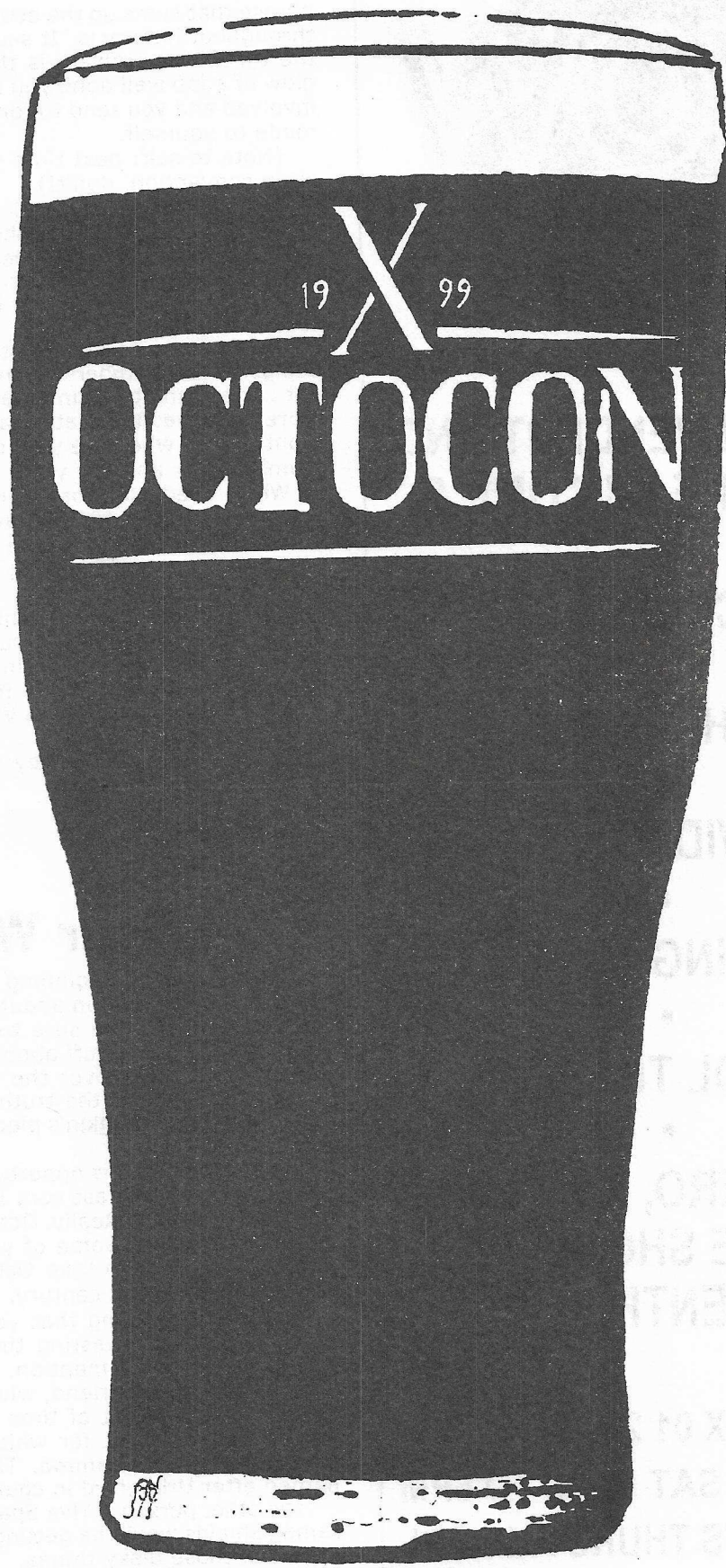


OCTOCON X **9-10 October 1999** **Programme Book**





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Welcome to Octocon

You'd think I'd have learnt by now. But then the one phrase that sums up the actions of heroes and villains throughout history is "It seemed like a good idea at the time." The problem is that while basking in the glow of a job well done you forget how much work is involved and you tend to forget all the promises you made to yourself.

(Note to self: next time you're thinking of chairing a convention, don't!)

Still, if I could turn back time to that moment in O'Brien's (the sandwich shop, not the pub) when Pádraig first suggested Octocon X I don't think I would have made any other decision. For all of the stress and work it has been worth it to bring the tenth Octocon to fruition.

The number ten seems to resonate with human beings. In fact numbers ending with zero tend to bring out certain emotions in us and the more zeroes the more emotive. Look at what's happening in a few months time when the year changes and the millennium isn't for another year.

We've tried therefore to make this Octocon worthy of the number 10. We have a great guest of honour in Robert Rankin and we are very grateful to our other guests for generously giving of their time to come here.

I would also like to thank all those who helped out in the organisation particularly Alix Landridge who welcomed the various committee members into her home on a regular basis for meetings and Fran Quigley of Corporate Audio Visual Services for sponsoring the video room.

So all I can say is enjoy yourselves and over to you Pádraig.

Dave Stewart

Another Welcome

Here we are at the beginning of another programme book. I get to drone on about the previous cons further on inside, so be sure to read that, and I also wrote some of the stuff about the guests. I've written a few of these over the years, and know a bit about embroidering the truth when you're short on facts, but Robert Rankin's piece on Tom Mathews will take some beating.

I'd like to take this opportunity to say that I have definitely done my last con. I keep saying this, but this time I mean it. Really. Octocon needs new blood, which means you. Some of you have got the ideas and the initiative to take Octocon striding forward into the twenty-first century, whenever that is.

Beyond suggesting that you should read this at home rather than wasting time on it at the con, I have two people to mention. Firstly Mick O'Connor, and old and valued friend, who has been spending a considerable amount of time working on the Octocon Archive, an URL for which can be found elsewhere in this programme. The URL is, of course, named after Urlingford in county Tipperary.

The other person is Ylva Spangberg, without whom James Shields would be getting this on paper instead of one of those disky things.

Enjoy the con.

Pádraig Ó Méalóid

The Committee: Who to Blame

David "Boss Nass" Stewart

When not plundering smaller nations and generally throwing his weight about, Dave usually engages himself in consultancy work. He has also written numerous articles for magazines such as *Business and Finance* and *The Engineer's Journal*.



A heavyweight of the Science Fiction world, Dave took over the ISFA. Having rid it of its natural resources, he now plans to sell off the streamlined and newly privatised SFI to the highest bidder.

Dave's next conquest is to convert the entire world to the Macintosh. A difficult task, but one he will no doubt attack with the same vigour he gives all his projects.

Pádraig "Watto" Ó Méalóid

It was once said of Pádraig that he could sell sand to a Hutt. However, as the shrunken head of the person who said this now adorns Pádraig's belt, it will never be said again.

Although he has worked in many areas of sales, he now concentrates on his twin loves of starship components and books. His Ships-R-Us chain spans the galaxy, and he runs the Flying Pig Bookshop, which from its humble beginnings of a single shop in Dublin, has grown to be found on every civilised planet in the galaxy (in fact it is still a single shop in Dublin, but thanks to the technological miracle of space time portals, there are entrances on every civilised world).



James "Sebulba" Bacon

Pod racing freak, James Bacon, spends most of his time behind the wheels of hypersonic vehicles. To pay for this expensive hobby, he owns a pan-galactic chain of clothing stores where he sells poor quality merchandise to unsuspecting interstellar travellers. Indeed, he often lures unwary space freighter owners into intergalactic shopping trips in search of new wares to peddle.



While on the surface, it looks like James has sold his soul to speed and money, this is not the case, as he is a devout member of the Church of the Holy Sprout. So great is his devotion to this ancient religion that he has risen to the level of high priest.

Despite this, James is not one to be crossed, and one can usually find him by following the trail of dead and wounded.

James "Viceroy" Shields

Although James has fallen from his former position as head of the Galactic Trade Federation, he is still very active in his many other enterprises. Now working for the computer department of an intergalactic banking corporation, he merely laughs when we suggest that he is siphoning fractions of pennies into a hidden bank account. Very worrying.

Back in the days of the Galactic Web, James carved out a small empire for himself, and now he plans to move it to the new Pan-Universe Net (PUN).

Rumours that James is planning to run Octocon next year are absolutely false. Absolutely. Unless they are true.



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Acknowledgements and Thanks

Alix Langridge
Brendan & Helen Ryder
Dave Lally
Ed Stafford
James Peart
Jonathan
Mark Lamki
Maura McHugh
Michael Carroll
Noreen Monahan
Robert Rankin
The Blackrock Market
Corporate Audio Visual Services
Coca Cola
The Flying Pig
IT Direct
Offworld
Wow Comics

Illustrations and Photographs

Cover: Jonathan
Page 7: Paul Sheridan
Various Photographs: Ed Stafford
Other Photographs: James Shields
(Except the ones we stole from various web sites)

Special Thanks To:

Coca Cola

Thanks to Coca Cola (Ireland) Ltd for providing refreshments for gophers during the weekend.

Special Thanks To:

C.A.V.S.

Corporate Audio Visual Services
Tel: 4781314 Fax: 4781316
Email: cavs@indigo.ie

Thanks to C.A.V.S. for providing the video projector in use this weekend.

The Silent Stars Go By

In Memory of James White

By Michael Carroll

Author's note: This is the hardest thing I've ever had to write. If I ramble a little, or have a tendency to lavish praise, please forgive me.

James White was born in Belfast in 1928. He was always a science fiction fan, and it wasn't long before he began to produce his own short stories. His first was "Assisted Passage" which was published in 1953 in *New Worlds*.

This was followed by a series of highly-regarded short stories set on Sector General, an orbiting hospital. As a fan recently put it, many authors had their protagonists battling against fierce, many-tentacled aliens: James White's hero Doctor Conway was the first to pause for a second, and wonder whether the alien perhaps had a headache.

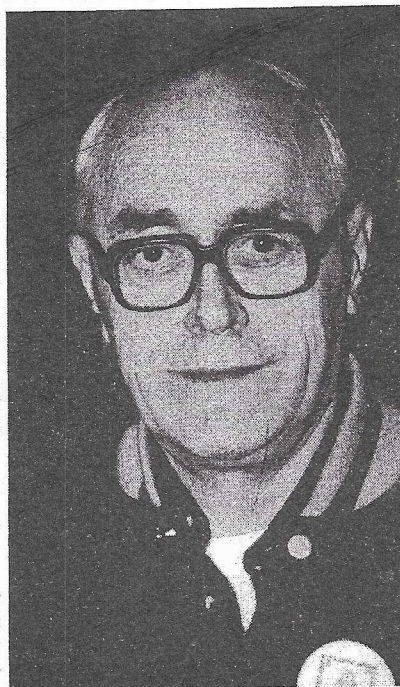
These short stories were linked and partially re-written to form the novel *Hospital Station*, first published in 1962 and still in print today.

He continued the theme with the books *Star Surgeon* (1962), *Major Operation* (1971), *Ambulance Ship* (1979), *Sector General* (1983), *Star Healer* (1985), *Code Blue - Emergency* (1987) and *The Genocidal Healer* (1992). Until *Star Healer*, the books were comprised of linked stories. The last book in the series being the recent *Mindchanger*.

Sector General stories also appear in other of James' collections, notably *The Aliens Among Us* (1969) and *Futures Past* (1982).

A frequent and popular convention guest, one of the things James joked about most was that he was continually being asked about the four-letter system he devised for his Sector General stories to help Doctor Conway and his colleagues to categorise the injured and ill aliens that arrived in a seemingly never-ending stream at Sector General. Occasionally, he would go into some detail as to the classification system (though it was always fun to see his reaction when he learned that some of the fans could remember the system better than he could), but sometimes when pressed for an answer he would say, in his humorous and gentle manner, "I made it up as I was going along."

But though he is best-known for the Sector General books, his many other works are of equal importance to the science fiction world. *The Silent Stars Go By* (1991) is an alternative-world tale that starts from the premise that the first European people to reach the American continent were Irish monks... It is, truly, a breath-taking work,



in both scope and execution, and I challenge any reader not to be impressed.

Another of my favourites is *The Watch Below*, written in 1966.

In this, James presents two seemingly disparate storylines and weaves them masterfully into one tale. The first begins in the second world war and deals with the survivors of a shipwreck. They are trapped in a large bubble of air and have to work out how they are going to survive. The second thread takes place in the future and concerns water-based aliens who have come to Earth searching for a new home... To reveal anything else would spoil what is certainly one of the James White's best novels.

The first time I met James White was during an art exhibition organised by the Irish Science Fiction Association... A bunch of us went out for something to eat, and though James didn't want to eat anything - he was diabetic and thus had to be very careful about his diet - he agreed to come along. So there we were in McDonald's in Grafton Street, eating our burgers and fries, while James told the most appalling jokes that had us almost in tears of laughter. One of those jokes I'll never forget: A man goes to the doctor, and says "Doctor, I'm having a little trouble." "What's that?" The doctor asks. "Well, I keep seeing spots before my eyes." And the doctor says, "I see. Well, it's not such a big deal. I wouldn't worry about it." And then the man says, "But the thing is, doctor, I think my eyes should be seeing them before I do."

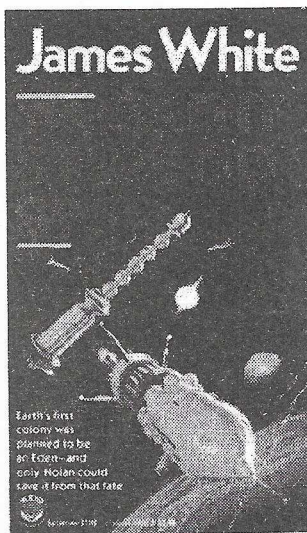
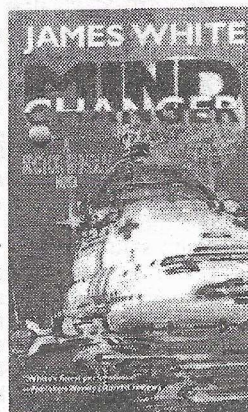
James White was a very welcome guest at past Octocons. In fact, he was Guest of Honour at Octocon 9 in 1998. He was also one of the original patrons of the Irish Science Fiction Association, and when the ISFA was rebuilt and reconstituted to form Science Fiction Ireland, James was invited to become the group's President. A better man could not have been chosen.

James White died on Monday 23rd of August, 1999.

He touched the lives of everyone who met him, and - through his works - many, many others. The one word that everyone seems to use when talking about James is "gentleman."

That he was. A great author, a good friend, and a very gentle man. With his passing, the universe seems a little colder, and a little more empty. But the future...

The future is still bright. It has been illuminated by James White.



Ten Years A Growing

The History of the Con that is Octocon



It's just over a week before Octocon ten, and I've just got a call from a researcher on the Marian Finucane Radio Show, wanting to do an interview with Robert Rankin on the day of the con. At last the big time! The media are finally paying attention. It seems to me we have come a long way. (For those of you who have no idea what I'm talking about: you must be a foreigner, so have no-one to blame but yourself.)

My memories of the first Octocon are varied. I sold a second-hand book to Terry Pratchett (Arthur C. Clarke's 2010, and yes, I realize how sad and pathetic it makes me that I still remember). Katherine Kurtz showed us how to make

a paper plane the way her father taught her. Rumour had it that one fan got her to sign it, and still treasures it. I met a number of people I was to see regularly - at least once a year - from then on. I met Dave Lally:

"Who's that guy with the straw hat?"

"That's Dave Lally."

"So why is he wearing the hat?"

"Because he's a big fan of the Prisoner."

"What's the Prisoner?"

And so on. My ignorance of what was going on around me was profound. Somebody told me they were going to a panel on Pern fandom. I had no idea what they were talking about then, and, nine years later, I'm still a little hazy. I met Diane Duane and Peter Morwood for the first time. Although at that time I had never heard of either of them, I got to know them very well over the years.

I had also never heard of Geoff Ryman, the guest of honour the following year, despite the fact that by now I was on the committee. I remember him as a tall - very tall - Canadian man who was very likeable. But they all were, or almost all. Orson Scott Card I took to immediately in the brief time I had to talk to him as he performed his duties as GoH for Octocon 3.

Then came 1993, and I found myself as co-chair of the con. We had the delightful and elegant Storm Constantine as our guest of

honour. Storm became a regular visitor and a friend. With Storm came quite an entourage of leather-clad Goth folk, which was something of a change from the usual, somewhat style-challenged, attire of the attendees. Also attending that year for the first time was Billy Stirling, a Scotsman living in London, and the semi-legendary Robert Rankin, a man of wealth, erudition and occasional sartorial sense. Billy has been back every year, as part of a growing group of British attendees, which also includes the multiply pierced Stef and the renowned Jersey sot Toby Valois. Toby's fanzine "Strange Delusions of a Drunken Fuckwit" is wonderful stuff, and highly recommended if you can get your hands on one.

Robert Holdstock was next as GoH, followed by his good friend Kim Newman. Robert enjoyed himself so much that he kept insisting on trying to pay his membership for the following year. I had to tell him that we would be honoured to have him as a guest, but that there was no way on Earth we were going to charge him money for it.

Kim stood in at very short notice for Mary Gentle, who was laid low by the flu, and became one of the most popular and regular of our guests.

Due to illness on my own part I got to see very little of 1996's Octocon and it's GoH, Brian Stableford, who I had met a few years previously in the late and much missed Alchemist's Head Bookshop. The following year we strayed from The Royal Marine Hotel for the first time, all the way into the centre of Dublin to Dublin Castle, once head-quarters of the British forces, but occupied for one week-end in October 1997 by Eurocon, which took over from Octocon that year. Harry Harrison, occasional Dubliner and the world's most famous Esperanto speaker, was GoH.

It was not until last year, 1998, that Octocon had its first Irish guest of honour. James White had been coming to Octocon from the beginning, and I'm glad to have been at least partially responsible in his being chosen as GoH. We'll all miss him.

And so to this year. Robert Rankin has been a good friend of mine for a number of years, but you'll get to meet him yourself, so you'll see for yourself.

The future of Octocon remains to be seen, even though James Shields has been heard muttering something. He obviously needs his head examined, but who doesn't?

Pádraig Ó Méalóid



Your Programme Book Editor asked me to put my thoughts down as we approach a decade of Octocons.

As far as I remember (but I'm open to correction), only three people have attended all ten Irish National SF Cons - myself and the *doyen(!)* and *doyenne(!)* of Irish Fandom themselves: Brendan and Helen Ryder.

Indeed the birth of the idea for an Annual National Con for Ireland (along the lines of Britain's EasterCon) had emerged from the actions of the three of us (along

with others of course). Helen and Brendan (long before the arrival of their little cherub Jenny) had been regular attendees at EasterCon and had discussed the idea with me and with others during one of those events.

The Ryders got so involved in Intersection (WorldCon 1990, in The Hague) that their enthusiasm for an equivalent (but obviously much smaller) Irish version emerged. I offered as much support as possible (and indeed did for that first Octocon, and have done each subsequent year, a Video programme).

The first Octocon was lucky in getting Terry Pratchett as its first Guest of Honour (GoH). This was a great start. I vividly remember arriving at the Ryder's house (fresh off the ferry) in the early hours and being told to start filling attendee packages!

That first Octocon got a lot of local publicity. Irish television had Brendan Ryder on its "Jo Maxi" show to talk about SF in general and Irish SF in particular. *Octocon X's Video programme will be showing this and a lot of other memorable Octocon moments.*

Subsequent Irish Cons have had a wide range of GoHs. Often they enjoyed themselves so much that they came back as an ordinary attendee in subsequent years. Of course the clever Con Committee would immediately put them on some panel or other!

I particularly remember some of the costumes at the various Masquerades (Fancy Dress Parades) over the years (and especially one excellent Cyborg one).

But there were also trials and tribulations that occurred with some Octocons. There was the year that the RTE Guide (Ireland's biggest readership magazine) gave us a nice piece but described the Con as a major "Star Trek" event.

As a result, Octocon that year was literally swamped with youngsters arriving on the door. The entire programme (including the Video) had to be re-jigged to suit the "Enterprise" loving attendees. Whilst the rearranged schedules got the Con plenty of money that year, it caused some resentment from the less-media (and especially less-Trek) orientated attendees who felt we had become a

media Con. It was always clear that a National SF Con should be a broad church, covering all aspects of fandom, not just media.

Anyway, Octocon began to settle into their regular pattern and overseas fans began to hear the "vibes" about the "good craic" and began to turn up in increasing numbers year-on-year. Two odd aspects were noticed by non-Irish fans however: firstly the lack of any (official) Friday events - Octocon strictly began on the Saturday morning and was (more or less) a two-day event; and the lack (in the earlier years) of a Conzine - with the usual news/gossip and programme changes.

Word got round that despite no Friday event fans *did* meet (as they still do) on the Friday evening in the Con Hotel bar. And secondly, the arrival of the daily Conzine in later years (ably done by James Steele & Co) has contributed to Octocon's "normality" feel.

In 1994, the idea of expanding Octocon from just a National Con into a once-off EuroCon emerged and I went to that year's EuroCon (held-like its initials, in Timisoara Romania) and a pre-bid was made and accepted.

The following year (1995) at the combined UK WorldCon/EuroCon in Glasgow, Euro-Octocon's formal bid was made and accepted for 1997. And we held it (as an exception to the usual Con venue) in the Dublin Castle Conference centre.

For all of Octocon's life (except as above), our venue has been the wonderful Royal Marine Hotel overlooking the comings and goings the Stena Line ferries to Holyhead.

Thanks to advantageous tax laws, Octocon (and Irish SF generally) has had the continued support of luminaries such as Harry (Stainless Steel Rat) Harrison, Anne (Pern) McCaffrey and Diane (Trek-scripts) Duane - not forgetting the marvellous (and now sadly missed) James (Sector General) White.

It is interesting to note that prior to Octocon, there had only been the occasional Irish-based Con (eg NiCon in Belfast) and upon their demise, Octocon came along. Now with many of this Con's organisers suffering "burn-out", it might be appropriate to allow the (newly) re-emerged Queens University Belfast SF Society's own Mecon (on next March) to take over the mantle for a while. And then when the QLTB boys slightly tire, a new, rested SFI contingent in Dublin can re-start.

Of course it may be that there is still life in the old Octocon girl yet and so here's to another 10 years!

Dave Lally

URL Box:

For lots of information, photographs and gossip from all ten Octocons, visit Chip Livingstone's Octocon Archive (courtesy of Laser Cafe) at:
<http://www.irelands-web.ie/~octoconarchive>

A Word from Some of Octocon's Previous Chairs

We Never Dreamed Of What We Had Started...



What was I doing ten years ago? Panicking, probably. It seems so long ago, is so long ago that it is hard to remember individual things to focus on. Octocon was a thing I fell into, because I had just finished a gruelling post-grad course and was finding time weighing heavily on my hands. The ISFA was two years post re-birth (see Brendan's article for the story in FULL detail) and we were enjoying the monthly meetings in the Vintage Pub on Camden Street (great venue, lousy layout) and talk had been turning towards an Irish SF convention. One guy, Peter McCanney, an artist of some talent, was supposed to be in the midst of organising it so Bren suggested that I offer to help in some minor capacity.

"Hi, Peter - how's the convention going and can I help?"

"Great - we've thought of a name - Octocon. We were thinking of asking Terry Pratchett to be our guest of honour."

"Fine! What's the venue - committee - costs - dates?"

"Well, we've thought of a name...."

The problem with running a convention is that few people realise how much background work is needed to get the ball rolling, and Peter was a great man for great visions but had no experience of being on a convention committee. After a few phone calls we started to pull in people, most notably two fans who had had con committee experience. Phil Nanson and Kari were two British fans who were at that time living in Dublin and dived in with some background knowledge. Brendan and I had attended many conventions, which helped, but Bren was at the time on the ISFA committee and had decided not to cross over onto the convention. Friends were leaned on and we added ISFA notables Robert Elliott, Noreen Monahan and Mary McKay, Sharon O'Doherty and Ronan Fitzgerald. This was going to be their first convention, both running and attending. We were a committee and needed a chairperson. Guess who drew the short straw.

Within a few days of talking to Peter we had a committee, a hotel (The Royal Marine) and the dates. Shortly afterwards we also had a guest, Terry Pratchett. I must say that Terry was the ideal guest for a first convention in that he was extremely personable and friendly, immediately identifiable as a writer and entertaining as a speaker. He was probably also extremely anxious before the convention as a number of us had attended the Dutch Worldcon that summer and had TOLD him that this was our first convention. He told me after Octocon that he had enjoyed it. I'm just glad he survived it (I'm just glad I survived it) and it can't have been too bad as Irish fandom has welcomed him back on a number of occasions to these shores. There were a number of other authors and artists who supported us too and who have continued to support us through the years and I'd like to add my thanks to them here. Obviously I must mention James White, a true gentle-man and loved by both fans and writers. A particularly vivid recollection is of a conversation with Katherine Kurtz, who was thrilled to realise that Jim was attending the convention. Her excitement and pleasure was a reminder that the writers were mostly fans first, and they have their favourite authors too.

The first Octocon lends itself to a number of memories, which make me both smile and cringe. I was dubbed 'Chairbeing', a title I will proudly hold and will never relinquish. Chairpersons come and go, chairbeings go on forever. I remember Phil as our treasurer was anxious that we would hit the 125 attendance figure that we had fixed as our break even point. He SMILED from 10am on the morning of the convention as we hit the mark with ease and went on to admit a total of 250 attendees. I remember the presence of an RTE film crew, who were too invasive (we learnt for future reference) but who produced some great footage later. I remember the Radio Play, which over the course of the conventions roped in both guests and fans including Geoff Ryman and Patrick Walshe, who has since

become a playwright. I remember the Costume Disco on the Saturday night where the committee led by example by wearing a stunning range of costumes, and I remember having difficulty persuading Terry that we couldn't give ALL the prizes to the committee. Oh, Ronan, do you remember your Rocky Horror Costume, and the look on that woman's face when she saw you in hotel reception! I remember the committee meal with the guest in the Japanese restaurant in Blackrock - the number grew larger, and the staff grew more anxious as they debated whether to throw us out well after closing time. And Peter Morwood does a fantastic imitation of an Army helicopter. Finally, I remember the sheer joy, elation, exhaustion and exuberance at the closing ceremony and the 'never agains' and 'we'll do THIS next year.'

Yes, we did it next year.

Well, we had started the ball rolling and couldn't give up now, could we? Octocon 2 was the start of the expansion of the convention into what nearly became the whole hotel (sans ballroom). Bobby McLaughlin dived in on hotel, Padraig O Mealoid with the dealers. The guest of honour was to be Geoff Ryman and the guest list had expanded dramatically. Colin Greenland came from the UK and George R.R. Martin wrote to say that he would be in Ireland at the same time - could he come to the convention too? COULD HE!

Octocon 2 was the convention of stresses and surprises. Stresses came when a postal strike upset the letters to the participants and the programme had to be arranged at short notice. Colin Greenland reeled back in shock when the new programme had him performing his socks off in six items on the Saturday, many back to back! A delightful article in the RTE GUIDE by Linda Kavanagh highlighted the fact that Octocon would be running a few programme items celebrating the STAR TREK 25th Anniversary - this would be enough to turn us into a Star Trek convention in the eyes of the readers, and would lead to some confrontations during the convention and a complete flip of the video programme. This would require two showings of every episode to allow the conventioners a chance to see the sequential programming of the 'Klingon Saga', the hot, just-shown-on American-TV-for-the-first-time final episode of which we had received into our hot sticky hands on the Friday night from Canadian attendee Denis Caswell, but caused screams of anguish when we realised that the TV which was supposed to be NTSC-compatible wouldn't translate the signals from the NTSC video recorder. Paul Sheridan rushed to the rescue with a VERY quick tape conversion, just in time for the showing on the Sunday afternoon. I think it says it all when my abiding memory of surviving O2 was Kim Campbell sitting with me on the central stairwell, arms around my shoulder, reassuring me that the convention was OVER, very successfully and with no lasting trauma. All I knew was that next year it was going to be someone else's baby (evil grin). I was only going to be a committee member...

The next few years saw me on the O3 committee, then involved with the two TIMEWARPs, the second one whilst I was heavily pregnant. Jenny was born in 1995 and I thought my con career was over. Dave Stewart had different ideas.

Octocon 9 was mooted as a one-day convention, as a stopgap to allow the committee who had so admirably run the 1997 Eurocon to take a well-deserved break. We couldn't allow Octocon to die, so shouldn't we do something. I'll tell you this right now - there were only two committee members last year, everyone else (Bren and Margaret Moran) claimed they were only helping. And of those two committee members, I will state right now that Dave Stewart should get the kudos. That man really knows how to work a committee. This Chairbeing bows to Dave and his tireless efforts to pull such a great day together.

I will thank the Great Maker all my days that were we allowed the privilege of greeting James and Peggy White as our Guests of Honour last year. At the time we thought he was the only possible choice and hindsight, that wonderful vision, shows how right we were. If anyone has a video of the RTE programme which was made that weekend I would love to talk to you. The whole atmosphere of the day was happy and untroubled in many respects. Yes, we ran around, yes of course there were a few upsets but on the whole we did what we set out to do which is why I am writing this.

Happy 10th birthday, Octocon, and may there be many more.

Helen Ryder, Chairbeing Octocon 90-91

(This article is written from a failing memory and as a fond recollection. It is not meant to be comprehensive in detail so I ask pardon for omissions and extend my warmest thanks to those who made the memories possible. You know who you are.)

Noreen's Story



Octocon '89 was my first ever convention and I was on the committee. So by the time Octocon 3 came along I had been to an Eastercon and a Star Trek convention, as well as running Octocon 2, and it was proposed that I was a good candidate for Chairperson. Due to a surplus of cash from Octocon 2 we decided to try for an American Guest of Honour. The monthly committee meetings quickly turned into weekly meetings as our Guest of Honour was finally confirmed as Orson Scott Card. As the date neared we found ourselves busy with packing and badge

making parties and the convention was on final countdown.

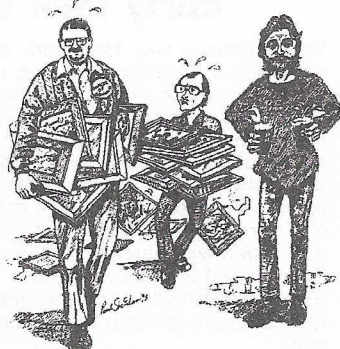
As I was the chairperson and had a car I was dispatched to the airport to collect Orson and his wife. Luckily I had Robert Elliott with me as he had some idea what Orson looked like. Orson was an extremely charming and nice man but one look at his 6ft+ frame, his wife and their trolley of luggage I knew my Nissan Micra would not handle the journey. We had to get a taxi.

From then the convention took a life of its own. After two stiff gin and tonics the opening ceremony went okay, except for the heckler who said that they could not see my 5ft+ figure behind the podium. Then it went into the normal run of panels, videos, dealers' room, art show, etc. Due to unforeseen circumstances the art show did not get set up until nearly lunchtime on the Saturday and the person who helped Paul Sheridian set up was our GOH earning him the title of Gopher of Honour in Paul's cartoon. It was also discovered that it was the 25th anniversary of Anne McCaffrey's first Dragon story, so we presented her with specially commissioned Dragon and Rider sculpture.

I think everyone enjoyed Octocon 3. I can't remember any major disasters. Orson was a great guest very obliging and approachable. Attendance was smaller than Octocon 2, so we broke even, but we won the best convention of 1992 in the ISFA awards later that year. I am glad the Octocon is in its 10th year. Long may it continue.

Noreen Monahan, Chairperson Octocon 92

ORSON SCOTT CARD
GOPHER OF HONOUR '92



Anything But Trek!

The third Octocon was my first time as chair - co-chair actually, with Noreen Monahan. Although I'd been on the committee of the two previous I decided I wanted the glory attached to the position of chair and the ability to tell everyone else what to do. It didn't quite work out that way though...

We decided to book all the function space in the hotel, have a transatlantic Guest of Honour (Samuel Delany being one option, but Intersection, the 1995 Worldcon got him instead) and extend the programme to a three-day con. Yes, we were masochists.

We had a great Guest of Honour in Orson Scott Card, at the height of his popularity. One of the perks of being committee is getting to go out on meals with the GOH, and the meal with Orson and his charming wife remains one of the highlights for me. The ballroom, large though it looked when we booked it seemed hanger-like in immensity before we started filling it, and we worried about it having little or no atmosphere. But by having the art show and the dealers room there it always appeared busy and went down well with the fans. Though numbers were well down on the previous years madness, (we didn't advertise any Star Trek programme!) there were still around 450 fans, enough to break even. We had been worried that TrinCon, in February, might have affected attendance but in fact it gave us the opportunity to publicise the con and only impinged slightly on the overseas fan contingent. I vaguely recollect problems with programming letters not being posted - Anne McCaffrey ringing a few nights before the con and wondering what she's supposed to be doing is not the sort of thing you need to hear, especially when it transpires that no-one knows! But professionals that they are, all our guests were their usual entertaining selves.

I thoroughly enjoyed my time as Chair, and no, I wouldn't do it again!

Brendan Ryder, Co-chair Octocon 92

Sure, I'll be on the Committee...



It had been the year that the great con had come upon us all. The Ryders had organised, created and manifested what most fans would have considered fan nirvana, ending in a thump when Brendan Ryder had made his definitive "There will be no Octocon next year" speech. Octocon had been left all alone in the night. Ireland's one and only kick ass con was no more and among the many, I had been left thinking "Well, that's it for SF in Ireland, it was fun while it lasted". And then, out of the blue came the phone call. Pádraig O'M inno-cently saying "Will we do it?"

Curiously, not so much as a vague doubt entered my mind. Of course I would. And there started my slippery slope towards madness.

These were the days before Internet, easy living and Ice Cream Mars bars. You achieved things by way of argument in person, drinking, and more argument. Weekly meetings every week for... moooooonntthhssssssssss.

For those not in the know, running an Octocon requires time. Not just "give it a Saturday afternoon or two," but serious time. Your life after work becomes Octocon, and eventually work itself is pushed severely into a corner so that the con survives.

It is the child that never stops wanting a feed, the car that always needs petrol, the sculpture that can never be finished.

Running Octo, for me, was the best of times AND the worst of times. You put yourself into a major pressure environment for something you know is going to afford you no return of investment. This is offset by the incredible buzz achieved from watching fans reach that unique sense of vitality (as only we can) at the events that you have organised, and saying to yourself "I made this!"

However, above all else, my enduring memory of the tough times was (and is) the framework which was the other members of the committee. Far from a well oiled team, at times we were more like a dysfunctional family, But the profound wisdom that came from the joint hive was pretty well always second to none.

Octo was an experience. Oh, and one other thing, for those people who wave passed remarks like "oh, those committee members lord it over everyone and spending all the takings from the door on booze for themselves" I challenge you to run an Octocon... and be afraid... be very afraid!

James Peart, Co-chair Octocon 93-94

Four of Seven



It's all Pádraig O'Méalóid's fault. As he is fond of reminding people, it was he who stood up at an ISFA meeting in January 1993, bemoaning the fact there was no one to take up the discarded mantle left after the end of the third Octocon. He cajoled, wheedled, and urged people to meet the following week to start working on another Octocon. Being new to Dublin, and having a soft spot for Octocon (and of course, not knowing any better), I turned up at that first meeting.

It is very hard to summarise the experiences of four years in a couple of paragraphs. I have been lucky to work with great people on the various committees. I consider myself even more fortunate that I was still on speaking terms with each member of each committee when it was all over. It is a difficult task, organising a convention, and it will always put a strain upon your working relationships with the other people on your committee, especially when things go wrong (as they always do). I think part of the success of those four years of working on Octocon can be attributed to the hard work, good humour and thick skin of all the people who helped out with the convention.

Each Guest of Honour I had the pleasure of meeting - Storm Constantine, Robert Holdstock, Kim Newman and Brian Stableford - were wonderful people with which to work. They were unfailingly good-willed, laid back and approachable - all essential characteristics for a Guest of Honour at an Octocon convention. The many other guests, especially those who were resident in Ireland and attended every year without question, were the backbone of the convention. Of all the numerous people who contributed unstinting work while I was on the Octocon committee, I feel obliged to mention Dave Lally. Each year he made sacrifices to come to the convention and provide us with a first rate video room - always with a theme, always carefully considered, and always different. There were the Dealers and advertisers who supported the convention each year, upon whom we depended so much to keep Octocon in the black. Finally, and most importantly, there were the fans who attended and gave Octocon the character which made it the kind of convention people enjoy returning to year after year. I have been to all ten Octocons, and they have all been different - though I think I enjoy them the most attending as a fan.

Maura McHugh, Chair-thingy Octocon 95-96

Irish Fandom - A Potted History

By Brendan Ryder

Irish fandom has been around a lot longer than most people might think. It deserves far more than I can give it here - the ideal would be a book, along the lines of the classic 'A Wealth of Fable' by Harry Warner, which details American fandom of the 1950s. However, a personal view of the local scene (I've been involved since 1976 when the ISFA was originally founded) will hopefully provide some interesting reading. All of those mentioned below deserve much more than a name check - if I ever do start my Irish fan history website, or indeed publish a print version, I promise to give all the juicy details.

The ISFA - 1976-84

My first contact with fandom was when I heard a radio programme about the World Science Fiction Writers Conference that was to be held in the Burlington in Dublin, in September 1976. I persuaded my father to drive me to it, hoping to get in! In the lobby was a small display by the Irish Science Fiction Association, manned by some of the original committee - P.J. Goode, David Lane, Paddy O'Connell and others. I met Harry Harrison, Gordon Dickson and Theodore Sturgeon there. The new association benefitted from their involvement with that conference and the subsequent meetings were lively and entertaining. Prominent in the Association that time was amateur film-maker David Lane and he organised the radio play of Bradbury's 'The Veldt' which was performed by ISFA members, including yours truly. I was more involved with the ISFA when the next World SF Writers Conference was held in the country, a couple of years later. There was a large display of books and sf paraphernalia by the ISFA, with membership forms and details in a vacant shop in the Dun Laoghaire Shopping centre, while the conference took place in what has become the Irish sf hotel, the Royal Marine.

The inaugural meeting of the ISFA was held in Buswell's Hotel in May 1976. Anne McCaffrey kindly offered to have ISFA members out to her house in Loughlinstown one night a month and this tradition lasted until Anne moved to the wilds of Wicklow. Anne was always a supporter of Irish fandom - she, Harry Harrison, the late James White and Harlan Ellison were patrons at various times. Most subsequent meetings took place, surprise, surprise, in pubs of which the two most noteworthy were The Falcon Inn (now The Bleeding Horse) on Camden Street, and the Parliament Inn on Parliament Street. By the time of the Parliament Inn (1978-82) there was an excellent library run by P.J. Goode which was extensively used by the members. The room was free of charge courtesy of some quick thinking by the then chairman, John McCarthy, an ex-US Navy officer who disarmed a knife-wielding maniac in the pub single-handedly and prevented a very ugly incident.

The 1979 Worldcon was held in Brighton and an Irish contingent made up of John McCarthy, Paddy O'Connell, Fiona O'Connor, P.J. Goode, myself and others went (by boat - air travel was for the rich in those days!). Seacon '79 was my first convention and made a huge impression on me, with the variety of nationalities present, the sheer number of authors, and a book room that dwarfed my vivid imagination - what a way to start in conventions! Those who went to the con came back re-energised, with great plans for the Association, and some became regular con-goers.

By the time of the Parliament Inn days I had been elected to the committee. Others who served on the committee in the early days were Richard Gallagher, Tony Cafolla, David Norman, Jacob Struben, Brian Redmond, Rita Meehan, Pearse Mooney, Eoin Bairead, Hugo Duffy - prominent members of the time were David Lass, Arthur O'Duffy, Fred and Anita Woods, Bobby MacLaughlin, John Kenny, David Browne, Sharon O'Doherty, Maria Schiro, Criostan Drew, Bridget Anthony and Fiona O'Connor. Meetings were held on the last Sunday of the month, and though not too many sf writers visited our shores at the time we had some very supportive locals in the form of Anne McCaffrey, Harry Harrison and of course Jim and Peggy White. Jim and Peggy travelled down at the drop of a hat, and it wasn't unusual to see all three writers chatting at the one

meeting. Other pros who attended usually came across after encouragement by Harry or Anne and included Joe and Gaye Haldeman. Irish author Nicholas Emmett was another regular attendee.

There was a Writers and Artists Workshop, meeting semi-regularly. Publications were a monthly newsletter and a twice yearly magazine, Stargate. Editors of the Newsletter included Eoin Bairead, myself, and Hugo Duffy and of the magazine John McCarthy, Rita Meehan and Pearse Mooney. Production values and size varied on both publications; one of the most innovative of Stargate's editors was Pearse Mooney who introduced unusual layouts and varied typefaces, but with the limited technology available (we're talking typewriters here, including one borrowed (along with its typist) from my office!). The magazine also published the Aisling Gheal short story award winner - this competition attracted over 30 stories annually, whittled down by a committee and the remainder judged by the patrons of the Association. The winners included John McCarthy and Graham Andrews.

Early ISFA Conventions

Though there was talk from as early as 1977 of an Irish sf convention (initially proposed by Harry Harrison) it took a few years for one to get off the ground. The first of the two 1980s conventions was in The Clarence Hotel on Dublin's Quays in March 1984 and was a hugely successful one day affair. The main hall seated about 150 and in addition to the various talks and panels had a dealers area. There was a small video room nearby and attendance was estimated at well over 200. Anne McCaffrey, James White and Robert Anton Wilson were guests, and a talk was given on Tolkien by his friend, Dr. Pfeifer, who had studied under C.S. Lewis. The con was great but unfortunately the crowds overwhelmed the registration desk and half of the people got in free, causing the event to just about break even.

The following year was another one day event with Bob Shaw and Harry Harrison as guests (though I seem to remember Anne McCaffrey turning up as well). It was another enjoyable con with even more people turning up. All the function space in the hotel was hired so there wasn't the crush of the previous year but once again the registration system wasn't up to the job and many people got in free. With Bob Shaw's airfare and hotel bill to pay this was a disaster and it did seriously affect the ISFA's finances. It contributed in no small way to its demise, with rumours of bills outstanding to the Clarence and others.

Until the mid-1980s science fiction was difficult to buy in Ireland, one of the reasons that the ISFA library was such an important and well-used facility. So any trip to Dublin city centre had to include a visit to the Alchemist's Head in East Essex Street, Ireland's only sf bookshop. Originally set up by Penni Campbell in 1976 it served as a meeting place for many of the sf community, a supporter of the fledgling association and a place for the media to go to get some informed opinion on the genre. Gloria Hamilton and Valerie took over the running of the shop, but after the arrival of serious competition from Forbidden Planet in the late 1980s, a better selection of stock from general bookshops and an ill-fated move to bigger premises in Dame Street, the Alchemist's Head could not compete and eventually closed.

The Alchemist's Head was a bridge between the two versions of the ISFA, just about surviving to see the Association's re-birth in 1988-89. At an Eastercon in 1988 Bobby MacLaughlin, Helen Ryder and I talked of the need for some sort of group, along the lines of the old association, to take advantage of the popularity of the genre. Within a month of that chance meeting in Liverpool Bobby held an evening to discuss the setting up of the (new) Association, a few posters were put up around the city and the first proper monthly meeting took place. Attendees that evening in Searson's in Ballsbridge included P.J. Goode,

John Kenny, Declan Brennan, Bobby MacLaughlin and Helen and I from the original ISFA, and quite a few new faces. Another meeting was organised for the following month, talk started of a newsletter, then a magazine, a convention, Worldcon in Dublin (I'm serious!) - all from a position of no organised fandom just a few short months previous.

Support for the Association again came from the Irish or Irish based writers and artists: Anne McCaffrey, Harry Harrison, James White, Diane Duane, Peter Morwood, Katherine Kurtz, Scott MacMillan, Morgan Llywellyn, Ian McDonald, Michael Scott, Jim Fitzpatrick, Steve Dillon, Garth Ennis - quite a few had moved here or made contact since the old association folded.

In the ten years since then Irish fandom reached heights never before achieved, becoming very visible on the international scene through Octocon, the magazines FTL and Albedo One, and fans travelling throughout Britain and the US to major cons on a regular basis, usually laden down with flyers for whatever event happened to be coming up. And there was a lot - the ISFA Art Show, held two consecutive years in Bewley's of Grafton Street, an annual convention which attracted a minimum of 200 fans, monthly meetings of both the Association (at one time with over 100 people attending regularly) and a very active Writers and Artists Workshop meeting twice a month at one stage. At one stage in the early 1990s I was involved with most of the events and realised that I hadn't eaten dinner at home with Helen for a couple of weeks because of all the meetings we were going to, either ISFA or Octocon. It was a fabulous time, the best I've experienced in sf fandom, even with all the disagreements and rivalry.

The incredibly hard-working committees of this time included many who are still active in some capacity - Robert Elliott, Paul Sheridan, Michael Carroll, Padraig O'Mealoid, Leonia Mooney, Theresa O'Connor, Ronan Fitzgerald, Carol Edmonds and myself. Editors of the newsletter and magazine included Robert Elliott, Michael Carroll, David Egan, John Kenny, Ceri Alexander Bennett, Michael Cullen and myself. Space unfortunately precludes me from going into more detail here. Mention should also be made of the writers and artists here, in no particular order: Pete Queally, Johnny Rothwell, Peter McCanney (who came up with the name Octocon) are the exceptional artists and of the many excellent writers produced through the recent incarnation of the ISFA and its associated groups Michael Carroll, Dave Murphy, Bob Neilson, John Kenny, Nigel Quinlan and Dermot Ryan stand out.

One of the most influential people at this time was Dave McKane. Dave, a graphic designer, had heard of us through one of the artshows and offered to help us out with production of FTL. He eventually ended up on the committee, and laid out the Newsletter as well. When his first issue (issue 9 of the magazine) was unveiled at a reception to launch the second Artshow, SfeX, people were stunned. Fully printed, two colour cover, beautifully laid out and 500 copies of it! All this and a great Art Show launched at a wine reception sponsored by Bewley's, Bob Shaw and Robert Rankin as guests - the Association looked like it was going places. Following the show we were contacted by a major bookstore chain to run courses in sf for their staff, the ISFA seriously talked of getting an office and employees, and if the energy levels and enthusiasm of the committee lasted the possibilities seemed endless. When Ceri Alexander Bennett joined the committee and it transpired she worked in the printing trade a beautiful monthly Newsletter, produced by herself and Paul Sheridan, appeared for about a year, before going back to the photocopied version after she left. Harry Harrison provided the funds and sculptor Peter Langebrook the sculpture for the revamped Aisling Gheal short fiction award, which ran for three years, being won by Brendan Farrell, Michael Carroll and Martin Brady.

But of course it couldn't last, and membership dwindled from over 250 at one point to less than 50. There are a number of reasons for this, but the parallels with the original Association are obvious. There appears to be a limited life-span to any sf group, related to the size of the population of the country and available committee members. The ISFA was wound up last year, to be replaced by Science Fiction Ireland, with David Stewart at the helm. Memberships are available at their table in the fan room... Join!

Other Irish groups and events

This article is of course written from my point of view and cannot be comprehensive in such a short space. But I'd like to mention that there has been an active fandom in Northern Ireland since about 1950, with James White and Walt Willis being the earliest of the well-known fans there. A regular visitor to

us down south was Joe Nolan who usually travelled with James White for the Sunday meetings. There has been a strong Queen's University fandom for a number of years, but somebody like Tommy Ferguson or Eugene Doherty would be much better qualified to write the history of that. But to say that Walt Willis was Fan Guest of Honour at the Florida Worldcon in 1992 should give you some idea of the stature of the man in world fandom.

Support for the various events came from Irish living abroad: David Stewart (Belgium), David Lally (London) and Graham Andrews (Belgium) all regularly dropped by for updates and gossip on the scene here, and supplied reviews, money and/or chocolates!

Within Dublin there have been many other groups, most prominent being Dublin University Science Fiction Society (Trinity) which has claims to be the biggest in the country. Holding regular video nights and some author visits, they also ran two conventions, the TrinCons, with varying degrees of success.

Star Trek/media groups also ran conventions, the biggest of which were the two Timewarps, the second of which raised £15,000 for charity. Original committee members David and Nicola McConnell, Noreen Monahan and Helen and I were joined by Francis Cave, James Clarke, Robert Kavanagh, Jean Keegan and Margaret Moran for the second. Over 1200 fans attended each, seeing George Takei at the first and Majel Barrett (after Leonard Nimoy cancelled) at the second. Visicon was another media con, bringing Alexander Siddig and Nana Visitor to Dublin City University. Babylon 5 fans were catered for by the Jumpgate conventions, one day events organised by Gerard Keating and others which brought a lot of the stars from the series across. Other conventions included the generally poorly organised Irecons which were mainly Trek related. The same organisation coordinated various media groups throughout the country. The most successful Star Trek group in the country was Starbase Ireland, of whom Tony Carter was president. It produced regular magazines and held quarterly meetings, usually in Dublin, and social evenings once a month, also in Dublin. It was eventually disbanded after the committee who had run it for most of its existence decided to move on to other events.

Albedo One, a predominantly fiction magazine, was set up when the ISFA stopped producing FTL. Since then the editorial and production team of Roelof Goudriaan, John Kenny, Dave Murphy, Bob Neilson and myself have produced twenty issues and received four European SF Society awards and honourable mentions in various end of year anthologies. The same team also had a radio show, The Infinity Effect, running on Anna Livia FM for about a year, produced by Stephen Walker, an sf artist. Black Rose is another Irish fiction magazine, from David Dunning, which has seen a couple of issues to date. David also has another magazine planned for later this year.

James Bacon and James Shields have worked on Sproutlore, the Robert Rankin fanclub, over the past few years, building it into a fan group worthy of the man who was first introduced to Irish fandom at the SfeX art show in 1992, where he was interviewed for FTL. PFJ was a humorous fanzine from Michael Carroll, Michael Cullen, Robert Elliott and assorted others. Maura McHugh, Paul Sheridan and others produced Ogham, a fanzine dealing with fandom and articles about science fiction; there have been many single shot comics and magazines, a lot of them media based. In the early 1980s I was involved with a fanzine produced by myself, Helen Ryder and two others from Britain, called Apathy, later changed to General Quarters, which was mainly media based. James Shields also produces an amusing con newsletter, but the most notorious must be Cortex from the Belfast lot! I produce Aphelion, an update sheet for bookshops and libraries, detailing the current sf scene in Ireland. The most recent publication I'm aware of is from James Peart and is an excellent electronic news fanzine on the local scene. And speaking of the Net, there are excellent web sites for Albedo One (designed primarily by Roelof Goudriaan), Octocon history (Mick O'Connor), Sproutlore (James Shields) and most of the groups and events above.

Fandom has a history of 23 years in Dublin alone and the above can only just scratch the surface of what has happened. Even after namechecking over one hundred people I know there's a few glaring omissions, but I'm already at twice the word length James asked me for so my sincere apologies and I'll remedy it all on the website real soon now.

URL Box:

Brendan Ryder is part of the collective which produces Albedo One, an Irish magazine dedicated to the publication of speculative fiction. Visit it at:
<http://homepages.iol.ie/~boba>

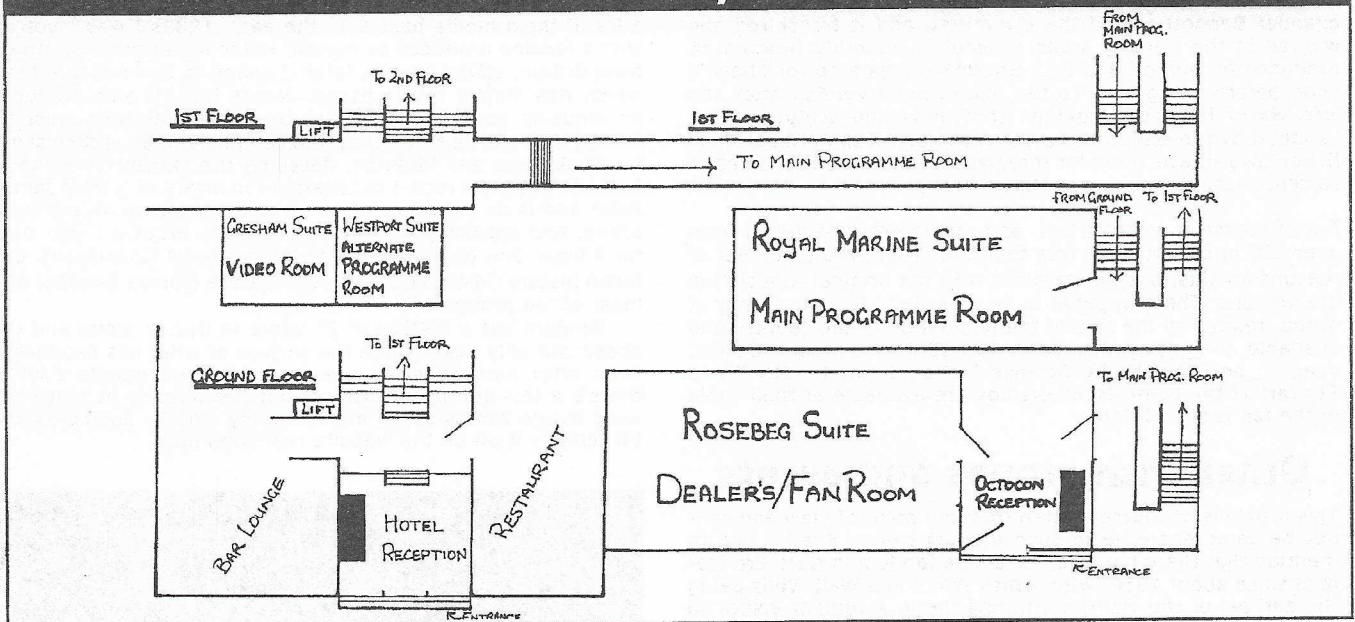
Saturday

Time	Main Programme	Alternative Programme
10am	Opening Ceremony	Closed
10.15am	Room 101	
11am		Fanzines
11.30am	Unsung Heroes: SF Authors You've	
12 noon	Never Heard Of	Small Press hour
12.30pm	An Roriocht, a tradional kind of fantasy?	
1pm	Buffy the new face of horror	How to get Published, a useful workshop
2pm	GOH Interview: Michael Carroll talks to Robert Rankin	Closed
3pm	Why were they banned?	Rocketry - Practical Workshop
4pm	UFOs Exist: a Debate	SFI AGM/Open session
5pm	James White Tribute	www.deathtobooks.com
6pm	Closed	
6.30pm	Pub Quiz	
8pm	Costume party	
9pm	Disco proper	

Sunday

Time	Main Programme	Alternative Programme
10am	Sunday Worship with Rev Jim	Closed
11am	Jar Jar Binks - Just Another Wanker like Wesley Crusher?	The Hangover workshop
12 noon	Fans from Hell, Horror stories of truth.	Fight Like a Jedi - Teach You I Will
1pm	The Best of the Century: You Decide	Jedi Tournament
2pm	Who was Brian O'Nolan?	Bob's Bead and Crystal Workshop
3pm	Books to Screen (and back again)	Tarot Workshop
4pm	Seanachí: A Few Tall Tales	Goth is Dead

Hotel Layout



Convention Highlights

Room 101

Okay, we stole the idea from the BBC, but they stole it from George Orwell. In his novel, *1984*, Room 101 was where all the undesirables were sent to be tortured by their worst fears. We asked our guests to pick objects, people, books, films, series, and even concepts which most deserve being dumped in Room 101, where they won't bother us any more.

Unsung Heroes: SF Authors You've Never Heard Of

Join Rory Lennon, who owns the largest collection of SF books in the country, Kim Newman, Eugene Byrne both extremely well read authors and Gerry Doyle who is a grumpy bollix, as they talk about books that you may not even have heard of, but which they would heartily recommend that you read. Obviously audience participation is required to broaden everyone's horizon.

Buffy: the new face of horror?

Horror is meant to scare you. That way you know you are alive because you can feel your heart racing. Buffy has blood rushing all right, but to the wrong places. A panel of real horror writers discusses current opinion of horror and whether the likes of Buffy are the future for the genre.

Why were they banned? SF Then and Now

In olden days a glimpse of stocking was looked on as something shocking, or so it would seem...

Rocketry: A Practical Workshop

Have you got an asbestos suit on you cause with these two nuts you'll probably need one. Rory is the scientific mind on this one and James is the looper who is going to fire his Rockets, some of which are home made. The practicalities of the hobby will be gone through, and then the panel and all attending will adjourn to an open space to try and reach for the skies.

www.deathbooks.com

Is the web the end to books? Booksellers would tell you it isn't, but with books readily available on think-pads and the like, and with authors such as Geoff Ryman publishing on the net first how long can the traditional book have left? People adjust easily to change, where are eight tracks, 8mm cine, Hardback books, C+ format books now? Will books be added to that obsolete list? An expert panel will discuss the future.

Costume Party

This is a fun event that has been running for ten years. Costumes Don't have to be elaborate and original but simple ideas have won before. If you are reading this on Saturday you still have time to organize something. There is a multitude of shops in Dun Laoghaire, and if you are stuck we have a local committee member on hand to help and advise. Contestants must register before the event at the registration desk and a form must be filled out. Latest registration is ten to eight at the disco.

Fans from Hell: Horror Stories of Truth.

'And there he was at my door sticking his willy through the letter box and asking me to sign it in permanent marker.' There are a lot of strange people out there who would kill for an authors address, some of these authors have experienced such lunatics going to strange ends to meet them, expect to laugh a lot at this one as the real horror stories unfold.

Who was Brian O'Nolan?

Well, who is he? Our panel try to come to terms with this fantastic Irish comic genius, better known to many as Flann O'Brian. It is perhaps apt that we are only a short walk from Dalkey where he set some of his stories. *The Third Policeman* could even be considered Science Fiction and he definitely came up with some odd but brilliant Ideas. If you have read some of Brian's work there is no doubt that you will find that there is a lot more out there. And if you haven't, don't let this opportunity to be introduced to one of the country's finest authors go amiss.

Seanachí: A Few Tall Tales

We have a few wags get up and tell some stories, that they heard from a friend of a friend. Expect to be entertained by these stories and try to separate fact from fiction, as no doubt there will be no telling what is truth and what is a ruse.

The Hangover Workshop

Join Rev. Jim in his post service hair of the dog session, where all methods of cure, revolting and pleasant will be offered to all those present.

Fight Like a Jedi

Eoin "Gur-Gur Bonks" Meehan, Jedi Master and martial arts expert, shows us how to do it.

Tarot Workshop

Believe it or not, this remains to be confirmed.

His Holiness Robert Rankin

An appreciation by Michael Carroll

In his early days in Victorian London, Robert Rankin performed street magic alongside such greats as Bernard the Man-Cabbage and The Amazing Fabuloso of Penge. Robert's act often grabbed the attention of hundreds – sometimes even *dozens* – of passers-by. His most popular trick was most probably "sawing a plank in half", a feat of such incredible prestidigitation that no magician since has dared to perform it in public.

Blessed with the power to heal the sick using only a hospital, and the power to return sight to the blind, Robert Rankin's reputation grew and grew. He gathered about himself a band of followers, men and women who gladly abandoned their professions and former lives to spread the word about him. They shouted his name from the rooftops, they circulated his name on Ye Internette, they posted posters in the post office, and by the turn of the century almost everyone in London had heard of this man who, they said, could perform miracles.

Unfortunately, at the peak of his career Robert Rankin was cruelly struck down by a runaway offal cart – the first of many signs of his apotheosis, according to followers of The First Church of Rankin – and wasn't heard from again until his reincarnation in 1949 – the first of many signs of his deification, according to the followers of The Second Church of Rankin.

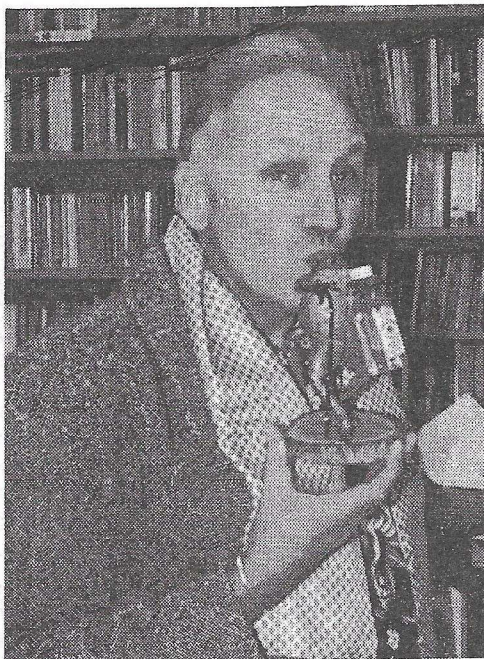
The Book of Jeffrey, Chapters 12-14, states: "There shall be a sacrifice of the fatted calf and thigh, and, lo, verily even, shall come again a man who will work miracles, and if within a week you can find the same miracles cheaper anywhere else, he will refund double the difference."

In accordance with the prophesy, Honest Bob's Miracle Warehouse was established in 1978, and offered solutions to many world problems, including all seven of the armageddon scenarios (plague, famine, ecological disaster, comet smashing into earth, punk rock, alien invasion, single European currency). It should have signalled the start of a new Aquarian Age, but sadly after a mere three weeks the business was forced to close due to the number of complaints lodged

with the advertising standards association. The building, it turned out, was not a warehouse but a converted storage shed.

Unperturbed by this, Robert Rankin formed the Brentford Poets and Paramilitary Association. This is where he learned that his word could be spread more widespread if the word was written down, along with some other words, and published in hefty religious tracts, or "books."

Robert Rankin's first book was, is, and ever shall be *The Antipope*. It was quickly followed by two more, then a



little pause, and then a fourth. These books, plus a more recent one, have become known in many circles as The Blessed Trilogy – the miracle of five books in three. The books tell of the exploits of Jim Pooley and John O'mally, two reluctant heroes who continually save the world from such diverse enemies as a resurrected Pope, an alien invasion fleet, and Hugo Rune. They are aided in their struggle by their old friend Professor Slocombe, a man of great mystery and power, who, according to James Bacon, the leader of the Fifth Church of Robert Rankin, will eventually be seen to be none other than Mister Rankin himself.

Robert's next series of books was the *Armageddon* trilogy, which deal with the struggle of humanity against a meddling alien race. The hero of these books is one Rex Mundi, aided by Elvis Presley, who in turn is aided by a sapient, time-travelling sprout called Barry. These books are probably the most complex that Mister Rankin has written to date, and on re-reading they offer up much in the

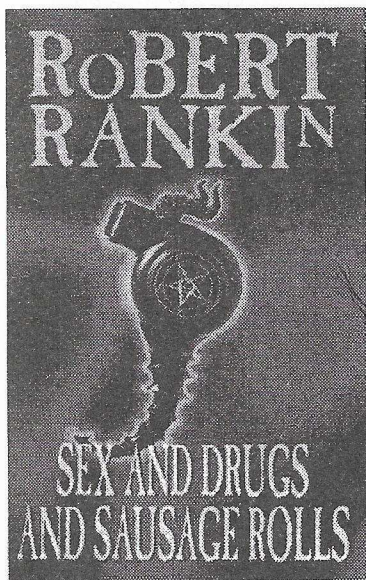
way of fresh nuggets for the observant reader: They're not so much a trilogy as an investment.

Subsequent books include the Huge Rune trilogy, in which the young heroes Cornelius and Tuppe are faced with finding that ancient master of the mystical arts, Hugo Rune, and his book *The Book of Ultimate Truths*. Indeed, so popular was this series that fans of Robert Rankin tend to find themselves on their own quest for *The Book of Ultimate Truths*. Thus, art becomes life... Was it prediction, or mere chance? Both of the followers of the Twelfth Church of Robert Rankin believe it to be the former. "Most Holy – that's Robert, by the way – knows what has gone before and what is to come," said the Church's founder James Bacon.

There are also a number of stand-alone novels, such as *A Dog Called Demolition* and *The Garden of Uneathly Delights*. Like most of his other novels, both of them present a complex parable, which the layman (you, in other words) must interpret as best as possible. Interestingly, the followers of the Zeroth Church of Robert Rankin believe that the true path is not the reading and understanding of the books, but the purchasing of the books. The Zeroth Church is the most recent of the many churches, their name chosen by their leader James Bacon in the belief that they'd be listed first in the phone book. They subsequently discovered that the entries in the phone book are listed alphabetically, not numerically, so they're last instead.

Robert Rankin has also written about his own life, though many believe those books to be allegorical, or, in their terminology, "fabricated from lies and half-truths." However, among his followers those criticism of those books is regarded as tantamount to blasphemy, punishable by sneering.

The belief of The Fort Church of Robert Rankin that he



is the Davine Savier is particularly strong, as expressed in their mannyphesto, written by the Chruch's leader, James Bacon*: "Roburt is probly the best ever savier that weve ever had. When officer Joans reads the book's to me I go all cam and sadated."

For the less fanatical, there is another group of people who frequently gather to pay homage to the great man. Calling themselves "SproutLore", they publish a fan magazine four times a year and provide news about forthcoming events. It is with this group of fine bodies that I, your humble servant, am affiliated. It has been predicted that one day every person on Earth will be a member of a Robert Rankin Appreciation Society, so I strongly urge you all to join the One True Society, SproutLore, before you are indoctrinated into any of the other, lesser, groups.

For those of you who are still unsure, I urge you to read - and re-read - as many of the Great One's books as you can find. Please bear in mind that each copy of his books can only be properly read once: as soon as the words have been absorbed into your brain, the books lose their power. For this reason, you should only buy new copies, and to re-read them, you must buy additional copies.

In the unlikely event that you ever get to meet Mister Rankin, the correct way to greet him is as follows: Respectfully grasp the left side of your collar in your right hand, bow your head slightly in supplication, and mutter the sacred words, "He's right in front of me, all units close in."

You should then proffer at least three shiny new Robert Rankin books for signing. It is *not* necessary to have three different books, as long as they are all new. Note: you may be asked by one of his Apostles to show proof of purchase.

Once this is done, you should close the ceremony by making a token sacrifice of a twenty-pound note, an ancient tradition whose origin has long since been lost, but without which you could very well bring bad luck upon yourself.

You should also be wary of the many Robert Rankin impersonators who attempt to cash in on Most Holy's success. Most of them can be easily spotted, for they are not tall and dashing and handsome, and do not carry about them an air of divinity, but there are others who are mas-



ters of disguise. These charlatans should be approached with caution. Remember, only the true Robert Rankin knows the answer to this question: "Where do you get your ideas from?" Should you suspect the Robert Rankin you meet to be a fake, simply ask the question. If the answer fails to satisfy you, then that Robert Rankin is most likely false. You should then remove your clothes and stand naked in front of him, as a sign of protest, but only if you are female.

**Note: perhaps I should make it clear at this point that "James Bacon" is the honorary title bestowed upon the leaders of all Robert Rankin societies.*

URL Box:
Sproutlore, The Now Official Robert Rankin Fan Club can be found at:
<http://www.lostcarpark.com/sproutlore>

A Little Bit About Our Guests

Eugene Byrne

Eugene is a freelance journalist and Deputy Editor of *Venue*, Bristol's what's on magazine. He works there part time and spends the rest of his time thinking about how he ought to write more. His new Science Fiction novel, *ThiGMOO*, was published

in the UK this year. Eugene has been writing short stories with Kim Newman for several years and they recently completed a cycle set in a parallel 20th century in which the United States goes communist in 1917 and

in which Russia remains Tsarist/Capitalist. These stories form a complete novel when taken together, and are available as *Back in the USSA*.

Kim and Eugene are now working on a cycle of novels set in a Britain which is conquered by the Germans in 1940. The first novel in the cycle, *The Matter of Britain*, is now finished and looking for a publisher. It is planned to be a series of 5 books, each one set in a different decade, and will follow the fortunes of various characters through the years of Nazi domination to what is bound to be a happy, and at the same time rather sad, ending.

Maura McHugh

URL Box:

The site for Kim's and Eugene's collaborations is:
<http://www.angelfire.com/ak2/newmanbyrne/>



Graham Joyce

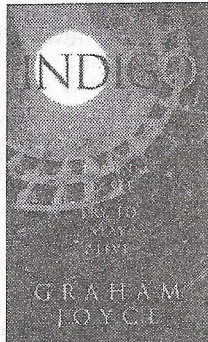
Graham Joyce has been to Octocon twice before, once in 1995, and again in 1997, for the much-discussed Octocon/EuroCon in Dublin Castle. He had intended also coming for 1996 and 1998, but chose instead to stay at home for the births of his two children, which roughly coincided with the two cons on those years. Ask about his children at your peril, as he will instantly turn into 'Doting Father at Full Gush'-mode. Incidentally, Michael Marshall Smith had to refuse to attend this year due to an imminent birth, in what has now become known as 'The Joyce Manoeuvre'.

Graham takes his writing very seriously, and will go to great pains to research his subjects. For example, he spent some time in Thailand earlier this year as part of his preparatory work on a forthcoming novel. It's a tough job, but somebody's got to do it.

What about the books? I hear you cry. Well, so far there are seven, which are in order *Dreamside*, *Dark Sister*, *House of Lost Dreams*, *Requiem*, *Toothfairy*, *Stormwatcher* and *Indigo*. And, of course, one forthcoming set in Thailand, which should be exciting. Graham has won the British Fantasy Award for at least half of these, and so he should, because it's damn fine stuff. Read them.

In closing, it only remains for me to tell you that Graham's middle name is William, and that his wife, the wonderful Sue, is a solicitor. Hands up who thinks Sue is a good name for a solicitor!

Pádraig Ó Méalóid

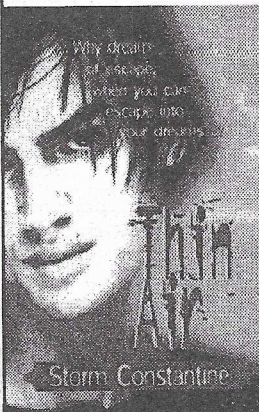


Storm Constantine

Storm might find it amusing to know that the first piece authored by her I ever read was a short story in *GM Magazine*. I liked it a great deal, and noticed the author with the interesting-sounding name had published three books. That was how I came to read Storm's Wraeththu trilogy: *The Enchantments of Flesh and Spirit*, *The Bewitchments of Love and Hate*, *The Fulfilments of Fate and Desire*. In the Wraeththu world, humanity had transformed into a hermaphrodite race, and the books explored the intricacies of love, desire, hate and ecstasy. Questions about sexual identity, sexuality and sensuality, along with an examination of the deeper motives of the human heart, became a touchstone to which Storm returned in many of her later works. Her vision is usually laced with Gothic structures, and occult dealings, with a basis in mythology that delves back to the some of our race's oldest civilisations.

Lately Storm finished off her Grigori trilogy and begun work on a fantasy series called *The Magravandian Chronicles*, of which *Sea Dragon Heir* is the first. This year she also published a collection of short stories called *The Oracle Lips* which features an introduction by Michael Moorcock. On top of this a novella, called *The Thorn Boy*, was released. More recently a short story based on the Wraeththu work, called *Paragenesis*, was purchased for James O'Barr's new Crow anthology called *The Crow: Shattered Lives and Broken Dreams*. As if she was not busy enough with all of these projects, Storm is venturing again into the non-fiction scene with the publication later this year of *Bast and Sekhmet: Eyes of Ra*, a book she co-authored with Eloise Coquio. The book is an examination of ancient Egyptian cat deities.

Maura McHugh



Harry Harrison



The author of – to date – almost sixty novels and over a hundred short stories, Harry Harrison is one of the world's most popular and best-loved science fiction writers.

He was drafted in 1943, on his eighteenth birthday, and was trained as a power-operated turret and computing gunsight specialist. He left the army in 1946, having been promoted to sergeant.

An accomplished artist, he

began his SF career as an illustrator for magazines. His first story was "Rock Diver" (1951), written when a serious bout of illness prevented him from drawing. Damon Knight bought the story for his magazine *Worlds Beyond*.

In 1957 he published the novelette that was to become the basis for his most enduring series, "The Stainless Steel Rat". In his own words: "I had practised writing narrative hooks, just the hooks without stories to follow... I had written one that intrigued me so much that I had to write the story to find out what the hook meant." (from *Hell's Cartographers: Some Personal Histories of Science Fiction Writers*, edited by Brian W. Aldiss and Harry Harrison, 1975).

John Campbell bought the story for *Astounding*. Inspired by the sale, Harry sent Campbell an outline for a novel that was to become *Deathworld*. The novel was serialised in *Analog* and published as a paperback in 1960. Harry then began work on expanding "The Stainless Steel Rat" and its sequel "The Misplaced Battleship" into a novel.

Though he is well known for his humorous work – the Rat books and his anti-war novel *Bill, the Galactic Hero* (1965) in particular – he has also written some very serious work, notably *Make Room! Make Room!* (1966) a novel that deals with the problem of overpopulation in the year 1999... Reading the book today, it is disturbing how many of his predictions have proven to be accurate.

Another major work is the *West of Eden* trilogy, the first book of which was published in 1984. The trilogy takes the premise that the dinosaurs never died out, and that they evolved into intelligent beings, the Yilane. In the North American continent, however, humans also evolved. The two cultures clash when the Yilane are forced by an on-coming ice-age to seek new land on which to build their cities.

More recently, Harry has published the first book of a new trilogy, *Stars and Stripes Forever!* (1998), which looks at an alternative-world where a vicious war between Britain and the Americas has far-reaching consequences.

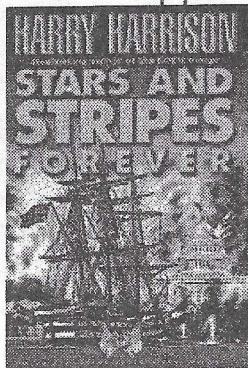
His forthcoming novels include *The Stainless Steel Rat Joins the Circus* and *Stars and Stripes in Peril*.

As a writer he is second to none, as a convention guest he is always popular and entertaining, and as a person he is warm, intelligent and humorous. Unfortunately, I cannot even begin to give the man his due in the few words allotted: I could write a book about him (indeed, some authors already have: see *Harry Harrison* by Leon Stover for a detailed look at Harry and his works).

Michael Carroll

URL Box:

The New Harry Harrison web site will be launched at the convention.



Tom Mathews

Tom Mathews, brother of the less famous Bernard and the best forgotten Stanley, first sprang to fame in the 1960's, as the dynamic banjo player in the popular soul trio Ike and Tom and Tina Turner.

A recurrent ham-string/Arab strap/fondue set injury forced him to drop out of music and begin a successful career as an artist, poet, novelist, snake charmer, Kwik Fit Fitter and Voodoo High Priestess.

The inventor of the lapel, handbag, suitcase, mouse-trap, digital clock, cheese grater, Internet, three-times winner of the Eurovision Song Contest and coiner of the ever popular catch-phrase "Now that's what I call a Theodolite, Mrs Wilkins!", Tom still sports the famous moustache that was named after him and sustains himself on a diet of strepsils and cornflower.

Raconteur and wit, Tom is infamous for his impersonations of kitchen utensils, as he once said to me, "Don't start me off on pot-holing lad, or we'll never get out of this lift alive".

Tom was the original model for R2D2, but was unable to appear in the film as it conflicted with his contractual obligations as the mascot of the all-Irish ladies Hurling team.

Tom Mathews is 39.

James Shields made me do this!

Robert Rankin



Robert Holdstock

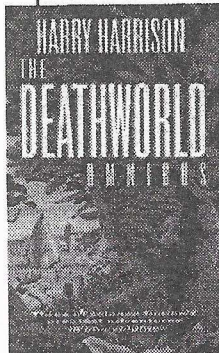
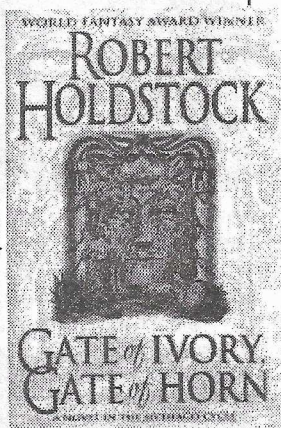


Most publicity photographs of Rob show him in a woolly jumper, and nearly always refer to him as a "Man of Kent". I've heard Rob complain about this fact, perhaps worrying that his image is somewhat outdated and he's not being taken seriously as an imaginative and thoughtful writer. The problem is that Rob looks great in a woolly jumper, and he loves tramping around fields, so the photographs and the byline do him some justice. Of course, as with most snappy lines, they hardly reflect the depth and complexity of his fiction.

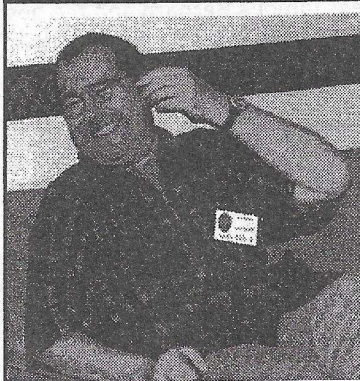
Before coming to prominence for his novel, *Mythago Wood*, Rob had been a prolific professional author of various fictions for many years. He wrote some heroic fantasy under the name of Chris Carlsen and Richard Kirk (with Angus Wells), but my personal favourite is his occult Night Hunter series using the nom de plume of Robert Faulcon. Another excellent novel, written later under his own name, is *The Fetch* – a wonderful examination of the father-son dynamic.

Mythago Wood comes from the novella of the same name, and deservedly won the World Fantasy award in 1984. The sequel, *Lavondyss*, continues the theme of the inter-weaving of myth and reality, and examining the primal archetypes which lie dormant within, but affect us on a daily basis. The Mythago cycle has continued to develop and stretch the themes first established, with the collection *The Bone Forest*, and novels like *The Hollowing*, *Merlin's Wood* and most recently, *Gate of Ivory*, *Gate of Horn*. Most importantly, Rob is considered a displaced Irishman because of his love of Guinness, his friendly and warm character, and his ability to argue about anything with extreme conviction. He is also rather fond of Crispy Duck.

Maura McHugh



Ian McDonald



Ian McDonald was born in Manchester but has spent most of his life in Belfast. He is a regular and very popular guest at Mecon, willing to talk for his supper (or beer, anyway). As a writer, his unusual and inventive style has earned him a great deal of acclaim and success in both Science Fiction and Fantasy.

He was nominated for the John W. Campbell award for best newcomer of the year in 1985. His first novel "Desolation Road" was nominated for the Arthur C. Clarke Award in 1989, and in 1992 he won the Philip K. Dick award for best original paperback of the year for his novel "King of Morning, Queen of Day".

More recently, Ian has published "Sacrifice of Fools", which featured aliens arriving in Northern Ireland and lampooned one or two (in)famous local personalities... and "Kirinya", a sequel to the acclaimed "Chaga". He has also cowritten the pilot episode of a prospective new version of the 1970s TV series "Doomwatch", which recently appeared on Irish TV and should be on Channel 5 this autumn.

He is currently working on his first mainstream novel, "Stupid Season". He says:

"It takes place over Drumcree week 1998, and involves five interlinked stories, which include a hunt for the legendary porno version of Snow White and Seven Dwarfs, a dog that dies of a drugs overdose which leads to a robbery of a Post-Office, a married couple who plan to eliminate their neighbours' children because they're driving them mental, and a comics artist who is very

slowly, very surely turning into his own superhero, with disastrous consequences."

Mark Lamki



Kim Newman

Where do I start to detail the work of Kim Newman? Do I begin with his non-fiction and academic work, which he began in the



early 1980s, and which continues as part of his daily life as a journalist and film critic? Or perhaps I should start with his short stories and novellas, some of which are collected into three anthologies (one co-authored with Eugene Byrne), with another two collections planned, which leaves plenty of stories to spare? What about his novels? Should I start with the eight written by Jack Yeovil, the Jack Daniels-drinking alter-ego, who produced such delights as *Drachenfels*, *Demon Download* and *Orgy of the Blood Parasites*? Perhaps I should really start with the nine novels which are published under his own name, including his three *Anno Dracula* novels, and his latest

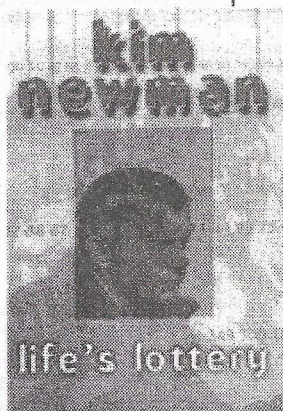
choose-your-own-adventure book, *Life's Lottery*? Maybe I should not mention the serious texts he has written about the history and theory of Film, with emphasis on the Horror genre? What about the books he has edited and co-edited?

It is an almost impossible task to give a snapshot of Kim's work in 300 words. He is a prolific, but innovative writer, whose professionalism demands that he turn his work in on time. His ability to remember the most minute details about films, and the horror field in general, means that most people don't like to play Trivial Pursuit with him, or appear on the opponent's team in a quiz show. Kim is a snappy dresser, though you always get the feeling he should be carrying a cane to finish off his outfit; he does own one but it doesn't travel well. He likes Chinese food - especially a good Crispy Duck.

Maura McHugh

URL Box:

The Official Kim Newman site, run by Octocon's own Maura McHugh is at: <http://indigo.ie/~imago/newman.html>



Geoff Ryman



Although Canadian by birth, Geoff Ryman, has lived most of his life in England. He is probably best known for fantasy novels such as *The Warrior who Carried Life*, *The Unconquered Country*, *The Child Garden* and *Was*.

More recently, he has been exploring new ground with the Internet novel 253. Rather than telling a narrative story, the novel has a chapter dedicated to each passenger on a London Underground train. As there are 253 people on the train (well, 252 people and one pigeon), the chapters have to be limited in length - to exactly 253 words each. At the end of the line (at Elephant and Castle to be precise) the train will crash, so the reader is left hoping the characters they like will get off before then. The final sections of the novel describe the crash.

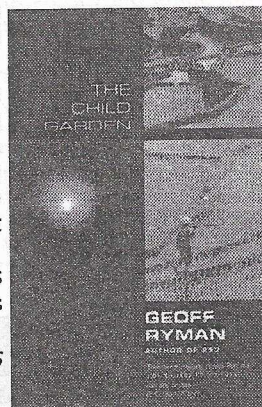
It's a very interesting novel because it explores space instead of time, and in the Internet version there are links between characters that share some commonality. The surprising thing about Geoff's writing how he manages to involve you in each character in so few words. The paperback version, published last year, was the first Internet-to-print novel. It won the Philip K. Dick award, an award given to the best novel first published in paperback.

Geoff works for the British government, and has for the past couple of years he has spent most of his time helping government departments to coordinate their internet presence.

James Shields

URL Box:

To read Geoff's novel, 253, tune your browser to: <http://www.ryman-novel.com>



Michael Scott

In addition to being a recognised authority on Irish history, folklore and mythology,

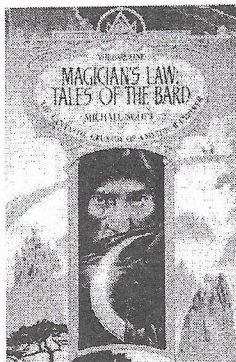


Michael Scott is also one of the country's most prolific and successful authors. His work spans many genres, including horror, fantasy, science fiction, romance, mystery and historical (in fact, there are few genres in which he has not yet published: Michael, we are still waiting for your Western novels...). He is a former chairman of the Irish Writers' Union and one of the world's foremost experts on electronic publishing rights.

Michael Scott's first novels were the *Tales of the Bard* trilogy, dealing with the life and adventures of Paedur, a Bard who travels from place to place in mythological Ireland, telling stories (some adapted from genuine myths, others completely conjured from Mister Scott's lucid imagination) and unwittingly becoming the catalyst in a struggle between the ancient deities of Ireland. The trilogy is due to be reprinted next year as a special-edition single volume.

He is also the author of three definitive collections of Irish folklore: *Irish Folk and Fairy Tales*, *Irish Myths and Legends* and *Irish Ghosts and Hauntings*. His horror novels include *Banshee*, *Image*, *Reflection*, *Imp* and *The Hallows*. Under the name "Anna Dillon" he has published three best-selling historical novels (collectors should note: there is a fairly rare hardcover edition of *Image* published under his Anna Dillon pseudonym).

He has also written many books for young adult readers, notably the highly-praised *October Moon* and its sequel *Wolf Moon*, the *De Danann* tales, featuring a young Paedur the Bard, the virtual-reality adventure *Gemini Game* and *House of the Dead*. With collaborator Morgan Llywelyn he has written the two-volume *Arcana* series, *Silverhand* and *Silverlight*, and the best-selling young adult novel *19 Railway Street*.



Michael Scott has been a popular and entertaining guest, speaker and auctioneer at previous Octocons. He is also an authority on antiquarian books, and a collector of esoteric paraphernalia, Fortean and urban legends.

Michael Scott's forthcoming works include a book on the Etruscans and *The Book of Celtic Wisdom*.

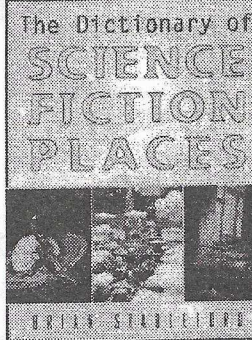
Michael Carroll



Brian Stableford



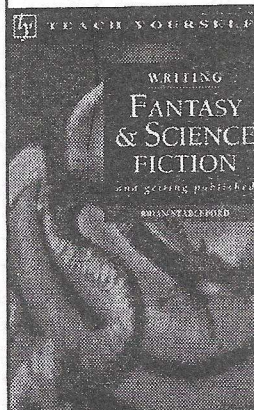
I remember Brian attending a panel at Octocon in 1996 called "real-life horror stories". He told a simple story of a rather unpleasant experience he had lived through which had the entire room squirming. Throughout his quiet delivery, his deadpan humour and sharp observances gave me a greater appreciation for his ability to spin a story.



Brian is one of those people who bridges the gap between the academic and the author. Not only has he written novels in every conceivable field in the Science Fiction, Fantasy and Horror genres since the 1970s, he has also lectured in sociology and creative writing while producing a large body of fiction and non-fiction. His space-faring adventures novels, particularly the Daedalus series, seemed symptomatic of the expansive, effusive 1970s, and he turned more to non-fiction in the more insular 1980s, writing a history of early SF: *The Scientific Romance in Britain: 1890-1950*.

By the late 1980s, Brian produced *The Empire of Fear*, an alternative look at the history of the world, in which the advent of vampirism made a deep political and social impact. He followed this with a trilogy comprising *The Werewolves of London*, *The Angel of Pain* and *The Carnival of Destruction*. All the time Brian continued to write short stories many of them about Biotechnological Science Fiction, and some collected in the anthology *Sexual Chemistry*. His recent novel is *Inherit the Earth*, which is about the implications of life-prolonging technology.

Maura McHugh

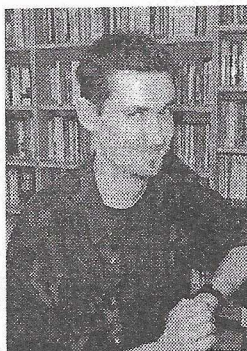


Dave (daev) Walsh

Although Dave Walsh has long been regarded as something of an expert in the field of unexplained phenomenon, in recent times he has come to prominence as a Fortean phenomenon in his own right.

Dave's fortnightly e-zine, *Blather*, has become a favoured source of the latest news from the world of the paranormal. Dave touches on subjects such as UFOs, mysterious creatures, poltergeists and studies of synchronicity. His wry wit and peculiar Irish slant make every issue a joy to read. And it's distributed free by email.

Dave has also contributed to numerous publications including *Fortean Times*, *Fringeware Review*, *Wired*, *Ept*, *The Anomalist* and *Animals & Men*, amongst others, and has worked for BBC Northern Ireland on their *Wildtracks* radio show. He currently writes the *Fortean Times'* *Pre Millennium Tension* column.



Shunned by the UFO lobby for being 'too sceptical', he has declared open war on the Irish Centre for UFO Studies after they excluded him from a UFO watch they were holding (the same night as the Geminid meteor showers, so it was hardly surprising they saw something).

He is interested in all areas of the Fortean world, but has a particular passion for lake monsters. Earlier this year, he took part in a monster hunt in Lake Seljordsvatnet, Norway, but it all turned sour when he suggested that the organiser's 'definitive evidence' might just be a smear on the camera lens. He has since been receiving a steady stream of death threats.

Although Dave is coming out of hiding for Octocon, he refuses to stop looking over his shoulder.

James Shields



URL Box:

Blather can be found at:
<http://www.blather.net>

Things to do in Dun Laoghaire

Is There Life Outside Octocon?

Shopping & Stuff

Dun Laoghaire is a busy port town and has all the amenities required by any con-goer, all of which are quite close to the **Royal Marine Hotel**. Unfortunately, most of the shops close on Sunday so if there is anything that you spy in town on Saturday make sure to get it then.

Next door to the Hotel is the **Dun Laoghaire Shopping Centre**. It is open from 9 am on Saturday to 6pm and has everything from a supermarket to a toystore. As mentioned above it doesn't open on Sunday.

There are three banks on Upper Georges Street (see Map) and they all have **ATMs**. Though the ATMs will be operational, the banks themselves don't open on Saturday and Sunday. For those of you from abroad, most ATMs in Ireland will now take VISA and American Express Credit Cards (if you can afford the exorbitant interest rates) and some will even take bank cards from other countries - such as CIRRUS and Link.

There is a pharmacy conveniently close to the Hotel which is open on Saturday (9pm - 6pm) and on Sunday (11am - 1pm) located at 131 Oliver Plunkett Road - ideal for that hangover cure.

For those occasional emergencies, there is a hospital on Lower Georges Street - St. Michael's - with a casualty department (280-6901). You can also find Dun Laoghaire's finest on the same street. For those outside of Ireland the police are called Garda, and their station can be found on Lower Georges Street (280-1285) and is the place to go if you have a crime to report.

If you are in Ireland for a longer vacation than just the weekend of Octocon, there is a **Tourist Information Office** at the Ferryport Terminal on St. Michael's Wharf (2844768) which is open all day on Saturday and Sunday. They'll tell where you can spend loads of money in Ireland.

The most common reason for people to leave the convention apart for visits to the detox section of the hospital is to grab a meal so here is a brief description:

Fast Food - i.e. Cheap Cardboard

McDonalds - 30 Upper George's Street
Burger King - 15 Upper George's Street
Abrahebabra - Anglesea Buildings, Upper George's Street

Decent Bite to Eat

i.e. You pay more for the privilege

Bits & Pizzas - 15 Patrick Street (284-2411). Guess what - they serve pizza, and damn fine it is too. They also serve some pasta dishes as well and beer and wine. Moderately priced and a short stroll from the Hotel.

Barrista's (beside Abrekebabra), George's Street - Quite reasonable Self service restaurant with good breakfasts and lunches (which one of your chairmen can personally vouch for).

Four Star Pizza - 51 Upper Georges Street (284-3629). Take-out pizza only but it's very good. Have your pizza delivered to your hotel room when you're too busy to take a break.

Outlaws Western Restaurant - 62 Upper Georges Street (2842817). Hot TexMex is the order of the day and the prices are quite good, but again, no beer is served here. The food is great, especially for you meat lovers, however, it is small and you would need to book ahead for a large party. It's about a ten minute walk from the Royal Marine Hotel.

Miami Cafe - 55 Lower Georges Street. A cafe/take away/chipper/cheap-stomach-filling stuff. The sit-down food is only moderately more expensive than the take away but it's the best place in Dun Laoghaire to eat a semi-decent meal for under a fiver.

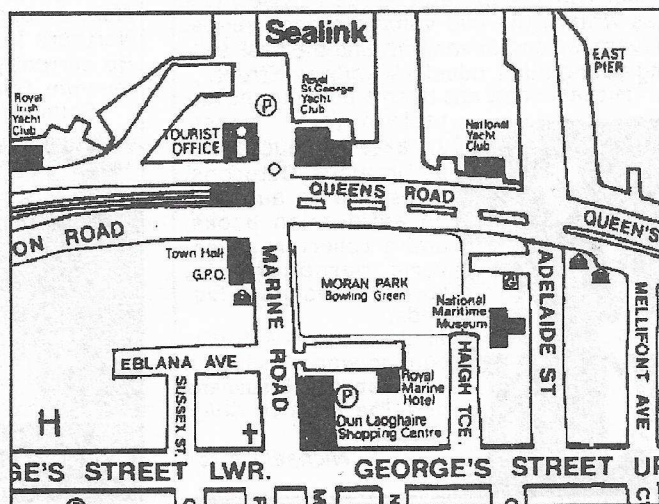
Royal Marine Restaurant - in this Hotel. The easiest restaurant to get to from Octocon however, it is pricey. A set course meal will cost you around £18 and an a la carte can go up to £25; expensive but was much praised last year.

Trader's Wharf - Dun Laoghaire Shopping Centre, Upper Georges Street (280-8119). The closest restaurant to the Hotel, this used to be Captain America's - for those fans who've been to Octocon before. It serves the same kind of food (pretty good variety) at a moderate price but now with a different ambience.

Trudi's - 107 Lower Georges Street (280-5318). This is a bit of a distance from the Hotel and for those of you with more cash. It is a French-European restaurant with an emphasis on Fish on its menu. From 5pm - 7pm they do a pre-theatre menu of 4 courses for only £9.95 which is pretty good value.

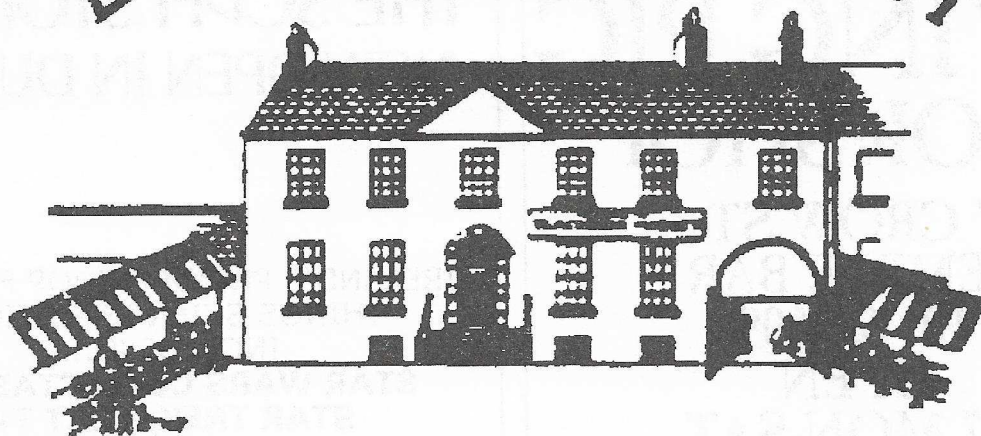
If you can't find anything to suit your tastes here, go to reception at the hotel and they will be able to help you out with some more information.

James Bacon



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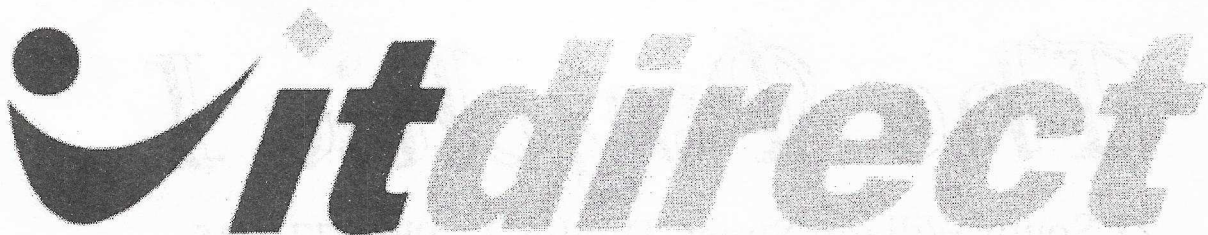
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