally contacted Irish Fandom and at my first meeting was introduced to Jim.

Little did I know that that was the start of a friendship which has lasted for eight summers. (Due to the vagaries of the Irish climate, a timespan of eight summers is equal to roughly 35 years.) During that period I have worked in the same office as Jim, seen him develop into a respected professional writer, tried (unsuccessfully) to borrow money from him, burned my fingers on his stupid model rocketship, learned to understand his jokes, helped introduce him to the evils of strong liquor, and finally convinced him that his early infatuation with Vera Ellen was misguided and that he would be better fantasising about somebody like Sheree North.

Above all, I've had a good time, because he is kindly, thoughtful, humorous, and has a truly original mind. Another quality which makes him an excellent choice as Guest of Honour is that he is a good talker. Even if he has no interest in your pet subject he is prepared to cultivate an interest in it there and then, all in the cause of lively conversation. What more can you ask of a friend or GoH?

Sometimes I find it a little surprising that Jim and I get on so well, because the usual criteria by which I choose my friends are very strict -- they have to eat too much, drink too much, smoke too much, be untidy, swear a lot, waste all their money, and have filthy minds. Jim qualifies on hardly any of these counts, so the only explanation I can think of is that he has been an uplifting influence on me.

Most attendees at Novacon 15 will know Jim White already and their regard for him will be as high as mine, but if by any chance you've never met him before -- don't hang back! Go ahead and talk to him. About anything that comes into your head. For as long as you want. Make him work for his free b&b.

And don't forget to tell him I sent you.....

DAVE LANGFORD

by Kevin Smith

THAT'S SF LIFE

We've received a letter from Eunice Pearson of Birmingham saying:

"Dear Esther, We've selected Dave Langford as a Guest of Honour for Novacon 15, but we're not sure how people will take it. Can you help us?"

Well, we thought that you would be able to solve Eunice's problem, so we took our microphones out into the street.....

*

Dave Langford as a Guest of Honour? Triffic! I've read his novels -- that great one where the lost Earth colony builds a giant radiator between the stars, The Space 'Eater. And the one about nefarious goings on at a Ministry of Defence Secret Research Toilet -- The Leaky Establishment. Cracking stuff! And then there's his non-fiction. I really liked Raw in 2080 -- the future of military pornography. Great!

*

Dave Langford for Guest of Honour? Had to happen, didn't it? Best fanwriter of his time, all those Hugo nominations. And his fanzines: the stunning, er, stunningly infrequent Drilkjis, the apazine (the any-ava zine) Cloud Chamber, the Nova award-winning Twll-ddu....

I wish you hadn't spat in my face.

*

And you, sir, what do you think of Dave Langford?

Dave Langford? Can't understand the man. I mean, he threw up a perfectly good and useful job at the Ministry of Defence and Not Killing People, making nuclear warheads targetted on Soviet missile bases which we would on no account use first -- as I say, he threw up all that to publish a scruffy little newszine Ansible which is probably contrary to the Official Secrets Act.

Thank you, Mr Heseltine.

*

You want to know about Dave Langford? Boy, can I tell you about Dave Langford! When he was in the States on his TAFF trip, the things he got up to! He didn't tell the half of it in that trip report. Boston's still talking about it!

Could you be more specific?

And get sued for libel?

*

Dave Langford, and not many people know this, is a frustrated builder. His first house, when he and Hazel bought it, was old and needed a lot of work doing to it. Then they moved to an even bigger, even older house which needed even more doing to it. Just lately, he's been eyeing a large pile of rubble near the M4.....

*

Dave Langford? Langford? Oh yeah, great! Saw 'im on the box, on the wossname, Whistle Tube. "Free Johns", innit? Funny name for a Free John -- Dave. 'e ought to change it to John or sunnik.

*

Dave Langford? That Astral thing, isn't he? You know, you grab him in both hands and put both feet through, then bring one foot over and round and through between there and there, then up over your head and finally put the second foot back where you found it.

No, you're thinking of the Astral Pole.

Oh yes, silly me. Famous Dave Westieluszeko.

*

Dave Langford? The computer boffin with the sci-fi pages on Prestel? The guy who programmed a PDP10 to write sci-fi stories by the yard?? The man with three home computers in every room???

That's the one.

Never heard of him.

*

Dave Langford will be a great Guest of Honour. He buys his pint like a true fan and drinks his round like a true pro. Or is that the other way round....? Guests of Honour should be associated with pints. Most Guests of Honour are very happy if you associate pints with them, in a tangible sort of way. Dave Langford is no exception. Buy him a pint, and watch him associate it.



NOVACON I; Vernon Memories-- Brown

"It seemed a good idea at the time" was probably the first thing that Man said when he invented speech, and it must have been used more than any other phrase in the years since. Thinking of NOVACON, it is certainly the first to spring to mind --not that NOVACON was a bad idea; its just that what it has led to that is a bit dizzying.

Way back in 1970, when I was ~~young~~ and much more involved in fandom, the University of Aston SF Group had a thriving social life outside its regular meetings and several of us had attended a couple of Eastercons, which were then the only SF cons in the country, and a Fantasy-type-con in Leeds, which was basically just a hired room in a hotel -- no programme, book-your-own-room if you attend etc -- the opposite to Eastercon. So, in our innocence and great experience of conventions, we decided the time was ripe for a second, one-off, national convention which would fall between these extremes, structured in a similar way to Eastercon but with only about 120 to 130 attendees to give a more social/fannish affair, big enough to allow people to circulate, small enough to prevent fragmentation into cliques.

But good intentions are not enough for success, and we were fortunate on two counts to have help from elsewhere. At that time I was involved with organising the 1971 Eastercon with several experienced fans who gave us the benefit of this experience -- in fact, Peter Weston suggested our Guest of Honour, Jim White, which was our second stroke of luck as Jim is such a popular and friendly chap that his acceptance of our invitation posted us rungs up the ladder to success. We clinched arrangements with the Imperial Centre Hotel in Birmingham, which was just the right size and location and started to get things organised.

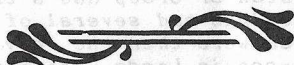
The next few months went smoothly, but then things speeded up. The trouble was that all the committee, with the exception of the chairman, yours truly, were students and had their studies to consider (honest!). A personal worry was that all the legal arrangements, bankbalance etc. were in my name, so if something went wrong I'd be the one to carry the can. University holidays didn't help and a month before the con there was only Ray Bradbury and myself around to finalise things, although by co-opting Ray's wife, Carole (plus car), we managed between us.

The weekend was so successful that it was voted to make it an annual event, although, because of the difficulties we had experienced as a University SF Group, we handed its organisation over to the Birmingham SF Group. The hotel staff were the best

I've ever known and there were none of the snarlups that can so easily occur. The con was shorter than other conventions as it was not a Bank Holiday weekend and we only ran it from 2:00 to 10:00 pm on the Saturday and 10:00 am to 4:30 pm on the Sunday; however, not counting films, we still had eleven major programme items during that time as well as a First Day Cover postbox with special handfrank for the philatelists.

Yes, looking back, that first NOVACON was a good idea, although its current size and content now bear little resemblance to our original visualisations. Not only was it the first of a highly successful series of NOVACONS, but it pointed the way for the multitude of conventions that now take place throughout the country (and the year), allowing many more people to participate actively in their hobby.

I don't want to annoy Vernon, but I had better explain that Novacon 1 wasn't actually Novacon 1. Since it was intended to only be a one-off, it was called simply Novacon. (EP)



"THE ARRIVAL"

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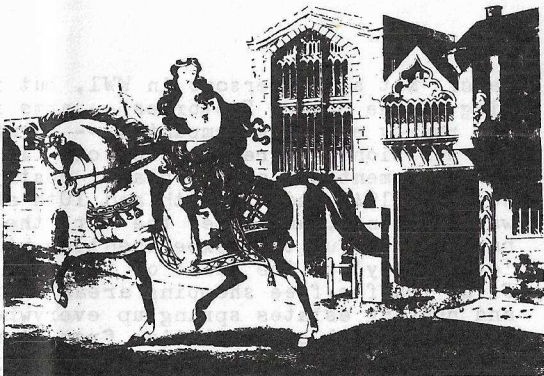
New Hall College, Cambridge: 13th - 15th September 1985.

Contact: CAMCON c/o Niel Taylor, Perspective Design Ltd.

Top floor, 9 Pembroke Street, Cambridge, CB2 3QY.

COVENTRY:

Tony Berry



Mention Coventry and people think of two things -- Lady Godiva and Coventry Cathedral. These represent both ends of the historical scale. The legend of Lady Godiva is mediaeval and the new cathedral is just over twenty years old. A lot happened in between!

The name 'Coventry' has two stories attached to it, both involving trees: one says that it is derived from 'Cofa's Tree' (don't know who Cofa was), the other that it is from 'Coven Tree' -- apparently there was a witches' coven which met under a particular tree.

Coventry did indeed begin as a mediaeval walled town, part of the Kingdom of Leofric, Earl of Mercia and husband of Godiva. Population was a couple of hundred, mostly villeins and serfs. In 1043 Leofric founded a Benedictine monastery and gave over half of the town to its rule. Over the next few hundred years the wool trade of the town grew and the Merchant Guilds became powerful and wealthy. Their money led to the building of various churches, hospitals, charity schools and alms houses (11th-14th centuries) some of which still survive today. By the end of the 14th century Coventry ranked next to London and Bristol among the chief towns of the country.

During the Civil War Coventry was a garrison town under the Royalists. It seems that the behaviour of the troops was so bad that the locals would have nothing to do with them, and so being posted to Coventry became very unpopular with the soldiers. Hence the phrase 'to send to Coventry' meaning to ostracise. Things remained fairly static until the Industrial Revolution, then a host of cottage industries sprang up. Coventry became famous for two crafts -- weaving (especially silk) and watchmaking. This town of small, independant artisans having close links with the surrounding countryside became the 'Middlemarch' of George Elliot's book of 1871. (I hope I don't have to tell you that George Elliot was a woman -- Mary Ann Evans.) Later in the 19th and early 20th century bicycle manufacture became important with names like Starley, Riley, Singer, Rudge, Hillman and Humber. Most of these gradually moved onto make motorcycles, and, after the first world war, motor cars, being joined by the Triumph, Daimler, Morris, Rover, Rootes, Alvis, Standard and Swallow (later to become Jaguar) companies.

Heavy industry grew. Coventry became noted for machine tool production -- Alfred Herbert's being, in 1914, the largest factory of its kind in England. This and the numerous other high-volume factories, coupled with a highly skilled workforce, enabled Coventry to become the centre of the arms industry in two world

wars. Not so bothersome in WW1, but in Episode 2 with the building of the Shadow Factories -- arms factories running alongside, and run by existing companies -- turning out guns, tanks, planes and munitions in great profusion. It led to the Luftwaffe bombing the excrement out of the place, mostly on the nights of 14th november 1940 and 8th, 9th and 10th april 1941. Much of the city was flattened, and after the war, the architects and town planners had a wonderful time experimenting with new ideas, creating their 'dream City' on the ruins of the old. Coventry got one of the first traffic-free shopping areas in the country and tower blocks and housing estates sprang up everywhere. The idea was to take the overspill of population from Birmingham and attract people from the surrounding areas to the city's industries. The new national road system put Coventry within easy reach of London, the ports and the big cities up north. The extensive double ringroad of Coventry itself kept traffic out of the town centre and supposedly speeded it on its way to foreign parts (and after years of negotiating Brum's ringroads you can consider yourself competent to tackle the one here).

All was fine in the boom period of the 50's and 60's and the city prospered. In 1958 the Belgrade Theatre, the first in the country to be built with the direct backing of a local authority, was opened; the new Cathedral, adjoining the bombed ruins of the old, was consecrated in 1962; the new hospital complex began in 1963; the University (for some reason called Warwick) opened in 1964 and the sports centre and international swimming pool in 1965. Alas, like most of the big cities, the bubble burst in the 70's. The country's economy made a headlong rush to the nearest toilet, unemployment increased as firms faced massive foreign competition in the markets on which the city relied for its living -- witness the complete destruction of the British motorcycle industry, which finally died a couple of years ago with the closure of the Triumph factory in Meriden. And of course, the car industry went the same way. At the same time the high-rise blocks and houses made using the 'new' building techniques began literally to fall apart, creating modern slums.

Well, you know the rest. Coventry has has its fair share of troubles, but I don't agree with the Specials' view that it's becoming 'a ghost town'. It is a place with a long and varied history, and there is much of interest to see. Of which much later.

Tony will be back in PR2 with the next thrilling instalment of the story of Coventry.



The Nova Awards

by Martin Tudor

In 1973 the late Gillon Field started the NOVA award, which was presented annually by the Birmingham Science Fiction Group to the editor of the fanzine voted 'Best of the year'. In 1981 a further two NOVAs were created; one to be awarded to the person voted the Best Fan Writer of the Year, the other to the person voted the year's Best Fan Artist.

Initially, the winner of the award was determined by a panel of judges consisting of experienced fanzine fans, but in recent years all this has changed; the current system enables all active fanzine fans (this means YOU!) to vote for their favourites in each category. Voting forms are dispensed from the registration desk at each year's NOVACON, the completed forms are deposited in the ballot box provided, early (?) on the Sunday morning of the convention the current administrator and his aids count the votes and calculate the winners who are announced during the closing ceremony on Sunday evenings. Simplicity itself? Not quite.

The difficulty which arises every year is that if the NOVA awards are going to be awarded we need people to vote. At NOVACON 13 twenty people voted -- from a total convention attendance of over 350. At NOVACON 14 twenty-eight people voted -- from a total attendance of 500+. According to the previous administrator, these figures represent if anything, an improvement on previous years. But as for as I can see such abysmal turn outs all but render the awards invalid.

The NOVA awards should be as representative as possible of fanzine fandom-at-large. But unless fanzine fans actually get off their butts and VOTE this cannot be possible. Yes, I do realise that not every person who attends NOVACON is eligible to vote, but I should like to point out that the potential voter has only to meet the most basic criterion -- they merely have to be an active fanzine fan. An active fan in this sense being someone who, during the period 1st October (of the previous year) to 30th September (of the year of the convention), has produced one or more issues of their own fanzine or has had articles or artwork printed in two or more different fanzines or has had letters of comment printed in at least three different fanzines. I am certain that far more than thirty such people attended NOVACON 14, in fact as I received more than twenty fanzines at that convention with, on average, three different contributors -- not counting letter writers -- I would estimate that there were in the region of eighty to one hundred eligible voters at the convention -- why didn't they vote? From my own personal experience, I would guess that they meant to but didn't get around to it. Y'know something always sidetracks you at a con, either someone you haven't seen for a while, or a good programme item or another pint. But this year I am appealing to YOU to make that extra effort and cast your vote! The voting on NOVAs is almost always pretty close so EVERY VOTE COUNTS.

DAVE WOOD:

"censorship and the swive factor"

A man, naked and weary, crouches on the deck of a makeshift raft. Standing beside him, legs apart, thighs tensed, torso clad in a green leather two-piece swimsuit, red cloak swirling around her shoulders, an auburn-haired girl points to the distance. On the skyline stands the remains of the Statue of Liberty.

I am fascinated by this magazine cover; memory deceives, maybe the cover is more garish, perhaps there is a more blatant sexual imagery. Because I am only about eight years old. I am with my best friend, also called Dave, and we are shifting through a pile of American comics. The year is 1944.

I don't remember the name of the magazine. I do remember it as being different from the rest of the stuff we are going through. It had hardly any pictures, but lots of words. I chose it from the pile in preference to my usual favourite, the greatest of comic book heroes, Captain Marvel. This brought me face to face with my first recollection of active censorship.

I was a child of course, and therefore unsophisticated. I didn't have any innate need to distrust my choice; I took the magazine as it was, or as it appeared to be to me. Yet the difference between that magazine and the other comics was to have a profound and lasting effect on my mind. You see, my father took great exception to its presence in our living room. He was, to some extent, what you would call an 'old fashioned' man. He read but little; the only books I can recollect he owned were three prizes he gained at Sunday School which sat side by side with a copy of 'Sanders of the River' and the 'Complete Works' of William Shakespeare. He never visited the theatre, but loved the radio. In his whole life I can remember only going to the cinema twice; to see Olivier in 'Hamlet' and Sabu in 'the Arabian Nights' (it is ironic that we saw only half of that film; during the performance the air-raid sirens went off and we all had to leave for the shelters). Anyway, there was my father twoering over me. He snatched the magazine from my grasp and tore it in half.

"I don't want to see any of this Yankee trash in this house."

"Why Dad?" I was close to tears.

"Because I say so."

"But its a good story."

"Its trash. Rubbish."

"How do you know? You haven't read any..."

"Don't you argue with me. One more word and its bed."

It didn't have The Lesson that was intended; I just became more secretive in my reading habits. I never came across another of those magazines with 'stories', but such delights as 'Suspense Stories', 'True Crime Stories', 'The Green Hornet', the great 'Tales From The Crypt' and other brightly coloured American imports continued to be devoured in the safety of the cellar of David's home.

By the end of the forties, external rumblings were a-foot. 1949 saw the Sunday Dispatch launch a campaign: "(The morals of children)...are being corrupted by a torrent of indecent coloured magazines that are flooding bookstalls and newsagents....evil and dangerous...." Censorship was moving in on my reading matter again. The following years saw an increase in the public outcry leading to the 'Children and Young Persons (Harmful Publications) Act of 1955'. Horror comics were no more. The fifties were my teenage years. I had 're-discovered' the pulp world of sf. My boundaries were expanding. This was a period of great social upheaval; the first murmurings of the so-called teenage revolution that was to dominate the sixties. Those were the days of Beat -- sex, drugs and cool jazz. Ginsberg howled, Charlie Parker wailed his way to an early grave, riddled by drug abuse, Kerouac took us on the road, the Way was Zen and we all strived to hear the sound of one hand clapping, Gerry Mulligan cooled us with his pianoless quartet, we read Lipton, Clellon Holmes, Chester Himes, Rexroth and Sallinger; unknown and unheeded, the spirit of revolution was running through the lives of young people. Probably the last act of 1959 was the fight for publication in this country of Nabokov's "Lolita". This rage carried us over onto the sixties. I was now in my twenties, married and anticipating a family; I became just another face in the populace. My own personal crusading spirit was lost to the onslaught of the 'swinging sixties'. I felt no part of this era nor the recriminative seventies that followed.

The annual cycles go through their motions and without prior warning the mail produces a letter (an Official Novacon Letter, yet) inviting me to write a piece for this PR, "I understand you are interested in censorship. Now there is a subject dear to the hearts of your average fan-eds." is the indulgence I have been presented with. "Why me?" I howl into the Bristol Channel. I have never to my knowledge said I am interested in censorship as a subject. I might practise it in 'XYSTER' to the chagrine of the more with-it crowd. I might have stated my views on the subject. But to say I have an Interest..... Still, Eunice has spoken (and indeed a call from Phill reinforced it). So this is how they treat Award winners.....They set us up for a few pratt-falls... OK then. From the previous you will be aware that I have came up against censorship in one form or another. Actually writing about the subject makes me feel a little like a glazier who is asked to comment on the use of glass and space in the architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright.....

The case against censorship is an old and well trodden path. As indeed is the case for it. Almost anyone can take either side and come up with a valid reason for their views. It's easy to find Example to support Stance. For instance.....

I am against censorship. I will quote Milton, Shakespeare, Hawthorne, Shaw, Joyce or Lawrence as examples of those who have been victims of mean, narrow-minded censors who have sought to take it upon themselves to judge what others should read, and more importantly, not read. I will remind you of the remark that Thomas Hardy wrote in his journal when "Tess" came under attack:

"If this sort of thing continues no more novel writing for me. A man must be a fool to deliberately stand up to be shot at." His next novel was his last.

And yet.....I am for censorship. I will quote Morris Ernst: "(I) would hate to live in a world with utter freedom.....the idea that the lowest common denominator, the most tawdry magazine, pandering for profit...should be able to compete on the market place with no restraints."

I therefor stand, like Colossus, with a foot placed firmly in both camps. Malcolm Muggeridge put it neatly: "We don't like censorship, we don't believe in the efficiency of censorship, we have enormous evidence that censorship is a very ham-fisted and ineffectual operation, but we have to face the fact that today, in the written word, on celluloid, and for all I know on the stage, there is a deliberate exploitation for money of pornography of various kinds, and we have to ask ourselves, is this a desirable social phenomena." But what, I wonder, has this got to do with Novacon PRs, fanzines and myself?

I suspect it has to do with my views and actions over 'certain words' that have entered into common usage over the past decade and a half. You know what they are (if you don't you are either lucky, ignorant or innocent). I have also shown concern over what could be called a rather invidious form of censorship, the results of which permeate fandom and fanzines at this present time. (A form which has been honed and refined over almost the same period as that of the liberal use of language.) I'd like to comment on my second gripe first. What is this invidious form of censorship being carried out in fandom today?

To use a phrase like 'enemies of fanzines' may seem hyperbole; the paranoia of an old time fan. But fanzines do have secret enemies, and I have my views on why. The sf fanzine does have its own history, the course of which, in recent years, has been stultified. To some extent, this is because its latter life has gone through a period amidst other external factors -- in the midst in fact of a social revolution of great complexity with inherent uncertainties and changes. As a result most fanzine editors are working in a sub-culture that is largely unsympathetic to them. This stems from the obvious ease with which people now travel about enabling more personal contact, more conventions, more club meetings in pubs etc. Here then is the fact of enemy number one. To a certain extent I can see their point of view. Fanzines are for communicating with friends. It must seem a lot of wasted time and effort not to mention cash, to produce a fanzine aimed at a specific circle and then go down to the pub and meet them face-to-face. But there are people out there who can't get to the pub, can't make it to every con, din't have any fans within physical reach -- what about our American, Australian and European counterparts -- who would like to communicate via the fanzine medium.

There are other enemies. Enemies condemning fanzines as a waste of time. Enemies insisting the fanzine is dead. Enemies determined that fanzines should conform to their standars. I know it's all been said before, but the worst enemy of all is the 'critic'. Not for what they do but for the whay in which they do it. These, along with their bedmates, the 'reviewer', many of who should have been long ago put out to grass, think it vulgar to betray enthusiasm for even those few fanzines of which they secretly approve. It is an obvious move; going into fanzine

criticism rather than getting on and doing something themselves. This is a quick access to a vulnerable audience; these 'experts' are usually of a well acquired vocabulary and have inventive and derision for their writing fluid. It is almost as though they have been told that 'names' are made in fandom not by praise, not even by any form of judicious appreciation, but by producing the most vicious hatchet job they can muster, on the work of those who are at least trying.

How difficult it must seem for the would-be fanzine fan/editor to step into the field with this albatross hanging overhead. There is little room for manoeuvre, for experiment, for development if you are slapped down over your first tentative efforts. (And it makes it equally difficult for those few existing eds in the field who have a limited supply of the goods for too large a market. Fanzine production, as those who do it will tell you, is costly, time consuming and effort taking. They look for interchange. This comes from locs or trade. Production level is very low and there is little pleasure in sending out sweat and toil to a largely unresponsive market. Zine for zine is fine. Locs gauge reaction. If you produce, say one hundred copies, they must go to other eds for trade or people you know will respond with more than a thank-you. On that basis can an ed afford to spread his largess into the unknown?) There is a gleam of hope. Efforts by committees, in particular Mexican, show that perhaps the way out of the doldrums is nigh. I hope so.....

My other gripe, of course, is a personal thing. Having said that, I hope I am not alone in fandom in my dismay at the excesses of dehumanisation in our society. And when you laugh at my seeing the use of mere words giving me such a feeling, remember there is some truth in the old adage 'from little acorns great oak trees grow'. Our language is one that grows and contracts over the years; new words are added, old ones fall into decline. This can and should add a richness to our culture. The particular words I object to, I do not object to absolutely. This is not an irrationality, but a desire for 'context'. At the last Novacon I fell into heated argument with a Rat (or was it a Gannett) about his language. He found it normal, I found it abhorrent and degrading. I made the point to him that I hadn't heard such limited use of adjectives and adverbs since I worked on the road digging ditches. He laughed, and said I was out of touch with reality. I had to agree with him that if it meant having my senses assulted by the language of the gutter, then, yes indeed, I was out of touch with reality. This didn't bother me unduly and I told him that in the society I moved during my 'normal', ie out of fandom, life, I was never subjected to his 'style'. Rubbish, was his answer. It's commonplace, kids don't think anything of it, it's heard in schools, at home and on the media. It's accepted. He still wouldn't believe me when I said it didn't happen in my home, at my office or my local. "You are a ----ing ----head" he shouted and walked off. Well, thank you very much, I though, so much for constructive discussion. But it was the easy way out wasn't it. You can't argue with statements like that. Those words once used as a sense of exasperation. A way to shock, an expedient when nothing else would come to the surface, now mean everything and nothing. They are eroding speech and the written word. They are not there to shock, not to bridge a gap, not to offend but to say all. We are being reduced to staccato comic strip communicating machines. The language is being reduced to a simple phrase or two, which, depending on the inflection, take on the context required. Move over Oo. I'm coming back into the

cave. Now all that is patently absurd. The self same people are able to write lucidly and intelligently, far beyond what I am capable, and yet they still abuse their gifts. They still throw in these words ad lib ad hoc ad nauseum. Why, beats, me, but perhaps this piece will generate some replies which will give enlightenment.

Of course I may be doing the Gannett (or was it a Rat) an injustice. As C.S. Lewis once pointed out, it is no accident that in the history of all literature's obscene words, the 'four letter words', they have always been the vocabulary of farce or vituperation. They reduce men and women to their mere bodily functions, they reduce men and women to their animal components, and such reductions are the essential purpose of farce or vituperation.

One final point on this subject of language. If as sf fans we are dedicated to the proposition that the written word is important, if we can see the whole of literature's history as something from which we can go forward, if we see the richness of the past as something to build on, then why are we happy to join the rest of the world and go downhill? Hemmingway once said: "There is no use writing anything that has been written better before unless you can beat it. What a writer in our time has to do is write what hasn't been written before or beat dead men at what they have done." I'm sure by that he wasn't advocating what I am seeing being done.

Inevitably, the flood of four letter words loosed on us is dulling our reaction to shock or surprise. Unfortunately, with these practitioners there seems no search for variation and they seem oblivious that the few inexpressive four letter words they use are narrowly limited. Can I offer up the Chaucerian 'swive' for a change?

((If anyone would like to comment on this article, please do. The responses will be printed in the next PR.))



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the Organisation

.....is one of those terrible apa things, attached to the Birmingham science fiction group. It began in June 1983, known then as apa-b, as a way to encourage newer fans to 'get into' the fan publishing world. Today it is made up of sixteen people who more or less contribute at least two pages each month. The mailings are collated at the MiSFits meeting, held on the last Friday of each month. At the moment we are at the General Wolfe, but that is to be pulled-down soon to make way for a very important grass verge!

If you are interested in joining us, please contact the administrator, EUNICE PEARSON at 32 DIGBY HOUSE, COLLETTS GROVE, KINGSBURST, BIRMINGHAM, B37 5JE. All you have to do is to write or draw, at least two pages every other month and make twenty copies of your contribution. Then you send it to Eunice, or bring it along to the MiSFits, by the last Friday of the month. Your copy of the mailing will be given to you then or sent to you as soon as possible afterwards.

We do have one advantage over most other apas -- there is waiting list! If you're new to fanzines, or perhaps new to fandom in general, there's no better way to get some experience than by joining an apa. Especially a small one.



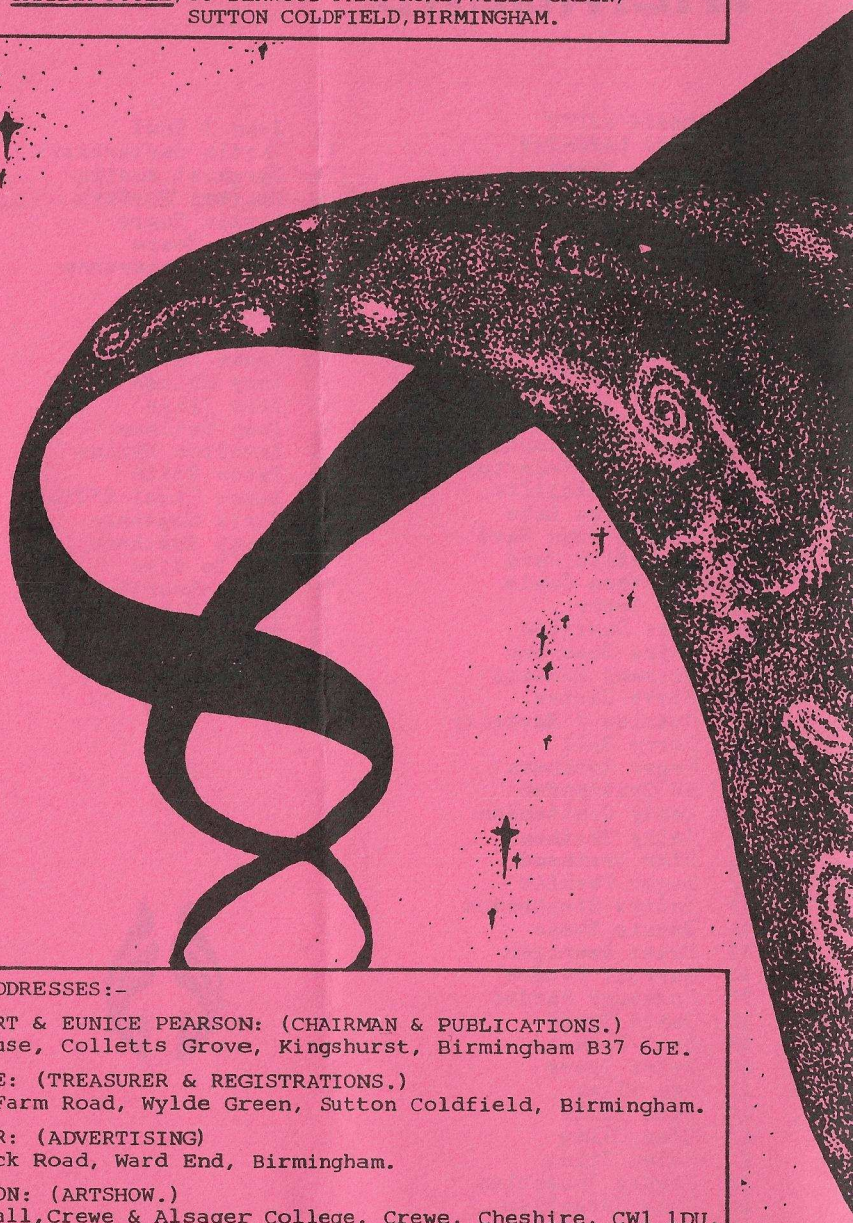
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