



54th National British Easter Convention

Progress Report 1

November 2001



GUESTS

(in alphabetical order)

***CHRIS
BAKER***

***CHRISTOPHER
EVANS***

***MARY
GENTLE***

***Hanover International, Hinckley
18-21 April 2003***

THE COMMITTEE & CONTACTS

Paul Oldroyd	Co-ordinator & Programme (he's the very annoying 'completer-finisher' – don't you just hate that type of person?)
Ped Badlan	Minister without Portfolio – keep us on the straight and narrow
Noel Collyer	No, no, no, no... yes! Operations
Chris Donaldson	Memberships (bung her loads of money)
Julian Headlong	Science programme and interesting minutes supremo
Eve Harvey	Publications & Finances (OK Paul, I can't think of any other excuses not to take on this job)
John Harvey	Publications & Communications – oh yeah, just try to get him communicating!
Rog Peyton	Hotel Liaison (Arlene will kill me when she finds out)
Yvonne Rowse	Programme and doyenne of fun

Other Conscripts

Claire Brialey & Mark Plummer	Fanthology
Tanya Brown	Website
John Dallman	Publications
Vincent Docherty	Finances

Membership Rates to 1/4/02

Full attending	£35
Supporting	£20
Child rates (ages at time of convention)	
Infant (up to 5)	Nil
Child (5-11)	£5
Junior(12-15)	£20

Join now, they'll be going up next year!

Contact Addresses

Post: Seacon 03
 8 The Orchard
 Tonwell
 Herts
 SG12 0HR
 UK

E-mail: memberships@seacon03.org.uk
 info@seacon03.org.uk

Website: www.seacon03.org.uk

eGroup: For membership of this group,
 contact john@seacon03.org.uk

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PAUL'S PIECE

First of all I'd like to thank all of you who voted for us at the bidding session at Paragon. Given that we didn't have a hotel or Guest of Honour (or indeed a committee the previous day), it was brave of you to take a chance and give us the opportunity to run the 2003 Eastercon. We're confident we can repay you by putting on a great convention that you will enjoy attending.

As you can see from this PR we've been busy since Easter filling in the major gaps and now have a venue and guests. So we are delighted to announce our Guests of Honour – Mary Gentle, Christopher Evans and Chris Baker. Thanks to them for agreeing to be part of the convention.

At this stage of organising a convention there's an acid test to tell whether or not you've done the right thing by getting involved in the whole surreal process. If you wake up in the early hours in a cold sweat, realising that you haven't yet found a hotel, and then remember that the convention is still eighteen months away, perhaps its time to reach for the medication and hand the thing on to somebody else.

Well, so far so good – we're all still here, with the exception of Maureen Kincaid Speller. It was nice to have you along even for a short time Maureen. Since Paragon we've been joined by Noel Collyer, who succumbed to feminine charms (and perhaps a touch of alcohol) during the Arthur C Clarke Award presentation (remember, we have the photos, Noel) and agreed to be our Operations Manager.

Elsewhere in this PR Yvonne talks about the programme so I won't duplicate that here. One thing I would like to highlight is that there will not be a fan-room at Seacon03. That's not because we don't want fan programming at the convention, but because we feel it should be incorporated into the main programme streams. Not having a separate fan room, however, leaves the problem of where to have fanzines and other displays. We're still working on the best way of doing this and would be pleased to hear from any of you who may have ideas.

We're also very keen on knowing what you want out of this convention – at this stage very little is fixed and we're interested in

hearing what you have to say. Any thoughts, suggestions, or warnings will be very welcome. To try and stimulate interaction and promote an ongoing conversation, we've set up a special eGroup for all members of the convention. To join the group, you need to contact John Harvey, at john@seacon03.org.uk. At the moment the group is open to all members of the convention and we hope will not have to be moderated. Of course, we're not being exclusive here, if you don't have internet access, you can still write to us at the contact address on page 2.

So don't forget – keep in touch. We want to hear from you.

The rest of us are off to find some of that increasingly desperate fun that always comes when organising a convention.

Paul Oldroyd



GUESTS

We will be talking much more about our guests in later Progress Reports, but as a taster, here's a brief introduction to each of them.

Chris Baker

Chris is probably better known to most con-goers as 'Fangorn'. He has been coming to cons for about 20 years and has sold many, many pieces of artwork in the auctions. For several years he was working directly for Stanley Kubrick on A.I. and then for Spielberg to help complete the movie. He has art credits at the end of the movie and was featured in the TV programme on Spielberg shown on BBC2 a few weeks ago.

Since A.I. he has worked in Chicago on a remake of THE TIME MACHINE. Now that Chris is known in Hollywood, it could mean a LOT more work over there. We may even have to pay for him to fly back to be a Guest of Honour in 2003! *(I don't think so says Eve waving her finance hat!)*

Christopher Evans

Christopher Evans is both a writer and a fan. As a writer, he is one of the unsung heroes of British Science fiction. Books like Capella's Golden Eyes, Aztec Century and Mortal Remains are not only well written, but also addictive, you want more – unfortunately prolific isn't an adjective that is often used to describe Christopher.

Although you don't see him at as many cons these days, Chris has been a fan for years. He and Rob Holdstock used to edit the BSFA's writer's magazine Focus. He has strongly held views about what a programme should be, and was instrumental in both the birth and the death of Mexicon – the series of literary and fully-integrated conventions of the 1980s and 90s. So, you can be assured he won't let us provide you with anything other than an exciting programme.

Mary Gentle

Pick up *Lost Burgundy*, the fourth volume of Mary Gentle's award-winning *Ash*. Take a moment to read the blurb: "In a barbarous age ... an extraordinary figure stood formidable on the European battlefield – a remarkable female warrior and strategist without equal". Now simply substitute 'genre' for 'European' and 'writer' for 'warrior', although she is trained in both arts – and, hey presto! we arrive at a working definition of Mary Gentle, red-haired (or blonde) icon of British science fiction (or fantasy).

Throughout a career spanning almost a quarter of a century (she has a portrait in the attic), Mary Gentle has subverted genre expectations. Most recently, the monumental *Ash* has generated at least its own weight in taxonomic debate. Fantasy? SF? Counterfactual? It's rich, dense and strange: 'without equal'. Oh, and a very good read.

YVONNE'S PIECE

Write a bit about the programme,' they said.

'Must I?' I asked plaintively.

'Yes. You must. Julian's minuted it that you will.'

'Oh. OK. By the way. What programme?'

'The one you're going to be running. You were there at the ProgCom meeting.'

'Physically,' I protested. 'I was there physically. But I had a hangover from the Arthur C Clarke awards. And Maureen was going to do the grown-up programming. So I didn't take much notice.'

'It's all in Julian's minutes.'

'I've lost them.'

'He'll send you another copy. Read them and then write a bit for PR1.'

'Sigh,' I sighed.

So. We're going to run four channels of programmes. Channels 1 and 2 will be the main programme items. Channel 3 will be interactive. This is where you get 'the right to reply' or we do an 'Everything you ever wanted to know about costuming but were afraid to ask' item with a guided tour of Chaos Costuming.

The last Channel – 4 – is the public access

channel. This is where you do-it-yourself. Anyone with a burning urge to discuss/demonstrate/celebrate anything can use this time/space to do it in. The only stipulations that we make is that we don't get into trouble for it (no indoor fireworks) and that everyone should be welcome.

Themes? Well yes, loosely we have themes. Milestones of SF, Cutting Edge Science, and The Rest. If it doesn't fit into MoSF or CES it should snuggle comfortably down in The Rest.

I suppose the overarching theme we envisage for this convention is Inclusion. We want everyone to feel welcome, and to this end we will be including programme items for people new to conventions and hopefully something of interest to the kids.

Finally, following our theme of Inclusion we've opened up an eGroup. This is for members to discuss what they would like from their convention. Membership of this eGroup can be obtained from John Harvey by e-mailing him at john@seacon03.org.uk.

ROGER'S PIECE

Finding a Hotel

(when the obvious is staring you in the face!)

My first thoughts on taking responsibility for finding a hotel was, 'Easy. Done it many times before. Piece of cake.' Hah!

I had no idea how difficult it was going to be – far more difficult than in the 70s and 80s when I'd taken on this task for Novacons and a couple of STAR TREK cons (don't ask!).

My initial 'favourite' hotels were soon knocked off the list – the Norbrek at Blackpool is booked solidly at Easter through to 2006, the Harrogate Conference centre is booked through to 2004, the Metropole in Brighton wanted £215 per room (plus breakfast!), the Metropole here in Birmingham wanted even more. They also wanted £7000 per day for function facilities...

Helpful people at Easter this year told me about a BIG new hotel in Harrogate (it turned out to have 88 rooms) and that there was another Hanover in Leicester that was bigger than Hinckley (there wasn't – the Hinckley one is by far the biggest in the chain).

Then I heard about the British Conference Destinations Directory 2001 – a book published by the BACD (British Association of Conference Destinations) and it was right here in Birmingham. Each major city/town has an entry that gives the number of hotels with the capacity of the largest, the biggest conference facilities in that city/town, etc. Surely I could find something in this book? Tees Valley listed a conference capacity of 1000 and the largest hotel had 440 bedrooms. When I rang I discovered that the hotel and the conference facility wasn't the same venue – they were on opposite sides of the area and that the 440-room hotel wasn't a hotel at all but a university campus. Another venue was good but had a golf competition every Easter and was their busiest time of the year. Together with the committee, we went through the book but found nothing. More 'hotels' turned out to be university campuses.

The Association even distributed our requirements throughout the country. I was inundated with fancy bulky brochures for conference centres but hardly any of them had hotels attached or even close by. I was even offered the International Conference Centre here in Birmingham – function space (one main hall only) at £27,000 per day! Only Harrogate conference centre has a hotel attached with plenty of other hotels within half a mile. Someone should check this place out fully (for after 2004!).

The list of possibles did not get very long – when

we finally got down to the last two or three, it became blindingly obvious that the Hanover HAD to be the choice.

The Hanover had already expressed interest to have us back but their rates were a little on the high side and they wanted a lot for function space. Negotiations followed and we ended up with rates for 2003 that are cheaper than the 2001 rates!

An Ongoing Problem?

So what about the future of Eastercons? Hinckley is fine, but limited. It couldn't really cope with a large convention – what if we got 1,000+ members? And what about being able to offer a range of accommodations at different prices? There must be something better out there!

As you can see from Rog's comments above, there isn't at the moment. Luckily, looking at the recent trend in membership numbers it seems optimistic to be looking at 1,000+ members, but what about future Eastercon committees? Where can they go? Will it get to the stage where we have to limit memberships to Eastercons to fit the hotel, or will we have to go to 2 or 3-venue sites?

This problem has already been identified by others, and if you're interested there is a special eGroup set up to discuss it and pool ideas. To join, send an e-mail to Eastercon-subscribe@yahoogroups.com and the moderator will help you further.

Or you could write to us with your thoughts, at the contact address shown on page 2.

Hotel Rates

So, what are these great new rates we've negotiated.

Single rooms £45 per night

(£47.50 per night this year)

Double rooms .. £32.50 pppn

(£37.50 this year)

Triples£25.00 pppn

(£30.00 this year)

Not bad, eh?

We do remember, however, promising at the bidding session that we'd do our best to offer a range of prices, and we'll be looking at potential cheaper alternatives over the next couple of months. Full details will be available in the next Progress Report, which will be out for Easter 2003. So don't watch this space, nothing will change here - read the next PR, or look on the website!

THE BIRTH OF A CONVENTION

Minutes of the first ever Eastercon 2003 bid meeting

A Chinese Restaurant, somewhere in Hinckley, half way between Coventry and Leicester. 14th April 2001, 20:00 till late.

Nobody really remembers what went on at this meeting, even if you were there, far too much wine and lager having been consumed, but it appears that we decided to put on bid for an Eastercon in 2003. It even appears that we all said we would be on the committee, even if you have no memory of doing this, it is now too late – you are on the committee.

Jobs were handed out or bagsied. Paul will co-ordinate. Chris will register. Rog will liase hotels. Eve and John will publicate. Julian will scient. Ped will inspire. And the unresent Yvonne Rowse will be volunteered to programme, be fannish and pub. This leaves money unaccounted for, and ops unoptioned. They will be assigned. Later.

It was agreed that we would meet on Sat 15-04-01 at 11:00 to prepare a bid. We also agreed to at least ask Yvonne Rowse before telling her she's to be on the committee too.

After this we all had lots of desperate fun.

Second Meeting of the Bid Committee for Eastercon 2003

Held in a rather plush hotel room (No. 465) at the Hanover International, Hinckley, somewhere between Coventry and Leicester. 15th April 01, 11:00 – 12:00.

Everyone welcomed everyone else. Especially Yvonne. We agreed we were going to do this thing. We have no hotel, no GOHs, no ops or finances. So we started talking programming.

Much talk of “integrated programming” combining special interest groups with the main programme, later referred to as a “fusion programme”, one hopes its realisation will not take the traditional thirty years. It was agreed - there must be a Buffy panel. The two words bandied about are “fusion” and “continuity” – implying a programme integrating the contemporary with our field's oral and written history. Including:

Fantasy and Science Fiction (GOHs, filthy pros, artists, etc)

Fan Stuff (FGOHs, BSFA, TAFF, GUFF, fanroom?, fanlounge?, history room?)

Fun Stuff (Games, quizzes, robots, workshops, the Saturday Night Disco)

Sercon and Science (literary, fan historical, con historical, Science and Technology)

Spectaculars (Masquerade, Awards, Fireworks, Plays, Concerts, etc)

Special Interests (gamers, filkers, real ale, jewellery, bonsai, pyrotechnics, books etc)

Milestones in British SF (the last century, in, say, 20 year blocks, the Oral History)

– all with the usual talks, lectures, panels, readings and demonstrations.

We need to locate the proverbial “good speakers”, to canvas for ideas and “who do you know who knows their subject *and* can talk about it on a stage”. The Listening Convention.

We talked names, decided not to use Contravention, Speculation II, Metrocon or Mancon. Considered “Boffcon” but instead settled on “Seacon 03” because it would be the fourth con of that name. And it brings to mind the successful Seacon bid created at Tynecon which was put together at the convention.

We suddenly have an email address – gosh, that was quick. We will also have a bank account and even a website. We all go to the bar.

After the meeting:

Eve says she will do the money with backup from Vince Docherty. Yvonne will be part of the pub team. The prog team will be integrated and will be Julian, Yvonne and Paul.

There is still no ops.

The Third Meeting of the Eastercon 2003 Bid Committee

Held on Sunday 15th April 2001 on stage in Paris (actually a room in a hotel in Hinckley, half way between Coventry and Leicester).

First there was an introduction by moderator Mr. Pat McMurray. Options allowed were:

Vote for Us

Major procrastination

There then followed an amusing humorous skit by a group of resting skiffy fans. This group included all those mentioned above, using a script provided by Eve and Chris. The production was very warmly received. During the course of this presentation

(ably assisted by Eve's computer graphics) we announced our name – Seacon 03.

Next Mr. McMurray threw open the proceedings to allow Questions from the Floor. These were held to a minimum by our candid acknowledgement that we had no hotel, no GOHs, no FGOHs, no Guests, and no budget.

We did, however, have a Clue. We were going to be a Programme Led Convention, a PLC. So we discussed the programme. One stream vs. Multiple Streams, spectaculars vs. fannish silliness, etc, etc.

This didn't take very long.

Then we all voted.

Then we won. By a New Labour style landslide. Which was nice.

Then we all went to the bar.

Julian's Bit

The Wright Stuff

With a scream of ultra-high velocity exhaust, and a bone-crushing acceleration, the Bell X-1 "Glamorous Glennis" rocketed up into the sky above the USA's Mojave desert.

It was the 14th October 1947, and on that day Chuck Yeager became the first man to break the sound barrier.

And only 44 years before, on the 17th December 1903, at 10:35 in the morning Orville Wright became the first man to fly a mechanically propelled, heavier-than-air, flying machine – the prosaically named "Flyer" – at Kill Devil Hill, Kitty Hawk, NC. With his 12 horsepower engine and twin 8 foot propellers, he covered a distance of 120 feet and stayed aloft just 12 seconds. But he flew.

And on the 20th July 1969 Neil Armstrong landed on the moon.

There was but a single, ordinary, lifetime between Orville Wright and Neil Armstrong. A man born when Orville first flew would have just been eligible for his pension when Armstrong walked on the moon.

And 2003 is his centennial year.

The "Flyer" can still be seen in the main atrium of the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum, right next to Chuck Yeager's Bell X-1, and close to Neil Armstrong's Apollo 11 capsule. The sense of wonder in that one building can hurt.

My favourite place in the world.

Special Publications

There will be some, we all agree. Well, there will be at least one, since we've found a couple of masochists who actually volunteered! And we've got them to put it in writing so there's no chickening out – not that they would, oh no, not them.

Eastercon GOH Fanthology

As a special publication for Seacon 03, we'll be issuing a fanthology featuring relevant fannish writing from past Eastercon guests of honour.

There'll be more information in later PRs, but if you've got any queries or suggestions in the meantime, contact:

Mark Plummer & Claire Brialey
(email: banana@fishlifter.demon.co.uk)
or write to
14 Northway Road
Croydon
Surrey CR0 6JE
UK

Advertising Rates – Progress Reports

The following rates will apply for any adverts placed with us and paid before 1 April 2002, even if it is for publications after this date. Camera ready copy is assumed (preferably on disc). If we have to do any additional processing work, this will be charged extra.

Fan Rates

Full page ----- £30
Half page ----- £15
Quarter page ----- £8

Professional Rates

Full page ----- £100
Half page ----- £50
Quarter page ----- £30

The committee will decide at its own discretion (and the view of the judges is final!) on what is fan or professional. Colour will be quoted separately. Rates for inserts will be quoted individually depending on the size and weight.

Rates for the Programme Book and for flyers to be included in the Membership Pack will be published in the next Progress Report.

For further information, or to place an advert, contact John Harvey at the convention address or via e-mail at john@seacon03.org.uk.

MEMBERSHIP LIST

As at 30 October 2001 (all Attending except where marked (S) for Supporting)

GoH Chris Baker	36 Tony Morton	74 Andrew Patton	112 Anne Wilson
GoH Christopher Evans	37 Carol Morton	75 Roger Smith	113 Ian Sorensen
GoH Mary Gentle	38 Steve Lawson	76 Elaine Coates (S)	114 Steve Grover
1 Ped Badlan	39 Marcus Rowland	77 John Bray	115 Janet Figg
2 Noel Collyer	40 Peter Mabey	78 E.D. Buckley	116 Mike Figg
3 Chris Donaldson	41 Steve Davies	79 Joan Paterson	117 Jane Cooper
4 Eve Harvey	42 Tim Illingworth	80 Tibs	118 David T. Cooper
5 John Harvey	43 Kathy Taylor	81 Urban Gunnarsson	119 Baby Cooper
6 Julian Headlong	44 Ian Taylor	82 Mark Bailey	120 Rory McLean
7 Paul Oldroyd	45 Dave Langford	83 Lars Strandberg	121 Robert Gorman
8 Rog Peyton	46 Anders Frihagen	84 Dave Tompkins	122 Ray Miller
9 Yvonne Rowse	47 Larry van der Putte	85 Andrew Norcross	123 Andrew Miller
10 Rhodri James	48 Steve Rogerson	86 Mic Rogers	124 Barry Traish
11 Alan Woodford	49 Michael Bernardi	87 Andrew Stephenson	125 Jaap Boekestein
12 Claire Brialey	50 Tony Rogers	88 Anne Woodford	126 Colin Lilley
13 Pat McMurray	51 Mary Burns	89 Howard Rosenblum	127 Katherine Lilley
14 Mark Plummer	52 Bill Burns	90 June Rosenblum	128 Stephen Dunn
15 Sue Edwards	53 Andy Hayton	91 Michelle Rosenblum	129 Martin Wisse
16 Alice Lawson	54 Colin Fine	92 Jenny Southern	130 Gytha North
17 John Dowd	55 John Stewart	93 John Brown	131 Amanda Kear
18 Philip Plumbly (S)	56 Barbara Stewart	94 Steve Cooper	132 Jan van't Ent
19 Dave Lally	57 Zoe Deterding-Barker	95 David Stewart	133 Hans-Ulrich Boettcher
20 Caroline Mullan	58 Trevor Barker	96 Herman Ellingsen	134 Brian Parsons
21 Chris Bell	59 Valerie Housden	97 Tony Keen	135 Bridget Wilkinson
22 Margaret Austin	60 1/2r Cruttenden	98 Ian Maughan	136 Andrew O'Donnell
23 Martin Easterbrook	61 Roger Earnshaw	99 Mark Sinclair	137 Ken O'Neill (S)
24 Paul Dormer	62 Mark Slater (S)	100 Michael Braithwaite	138 David Thomas
25 Paul Allwood	63 Chris Cooper	101 Tim Morley	139 Colin Harris
26 Vincent Docherty	64 Alan Bellingham	102 John Meredith	140 Carolina Gómez Lagerlöf
27 Michael Abbott	65 Colette Reap	103 Nik Whitehead	141 Niall Gordon
28 Giulia DeCesare	66 Charles Whyte	104 Mark Young	142 Kevin Anderson
29 Brian Ameringen	67 Susan Stepney	105 Silas Potts	143 Kelvin Proctor
30 Paul Treadaway	68 Mark W. Waller	106 Roderick O'Hanlon	144 Judith Proctor
31 Gwen Funnell	69 Brian Flatt	107 John Dallman	145 Thomas Recktenwald
32 Peter Wareham	70 Pauline Morgan	108 Ben Yalow	146 Wilf James
33 Felix Cohen	71 Chris Morgan	109 Trevor Reynolds	147 Barbara Jane
34 Krystyna Oborn	72 Roger Robinson	110 Pat Reynolds	148 Oscar Laggur
35 Martin Smith	73 David Drysdale	111 Marcia Kelly Illingworth	

If you have any queries or amendments to the above list, please contact Chris by mail at the main convention address (Memberships, Seacon03, 8 The Orchard, Tonwell, Herts, SG12 0HR, UK) or by e-mailing to memberships@seacon03.org.uk.

Progress Report 2

Yes, there will be one out in April 2002. And it will contain lots more

More on our Guests
 More on our Programme
 More on Milestones
 More on Members (yes, lots, lots more members!)
 More on whatever we feel like writing more about...

That's all folks!

Copy deadline 1 March 2002