

NOVACON 48

9 - 11 NOVEMBER 2018

Guest of Honour

**Chris
Beckett**



BIRMINGHAM SCIENCE FICTION GROUP

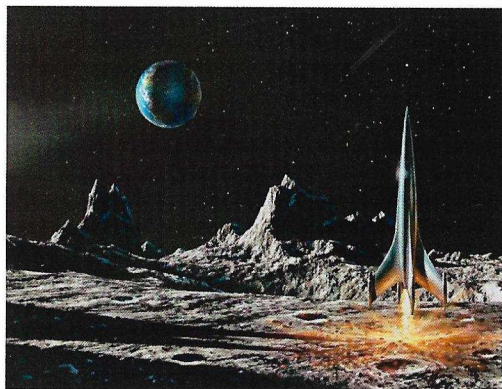
Adrian Tchaikovsky

Dave Hutchinson

Aliette de Bodard

Peter F Hamilton

...have all been guests at our regular monthly meetings this year! If you live anywhere in or around the West Midlands, the BSFG is the group for you!



©DAVID A HARDY WWW.ASTROART.ORG

We usually meet on the second Friday of every month at the Briar Rose Hotel on Bennett's Hill in Birmingham, only 5-minutes walk from New Street Station. Admission £4.

COME AND MEET US!

FOR FURTHER DETAILS PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT:

WWW.BIRMINGHAMSFSGROUP.ORG.UK



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48

The Annual Convention OF
The Birmingham Science Fiction Group



A Word

37 (thirty-seven!) years ago a gangly youth sauntered up to the registration desk of **Novacon 11** at the Royal Angus Hotel, his second SF convention ever, received his badge and programme book, and headed towards the bar. "Who runs this kind of thing?" he might have wondered briefly...

Some years later at a pub meeting of the Misfits, who used to be the militantly disreputable wing of the **Birmingham SF Group**, someone trapped me in a corner and said: "Don't you think it's about time you were on the **Novacon Committee**?" I could have refused, but he had a point. SF Conventions are run by volunteers and I'd enjoyed sitting round while other people made a good time happen for me, so it was time to pay back. I did programme the first time out and it nearly killed me...

So, I was sitting in last year's **Novacon Committee** and someone trapped me in a corner and said: "Don't you think it's time you *chaired* a **Novacon**?". I could have refused. Should I have? We're about to find out...

Fortunately, I am not alone. I have the help of a fine body of SF fans from Birmingham, Sheffield and the South of France to make your weekend fun, and I think the best perk of being a convention chair – now con chairs don't get carried around all weekend in a sedan chair any more – is picking the Guest of Honour. I'm delighted to have **Chris Beckett** as that Guest and commend to you his *Dark Eden* novels and we'll be celebrating his work on Friday night with a book launch.

Between that and the beer tasting/convention meal on Sunday I hope you'll enjoy a wide range of programme from science through art, poetry, to discussion about the state of modern, diverse, science fiction in "interesting" times. And don't hold back if you want to make a contribution. The talent at a good SF convention is all around you, it is you.

Enjoy your weekend.

THE COMMITTEE

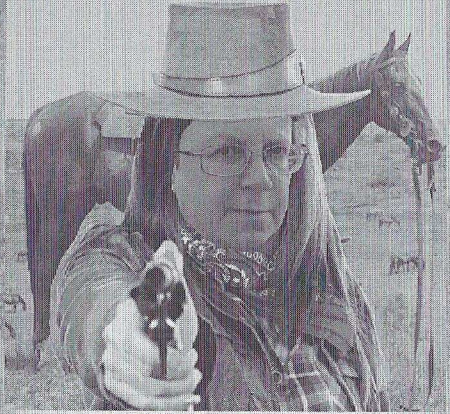
(And a bigger bunch of
cowboys you will never meet)

WANTED
LIKE A HOLE IN THE HEAD



DAVE "WHAT INDIANS" HICKS
REWARD \$12.0 AND CHANGE

WANTED
RUN...JUST RUN



CAT BOOHOO
REWARD \$110,000

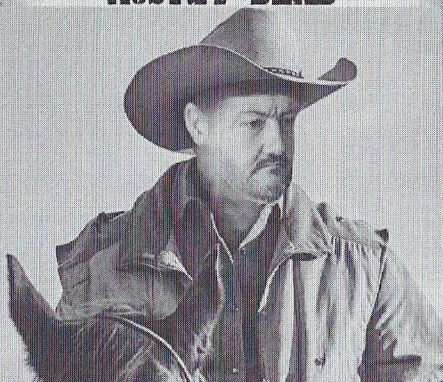
WANTED
IF YOU HAVE A MINUTE



ALICE "LOWERWATHA" LAWSON
REWARD \$120,000

WANTED

MOSTLY DEAD



DOUG "I'M SURE I'VE PASSED
THIS CACTUS BEFORE" SPENCER
REWARD \$10,500

WANTED

ALIVE IF YOU CAN



EVE "DEAD EYE" HARVEY
REWARD \$100.00

WANTED

ALIVE...ISH



HELEN "OBEY ME" BOWLES
REWARD \$100.00

WANTED

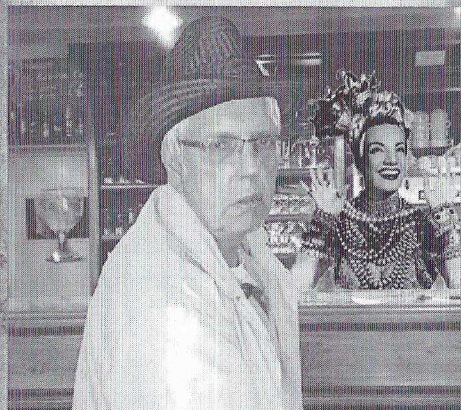
NOTORIOUS SHEEP WORRIER



TONY "UNLUCKY" BERRY
REWARD \$1.50

WANTED

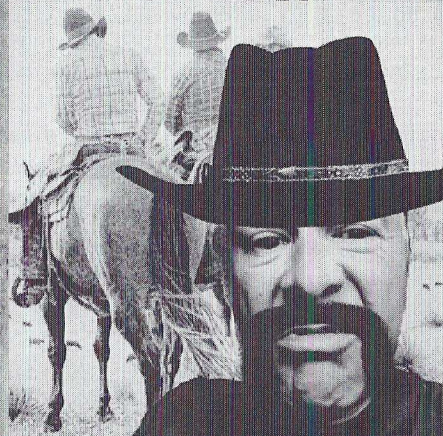
DEAD...ISH



JOHN "SPIDERMAN" HARVEY
REWARD \$100,000

WANTED

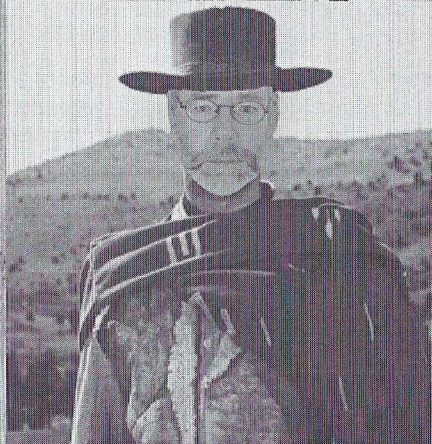
BY NOBODY



RICHARD "MAD DOG" STANDAGE
REWARD \$120,000

WANTED

DEAD OR ALIVE



STEVE "QUICK DRAW" LAWSON
REWARD \$1.50

UNWANTED

REALLY DON'T CARE



GARY "IN THE WRONG MOVIE" STARR
REWARD \$1

Novacon Code of Conduct

A Convention is a private event and, as such, the Committee has always had the right and the ability to remove any attendee for antisocial behaviour. Over recent years, it has become standard practice for such events to publish a Code of Conduct providing guidelines as to what that antisocial behaviour may include.

For most people, the simple principle of, "Behave like a decent human being," is enough of a guideline. However, just in case, these are the behaviours we feel lead to that result:

1. **Be welcoming.** We expect all our attendees to respect each other's right to be at **Novacon**. In particular, discriminatory behaviour or harassment will not be tolerated.
2. **Be courteous** and aware we all have different sensitivities. If your language or behaviour is unwelcome to another attendee then stop. Anything else may be considered harassment.
3. **Be respectful** of other people's boundaries. Physical contact should only occur with all parties' enthusiastic consent. Remember, not everyone likes being hugged.
4. **Be aware** that communication may be verbal or non-verbal.

Discrimination includes, but is not limited to, discrimination on the grounds of: sex, gender, gender identity or expression, sexuality, ethnicity, age, religion and mental or physical disability.

Harassment includes, but is not limited to, any behaviour that can be reasonably expected to disturb or intimidate another convention attendee. It includes the wearing of symbols associated with fascism and racism, independent of the intent of the wearer. Harassment may be verbal or non-verbal.

Dealing with discrimination or harassment

If you feel comfortable, address the person and the problem behaviour directly. In most cases this will be all that is required.

If you are not comfortable with a direct approach, or it proves insufficient, then either:

- report the matter to the Duty Committee Member (look for the gold waistcoat). He/she will contact the Designated People who will come to talk to you as soon as possible, or
- contact one of the Designated People directly on the number below.

Convention Response and Responsibilities

The Novacon Convention Committee is responsible for enforcing the Code of Conduct and for maintaining confidentiality.

Three people are designated to deal with complaints. These are **Helena Bowles, Alice Lawson** and **Douglas Spencer**. The complaint will be heard, in confidence, in a private place, and an appropriate response agreed upon with the complainant. This may be any of the following:

- Arbitration between the parties involved
- One, and only one, verbal warning.
- Rescinding of convention membership without refund and/or refusal of membership at future Novacons.
- Reporting the incident to the police.

The committee's decision in this matter is final.

If a complaint is made about you, either to your face via the Duty Committee Member or via the Designated People, your interaction with the complainant is over.

In cases of a dispute with the hotel, the committee will support the hotel and the hotel's own Code of Conduct.

The standard of judgement in these matters is the "reasonable person" standard as applied by the designated committee members. Attempts to "rules lawyer" the Code of Conduct will be seen as a sign of bad faith.

This Code of Conduct is considered to be a living document and is expected to evolve year on year. In advance of each convention, we fix the Code of Conduct for that convention. This is the iteration that will be in use Novacon 48. Constructive comments are welcome and will be considered when drawing up the Code of Conduct for next year's Novacon. Please address suggestions to the Code of Conduct team on the email below.

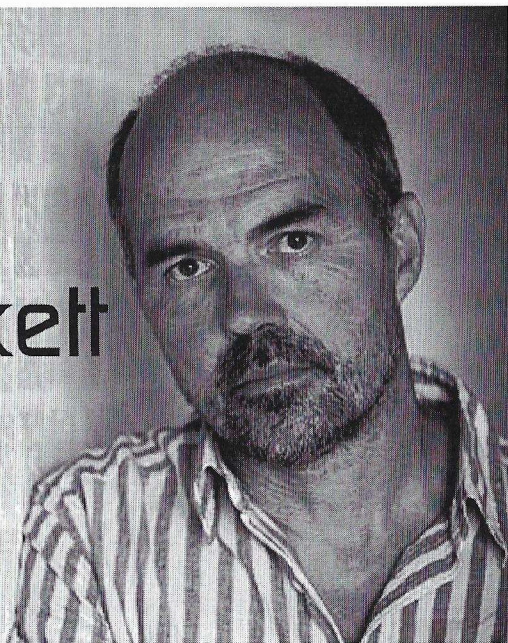
Designated People: contact numbers and email

Helena Bowles, Alice Lawson and Douglas Spencer: 07514 867 770

Code of Conduct team email: CodeOfConduct@novacon.org.uk

Guest of Honour Chris Beckett

by
John Jarrold



I met **Novacon 48's** Guest of Honour Chris Beckett at an **Eastercon** in Hinckley, well over a decade ago (I've been his literary agent, and his friend, since 2005). When we meet the conversation covers many areas (he a fascinating talker) and I am proud to be involved with an author I consider to be one of the best and most important SF writers of the 21st century.

Chris is a former social worker and lecturer, based in Cambridge, England. He has published six novels and three short story collections. His SF collection *The Turing Test* won the literary **Edge Hill Short Fiction Award** in 2009 against stiff opposition from authors who had been shortlisted for and won the **Booker Prize**. His novel *Dark Eden*, first book of the *Eden* trilogy, won the **Arthur C. Clarke award** in 2012. His third collection, *Spring Tide*, is his first foray outside of the boundaries of science fiction, and his latest novel is *America City*, with echoes of the present US political situation (we first discussed it a year before Trump mentioned standing for president), climate change and mass migrations, which **The Guardian** called: 'An uneasy read that manages to feel both timely and urgent... Beckett offers an intelligent, visceral reminder that unless we change what today looks like, tomorrow will be turbulent indeed'.

Chris's first SF short story was published in **INTERZONE** in 1990. His first SF novel, *The Holy Machine*, was published in 2004. This was followed by *Marcher*, based on a short story of the same name. Paul Di Filippo reviewed *The Holy Machine* for **ASIMOV'S**, calling it "One of the most accomplished novel debuts to attract my attention in some time...", Michael Levy in **STRANGE HORIZONS** called it "a beautifully written and deeply thoughtful tale about a would-be scientific utopia that has been bent sadly out of shape by both external and internal pressures." and a review in **INTERZONE** by Tony Ballantyne declared, "Let's waste no time: this book is incredible." His Clarke Award-winning novel,

Dark Eden was called by Stuart Kelly, of **The Guardian**, “a superior piece of the theologically nuanced science fiction”. Valerie O’Riordan, in **BOOKMUNCH**, called it “a science-fiction dystopian tale in the vein of Russell Hoban’s *Riddley Walker* or Patrick Ness’s YA trilogy, *Chaos Walking* – or, if we’re to go classical and mainstream, maybe *Lord of the Flies*” and “a character study of unconscious political ambition”. There have been two sequels, *Mother of Eden* and *Daughter of Eden*. SF novelist Alastair Reynolds has said of him: “Beckett should be on the radar of anyone who professes concern for science fiction as a literary form”.

Chris has written over 20 short stories, many of them originally published in **INTERZONE** and **ASIMOV’S**. Several of his stories have appeared among the top three favourites in **INTERZONE**’s annual readers’ polls. A number have also been selected for republication, including in several Year’s Best anthologies.

With his background in social work, he has also written several social work textbooks. These include *Essential Theory for Social Work Practice* and *Human Growth and Development*. The latter is an introduction to emotional, psychological, intellectual and social development across a human lifetime. It is written for students training in fields such as social work, healthcare and education, the book covers topics which are central to understanding people, whether they are clients, service users, patients or pupils.

As you can see, Chris has a writing and life background that is both wide ranging and impressive. You’ve going to have fun with him this weekend and be left thinking. We’ve hung out at various cons, and he also likes a drink...

Bibliography

Novels

The Holy Machine, Wildside Press, 2004 *Marcher*, Dorchester Publishing, 2009 (a revised version was published by NewCon press in 2014)

Dark Eden, Corvus, 2012 (winner of the 2013 **Arthur C. Clarke Award**)

Mother of Eden, Corvus, 2015

Daughter of Eden, Corvus, 2016

America City, Atlantic Books, 2017

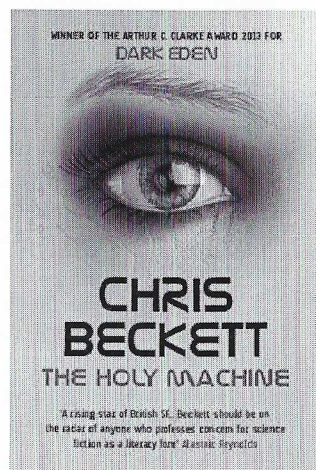
Short story collections

The Turing Test, Elastic Press, 2008

It comprises: *Karel’s Prayer*, *Dark Eden*, *The Perimeter*, *Piccadilly Circus*, *We Could be Sisters*, *Monsters*, *The Turing Test*, *Snapshots of Apirania*, *The Gates of Troy*, *The Marriage of Sky and Sea*, *Valour*, *The Warrior Half-and-Half*, *Jasmine in the Green Wood*, and *La Macchina*.

The Peacock Cloak, NewCon Press, 2013

It comprises: *Atomic Truth*, *Two Thieves*, *Johnny’s New Job*, *The Caramel Forest*, *Greenland*, *The Famous Cave Paintings on Isolus 9*, *Rat Island*, *Day 29*, *Our Land*, *The Desiccated Man*, *Poppyfields* and *The Peacock Cloak*.



Short stories

A Matter of Survival – originally published in *Interzone* (1990)

La Macchina – originally published in *Interzone* (1991); republished in *The Year's Best Science Fiction: Ninth Annual Collection* (1992); republished in *Gedanken Fictions: Stories on Themes in Science, Technology and Society*, edited by Thomas Easton, *Wildside Press* (2000); republished in *Robots* (2005)

The Long Journey of Frozen Heart – originally published in *Interzone* (1991)

The Circle of Stones – originally published in *Interzone* (1992)

The Welfare Man – originally published in *Interzone* (1993); republished in *The Best of Interzone*, edited by David Pringle, *Voyager* (HarperCollins) (1997); truncated version published in *Health and Disease: a Reader*, *Open University Press* (1995)

Jazamine in the Green Wood – originally published in *Interzone* (1994)

The Warrior Half-and-Half – originally published in *Interzone* (1995); republished in *Year's Best SF 5* (2000); republished in *The Ant Men of Tibet*, edited by David Pringle, *Big Engine Books* (2001)

Valour – originally published in *Interzone* (1999); republished in *Year's Best SF 5* (2000)

The Marriage of Sky and Sea – originally published in *Interzone* (2000); republished in *Year's Best SF 6* (2001)

The Gates of Troy – originally published in *Interzone* (2000)

The Welfare Man Retires – originally published in *Interzone* (2000)

Snapshots of Apirania – originally published in *Interzone* (2000)

Marcher – originally published in *Interzone* (2001); republished in *The Year's Best Science Fiction: Nineteenth Annual Collection* (2002)

Watching the Sea – originally published in *Interzone* (2001)

To Become a Warrior – originally published in *Interzone* (2002); republished in *The Year's Best Science Fiction: Twentieth Annual Collection* (2003)

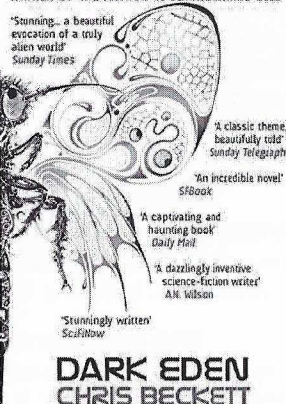
The Turing Test – originally published in *Interzone* (2002); republished in *A.I.s*, edited by Gardner Dozois and Jack Dann, *Ace Books* (2004)

Monsters – originally published in *Interzone* (2003)

Tammy Pendant – originally published in *Asimov's Science Fiction* (2004)

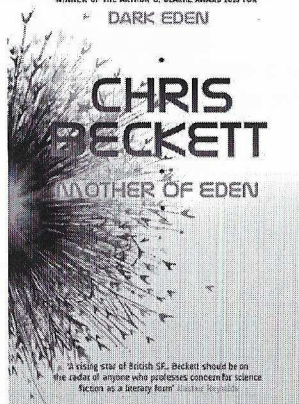
We Could be Sisters – originally published in *Asimov's Science Fiction* (2004)

WINNER OF THE ARTHUR C. CLARKE AWARD 2013



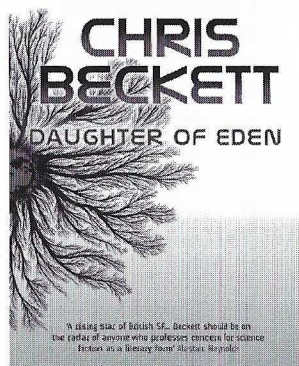
WINNER OF THE ARTHUR C. CLARKE AWARD 2013 FOR

DARK EDEN



WINNER OF THE ARTHUR C. CLARKE AWARD 2013 FOR

DARK EDEN



Picadilly Circus – originally published in *Interzone* (2005); republished in *The Year's Best Science Fiction: Twenty-Third Annual Collection* (2006); reprinted in Russian in *Esli* magazine.

The Perimeter – originally published in *Asimov's Science Fiction* (2005); reprinted in Russian in *Esli* magazine.

Dark Eden – originally published in *Asimov's Science Fiction* (March 2006)

Karel's Prayer – originally published in *Interzone* (2006)

Rat Island – originally published in *Interzone* (2008)

Poppyfields – originally published in *Interzone* (2008)

Greenland – originally published in *Interzone* (2008)

Atomic Truth – originally published in *Asimov's Science Fiction* (2009)

The Famous Cave Paintings on Isolus 9 – originally published in *Postscripts* (2009)

Johnny's New Job – originally published in *Interzone* (2010)

Our Land - originally published in *Conflicts* (2010)

The Peacock Cloak - originally published in *Asimov's Science Fiction* (2010)

The Desiccated Man - originally published in *Postscripts* (2010)

Two Thieves - originally published in *Asimov's Science Fiction* (2011)

Day 29 - originally published in *Asimov's Science Fiction* (July 2011)

The Goblin Hunter - originally published in *Solaris Rising 3* (2014)



DUBLIN 2019
AN IRISH WORLDCON

August 15 - 19, 2019
Convention Centre Dublin

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Guests of Honour
Jocelyn Bell Burnell
Ginjer Buchanan
Mary & Bill Burns
Diane Duane
Steve Jackson
Ian McDonald

World Science Fiction Society, "WSFS", "World Science Fiction Convention", "Worldcon", "NASPC", "Hugo Award", the Hugo Award Logo and the distinctive design of the Hugo Award Trophy Rocket are service marks of the World Science Fiction Society, an unincorporated literary society.

Artwork by Jani Clark

AMERICA CITY

A REVIEW

BY MAGGIE STANDAGE-BOWLES

I've been alive for two decades, which means there has never been a time for me when climate change wasn't an increasingly hot button issue. Although published last year, Chris Beckett's *America City* opens into a vision of the future that could have been penned any time in the last decade.

America is falling; storms are destroying the east coast with increasing frequency and severity, and, down south, droughts are driving whole towns out of business, and people out of homes. Millions are fleeing north where they find themselves in trailer parks facing hostility and abuse from the resident northerners.

Into the picture steps Holly Peacock, a British-born PR rep who gets hired as a spin doctor for Senator and would-be president, Steven Slaymaker. Once Holly and Slaymaker join forces, the catastrophic climate takes a step to the side, becoming more the canvas on which Beckett paints a narrative that is perhaps the child of a newer world.

Slaymaker has a vision of "reconfiguring" America: of moving the denizens of ravaged states further north, not into trailer parks but into proper, permanent extensions of the cities. This ambitious and wildly expensive project is mocked by Slaymaker's rivals and despised by the northerners who think that the *Barreduras*, or "dust trash" and "storm trash", have only themselves to blame for their situation. Slaymaker, however, is determined to see it through, so he and his team start campaigning. He wants a stronger America. Holly (despite what she tells her friends and herself) wants the challenge of selling an impossible story. The rest of his team want power and the *Barreduras* themselves are simply the tools that they can utilise. Both Slaymaker and his rivals rely on dirty tricks and

'Beckett should be on the radar of anyone who professes concern for science fiction as a literary form' **Alastair Reynolds**

CHRIS BECKETT



AMERICA CITY

manipulation of the whisperstream (an evolution of social media), which is a petri dish for lies and misinformation. Image is everything – the truth is irrelevant.

If there is a key strength to this story, it's the combined urgency and hopelessness that permeate every page. We as the readers can do nothing but watch as Holly sets events in motion that soon spiral far out of her foresight or control – just as the characters themselves are desperately fighting a battle against the climate. A battle they know is too little, too late. Advancements in technology are putting people out of work, the entire world is in political turmoil, and the amount of habitable land gets smaller every year.

Beckett draws this dystopia, not as some hypothetical distant possibility, but as a very real future that we are hurtling towards. Frankly, it takes no imagination at all to envision this reality, if not quite in my lifetime, then soon after it.

Of course, there's no discussion about climate change without a discussion of blame, and here the story lets nobody off the hook. We greet the elite one per cent (donors for Slaymaker's campaign) and through Holly, are invited to share her disdain. Their morality is entirely self-centred and they are clueless about the workings of the world outside the privileged bubbles that they've been raised in; neither the weather nor the humanitarian crisis have anything to do with them. Likewise, Holly very quickly develops a distaste for her friends in her own social class: the *Delicados* – middle class (presumably mostly white) liberals – are all bark and no bite. They make grand shows of compassion and righteous anger but rarely make any real moves for change. Social awareness is a fashion accessory that comes a distant second to their comfortable existence.

On the other end of the scale, we are given glimpses of life for Americans on the ground: the prevailing feeling is that the people safe in the northern states don't owe a thing to the refugees from the south – they themselves never asked for help, so why should they have to help anyone else? The refugees lament this

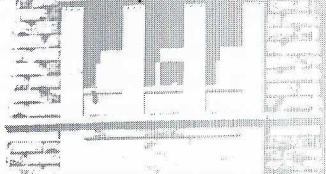
hostility, but only a few reach the realisation that their previous easy lives were only maintained for so long by America's strict immigration laws and rejection of movement from further south (that's right, there's a Wall dividing America and Mexico). It's a stinging indictment of human apathy, and no one escapes. Whoever you are, whatever social class you're in, you're stepping on *somebody* to keep yourself in comfort and likely letting yourself ignore it. If that wasn't pointed enough, Beckett makes it very clear that it's *our* decadence and apathy that led the characters of the story to the dire straits they're in. We carry on with our lives despite knowing the damage we're causing.

It does have to be said that if you're looking for subtlety, you've come to the wrong place. All these moral questions are discussed at length; political and social ethics and the balance of self-preservation verses making a difference are all interrogated frequently. But perhaps, in the world we live in, the time for subtlety on these issues has long since passed. Maybe it's time to start shouting as a last-ditch effort to get people to listen.

Also, focussed as the novel is on the large-scale, when it comes to the interpersonal relationships of the characters it occasionally runs into the trap of too much telling and not enough showing. We are expected to feel the strain in Holly and Ruby's friendship without ever truly seeing what they've fallen from. In a similar vein Holly's husband Richard is a little flat as a character, inspiring neither camaraderie nor contempt, and really serving only to show how far Holly is disappearing into her own ambition.

Overall, *America City* is a grim piece, treating worse-case scenarios as future realities and not so much asking as demanding that we take a long, hard look at ourselves: how much are we really doing for the causes we claim to care about? Are we shirking our responsibility to future generations in favour of the comforts we're so used to? Where are we going to end up when (not if, *when*) we reach crisis point?

The eventual fate of Slaymaker's relocation initiative suggests that we, as a species, are destined by our own stubborn selfishness to repeat our histories over and over in an inward spiral until we annihilate each other completely. The dying world that drives the novel is something that would have been relevant when I was a child, is still relevant now, and will only continue to grow more relevant in decades to come. Beckett seeks to make one thing very clear – this train is running out of track unless we change and change fast, but is that amount of change something we're even capable of?



Cheese And Onions

(or How I Became A Science Speaker)

Some of you will be familiar with the series of Serious Scientific Talks that I've been presenting at conventions over the past decade or so, and periodically someone will ask what prompted me to become a science speaker.

The term "Serious Scientific Talk" clearly takes its rise from the series of excellent talks with that title presented by the very wonderful Bob Shaw. But I didn't encounter those talks until my advent in convention-going Fandom at the start of the 1990s, and my taste for melding the communication of academic content with humour, coupling a love for science with a keen sense of my own ridiculousness, dates from 1988.



You see, in 1988 I was an eager young computer network engineer, cheerfully building routers, firewalls and mail servers in a succession of end-user organisations. In those days, data transmission speeds were low, latencies were high, and the cost of bandwidth loomed menacingly over IT budgets. New techniques were being sought for improving the throughput of networked systems, and I spent my free time devouring all the available literature in the field.

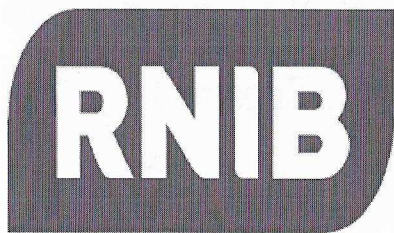
And on April 1st in that year, I came across a paper entitled *A New Data Encoding Scheme*, by Andrew Cheese and Julian Onions from the CS department at the University of Nottingham. Encoding schemes are a way of taking data and massaging it to achieve any number of arcane goals – error correction, encryption, compression – and I was always eager to learn of new developments. I read the paper. This was heady stuff, claiming levels of compression previously unachievable. I read on, with enthusiasm.

I hadn't yet spotted the date of the paper. I didn't spot the date until after I'd spotted the flaws in the scheme. It was a delicious moment. It was a delicious paper.

It's entirely possible that, had I not read this paper, my life would have taken a different turn. We just don't know what other ambitions I'd have found. It's entirely possible that, had I not read this paper, I would never have thought to make fun out of talking about science. We just don't know how else I'd be wasting everyone's time instead. It's entirely possible that, had I not read this paper, every other part of my life would be completely unchanged. But I don't think so, I think they planted a seed.

So here's my thanks to Andrew B Cheese and Julian P Onions for that paper from thirty years ago. I'm very pleased that they're both still engaged in science communication, and I'm very pleased that they're both coming to Novacon to do so.

Douglas Spencer



The RNIB has been supporting people with sight loss since they were founded, in October 1868, as **The British And Foreign Blind Association For Improving The Embossed Literature Of The Blind**. In 1914 it changed its name to **The National Institute for the Blind**, or NIB (which was, presumably, easier to get on a t-shirt). In 1949 it received the Royal Charter and changed its name to the **Royal National Institute Of Blind People**.

Over the years it has been responsible for adopting and standardizing system for helping the visually impaired including the introduction of a standardized Braille system in 1870, the first Braille magazine, **Progress**, in 1871, the first Braille dictionary in 1893. In 1918 their first "Sunshine Home for Blind Babies" (*and if that thought alone doesn't make you donate....*) was opened and in 1930 the standardized Braille music code was introduced.

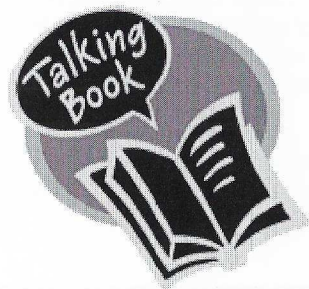
They introduced **Talking Books** in 1935 and it is still one of their flagship services with over 25,000 titles available. Their service is absolutely free and available to all ages and covers a wide range of genres. The books are available in a variety of formats including DAISY CD (one book per disc) and USB stick (three books per stick) and Digital Download. They also have a range of titles available to buy from their online shop and a selection of large print books and newspapers available.

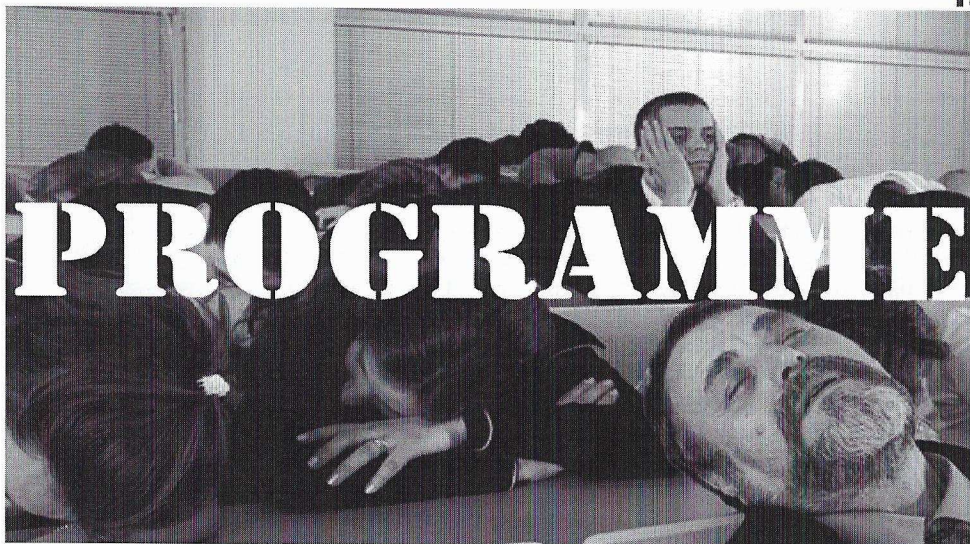
Today, they support almost two million people in Britain who are living with sight loss. As well as supplying a wide variety of Talking Books for recreation they also provide educational books to children with sight difficulties as well as those with Dyslexia.

We have been donating to the charity for many **Novacons** now with our donation being specifically directed towards their Talking Books division. It's very important work and all contributions are gladly received. We, The Committee feel this is a worthy charity for such a literary based convention, so join in.... let's make some money.

At last year's **Novacon** we ran an advisory-only referendum, asking the membership to vote on whether we sent donations to the RNIB to assist the service with its general funding, or to wait until we'd raised enough to sponsor (and, therefore, choose) a specific book. When we counted the votes, the results were divided exactly half-and-half between the two options, and we interpreted the results to mean that the committee should proceed as seemed best to them. We're currently using these donations to assist the service with its general funding.

Many thanks to the members of **Novacon** for helping us to raise the donations we've been able to make to the RNIB **Talking Books** service. If someone approaches you at Novacon asking you to buy raffle tickets, please remember this service that the RNIB provides, and continue to help us donate to the RNIB's Talking Books service in the future.





FRIDAY

19:00

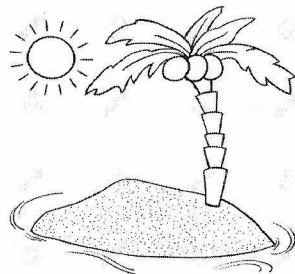
Opening Ceremony

Welcome to **Novacon 48**. Come and meet our fabulous Guest of Honour, Chris Beckett, the committee and hear any last-minute updates and useful information to make your convention more enjoyable.

19:30

Desert island Books

Our Guest of Honour in conversation with Eve Harvey. Which books (plus a couple of pieces of music) would Chris like to take with him to a desert island? And why they're so special to him.



21:00

Chris Beckett Launch Party

Come along and get your own signed copy of Chris's latest acclaimed novel, *America City*; plus, the latest releases of the *Dark Eden* trilogy and *Holy Machine*. Free wine and nibbles provided by your caring committee.

22:30

Am I Who?*

We may all be a little tired and emotional after all the travelling and free booze, so we'll finish the evening with a simple game: an SF-themed version of Who am I? where you have to guess who you are.

*You see what we did there?

SATURDAY

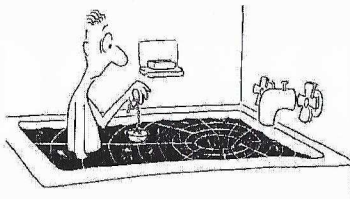
10:00

Professor Tony Padilla: Black Holes & Extra Dimensions

Why does the Universe even exist?

Physicists believe that the answer to this question lies deep inside black holes, where space and time is as strange and complicated as it was at the beginning, when the Universe was born. This will be a journey of discovery, from the black hole at the centre of our own galaxy, to the exotic world of string theory, extra dimensions and parallel universes.

Find out what it's like to fall into a black hole, why we believe in extra dimensions, and what this all has to do with a 9-billion-dollar machine smashing things together at almost the speed of light.



11:30

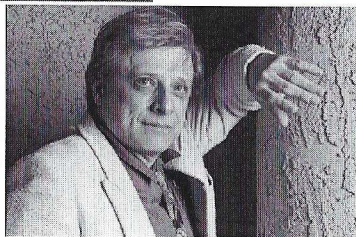
Panel: Retired Extremely Fannish

"Why should I let the toad work squat on my life?" (Philip Larkin) Are we looking forward to retirement, so we can finally have time for all the fannish schemes we couldn't finish because work got in the way? For already retired fans – and there's more than a few at Novacon - is life working out as planned or do we need "the toad" to give us some energy?

13:00

Panel: Harlan Ellison Foursquare for chaos

The remarkable Harlan Ellison passed away this year. We discuss a career full of feuds, law suits, eight and half Hugos and his massive body of science fiction including some of the best known short stories in the genre. Your own reminiscences will be welcome.



14:30

Gerry Webb: The Fermi Paradox

Gerry is the President of the British Interplanetary Society and a popular speaker on space and science as well as a Novacon regular.

16:00

Chris Beckett: Haunted by the Future

Most SF is set in the 'future', though nearly always told in the past tense. But the nature of the proposed SF future varies from entirely nominal 'futures', which no one believes will ever happen, to 'futures' that are really just commentaries on the present, to serious attempts to predict what the world will be like at some near, or distant, future date. Do these different kinds of future have anything in common, and how do they connect with the future that actually comes to pass?

17:30**Douglas Spencer, Esq.: Clanger Cuisine**

In his most recent Serious Scientific Talk, repeated from Satellite 6, Doug talks about soup and blue string pudding, and explores what we might infer about the local biology.

**19:00****Poetry Open Mike**

Chris Morgan, former Poet Laureate of Birmingham, will read some of his work and host an open microphone for all of you to bring and read your own work also. If it's SF, that's nice, but any theme is welcome. Beginners are encouraged, and the audience will be supportive.

20:30**Panel: Science Fiction in Interesting Times**

We're already in the era that much seminal SF of the mid-twentieth century was set in. All sorts of upheavals and change were forecast, good and bad. Meanwhile we have real upheavals – political, social, climate and technological. So, how do you go about writing SF in uncertain times?

22:00**Saturday Night with Stan and Ann**

Popular past Guests of Honour Ann & Stan Nicholls - plus guests - will discuss recent themes, events and foibles that amuse, interest, and perhaps annoy them about SF, fandom and overlapping genres.

SUNDAY

11:00**Dr Julian Onions: Making your own universe**

SF often imagines different universes to live in, sometimes with different physical laws. Julian will talk about how astronomers build their own universes in large computers to explore the properties of our own time and space. This will range across a whole spectrum from galaxies to the entire Universe and conversely to the smaller objects in the hunt to understand what we have, what we are what is to come.

12:30**David A Hardy: To the Stars – on a Paint Brush**

The truly gifted Dave Hardy has painted the visions of astronomers and SF writers for more than half a century, as well as his own imagination of space and science. He exhibits original work every year at **Novacon**. Here's chance to hear about his life in SF art as he talks through his career and works. If you wanted to own something by Dave, then by pure coincidence the next item is...

14:00

Art Auction

Chris Morgan will take your money for some fine, original and sometimes truly strange things from the art show. Remember to put your bids in early. We make no guarantees about anything self-shredding after purchase.

15:30

Panel: Creating Imaginary Societies

"The Imaginary" is a sociological concept for the values and symbols that we use to "imagine our social whole". Writing SF is often about making up an entirely new one of those! Why – and how – do SF writers do this? How difficult is it to make a different society relevant, credible and consistent? Why do some play better with SF readers than others?

17:00

Hand Over Ceremony

It's not a closing ceremony because **Novacon** never closes, but this year's will be over except for the inevitable beer and food (and sarcastic convention reports). Come and help us give thanks to everyone who helped make the convention possible and give out gifts and prizes. And yes, it's time for the raffle again! So please buy tickets for our good cause.

19:30

Beer Tasting and Convention Dinner

Our traditional end-of-convention beer tasting. Bring 3 bottles of "interesting" beer to Registration in exchange for a ticket or alternatively you can also buy a ticket for either/both beer tasting and banquet (Tex Mex this year).



Off piste:

Remember there's an **Art Show** downstairs as well as **Mr Lally's Magic Lantern Show** (New members – ask discretely).

A **BOOK AUCTION** will be announced if we have enough books to sell and held downstairs. It usually happens later on Saturday night when you've all had enough beer to ensure you'll bid handsomely for those Pier Anthony trilogies we didn't shift last year.

There is additional function space downstairs, so if you want to have a reading, workshop or meeting please get with the committee in the registration area who should be able to help you out if they are sober enough.

NOVACON

.....a HISTORY

Novacon has a long and illustrious history which began in AD51, when the then Roman Governor, Publius Ostorious Scapula, imposed a tax on British beer and Public Houses in general. This was seen by the British as ironic considering his name, and something Alanis Morissette completely missed out of her song. The Britons of that time, not intending to take this lying down (unless they were too drunk to stand) moved drinking underground. No, not into caves, but into Pictish-easy's where they could mumble, moan and drink to their hearts content, whilst avoiding the dreaded Romans and their damnable tax.

These eventually came to be known as "Nov" (from the Latin meaning New) and "A Con" (from the British meaning "To Cheat").

Times changed but over the centuries the tradition of "**Nov-A-Con**" came to stand for the same thing, to hide from one's enemies whilst indulging in one's chosen vice.

In the 1600's Cavaliers would gather at a **Nov-A-Con** to discuss matters of state and to secretly support the Monarchy whilst hiding from Cromwell's New Model Army (who later went on to chart success with the singles, Vagabonds and No Rest).

In the early 1900's **Nov-A-Con**'s fell into ill repute when it was used by Draught-Dodgers to hideout during the first and second world wars. However, this disreputable past was redeemed when the entire membership of the 1940 **Nov-A-Con** where the first out of the landing craft and on the beach at Dunkirk. This was entirely due to the hotel bar being drunk dry and someone mentioning that the wines in France where "pretty good". They were never rescued from the beach during the subsequent evacuation but were all found some months later safe and well, but completely drunk, in a vineyard near Chaumont.

The 1960 brought the degenerate angle to the now modern and stylishly renamed, **Novacon**. All night orgies and unlimited alcohol were reported in the sensationalised tabloid press (despite the fact that no one has EVER gotten laid at a **Novacon** despite my best their best efforts). Scandalous pictures of knees, and in one case an elbow, were printed in the popular press and this depravity came to be forever associated with the **Novacon** name.

NOVACON 48

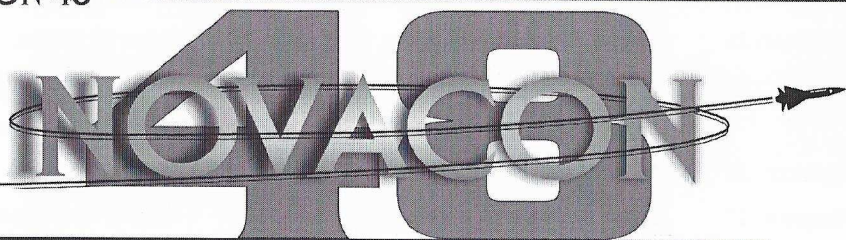
Indeed, little has changed from then till now. **Novacon** is the sum of its history and that is reflected by those who regularly attend it. People come to **Novacon** to hide, be it from loved-ones, bank managers, debt collectors, enraged Librarians, Adam Ant (a very unfortunate incident in the 80's, ask one of the committee for information) Basically, just to hide, and while there gather with like-minded deviants and drink.

It's history may be convoluted (get it), and at times, make uneasy reading but long may it go on..... or at least till we get to 50 (the convention... most of the committee lapped that number years ago).

		<u>Venue</u>	<u>Guest Of Honour</u>
Novacon 1	1971	Imperial Centre Hotel, Birmingham	James White
Novacon 2	1972	Imperial Centre Hotel, Birmingham	Doreen Rogers
Novacon 3	1973	Imperial Centre Hotel, Birmingham	Ken Bulmer
Novacon 4	1974	Imperial Centre Hotel, Birmingham	Ken Slater
Novacon 5	1975	Royal Angus Hotel, Birmingham	Dan Morgan
Novacon 6	1976	Royal Angus Hotel, Birmingham	David Kyle
Novacon 7	1977	Royal Angus Hotel, Birmingham	John Brunner
Novacon 8	1978	Holiday Inn, Birmingham	Anne McCaffrey
Novacon 9	1979	Royal Angus Hotel, Birmingham	Christopher Priest
Novacon 10	1980	Royal Angus Hotel, Birmingham	Brian W Aldiss
Novacon 11	1981	Royal Angus Hotel, Birmingham	Bob Shaw
Novacon 12	1982	Royal Angus Hotel, Birmingham	Harry Harrison
Novacon 13	1983	Royal Angus Hotel, Birmingham	Lisa Tuttle
Novacon 14	1984	Grand Hotel, Birmingham	Robert Holdstock
Novacon 15	1985	De Vere Hotel, Coventry	David Langford, James White
Novacon 16	1986	De Vere Hotel, Coventry	Chris Evans and E C Tubb
Novacon 17	1987	Royal Angus Hotel, Birmingham	Iain M Banks
Novacon 18	1988	Royal Angus Hotel, Birmingham	Garry Kilworth
Novacon 19	1989	Excelsior Hotel, Solihull	Geoff Ryman
Novacon 20	1990	Excelsior Hotel, Solihull	Dr Jack Cohen
Novacon 21	1991	Forte Post House, Solihull(formerly the Excelsior Hotel)	Colin Greenland
Novacon 22	1992	Royal Angus Hotel, Birmingham	Storm Constantine
Novacon 23	1993	Royal Angus Hotel, Birmingham	Stephen Baxter

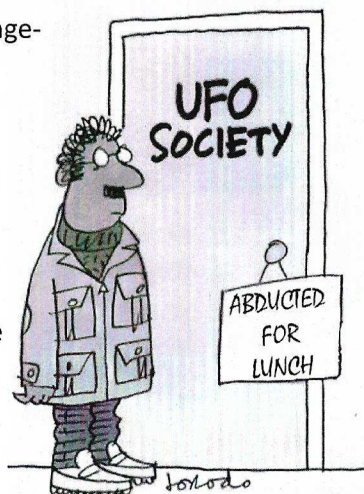
Novacon 24	1994	Royal Angus Hotel, Birmingham	Graham Joyce
Novacon 25	1995	Chamberlain Hotel, Birmingham	Brian W Aldiss, Harry Harrison, Bob Shaw
			Special Guest: Iain M Banks
Novacon 26	1996	Ibis Hotel, Birmingham	David Gemmell
Novacon 27	1997	Abbey Hotel, Malvern	Peter F Hamilton
Novacon 28	1998	Britannia Hotel, Birmingham	Paul J McAuley
Novacon 29	1999	Britannia Hotel, Birmingham	Ian Stewart
Novacon 30	2000	Britannia Hotel, Birmingham	Christopher Priest
			Special Guest: Rog Peyton
			Guest Artist: David A Hardy
Novacon 31	2001	Quality Hotel, Bentley	Gwynneth Jones
Novacon 32	2002	Quality Hotel, Bentley	Ian McDonald
Novacon 33	2003	Quality Hotel, Bentley	Jon Courtenay Grimwood
Novacon 34	2004	Quality Hotel, Bentley	Ian Watson
Novacon 35	2005	Quality Hotel, Bentley	Alastair Reynolds
Novacon 36	2006	Quality Hotel, Bentley	Ken MacLeod
Novacon 37	2007	Quality Hotel, Bentley	Charles Stross
Novacon 38	2008	Quality Hotel, Bentley	Ian R MacLeod and Vernon Brown
Novacon 39	2009	Park Inn, Nottingham	Justina Robson
Novacon 40	2010	Park Inn, Nottingham	Iain M Banks
			Special Guest: Brian Aldiss
Novacon 41	2011	Park Inn, Nottingham	John Meaney
Novacon 42	2012	Park Inn, Nottingham	Jaine Fenn
Novacon 43	2013	Park Inn, Nottingham	Jo Walton
Novacon 44	2014	Park Inn, Nottingham	Kari Sperring
			Science Guest: John Gribbin
Novacon 45	2015	Park Inn, Nottingham	Anne and Stan Nicholls
Novacon 46	2016	Park Inn, Nottingham	Juliet McKenna
Novacon 47	2017	Park Inn, Nottingham	Adrian Tchaikovsky

NOVACON 48



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|----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 Chris Beckett | 32 Peter Wareham | 63 Al Johnston |
| 2 Adrian Tchaikovsky | 33 Gwen Funnell | 64 Marcus Rowland |
| 3 Juliet McKenna | 34 Brian Ameringen | 65 Tim Stannard |
| 4 Dave Hicks | 35 Emjay Ameringen | 66 Penny Hicks |
| 5 Tony Berry | 36 Caroline Mullan | 67 Christine Davidson |
| 6 Helena Bowles | 37 Charlotte Bulmer | 68 Michael Davidson |
| 7 Cat Coast | 38 Neil Summerfield | 69 Harry Payne |
| 8 Eve Harvey | 39 Simon Dearn | 70 Omega |
| 9 John Harvey | 40 Dave Tompkins | 71 Hal Payne |
| 10 Alice Lawson | 41 Martin Hoare | 72 Jodie Payne |
| 11 Steve Lawson | 42 Tim Kirk | 73 Morag O'Neill |
| 12 Douglas Spencer | 43 Margaret Austin | 74 Stan Nicholls |
| 13 Richard Standage | 44 Martin Easterbrook | 75 Anne Nicholls |
| 14 Gary Starr | 45 Harpal Singh | 76 Giulia de Cesare |
| 15 Vanessa May | 46 Arthur Cruttenden | 77 Steve Davies |
| 16 Luke Smith | 47 Chris Stocks | 78 Anthony Smith |
| 17 Rob Jackson | 48 Roger Robinson | 79 Wendy Smith |
| 18 Sally Rowse | 49 Roger Earnshaw | 80 Gerry Webb |
| 19 Laura Wheatly | 50 Jim Walker | 81 Mali Perera |
| 20 Barbara-Jane | 51 Niall Gordon | 82 Alan Webb |
| 21 Markus Thierstein | 52 Steve Rogerson | 83 Pauline Morgan |
| 22 Tim Broadribb | 53 Claire Brialey | 84 Chris Morgan |
| 23 MEG | 54 Mark Plummer | 85 Paul Dormer |
| 24 Dave Hardy | 55 Anne Woodford | 88 Melica Smith |
| 25 Julia Daly | 56 Alan Woodford | 89 Martin Smart |
| 26 James Odell | 57 Steve Dunn | 90 Michael Abbott |
| 27 Chris Bell | 58 Sue Edwards | 91 Anne Wilson |
| 28 Vernon Brown | 59 Steve Jones | 92 Hazel Ashworth |
| 29 Pat Brown | 60 Peter Mabey | 93 Serena Culfeather |
| 30 David Carlile | 61 Julian Heathcock | 94 John Wilson |
| 31 A C Baker | 62 Adrian Snowdon | 95 Alison Scott |

- | | | |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 96 Steven Cain | 132 Mike Scott | 168 Richard Giddings |
| 97 Greg Pickersgill | 133 Flick | 169 James Shields |
| 98 Catherine Pickersgill | 134 Sue Mason | 170 Fionna O'Sullivan |
| 99 John Jarrold | 135 Claire Gamble | 171 Esther MacCallum-Stewart |
| 100 John Bray | 136 Chris Baker | 172 Sandy Morrison |
| 101 Henrick Pålsson | 137 Gary Andrews | 173 Nigel Rowe |
| 102 Caroline Humes | 138 Peter Buck | 174 Jonathan Earl |
| 103 John Richards | 139 Alison Buck | 175 Stephen Burridge |
| 104 Maerryn Richards | 140 Eira Short | 176 Jane Killick |
| 105 Dave Lally | 141 Smuzz | 177 Simon Beresford |
| 106 Dave Langford | 142 Cuil Short | 178 Nigel Furlong |
| 107 George Ternent | 143 Clint Wastling | 179 Sabine Furlong |
| 108 Linda Ternent | 144 Ian Maughan | 180 Simon Furlong |
| 109 Alice Ternent | 145 Helen Gould | 181 Carol Goodwin |
| 110 Dominika Klimczak | 146 Mike Gould | 182 Kin-Ming Looi |
| 111 Tom Denton | 147 Peter Cohen | 183 Lisa Smith |
| 112 Vanda Denton | 148 Terence Johnson | 184 Chris Brooks |
| 113 John Dowd | 149 Andrew Bannister | 185 Phil Dyson |
| 114 Fran Dowd | 150 Kate Solomon | 186 David Breslin |
| 115 Pat McMurray | 151 Malcolm Davies | 187 Anders Holmström |
| 116 Julie McMurray | 152 Lennart Uhlin | |
| 117 Ron Gemmell | 153 Joanna Ray | |
| 118 Kirsti van Wessel | 154 Dominic Dulley | |
| 119 Stuart Jenkins | 155 Magdalen Standage-Bowles | |
| 120 Jilly Paddock | 156 Nigel Price | |
| 121 Dave Brzeski | 157 Catherine Price | |
| 122 Peter Wilkinson | 158 Jessica Price | |
| 123 Robert Hummerstone | 159 R. J. Shannon | |
| 124 Tony Rogers | 160 Robert Smith | |
| 125 Jackie Burns | 161 Jamie Scott | |
| 126 Tobes Valois | 162 William Armitage | |
| 127 Bridget Wilkinson | 163 Philip Cooper | |
| 128 Ian Whates | 164 Peter Harrow | |
| 129 Christina Lake | 165 Yvonne Rowse | |
| 130 Doug Bell | 166 Ian Sorensen | |
| 131 Colin Fine | 167 Noel Collyer | |



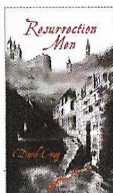
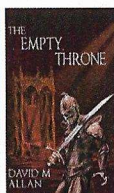
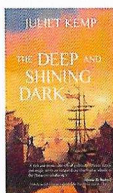
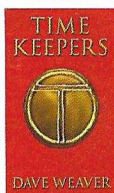
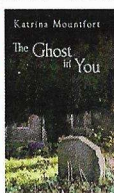
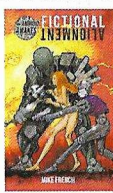
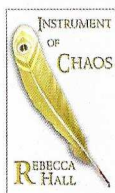


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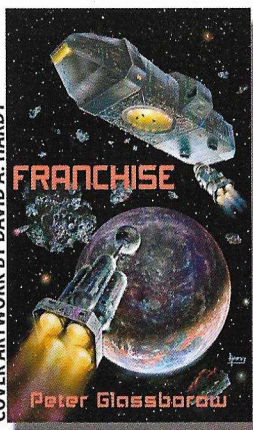
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THESE AND ALL THE REST OF OUR TITLES ARE AVAILABLE IN THE DEALER'S ROOM ALL WEEKEND

JOIN US FOR A DRINK TO CELEBRATE THE LAUNCH OF *FRANCHISE* IN THE DOWNSTAIRS BAR ON SUNDAY MORNING AT 11



NAVIGATING AN ASTEROID FIELD WAS JUST THE START OF THE HAZARDS...

When Pam Rakai convinces her husband Jack to write an article for the 'My Job' section of *The Modern Earth Woman's Weekly*, he starts to keep a record of their day to day life. A franchise holder from the Inter-Galactic Vending Machine Company, Jack's daily routine is not usually glamorous or exciting. He and Pam, along with their three children and sundry alien pets, travel to various spaceports and refuelling stations to service and restock the company's massive vending machines. In the process, they encounter aliens from many of the 739 species of intelligent

civilised life who make up the Conglomerate that Earth joined 114 years earlier.

Their next call is to the Afgfun Seven spaceport to deliver supplies that the company hope will defuse a miners' sit-in. It's a trip Jack is dreading as he's not confident that he can safely navigate their new spaceship through the asteroid field that surrounds the spaceport. The perilous journey is just the first of the unexpected hazards that lie in store as he and his family get caught up in a dangerously escalating situation. Jack and Pam must protect their family, keep their employer happy, deal with some very unsavoury characters (alien and human alike)—and remember to keep a log for the readers back home.

Written as Jack's personal log of what happened on Afgfun Seven, *Franchise* is the first in a series of logged events from the crew of the spaceship *Cornucopia*.