

Wooden shoes and Cotton t-shirts

Some fans really believe that Holland is the place for the 1990 worldcon. They had so much faith in us that they gave us money before we had anything save our name to give back.

Don't Panic ... Get Your Button!

That's now changed. Annemarie has already mentioned in an earlier article that we have goodies like buttons with our brave mouse sailing in front of our slogan 'Don't panic - Holland in 1990!' on a field of red, white and blue. Or little wooden shoes to hang beneath the button. Or even t-shirts, for which we do have to ask for money, pity.

We'll be giving out the buttons and wooden shoes to presupporting members of Holland in 1990 at the conventions where the Dutch committee members themselves can be present, either at parties or at booths set up near the registration desk. Be sure to look for us if you don't have your button or your wooden shoes yet.

We'll meet you at...

We know a fact that at least one committee member will be attending the following conven-

tions: Confederation, in Atlanta, Georgia, USA, 28 August - September 1986; Perry Rhodan Weltcon, Saarbrücken, Germany, 6-7 September 1986; Boskone, in Boston, Massachusetts, USA, 13-15 February 1987; and of course Conspiracy '87, Brighton, England, 27 August - 1 September 1987. Currently on our 'possible' list is - Coloniacon, Cologne, Germany, 14-15 June 1986; Ballcon, Zagreb, Yugoslavia, 10-13 July 1986; Science Fiction Club Deutschland Jahrescon 1986, Saarbrücken, Germany, 25-27 July 1986. Still others can be added, and there are always the conventions covered by our agents, where you can convince a friend to take a supporting membership.

T-shirts coming up...

T-shirts are available in various sizes. They can be picked up at conventions where you can get your buttons and wooden shoes, or you can order them directly from us for \$ 10.00 US, £ 6.00, or f25.00, return postage included. The t-shirts are 100% cotton, so no matter how hot it gets, you'll be comfortable declaring your support for Holland in 1990.

High Tide

Stichting Worldcon 1990
Postbus 95370 - 2509 CJ
Den Haag - Nederland

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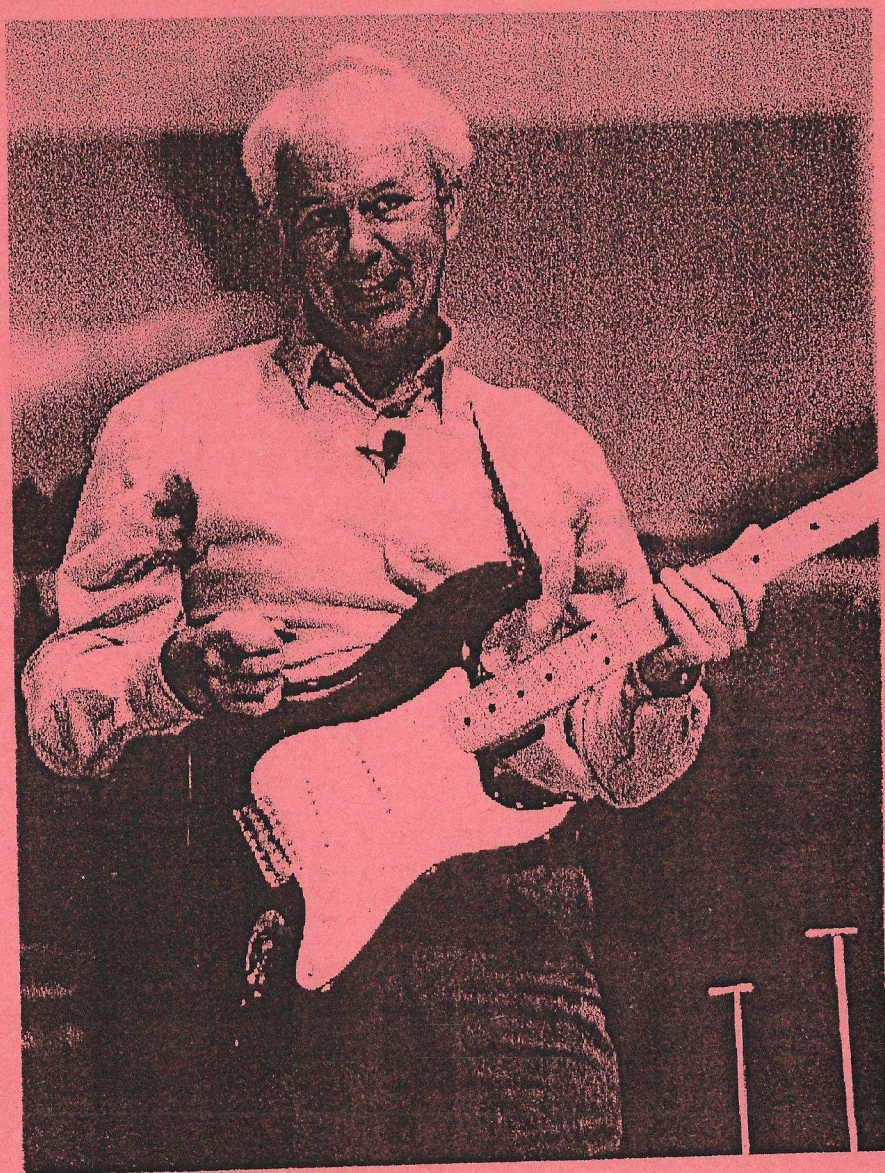
Steve Davies
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BRACKNELL BERKS RG12 2NG
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P 244

Greetings from Holland in 1990 to:



NOVACON 29



Progress Report #1

NOVACON 29

Date: 5th-7th November 1999.

Venue: The Britannia Hotel, New Street, Birmingham.

Guest of Honour: Ian Stewart.

Membership & Enquiries: Attending membership costs £23.00 until 16th November 1999, then £28.00 until Easter 1999 after which it may rise again. Postal registrations should be received by 30th October 1999, after this time please join on the door. Supporting membership costs £15.00 throughout. Cheques/Postal Orders should be made payable to "Novacon 29" and sent with your completed form(s) to: Carol Morton, 14 Park Street, Lye, Stourbridge, West Midlands, DY9 8SS.

Room Rates: £37.50 per person per night for people sharing twin/double rooms and £42.50 pppn for single rooms (inclusive of full English breakfast). NB: Hotel booking forms, and deposits of £20.00 per person, must be received by Carol Morton no later than **16th October 1999**. Cheques for room deposits should be made payable to "The Britannia Hotel". Enquires regarding hotel bookings should be sent to Carol at the address above or you can call her on 01384 825386 (before 9pm).

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 £25.00 (£13.00) full page, £14.50 (£8.00) half page, £8.50 (£5.00) quarter page.

Programme Book - Professional £60.00 (£31.00) full page, £32.00 (£15.50) half page, £18.00 (£9.50) quarter page.

Anyone interested in advertising should contact Martin Tudor at 24 Ravensbourne Grove, (off Clarkes Lane,) Willenhall, West Midlands, WV13 1HX (e-mail martin@empties.demon.co.uk). Deadlines for camera-ready advertising copy are detailed below.

Deadlines: Progress Report #2: 6th March 1999, to be mailed early April 1999.

Progress Report #3: 17th July 1999, to be mailed late August 1999.

Progress Report #4: 4th September 1999, to be mailed mid October 1999.

Programme Book: 18th September 1999, distributed at Novacon 29.

Book Room Rates: Tables will cost £15.00 each for the whole weekend. 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: Carol Morton (Chair & Hotel Liaison) and Tony Morton (Treasurer), 14 Park Street, Lye, Stourbridge, West Midlands, DY9 8SS, (tel: 01384-825386 - before 9pm); Maureen Kincaid Speller (Programme), 60 Bournemouth Road, Folkestone, Kent, CT19 5AZ, England, e-mail maureen@acnestis.demon.co.uk; Steve Lawson, 379 Myrtle Road, Sheffield, S2 3HQ (tel: 0114 281 1572, e-mail dream@netcomuk.co.uk); Chris Murphy (Operations), 126 McKean Road, Oldbury, B69 4BA, (e-mail CSHM@compuserve.com); Martin Tudor (Publications), 24 Ravensbourne Grove, (off Clarkes Lane,) Willenhall, West Midlands, WV13 1HX (e-mail martin@empties.demon.co.uk).

Acknowledgements: Ian Stewart, Tony Berry, Carol Morton and Chris Murphy for their articles. All uncredited contributions have been written by Martin Tudor. This Progress Report was printed on the CRITICAL WAVE photocopier, contact Martin Tudor at the above address for details of WAVE's competitive prices.

Chair's Piece by Carol Morton

As I said in Progress Report #4, Novacon 28 had a difficult time in finding a home. Thanks to Martin Tudor it now does and I have to say that I think the Britannia will be a great hotel for a Novacon; it's not perfect, but then no hotel is.

I did keep my options open as far as The Abbey Hotel in Great Malvern went, but I abandoned them as a possibility when a) we found the Britannia and more importantly b) the Abbey recently phoned me to say that they had booked in another event and had confirmed with them that the hotel would be available (all this without contacting me), did we want another weekend - no. So I can definitely announce that Novacon 29 will be back in the Britannia Hotel from 5th to 7th November 1999 - returning to our traditional first weekend in November.

I am even more pleased to announce that our Guest of Honour will be Professor Ian Stewart, a long time friend to Novacon. He is a writer of books on mathematics and associated scientific subjects (that are understandable even to someone like me who waved maths goodbye with enthusiasm when she left school). He is also no slouch when it comes to writing SF, both short stories and novels. Those of you who caught his Christmas Lectures on the BBC last year will know that he is a wonderful speaker. I feel honoured that he accepted when I asked him to be GoH at Novacon 29.

My committee has experience amounting to decades of con running. Treasurer is my hubby Tony, Publications Martin Tudor, Registrations Steve Lawson, Operations Chris Murphy and Programme Maureen Kincaid Speller. A formidable crew!

As always we welcome any suggestions you may have for Novacon 29.

All I can say now is that I look forward to seeing you all at Novacon.

-- Carol Morton,
Chair, Novacon 29.

Behind the Scenes in the Magical Maze

or

What I did in my Christmas Holidays

by Ian Stewart

If you're wealthy enough to own a twenty-pound note, go and get it from its hiding place. If not, borrow one from a wealthy friend -- not a bad idea in any case, but this time you're supposed to return it afterwards. Unfold it, turn it over, and look on the back. You'll discover a portrait of Michael Faraday, so honoured because he is one of Britain's most famous scientists, and an engraving of him standing behind a desk littered with apparatus. Behind are rows of adult Victorian spectators.

A week before Christmas 1997 I found myself in the same lecture room, at the same desk, surrounded by the same paraphernalia. The main differences were that my audience consisted mainly of children, Elizabethan ⁽¹⁾ rather than Victorian, there were six television cameras pointing at me, and I had to do the whole thing five times (and then repeat it all in Japan the next Summer).

What had I done to deserve this?

In 1826, around Christmas time, Faraday initiated an annual series of 'Lectures for a Juvenile Auditory' at the Royal Institution in London. The tradition has continued ever since, and once Faraday's discoveries about electricity had matured enough for humanity to invent the television set -- sorry, did I say 'matured'? -- they've been televised by the BBC. The 1997 series was the 168th -- three got missed out during World War I -- and the second ever on mathematics. Faraday started a tradition of hands-on demonstrations and audience participation, saying 'If you tell me something, I may believe it, but if you show it to me, I have to believe it.' We therefore decided on a theme of 'mathematics and nature'. Our title, chosen to be non-threatening, was The Magical Maze -- coincidentally, the title of a book of mine that even more coincidentally was being published at exactly the time the lectures were to be televised.

[FOOTNOTE (1) Terry Pratchett gets away with footnotes, so why not me? (2) Elizabeth the second, you understand.

FOOTNOTE TO FOOTNOTE (2) Because he sells a lot more books than me, I know. It was a rhetorical question (3)

FOOTNOTE TO FOOTNOTE TO FOOTNOTE (3) It was a rhetorical answer, too.]

The run-up to the lectures took all of my time for three months. I reckon I single-handedly kept Virgin trains in business, travelling up and down to London for meetings. While the Royal Institution's resident wizards Ilya Eigenbrot and Bipin Parmar were building new bits of apparatus and cannibalising old ones, a small BBC team (Caroline van den Brul, Martin Mortimore, Ann McNaught) made my draft scripts more televisual, located videoclips of cuddly animals like slime mould and graphics of mediaeval mathematicians locked in calculatory combat, and tracked down items ranging from Babylonian clay tablets to angelfish. ('And they must be *Pomacanthus imperator*, and make sure they're fresh,' as the Mole nearly said in *The Wind in the Willows*. See, I can do literary allusions, too.)

On 16 December, two days before the first lecture, I arrived in London to find three BBC Outside Broadcast vans illegally parked outside the Royal Institution in Albemarle Street. Crikey! It was real.

We 'staggered through' each lecture the day before -- an oddly apt piece of TV jargon -- checking camera angles and making running changes to the script. On the morning of the lecture we held a dress rehearsal. Well, I say 'dress rehearsal', but usually bits of kit were missing. In place of a tank of beautiful angelfish, for instance, we had an old cardboard box with 'fish' scrawled on the side in felt-tip. The tank arrived at lunchtime to reduce the stress on the fish. I could have done with arriving at lunchtime myself.

In the afternoon the audience of 450 people, mostly children, appeared -- and before I knew it we were into Lecture One: mathematical patterns in music, planets, snowflakes, flowers. A demonstration of Fibonacci's 'rabbit problem' required 24 stuffed toy rabbits, tied together in pairs, and a live one named Parsnip. Bipin, crouched underneath a gigantic top hat and concealed by a baize drape, passed the toys to me in order, protected from potential misdemeanours of Parsnip -- right over his head -- by a removable lid. In the event, Parsnip behaved herself -- and so did Bipin.

'Never work with animals and children.' We did both: they were all lovely. Except, perhaps, for young Jeremy -- see below. The biggest headache was the building workers outside, who promptly decided that it was absolutely essential to demolish the scaffolding to which the BBC had tied all their cables. Strangely, the urgency of this action vanished once a fattish bundle of used fivers had changed hands.

Another rabbit, Jasper (he liked carrots) featured in Lecture Two on animal locomotion. We also had robots, millipedes, and a stick insect. One of the millipedes escaped, and for all I know it still haunts the Royal Institution like

the Phantom of the Opera. The high point was two children inside a pantomime camel/horse/elephant. The serious scientific purpose was to explain the patterns in which these animals move their legs. Having children galloping all over the place dressed in funny costumes and getting their feet tangled up was merely an unfortunate side-effect and a total hoot. At dress rehearsal the elephant's head kept falling off, so it was rapidly redesigned.

All lectures were recorded 'as live'. The word 'as' is extremely important here. It means that the final edited version looks as if the lecture is live, even though it's not. ('It all went very smoothly', said a friend of mine, blissfully unaware of the significance of 'as'.) If I lost my place in the script, as I often did, I just stopped, read it, and started up again. If a demonstration went wrong, we did it again as a retake at the end. Then the kindly editor patched over the cracks -- images of intensely interested kids in the audience come in really handy here so that the lecturer doesn't suddenly teleport from one side of the set to the other.

Only twice did we retake on the spot: the first and most drastic instance being in Lecture Three, where we did 'Marilyn and the Goats'. This is a game show with three doors, one concealing the star prize, a sports car, and the other two the booby-prizes, goats. After the contestant has chosen a door, the host opens another door to reveal a goat and then invites the contestant to change their mind. Believe it or not, you double your chance of winning if you do just that. Unless you wanted to win a goat to begin with, as some strange people occasionally do. Anyway, first time through, dear little Jeremy, of whom I spoke earlier, opened the door to the prize car before we'd intended him to, destroying the entire demo. So we did it all again, and to his credit he was very effective at pretending it was all new to him.

We aimed for changes of mood. Lecture Three passed from a charming household tale with two stuffed toy cats and a stolen breakfast to the tragic explosion of space shuttle Challenger: I have never heard 450 people fall so silent so quickly. We went for Christmas topicality and dramatic touches: Lecture Four on chaos featured Suzanne Charlton and a ten-day forecast of the weather for Christmas day. Lecture Five, on symmetry, had the most dramatic opening of all. Slide of the last verse of Blake's 'Tyger, tyger...' with his own tiger sketch; voice-over of the words, ending 'fearful symmetry' -- and on comes Nikka, a six-month old tigress the size of a large Labrador. A very large Labrador. A Labrador remarkably close to the size of a six-month old tigress.

The science-fictional ending, equally dramatic, was improvised in a burst of creative panic two nights before recording when we decided that we were short of material. We invented a time-reversal demo (get a kid to drop a teapot and reassemble it by running the video backwards) and a time travel scenario (same kid takes pieces of teapot through a 'wormhole' in space-time and emerges with an intact one). Most of our 'volunteers' were genuine, though a few volunteered ahead of time so that we could rehearse them on tricky bits. On this occasion Sam, our only fake volunteer and the producer's son, performed brilliantly. The teapot did less well, smashing on the third attempt, and then only via Plan B -- help from the lecturer. (That was the other on-the-spot retake). For the grand finale, I vanished through time with a puff of smoke and a bang -- finishing up crouched down inside Faraday's desk to hide from the overhead TV camera.

I don't think I've ever worked so hard in my life -- but, lord, it was fun.

Operations

As we are sure most of you are aware Novacon, like most conventions in Britain, is run by volunteers and we can't have too many of them! So if you are willing to help out at the convention - anything from moving chairs to helping with tech ops or working on the programme, please contact our Ops Manager, Chris Murphy, at 126 McKean Road, Oldbury, B69 4BA, (e-mail CSHM@compuserve.com).

Hotel Bookings by Carol Morton

The hotel's room rates are £42.50 per person per night in a single room and £37.50 per person per night in a twin or double, both inclusive of full English breakfast. The enclosed hotel booking form explains all this. We also require from you a £20 per person deposit for your rooms. So please enclose a cheque made payable to "The Britannia Hotel". The balance of your room costs will have to be paid on arrival at the hotel, for those of you who attended Novacon 28 or have been to the Adelphi in Liverpool for an Eastercon this will not come as much of a surprise as it is standard policy at Britannia Hotels.

If you are not yet a member of Novacon 29 you will find a membership form in this PR1 package, please fill it in and send it to me with the appropriate remuneration.

Programme by Martin Tudor

Apparently Maureen Kincaid Speller hasn't organised the Programme yet, nor even written a piece outlining her plans. She's got some feeble excuse about travelling around North America on a TAFF trip, or something. But now she's back we're sure she'll be fired up with enthusiasm and eager to put into action some of those wonderful American ideas she'll have seen at the Worldcon....

"What's that Maureen?"

"Oh, we've got to relocate to the National Indoor Arena for Saturday's programme - why?"

"Ah, the diamond screen showing the 300 participant masquerade won't fit in the Gloucester, er okay."

"Maureen, can the Treasurer have a word....."

The Nova Awards by Tony Berry

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 1999 award, one or more issues must have been published between 1st October 1998 and 30th September 1999. 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 29 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.

[If you have any enquiries about the Novas or you want a copy of the Rules (50p to cover copying and postage), contact Tony Berry at 55 Seymour Road, Oldbury, West Midlands, B69 4EP.]