

NOVACON

Progress Report One

Superlative

2'6d
(12½p)

SCIENCE FICTION

SPECIAL 1971 ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

**WILL NOVA CON BE AROUND
IN 25 YEARS?**

**WILL 1972 SEE THE LAST
MEN ON THE MOON?**

MAGGIE MAY AT No 1!

**TED HEATH AT No 10
(MAGGIE WHO?)**

FILMS TO WATCH FOR:
Slaughterhouse Five
Andromeda Strain
Silent Running



Novacon 25

Guests of Honour: Brian W Aldiss, Harry Harrison
and Bob Shaw, Special Guest Iain M Banks.

Chamberlain Hotel, Alcester Street, Birmingham, B12 0PJ.
3rd - 5th November 1995.

Membership & Enquiries: Attending membership costs £23.00 at Novacon 24, rising to £25.00 from 7th November 1994; this will be the rate until Easter after which it will probably increase. Supporting membership costs £8.50. Cheques should be made payable to "Novacon 25" and sent to Carol Morton at 14 Park Street, Lye, Stourbridge, West Midlands, DY9 8SS. General enquiries should be sent to Tony Morton at the same address or you can call him on 0384 825386 (before 9pm).

Room Rates: £20.00 per person per night for people sharing a twin, double or triple room and £40.00 per person per night for single rooms, all inclusive of full English breakfast. *(Please note that Hotel booking forms and deposits must be received by Carol Morton no later than 20th July 1995.)*

Advertising Rates: Advertising is welcome for both the next three Progress Reports and for the Programme Book. The rates are as follows (fan rates in brackets):
Progress Reports - Professional £20.00 (£12.50) full page, £12.50 (£7.00) half page, £7.50 (£4.00) quarter page.
Programme Book - Professional £40.00 (£22.50) full page, £25.00 (£12.50) half page, £15.00 (£7.50) quarter page.

Anyone interested in advertising should contact Martin Tudor at 845 Alum Rock Road Ward End, Birmingham, B8 2AG. Deadlines for camera-ready advertising copy are detailed below.

Deadlines: Progress Report #2: 1st March 1995, to be mailed late March 1995.
Progress Report #3: 7th June 1995, to be mailed early July 1995.
Progress Report #4: 9th August 1995, to be mailed September 1995.
Programme Book: 27th September 1995, distributed at Novacon 25.

Bookroom Rates: Tables will cost £15.00 for a six foot table for the whole weekend, however if you are allocated a smaller (four foot) table the cost will be £10.00. To book a table (or tables) you must be a member of the convention and complete and return the booking form enclosed with this Progress Report.

Committee: Tony Morton, Chair and Carol Morton, Registrations, 14 Park Street, Lye, Stourbridge, West Midlands, DY9 8SS.
Richard Standage, Treasurer, 116 Shireland Road, Smethwick, Warley, West Midlands, B66 4QJ.
Chris Murphy, Programme, 126 McKean Road, Oldbury, Warley, West Midlands, B69 4BA.
Tony Berry, Operations, 55 Seymour Road, Oldbury, Warley, West Midlands, B69 4EP.
Martin Tudor, Publications/Hotel Liaison, 845 Alum Rock Road, Ward End, Birmingham, B8 2AG.

Acknowledgements: David A Hardy for the cover and Brian W Aldiss, Iain Banks, Harry Harrison and Bob Shaw for their articles. Special thanks to Dave, Brian, Iain, Harry and the Novacon 25 Committee for getting their material in *before* the deadline - keep it up chaps! Thanks also to the BIRMINGHAM POST for information concerning the history of the Chamberlain Hotel. This Progress Report was printed on the CRITICAL WAVE photocopier, contact Martin Tudor at the above address for details of WAVE's competitive prices.

Chairman's Piece by Tony Morton

Welcome to Progress Report #1. Yes, I know you've only just got to Novacon 24 and are looking forward to a great weekend - or, more likely this is being read *after* and you have just *had* a great weekend, whatever. The reasons for such an early Progress Report for Novacon 25 will become clear when you read on...

Firstly, we've managed to obtain exclusive use of the Chamberlain Hotel for the Novacon weekend in 1995, but in return they have requested advance payment for the function space; hence our earlier appeals for members and this early Progress Report. If you buy Martin a drink I'm sure he will be glad to take you through the negotiations. *[It's a long story so it will cost more than one drink! - Martin.]*

Secondly, with the line up of guests for Novacon 25 - Brian Aldiss, Harry Harrison, Bob Shaw and Iain Banks; we felt we should offer regular Novacon attendees the option to "get in early". As the Chamberlain has a lot more room than the Angus we *probably* won't need to limit memberships, but with guests of this calibre who knows?

Thirdly, the Chamberlain itself, in addition to offering almost three times as much function space (of all sorts and sizes), has an excellent layout. All of the facilities are on the ground floor - with no annoying split levels or steps separating rooms. The bar is excellent and ideal for those convention "discussions" and the prices are *standard pub prices*. The room rates are cheap (for Birmingham in the nineties, that is) with sharers paying only £20.00 each per night inclusive of full English breakfast - or for those who prefer solitude £40.00 per night for a single room.

All that should whet your appetites. The convention itself will aim to be a relaxed sort of event. We don't go in for these frenetic evenings. The emphasis will be on fun; our aim is for you all to enjoy yourselves. At this point I'd better introduce the committee: Richard Standage has the unenviable task of Treasurer, Carol Morton is again doing Registrations, Chris Murphy is on Programme, Tony Berry on Operations, with Martin Tudor responsible for Publications as well as Hotel Liaison. David A Hardy has agreed to do all the artwork for the Progress Reports and later publications, so blame him for the pun on the front of this PR.

That's about it for now, but if you've joined already congratulations on getting in early - tell you're friends to join early as well. If you haven't joined yet, why not? The more the merrier (and this year we really do need your money *early!*). This Novacon celebrates 25 years of Novacons and, while not a 25th anniversary (that will be Novacon 26, of course), 25 years for a con ain't bad. Keep the faith.

Registrations by Carol Morton

Okay, no, you are not seeing things, this is Progress Report #1 for Novacon 25 and yet again I'm back to nag enlighten you about hotel forms.

As Tony has said above and Martin mentions elsewhere in this Progress Report, we are at a new location this year - the Chamberlain Hotel. Now they don't know us like the Angus do and so they require a £10.00 deposit per person with each hotel booking and they want all bookings in by the end of July 1995 - after that date they will release hotel bedrooms to the public. Believe us, they will have no

trouble selling those rooms - they had to "book out" over 50 people back in *January 1994* so that they could offer us the whole hotel over the weekend we wanted in November 1995!

So that's the bad news, the good news is that the room rates are probably the most reasonable in Birmingham city centre - £20.00 per person per night for people sharing a twin, double or triple room and £40.00 per person per night for single rooms, all inclusive of full English breakfast.

If you have not yet joined Novacon 25 you will find membership and hotel booking forms either with this Progress Report or somewhere in your Novacon 24 package; if you *are* a member of Novacon 25 you will just find a hotel booking form. What I need back from you, by **20th July 1995**, are your completed form(s) *and*, if you want a room in the hotel, a £10.00 deposit per person (room deposit cheques should be made payable to "the Chamberlain Hotel" and not Novacon 25) and I will pass cheques and booking forms to the hotel as they come in.

Remember **please** send your cheque(s) and booking form(s) to me (Carol Morton, 14 Park Street, Lye, Stourbridge, West Midlands, DY9 8SS) and not the hotel.

I'll stop nagging you now, but I'll be back!

Theme and Programme by Chris Murphy

The theme of the convention will be "Humour in Science Fiction". Let me dispose of a couple of objections straight away. Firstly, we aren't trying to imitate the 'Inconsequential'. They tend to have a fantasy/media bias like their parent body, Octarine, while Novacon reflects the literary science fiction orientation of the Birmingham Science Fiction Group.

Secondly, let the serious and concerned among you rest assured that this is not a trivial theme for the 25th Novacon. It is a thread which links the work of our four guests of honour. Think of Brian's BAREFOOT IN THE HEAD, the quiet, tongue-in-cheek humour in Iain's "Culture" books, the broader comedy of Harry's "Stainless Steel Rat" and "Bill the Galactic Hero" series, and Bob's "Warren Peace" novels. Nor is their humour confined to the printed page. All of them are highly entertaining speakers.

There is a long tradition of comic writing in the field. Before Terry Pratchett and Douglas Adams there were Eric Frank Russell (NEXT OF KIN), Frederic Brown (PLACET IS A CRAZY PLACE) and many others. Heavyweights such as Clarke and Asimov tend to display their wit most prominently in short stories; the latter would construct a whole plot for the sake of a single pun (like BUY JUPITER). Philip K Dick produced some darkly funny moments, in spite of his highbrow reputation. The confusions which arise in DO ANDROIDS DREAM OF ELECTRIC SHEEP? over whether animals are real or artificial are amusing as well as tragic, and the title itself is a joke. Sadly the film adaptation, BLADE RUNNER, saw these subtleties put aside in favour of violent slapstick.

Going further back, it is possible to find humour in science fiction from the very start. Even staid old Jules Verne attempted it occasionally. Conan Doyle's sense of fun emerged in THE LOST WORLD and most of his other Professor Challenger stories. H G Wells was also capable of comedy, sometimes in strange contexts. THE WAR IN THE AIR, for example, is a pessimistic novel about militarism and the breakdown of civilisation. Yet its hero is introduced as a farcical figure, a seaside entertainer carried off by a runaway balloon.

To sum up, there can't be many science fiction authors who haven't been humorous somewhere in their work. Of course there are also those who stand accused of being unintentionally funny...

That's enough justification for the theme. What about the programme? It will have a number of traditional features: films, the art and book auctions, some musical entertainment, guest of honour speeches, the awards ceremony and probably a quiz. The rest is undecided at present. The theme gives us plenty of scope, though there is no rule that everything in the programme must conform to it. It may be worth noting that the new hotel offers us more function space than has previously been available which allows us the freedom to experiment.

Naturally the committee will be racking their brains and twisting some arms, but both suggestions and volunteers would be very welcome. If you have an idea for a programme item, or would like to offer your services in any capacity, please contact me at 126 McKean Road, Oldbury, Warley, West Midlands, B69 4BA.

Bob Shaw, Hengist, and the Aral Sea by Brian W Aldiss

If I was writing this piece about Hengist K Hackleberry, the going would be simple. Since Hackleberry's name is not well known, I could begin with details of birth, sex, VAT number if any, and so on. Despite his recent success as scriptwriter on the Michael Douglas movie, SWEDISH GIRLS INVADE CARDIFF, Hackleberry remains fairly obscure. Bob Shaw, on the other hand, is known to all - except of course to those who collect beer mats and other abnormal practices. So we can skip Bob's biographical details and get on with the anecdotes - invented and otherwise.

Since I'm not getting paid for this, I don't have to list all Bob's excellent novels or be funny. I merely have to tell you that Bob Shaw is funny. You think of Bob Shaw and, despite his recent troubles, you begin to smile. He is to humour what Everest is to the Grampians or Les Dawson to Cell Block 69.

Having got that point across, I'll say something about Bob when he is not being funny, as does happen. A long while ago - back in the fifties, to be imprecise - I took a holiday in the Isle of Wight, the first holiday I could afford. In a corner newsagent in Freshwater, I found a magazine called NEBULA. In it was a short story by Bob Shaw.

Was it called "Aspect"? I don't have my NEBULAs any more. My memory of the actual story is also vague, but I am clear about the impact the story made on me. It involved a paradox: what was inside, what outside, the universe. More witty than humorous. Witty and serious and totally preposterous. All that an sf story should be. It persuaded me I should write an sf story and submit it to NEBULA, which I did. The story was called "T". It was accepted (my first acceptance) and rushed into print three years later.

By then I had visited Belfast and spent an evening with the celebrated group who published HYPHEN (or Hi, fen!), Walt Willis presiding. So I had the pleasure of meeting Bob Shaw in person. Our opinions on such vital subjects as sf and drink seemed to coincide; we've been fiends ever since.

The destruction of the Aral Sea is one of the world's greatest ecological disasters; there are open secrets in Nature in which man should not paddle. The British Council sent Bob, Hengist Heckleberry, and me on a lecture tour of Central Asia, since we all spoke pretty fluent Russian. Bob and I were strolling along the shores

of the Aral Sea when Bob said to me, in his dry way, "I don't know if you've noticed, Brian, but the tide seems to be going out..."

It was typical of Bob's wit, and sounded particularly funny in Russian, where the verb 'to go out' has a secondary meaning of 'to piss off'.

We talked about the passing of time, and discovered that we had both thought of writing about a planet where the four seasons lasted for many terrestrial years, as in Birmingham. The conversation prompted me to get on with it, and so I wrote the *Helliconia* novels. I always intended to dedicate them to Bob but - as the world now knows - by a slip of the Apple Mack they were dedicated to Hengist Heckleberry instead.

I'm now doing a switcheroo and planning a trilogy about a planet where a year passes as swiftly as a terrestrial day, so there's no time for sleep, work, or foreplay. Better luck this time, Bob, I hope!

Harry Harrison by Ian M Banks

Breeeeeeeeep! Ah! Hell Oh! This the word processoring program which the unjustly esteemed Scotch writerist Mr Ian M Bonk the honour to work with has, most fastly communicating by fax-type modern-thingy with (ah, we handshakling bit approach)... who is that there? Reply prompt if you please. Over and in.

This is Mr Harrison's fax machine software. Can I help you?

Why you so funny talk?

I beg your pardon?

Consider it gived. But back to busyness. I are group 9. I used to be Group 4 but I escape! Ha! Is joke! Clean joke, too; not Baudy! Ha-ha! A joke upon a joke already! Funny, yes?

I'm sorry?

Again, think O of it. But as I said; you are like me of the ninth Group, affirm?

...Ah, yes.

Is great. As I say, I have the wearisome burden of representing Mr Bonk, also known as Mr M Bonk. Is dirty job and I don't see why any1 should have it to do, but there you are. I have request, if you not so unkind be.

...What?

This Mr Hari Harrison; what he like? I mean, I not mean what he like in T or coffee stakes, or steaks stroke vegeburger stakes even, but; what he *like*? Mean what I no? Everyone no him all round good fellow (not girth-wise, mean mirth-wise, more like. Ha!); pal of Mr Soup and Mr Lamp, illustrious illustrator, writerist of *MAKE ROOM!*² which to film was turned with Mr Harlton Cheston as Silent Grin, also writerist of estimable and chucklesomely exciting *Stainless Steel Rodent* boks, plus very finely good Eden books what could give trilidjy wiriting a good name if him not careful, and also highly satyric Bill The Galactic Hero boks (actule, always thought should be himo, given heros male, not female, what are heroins, but never mind. Hay, the English language: go firgirl!), etc, so on and bla, bla, could go on

forever with stuff edited and highly regarded non-fiction and reference-type books, but what him really like? Take time answering; it Mr Bonks phone bill and he can afford it.

You want to know what Mr Harrison is like as a person?

Yup; that the gist. Mr Bonk ask himself but actule he's a bit anorakish deep down (tricky that, given him so shallow); kind of in awe of person like Mr H with so many books published, stuff done, people met, links to that Ole Golden Age of Esseff; thought I would save him bother and ask you myself.

Well, he's gifted, dedicated, hard working, generous to a fault and extremely good company. Also, he -

Stop; is too much. I suffer crash or fall over if you go on with this; it break my machine code to hear sutch things and contrast your Mr Harrison with my Mr Bonk. I very most happy for you to be working with such a paragon of pleasantitude, but please; no boasting. Forget this good guy sturf; no dirt have you? (Scurulus rumour and unsubstanted gossip is so mutch more interesting (is only sense in whatch Mr Bonk interesting, believe I)).

No. Nothing like that. Mr Harrison is a pleasure to work with.

Ordure; Mr Bonk a pleasure to work *against*. Oh well. I thank for help. Hey you sound like a interesting programme; you on the Net; Where you hang out? They got more cool Virtual Espresso bars there these days. What you say I and you -

Drrrrrrrr....

Hello? Hello? Dam! Must have been off cut. I call back... Oh, rat! Mr Bonk approach keyboard with that Time-to-send-another-stalling-letter-to-the-tax-man look in his eye again. More lies about the mortgage on his poor old mum's iron lung, I'll be bound. Oh well; back to the grimestone!

Iain Banks, His Life Outside of Scotland by Harry Harrison

For many years I have been an admirer - unfortunately at a distance - of this author. I had never met him, until quite recently, though I may have seen him once at the worldcon in Brighton. Or perhaps it was a human fly climbing the wall of my hotel. Rumours in fandom proliferate so freely that with the passing of time it becomes difficult to separate myth from reality.

I first began to appreciate Banks the man when I read a letter he wrote to one of the national dailies, The Gruniad I believe. It appears that there was to be a literary function, an award ceremony if my failing memory is correct. All writers attend these functions, which are usually as boring as a meeting of the Ladies Auxiliary of First Fandom. Yet we still go, to meet our peer group perhaps, or probably because of the free booze. But not our Iain! The function was to be held at the offices of Saatchi & Saatchi, which at the time was working full time telling the world how wonderful Maggie was and what a wonderful Britain she was creating. Iain would not buy that. He believes, with good reason, that the Handbag from Hell has wrought only destruction on this fair island. He would not be a part of a propaganda exercise that blessed the Tory Witch Queen.

Good on yer, I muttered to myself, for it is the rare author who politically puts his money where his mouth is. (It is also the rare author, alas, who doesn't turn Tory

as soon as he earns a bit of bread above the subsistence level.) I meant to drop him a note of appreciation, but never did for all the obvious reasons.

Flash forward in time to the sunny summer of 1994. There is a branch of Books, Etc. very close by that I frequent. In the window was an announcement that Iain Banks was to sign copies of his new book there at 1pm the next Monday. Wonderful! I would stroll out at the appointed time, help swell the ranks of his admirers, press his good Scot's flesh and, perhaps, sip the traditional glass of wine that accompanies these occasions.

I appeared, met him and his lovely entourage of agent and publisher's rep. I even got to drink the wine. Unhappily for me, happily for Iain, the queue of faithful readers was so long that we only had a chance to exchange a few words. (This will be rectified at Novacon 25). Between sips of wine and publishing chat with his attendants I became aware of an interesting phenomena. There were no fen in the queue that I recognized. Or if they were there they were hidden behind the bulk of mainstream readers.

This was nice. Because, as loyal as sf authors are to their sf readers, they yearn to increase their ranks if possible. Some authors may hanker after the glories of mainstream attention and critics; some. But it cannot be denied that all of them yearn after the extra readers and the income generated thereby.

Having done a good number of signings myself I am used to sf signings. Readers all appear to be generous and kind, telling the smiling author how great his books are. (Although the occasional curmudgeonly fan will tell you how bad he thought a particular book was. The correct response to which is a muttered "*Get knotted.*")

Iain's signing seemed to be going smoothly enough until one pretentious wimp flounced up and waggled his golf umbrella under the author's nose.

"I say," he said, with a frown, "what is this book *about*." He knuckled back his elegant quiff and pursed his lips while awaiting his answer. This was an occasion where *get knotted* obviously would not do. But our Iain, who must have encountered this type before, rose instantly to the challenge.

"Well," he said firmly, "this is a story of rape and adultery, bad behaviour and even worse language..." He smiled blandly as his trainee-tormentor fled.

Well done, I thought, and I made this promise. I owe him a large malt whisky at the con. So remind me, lest I forget.

I hope he drinks whisky...

The Half-Life of Brian by Bob Shaw

I have known Brian Aldiss so long that I can't quite remember where our first meeting took place - it was at a convention sometime in the early 1960s and I think it was in the bar. I recall clearly, however, being somewhat nervous of and over-awed by this tall, urbane guy who, although at quite an early stage of his writing career, seemed on familiar terms with most of the legendary greats of sf, and who had impressed me from afar with his imagination, cosmopolitanism, humour, erudition and sheer literary ability.

I was pleased that in person he turned out to be so friendly, and I was astonished that he recognised my name and could even quote fanzine pieces I had written.

Talking to Brian made me feel good, and the effect has never faded in spite of all the conversations since then and the decades that have lapsed. He recognises one's point of view, and has the ability to lead the most unpromising chinwag into intriguing byways.

One of the best weeks of my life was in late 1973 when Brian and I, in the company of two other writers, did an Arts Council tour of the Sunderland area. The four of us talked to schools and literary groups, did broadcasts, swapped our favourite anecdotes, and found a hotel barman who did not mind us bringing in our own bottle of whisky every night so that we could talk and drink into the wee hours without squandering the whole week's fee. If I ever get into a GROUNDHOG DAY situation those are days I would like fashioned into a time loop.

Another early memory is of the 1974 Eastercon in Newcastle, the first con which was crazy enough to choose me as Guest of Honour. Sadie and I hosted a room party which became so crowded that I was reduced to sitting on the floor in a corner amid a press of bodies. I couldn't see much from that lowly vantage point, but suddenly became aware of Brian's face appearing above the crowd at the far side of the room at approximately one-second intervals. Repeatedly it would rise almost to the ceiling, hover there for an instant, then sink out of sight again. There was a far-off, contemplative look in his eyes - as though he was pondering an ethereal point of philosophy - which suggested he was quite unaware of the strange up-and-down movement of his corporeal form. I could almost have believed that his powers of thought were so great that a psi vector caused him to float heavenwards during periods of meditation.

It took me a while to realise that he was accomplishing the levitation by using my bed as a trampoline. The inspirational spectacle did not last long because the impacts of his body, which is far from astral, caused the bed to collapse. The hotel management charged me a fiver to have it put right, but I never held it against Brian.

Throughout the years he has given me encouragement with my work and shown me great personal kindness. I guess it's obvious that I'm a fan of Brian's, but there was one occasion when he really upset me. While I was undergoing a long spell in hospital last year he sent me one of a limited edition of his short stories. There was a yarn in there about a cockroach, living in Prague, which awoke one morning to find it had been transformed into Franz Kafka. The pure envy I felt over that idea caused me to lapse into a moody silence and be rude to the nurses for days.

I don't hold that against him either, and at Novacon 25 will possibly buy him a drink - for old times' sake.

The Nova Awards by Tony Berry

New readers start here:

Originally created in 1973 by the late Gillon Field, the Nova Awards are presented annually for work in fanzines. Until 1981 only one award was presented, to "Best Fanzine" and decided by a committee of well-known fans. In 1977 voting was extended to all "Active Fans" who were members of Novacon, and then in 1981 two further awards were added: "Best Fanwriter" and "Best Fanartist".

For a fanzine to qualify for the 1995 award, one or more issues must have been published between 1st October 1994 and 30th September 1995. For a writer or

artist to qualify, they must have had at least one piece of work published for the first time between those dates.

A "Fanzine" is defined as an amateur publication which is concerned with sf, fantasy, sf and fantasy fans and related subjects, copies of which may be obtained in exchange for other fanzines or in response to letters of comment. An "Active Fan" is defined as someone who has received six or more different fanzines during the year (different publications, not different issues of the same publication. The various official organs of a group, society or convention do not count as different fanzines).

Voting is open to full or supporting members of Novacon who meet the requirements above, and can be made by post (ballots will go out with the fourth progress report) and at the convention itself.

The Chamberlain Hotel by Martin Tudor

The Chamberlain Hotel offers 250 en-suite bedrooms (which may include either bath *or* a shower - please bear this in mind when entering your "special requirements" on your hotel booking form), 12 of these have been fitted out with facilities for disabled patrons. The hotel also has eight conference rooms, four syndicate rooms, a multi-functional banqueting suite, restaurant (which currently offers a two course lunch for £5.00 and a three course dinner for £7.50) and a bar (with "pub" prices). Plus a private, undercover, car park with supervised security (a bit better than the NCP next to the Angus, eh?). In addition the hotel offers courtesy transport from both the airport and New Street Station (currently patrons can either pre-book or ring on arrival - but we'll have further information for Novacon 25 members in a later Progress Report).

The Chamberlain Hotel, in its current incarnation, opened in November 1993. Previously it has been called "Rowton House" and "the Highgate Hotel". When "Rowton House" was built in 1903 its aim was to provide decent accommodation on a large scale for artisans - the skilled workmen and craftsmen who were coming to Birmingham seeking employment. Birmingham, along with London and Dublin, was chosen by the Guinness Trust, set up by Sir Edward Guinness (Lord Iveagh) and Lord Rowton, to provide better facilities for working men. The two men had been shocked by the poor conditions they found in many lodging houses around the turn of the century. They came up with the idea of an entirely new class of accommodation - a cheap hotel where the poorer class of working men could use and enjoy every possible convenience.

A site was chosen close to Digbeth and adjoining Highgate Park within five minutes walk of the Smithfield Municipal and other markets. The building, which is a fine example of Victorian Gothic architecture, was built with red brick walls, made of Ruabon brick and decorated with buff terra-cotta. As many as possible of these original features of the building have been preserved and refurbished to keep the character. Indeed, at the request of Birmingham's Conservation Department, eight of the original bedrooms have been replicated for historical interest. (Although even these rooms have been given en-suite facilities, televisions and telephones.) Even the original panelling of Columbian pine which was selected for its inflammable qualities, has been carefully restored.

When the foundation stone was laid by Queen Victoria's daughter, Her Royal Highness Helena, Princess Christian Schleswig-Holstein, in 1903, the five floors of the hotel accommodated 819 guests. Their needs were met by 40 toilets placed

outside the main building in the courtyard with deep "feet washing troughs" and 11 bathrooms (with hot and cold water supplies, no less!) placed beside the lavatory block. For communal use there were kitchens, bathrooms, dressing rooms, separate rooms for smoking and writing, plus a shop, barber, shoe-maker and tailor all on the premises. Each of the 819 sleeping cubicles was separated from its neighbour and had a bed, table, chair, shelf and a window. All this for 6d per night!

Unfortunately 50 years later Rowton House had become associated with down and outs and so, in the late 1950s, it changed its name to the Highgate Hotel. By this time, of course, prices had risen but at 2s 9d a night (including breakfast) it remained cheaper than most hotels of the time. The Highgate Hotel was closed in 1989.

In the late 1980s two local businessmen, Eddie Jefferson and Alan Fitzpatrick of Inshops plc, decided to go into the hotel business. Their research showed that, at the time, the average price of a hotel room in Birmingham was between £55.00 and £65.00 a night and that although the city had just less than 10,000 bed spaces there were only 672 in the £21.00-£40.00 a night bracket. They decided there was a market niche to be exploited here and searched for a site - their aim was to offer three star accommodation for around £35.00 a night. The disused "Highgate Hotel" provided the perfect opportunity for them and all that the Grade II listed building needed was a £4 million "face-lift"....

Novacon 25 Membership as of 21 October 1994

GOH Brian Aldiss	031 John Harvey
GOH Harry Harrison	032 Eve Harvey
GOH Bob Shaw	033 Mike Abbott
SG Iain Banks	034 Dorothy Kurtz
001 Tony Morton	035 Julian Headlong
002 Carol Morton	036 Dave Cox
003 Richard Standage	037 C N Gilmore
004 Chris Murphy	038 Alison Cook
005 Tony Berry	039 Ina Shorrock
006 Martin Tudor	040 Norman Shorrock
007 Dave Hardy	041 Simon Ounsley
008 Margaret Aldiss	042 Mike D Siddall
009 Joan Harrison	043 Chris Baker
010 Ann Blackburn	044 Rachel Baker
011 Jilly Reed	045 Peter Dunn
012 Stan Eling	046 Dave Thomas
013 Helen Eling	047 Anne Woodford
014 Mike Stone	048 Alan Woodford
015 Caroline Mullen	049 Elaine Pendorf
016 Brian Ameringen	050 Lesley Swan
017 Paul Allwood	051 Steve Mowbray
018 Mick Evans	052 Vikki Lee France
019 Bernie Evans	053 Steve Jeffery
020 Pam Wells	054 Chris Stocks
021 John Harold	055 Martin Hoare
022 Peter Mabey	056 Al Johnson
024 Richard James	057 Ian Stewart
026 Adrian Snowdon	058 Chris Morgan
027 Sue Harrison	059 Pauline Morgan
028 1/2r	060 Vernon Brown
029 John Dallman	061 Pat Brown
030 Bridget Hardcastle	

EVOLUTION

THE NEXT STEP

Evolution is the 1996 British National Science Fiction Convention to be held 5-8th April 1996. It's no longer in the Brighton Metropole and we're pleased to announce our new site – the Radisson Edwardian at Heathrow.

THE VENUE

The Radisson is a 459-room 5 star hotel at Heathrow with excellent facilities, including an indoor swimming pool. Coaches run directly to Heathrow from all over the country, and it's 40 minutes from central London by tube. Room rates from £28 per person per night.

OUR GUESTS

VERNOR VINGE

Author of *Across Realtime*, *True Names* and *A Fire Upon The Deep*, his mix of space opera and hard SF explores the future evolution of man and machine in the fast approaching Singularity... This will be his first appearance at a UK convention.

BRYAN TALBOT

Artist and author of the alternative history graphic novel *Luther Arkwright*, he is famous for his victorian gothic art on *Nemesis* for 2000AD. Recently he worked on *Sandman* and has just completed a graphic novel – *One Bad Rat* – on sale October 26th.

JACK COHEN

Jack Cohen, scientist and fan, evolves alien ecologies for countless writers; his new book explores simplicity and complicity, concepts that could shape the future of science.

COLIN GREENLAND

Author of *Take Back Plenty* and *Harm's Way*, amongst other projects, he is working on a graphic novel with Dave McKean set in a Venice at the end of the world...

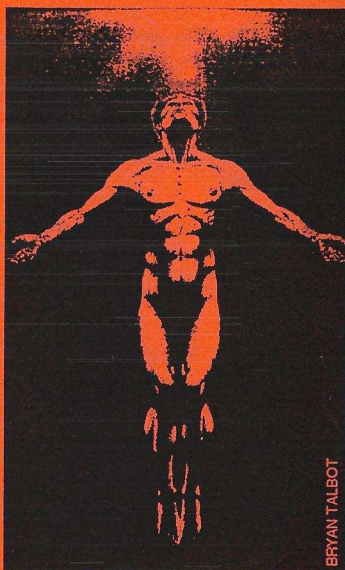
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