

# NOVACON 36



*Guest of Honour*

# **KEN MACLEOD**

**Progress Report 1**

**10<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> November**  
**Quality Hotel, Walsall**



# **Novacon 36**

## **CONTENTS:**

<b>P: 4</b>	<b>Chairman's Bit</b>
<b>P: 6</b>	<b>Committee contacts details</b>
<b>P: 8</b>	<b>Learning the Guest of Honour</b>
<b>P:10</b>	<b>Convention Information</b>
<b>P:11</b>	<b>Advertising Rates</b>
<b>P:12</b>	<b>Hotel Information</b>
<b>P:13</b>	<b>Nova Awards</b>
<b>P:18</b>	<b>Membership Listing</b>

# **Chairmans Bit...**

**By Tony Berry**

**Welcome to Novacon 36 PR1. Yes, it's me again, back for another thrilling year. Most of the committee remains the same as well, with Dave Hicks replacing Yvonne as programme supremo. Expect some silliness. After several years Ann Green has decided that she's seen enough Art shows, and is replaced by Vicky Cook, so contact her for details. Our thanks to Ann for all her work. Following various incentives to get you off your arses on Saturday night for a bit of physical activity, culminating in last year's free hot buffet which still didn't work, there won't be a disco this year. And if anyone complains to me about the lack of one, violence may ensue.**

**The rest of the programme will be the usual eclectic mix of lightweight, serious and fannish stuff. We will again be running the CD-ROM art show, and the Book Auction. Ah, yes, the book auction. Last year I appealed for books following an almost total absence the previous year, and the result was more books than we could shake a stick at! The auction barely scratched the surface and could have gone on for five hours; unfortunately it was not possible to schedule a continuation, so sorry if your books were not sold, and please bring them along again this year. But not your entire collection.**

**There were a few problems on the day last year which were beyond our control: the real ale was almost a write-off, dropping clear on the morning of the con, leading to disappointing sales. Expect Black Sheep to make a comeback. Just before the con the sauna and Jacuzzi in the health club broke down, while the general manager was off sick for two weeks. Naturally I've never even set foot in the health club, but sorry anyway if you couldn't have a Jacuzzi party. This year if necessary, Steve Lawson will be standing by with a kettle and a giant straw.**

**As ever, I am looking for volunteers to be Gophers during the convention. Lend a hand for a couple of hours to help things run more smoothly and take the strain off your beleaguered committee, and earn Groats – gopher reward tokens – which can be spent over the bar.**

**Now, on to the main event: Guest of Honour this year is Ken MacLeod, who burst on to the SF scene with his first novel, *The Star Fraction*, a mere decade ago in 1995. Looking at the photo of him on the back cover of my copy I can't help noticing the resemblance to another well-known Scottish author. Since then he's lost the beard, but has produced an impressive number of critically-acclaimed books, and is a regular feature at conventions. I'm sure he'll be a great Guest and it gives us the opportunity to serve up some Scottish delicacies for the food on Sunday evening. More details of that later.**

**Did you enjoy the game of Bingo which took place in the bar on Saturday evening? No? Well, if you want to stop this kind of thing happening at N36, please book your room early. We didn't fill enough bedrooms by the cut-off date, so the hotel sold a load to that coach party. The more rooms we take, the more clout we have with the hotel (and the less non-fans cluttering up the place).**

**If you want more information, check out the website at:**

**[www.novacon.org](http://www.novacon.org)**

## **Committee Contact Details...**

**CHAIRMAN: Tony Berry**

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**TREASURER: Alice Lawson,**

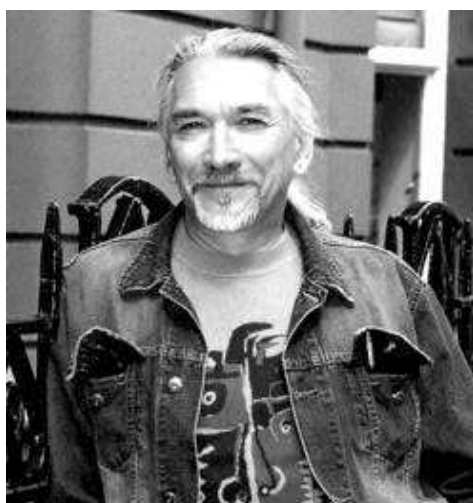
379 Myrtle Road  
Sheffield  
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[fab@zoom.co.uk](mailto:fab@zoom.co.uk)



# **Concussion**

## ***The 2006 Eastercon***

**14th-17th April, Crowne Plaza Hotel, Glasgow**



**Guests  
of  
Honour**

**M. John Harrison**

**Elizabeth  
Hand**

**Justina  
Robson**

**Brian  
Froud**

**Ian  
Sorensen**

***Special Guests: Dan Abnett, Marc Gascoigne, Mat Irvine, Johanna Sinisalo and Dee Parker***

**Membership £55 Attending / £27.50 Supporting (cheques to 'Concussion')**

**For details on how to join and further information, see our website at**

**[www.eastercon2006.org](http://www.eastercon2006.org)**

**or write to:**

**23 Ranelagh Road, Bruce Grove, London N17 6XY**

# **Learning the Guest of Honour...**

**By Dave Hicks**

On his weblog *The Early Days of a Better Nation* (<http://kenmacleod.blogspot.com/>) Ken MacLeod recounts a panel at last year's Novacon where he was moved to cry from the audience: "I would be very worried if my kids read SF." He explained that he feared an adolescent fascination with SF went hand in hand with alienation and insecurity.

"Yes, Ken," said Peter Weston, "but you've *improved*."

Personally, as someone who's read SF for thirty years, I feel no more alienated and insecure than the next degenerate freak. In fact I'd go along with the balance of Weston's thesis that SF does you good.

I'd add that Ken MacLeod's writing certainly does you good. His latest work, *Learning the World* (pub. By Orbit in the UK and Tor in the US) is shortlisted for both the Arthur C. Clarke and BSFA awards, a decade on from the appearance of Ken's first novel, *The Star Fraction*, which introduced the Christian fundamentalist state of ... Islington. It began a sequence of novels which serve as a demonstration of how to get it right if you're going to use your personal history and places you've lived in a work of fiction. All writers do this, of course, but it can jar horribly in inept hands, instead of adding to the romance and involvement. Ken also pulled off the demanding accomplishment of producing a sequence of books that each stands alone, set in different places, different times, that nonetheless lock together to form an entertaining future history of mankind and gave us the term *fast folk*.



**I suspect the reason Ken's work is successful may be because, as above, he's suspicious of science fiction. He doesn't take it for granted and feels the need to ask "what is this for?" even though it's how he earns his living.**

**Meanwhile, *Learning the World* reprises the first contact theme, although the futuristic aliens are us, and the planet-bound twentieth century style civilisation is the aliens. There's a comment on Amazon:**

**"The aliens are about as alien as your next door neighbour, but the future humans seem pretty strange."**

**That summarises a lot of Ken's best work as a leading exponent of one of SF's most compelling themes that, pace Haldane, not only are *we* stranger than we imagine, we're going to become stranger than we *can* imagine.**

**What's more, Ken is as articulate and forthright (while remaining eminently approachable) in person as he is in print. A regular on the UK convention scene and at many Novacons, we're delighted to have him as our Guest of Honour.**



## **Convention Stuff...**

### **NOVACON 36 MEMBERSHIP:**

**Attending membership is £33.00 until the end of Eastercon, rising to £36.00 after that until postal registration closes on October 31st 2006. Then it will cost £40.00 on the door. Children rates are, under 12 years of age, free, from 12 years of age up to 16 years of age, £10.00. Age as of the Friday of the Convention. Day rates are £10 Friday, £20 Saturday and £15 Sunday. Full attending membership gets you all convention publications a badge with your name on it and a carrier bag. What more could you ask for? Contact Steve Lawson for any membership or hotel enquiries at 379 Myrtle Rd, Sheffield, S2 3HQ or at [xl5@zoom.co.uk](mailto:xl5@zoom.co.uk) or call on 0114-281-1572.**

### **ARTSHOW:**

**The Artshow this year is being run by Vicky Cook, so if you are planning to exhibit any work get in touch with her at the address shown in the committee profiles to let her know what you need in the way of display area/tables. The CD ROM artshow will also be running, so if you have work in this format which you want to display, send your CDs to Steve Lawson. Artwork can be sold in the convention Auction, with Novacon taking the usual 10% of the sale price.**

### **DEALERS ROOM:**

**If you want to sell your wares, indicate the number of tables you require on the membership form or get in touch with Steve Lawson. The cost for the weekend is £20 per table, size 6ft x 2ft 6ins. You have to be a member of the convention to be a dealer.**

## **BEER TASTING AND FOOD:**

**We hope to be running the usual beer tasting on the Sunday evening along with some hot food. Details nearer the convention.**

## **ADVERTISEMENTS:**

**To advertise in our publications, the rates are as follows (Fan rates in brackets):**

### **Progress reports:**

**Full page      £35.00 (£15.00)**

**Half page     £17.50 (£9.00)**

**Quarter page £9.50 (£6.00)**

### **Programme Book:**

**Full page      £80.00 (£35.00)**

**Half page     £50.00 (17.50)**

**Quarter page £27.50 (£10.50)**

**Anyone interested in advertising should contact Helena Bowles (Publications) at 38 Harold Road, Smethwick, West Midlands, B67 6LJ.**

**Deadlines for camera-ready copy are:**

### **PR 2:**

**31<sup>st</sup> May, to be mailed mid-June**

### **PR3:**

**30<sup>th</sup> September, to be mailed mid-October**

### **Programme Book:**

**30<sup>th</sup> September, to be distributed at the Convention**

## **Hotel Information...**

**The venue is the Quality Hotel, Bentley, Walsall, which is situated next to junction 10 of the M6. The nearest railway station is Walsall, and the nearest intercity station is Wolverhampton. Full travel details will appear in PR3.**

**The Quality has 150 twin/double rooms and no singles. However a number of the rooms will be released to us as singles, but these are limited and so if you particularly want a single please book early as they will be allocated on a first come first served basis.**

### **ROOM RATES:**

**Twin/doubles: £36 per person per night.**

**Singles: £48 per person per night.**

***Both include full English breakfast***

**There are also a number of suites that are suitable as family rooms. Children aged 5-12 years will be charged at £10 per night inc. breakfast, while children under 5 years will be accommodated free of charge.**

### **BREAKFAST:**

**We have arranged with the hotel that breakfast vouchers will be issued this year. If you miss breakfast the voucher will entitle you to a baguette from the bar.**

### **LEISURE FACILITIES:**

**All residents will be entitled to full use of the hotel's Leisure Club facilities including swimming pool, spa-bath, sauna, gymnasium and solarium (hopefully, all will be fully functional this year!).**

## **DUPLICATE ROOM KEYS:**

**For those of you sharing a room the hotel can provide each person with a room key, but please let us know in advance. This does not apply to suites, which have a different type of lock to the rest of the rooms and don't allow the hotel to make copies. If you each want a key let the hotel know on arrival as they will be programming a number of rooms to take duplicate keys in advance of the convention and buying in key sets especially for us. Once you have a key each don't lose it! If you do then a new set of keys will have to be issued, and your sharer's key won't work anymore as soon as you use your new one. Of course if you do not have a key each and you can't find your sharer, you can still get into the room by asking hotel reception to let you in with a Master key, but please don't get them doing this all the time. The hotel will need to see your key card as proof of identity, so carry it at all times. You may also need it to charge drinks to your room, and at breakfast.**

## **OVERFLOW HOTELS:**

**For those of you who want a single, but don't book in time, or those of you who are strapped for cash, there is an overflow hotel nearby. This is the Travel Inn, 10 minutes' walk away from the Quality. Rooms are currently £48.95 Mon-Thurs and £45.95 Fri-Sun, excluding breakfast. Bear in mind that this rate is for the room, regardless of how many people are in it! Many of their rooms will accommodate 2 adults and 2 children. It's up to you to book here and you can visit at [www.travelinn.co.uk/TI/index.jsp?page=inn&id=210](http://www.travelinn.co.uk/TI/index.jsp?page=inn&id=210) or ring on 08701-977-258. Travel Inn, Bentley Green, Bentley Road North, Walsall, West Midlands, WS2 OWB.**

**Alternatively, you can book a room at the Village Hotel, which is on the other side of the motorway, towards Walsall. Bear in mind that you will have to cross J10 to get to and from here, so think bus or taxi.**



# FANTASYCON XXX 30TH ANNIVERSARY

*for readers, writers, artists and fans of  
the fantasy, sf and horror genre*

22<sup>nd</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> September 2006

Britannia Hotel, St James Street, Nottingham

Guests of Honour

***Neil Gaiman\****

***Ramsey Campbell\****

***Juliet E McKenna\****

With Master of Ceremonies

***David J. Howe\****

Events planned so far

- ✍ Interviews ✍ Discussion panels
- ✍ One-to-one appointments with editors & agents\* ✍
- ✍ Genre Quiz ✍ Charity Raffle ✍ AGM ✍ Banquet ✍
- ✍ The British Fantasy Awards ✍

\* All guests, tutors, experts and panellists appear subject to other commitments

## **2006 Nova Awards...**

**By Steve Green, Administrator**

**In 1973, Novacon instituted the annual Nova Awards to celebrate achievement in British science fiction fanzines. Originally handed down by a panel of judges, these accolades are now decided by Novacon members who can demonstrate a basic knowledge of current fanzines.**

**Following Novacon 32, the three categories – best fanzine, best fanzine writer, best fanzine artist – were extended to cover fanzines produced in Eire. In addition, electronic fanzines are now eligible, provided a file copy is lodged at the address below.**

**Claire Brialey and Mark Plummer's *Banana Wings* was presented with its fourth Nova Award for best fanzine at Novacon 35 on 13 November. Claire was also named best fanwriter for the fourth year running, whilst Alison Scott received the fan artist Nova in an extremely close race with last year's winner, Sue Mason. A total of 42 ballots were submitted, 50% up on last year, and the full breakdown is as follows:**

**Best Fanzine: *Banana Wings*, ed. Claire Brialey and Mark Plummer (72 points); 2<sup>nd</sup>, *Zoo Nation*, ed. Pete Young (45); 3<sup>rd</sup>, *Plokta*, ed. Steve Davies, Alison Scott and Mike Scott (21); 4<sup>th</sup>, *Meta*, ed. Geneva Melzack (18); 5<sup>th</sup>, *Tortoise*, ed. Sue Jones (17); 6<sup>th</sup>, *Shiny!*, ed. Flick (13); 7<sup>th</sup>, *YAFA Staffer and the Worldcon of 2005*, ed. Max (12); 8<sup>th</sup>=, *Floss*, ed. Lilian Edwards (6); 8<sup>th</sup>=, *Halo of Flies*, ed. Tony Keen (6); 8<sup>th</sup>=, *Thought Experiments*, ed. Geneva Melzack (6); 11<sup>th</sup>=, *Cosmic Hairdryer*, ed. Max (4); 11<sup>th</sup>=, *High Viz Girl*, ed. Yvonne Rowse (4); 11<sup>th</sup>=, *Owl Soup*, ed. Captain Buggernuts, aka Clarrie O'Callaghan (4); 14<sup>th</sup>=, *Album*, ed. John Dallman (3); 14<sup>th</sup>=, *The Convertible Bus*, ed. Tony Keen (3); 14<sup>th</sup>=, *More Balls*, ed. Ang Rosin (3); 14<sup>th</sup>=, *YAFazine*, ed. various (3);**

18<sup>th</sup>=, *Ansible*, ed. Dave Langford (2); 18<sup>th</sup>=, *The Banksoniain*, ed. David Haddock (2); 18<sup>th</sup>=, *Snapshot*, ed. Ian Sorensen (2); 21<sup>st</sup>, *Grunt Grunt*, ed. Captain Buggernuts, aka Clarrie O'Callaghan (1).

**Best Fan Writer:** Claire Brialey (44 points); 2<sup>nd</sup>, Tony Keen (37); 3<sup>rd</sup>, Geneva Melzack (33); 4<sup>th</sup>, Max (31); 5<sup>th</sup>, Mark Plummer (26); 6<sup>th</sup>, Dave Langford (14); 7<sup>th</sup>, Niall Harrison (13); 8<sup>th</sup>, James Bacon (11); 9<sup>th</sup>, Pete Young (7); 10<sup>th</sup>, Yvonne Rowse (6); 11<sup>th</sup>, Sue Jones (5); 12<sup>th</sup>=, Lilian Edwards, Cheryl Morgan, Alison Scott (3); 15<sup>th</sup>=, Greg Pickersgill, Ian Sorensen (2); 17<sup>th</sup>=, Giulia De Cesare, Steve Davies, Flick, Ang Rosin (1).

**Best Fan Artist:** Alison Scott (51 points, 14 first-place votes); 2<sup>nd</sup>, Sue Mason (51, seven first-place votes); 3<sup>rd</sup>=, Dave Hicks, Pete Young (24); 5<sup>th</sup>, Arthur "Atom" Thomson (16); 6<sup>th</sup>, Graham Higgins (10); 7<sup>th</sup>=, Sue Jones, Feorag NicBhríde (5); 9<sup>th</sup>, D West (4); 10<sup>th</sup>=, Jim Barker, Steve Jeffery (3); 12<sup>th</sup>, Flick (2).

The ballot form also included a straw poll on whether the Nova Awards should be open to non-Novacon members who met the existing "informed electorate" criterion (receiving at least six different UK / Irish fanzines during the relevant year); of the 35 who expressed a preference, 32 were in favour of expanding the electorate. Any decision on this will be made by the Novacon committee.

The following fanzines were received by the Nova Awards administrator between 1 October 2005 and 11 January 2006, and are eligible for the 2006 awards, which will be presented at Novacon 36:

?? *Ansible* #219 [10/05], #220 [11/05], #221 [12/05], #222 [1/06, both A4, 2pp] Dave Langford, 94 London Road, Reading, RG1 5AU, downloadable from <<http://www.ansible.co.uk>>



- ?? ***Banana Wings* #24** [A4, 40pp], Claire Brialey & Mark Plummer, 59 Shirley Road, Croydon, CR0 7ES, <banana@fishlifter.demon.co.uk>
- ?? ***The Banksonian* #8** [A5, 8pp], David Haddock, 84 Foxhollow, Bar Hill, Cambridge, CB3 8ES, <banksonian@yahoo.co.uk>
- ?? ***Brum Group News* #409** [10/05], #410 [11/05; both 12pp], #411 [12/05, 16pp] #412 [1/06, 12pp; all A5], Rog Peyton (for the Birmingham SF Group), 19 Eves Croft, Bartley Green, Birmingham, B32 3QL, <rog@rogpeyton.fsnet.co.net>
- ?? ***League of Fan Funds Newsletter* #2** [A4, 2pp], <www.astralpole.org>
- ?? ***Shiny* #3** [A6, 20pp], Flick, 13 Collette Court, Eleanor Close, London, SE16 6PW, [shiny@internet-fairy.org](mailto:shiny@internet-fairy.org)

The following were published prior to 1 October 2005, but received after the Novacon 35 programme book went to press; they are included here as a matter of record (only *Plokta* #34 and *The Banksonian* #7 would have been eligible under the current rules):

- ?? ***The Banksonian* #7** [A5, 8pp], David Haddock, as above
- ?? ***Ion Trails, the WSFS Armadillo Inflight Magazine*** [A4, 36], Kevin Standlee for Interaction
- ?? ***Paragon 2 Souvenir Book*** [A4, 60pp], Fran Dowd for Paragon 2
- ?? ***Plokta* #34** [A5, 24pp], Steve Davies & Alison Scott & Mike Scott, 24 St Mary Road, Walthamstow, London, E17 9RG, [www.plokta.com](http://www.plokta.com)

**The following have been received since 1 October 2005, but are ineligible under the current rules:**

- ?? *Novacon 35 Programme Book* [A5, 39pp], Helena Bowles for Novacon 35 <[www.novacon.org](http://www.novacon.org)>**
- ?? *Novacon 35 Progress Report #3* [A5, 20pp], Helena Bowles for Novacon 35**
- ?? *Two Year TAFF-Life #1* [quarto, 4pp], Suzanne Tompkins (for the TransAtlantic Fan Fund), PO Box 25075, WA 98165, USA**
- ?? *Vanamonde #608 – 622* [all quarto, 2pp], John Hertz, 236 S. Coronado Street #409, Los Angeles, CA 90057, USA**

**Finally, Claire Brialey has pointed out that *Banana Skins* and *Waxen Wings* had already merged to become *Banana Wings* by the time she and Mark Plummer shared the 1996 fanzine Nova. In addition, Pete Young edited *Zoo Nation*, winner in 2003 and 2004. Both errors will be corrected for the Novacon 36 programme book.**

**Material for listing in future progress reports and on the Nova Awards ballot form should be sent to:**

**Steve Green, 33 Scott Road, Olton, Solihull, B92 7LQ.**

# **Birmingham Science Fiction Group**



THE BIRMINGHAM SCIENCE FICTION GROUP was founded in 1971 to enable local and not so local fans to get together to discuss science fiction and related topics.

We meet on the second Friday of every month, 7:45pm at the Britannia Hotel. Just 5 Minutes from New Street Station and handy for all bus routes. We usually start the evening with a guest speaker, often a professional in the field such as Brian Aldiss, Terry Pratchett or Peter F. Hamilton.

If you live anywhere in or around the West Midlands, the BSFG is the Group for you. For further information, and a copy of our monthly newsletter, please:

email

[bhamsfgroup@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:bhamsfgroup@yahoo.co.uk)

Also, do visit our website at:

[www.bsfg.freesevers.com](http://www.bsfg.freesevers.com)