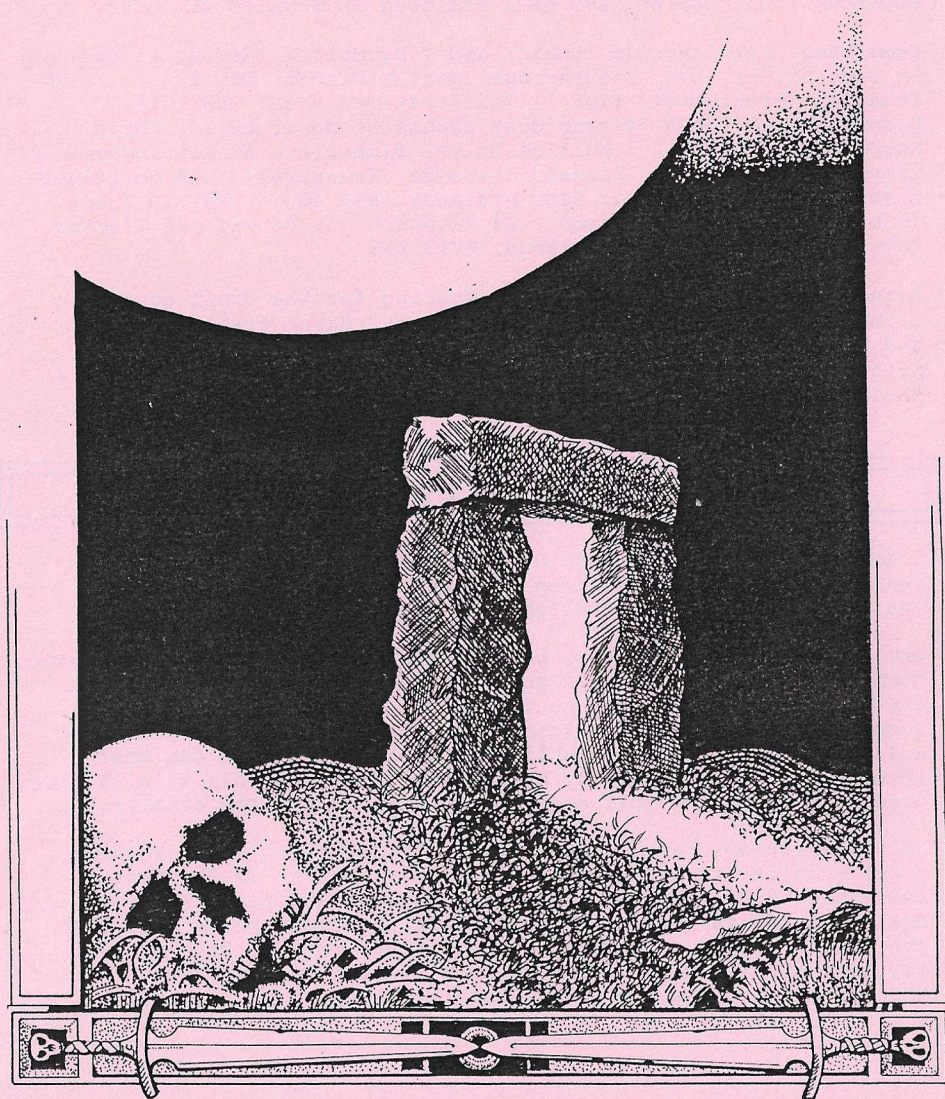


Novacon 26

Progress Report Four



Novacon 26

Guest of Honour: David Gemmell.

The Hotel Ibis, Ladywell Walk, Birmingham, B5 4ST.
8th-10th November 1996.

Membership & Enquiries: Attending membership costs £30.00 on the door - it is too late for postal memberships. General enquiries should be addressed to Carol Morton on 01384 825386 (before 9pm).

Bookroom: All tables have been assigned at Novacon 26, sorry.

Committee: Carol Morton (Chair) and Tony Morton (Registrations), 14 Park Street, Lye, Stourbridge, West Midlands, DY9 8SS. Sarah Freakley (Programme), Flat 1, 717 Stratford Road, Sparkhill, Birmingham, B11 4DN (please note change of postcode). Chris Murphy (Operations), 7 Mullion Drive, Timperley, Nr Altrincham, Cheshire, WA15 6SL. Richard Standage (Treasurer), 116 Shireland Road, Smethwick, Warley, West Midlands, B66 4QJ. Martin Tudor (Publications/Hotel Liaison), 24 Ravensbourne Grove, off Clarkes Lane, Willenhall, West Midlands, WV13 1HX.

Acknowledgements: Thanks to Dave Mooring for the front cover illustration, Pauline Morgan, Tony Berry, Sarah Freakley, Carol and Tony Morton for their articles. This Progress Report was printed on the CRITICAL WAVE photocopier, contact Martin Tudor at the above address for details of WAVE's competitive prices.

Chairman's Piece by Carol Morton

I am writing this in August whilst looking out of a window at a small fishing boat sailing on a calm sea under a cloudless sky, yes I'm on holiday but the job of a Novacon Chair goes on....

The con is shaping up okay, but as usual the "Curse of the Novacon Committee" has struck again and we have had to cancel more than one Committee meeting due to ill health - mine included. The Committee have all worked splendidly in isolation - with almost all of the programme and publications thrashed out at our most recent meeting. Hopefully by the time you read this we will have been able to hold a full meeting and settled all the details.

Just a quick word about the hotel. It is not an ideal Novacon hotel - unlike the Chamberlain last year, but it is the best available to us this year. The management and staff we have dealt with so far have been wonderfully helpful and we hope that the recent change of personnel won't alter this. Room parties may be a problem with access to each floor requiring an appropriate room key to escape the lift area. So you must

remember to collar someone on the appropriate floor before visiting friends.

In Progress Report #3 I had the unfortunate task of talking about the loss of Bob Shaw. now I have to tell you about the loss of two more Novacon stalwarts: Ethel Lindsay, a long-time Novacon attendee and Dee-Ann Farey, the wife of Tech Ops Supremo Nic Farey, both died earlier this year. The Committee wish to extend their sympathies and condolences to Ethel and Dee-Ann's their friends and family. I know it sounds trite to say this, but they will be missed.

I'll sign off now and go back to watching ships on the sea and hope I have happier news to report in the programme book. See you then and at the con.

Registrations by Tony Morton

As (sometimes) happens with cons, the Hotel live up to their promise and after discussion state: "We promised to hold rooms until the end of September, but that time has passed. We have numerous requests from non-convention people for rooms and your convention members to date are all in rooms so we're sorry but, due to economic situations we have to let our rooms to other guests".

Okay people, THIS is the reality of holding a con in Birmingham in 1996. The city is the same but with the popularity of both the National Exhibition Centre and International Convention Centre, hotel rooms are hard to come by.

I apologise for the delay in publishing this Progress Report, but we have used the last couple of weeks to negotiate extra bedrooms in the Chamberlain Hotel (used for Novacon 25). Unfortunately, these rooms are single or twin only (forms are enclosed for those STILL not booked and expecting the usual miracle).

On other matters, the hotel car park for the Ibis is the Arcadian car park, entrance via Bromsgrove Street (unusual one way system - check maps enclosed). This costs £5 per 24-hour stay, so be careful!

Enclosed is all relevant information on:

- (i) Hotel bookings as stipulated by the hotel. (Please get back to me ASAP if this is not what you booked.)
- (ii) Book Room reservations.
- (iii) Art Show Reservations.

I hope there are no problems with (ii) or (iii), but if you think otherwise let me know and we'll see what can be done....

At the convention I intend to open the Registration Desk at 4pm on Friday and close it during the opening ceremony (around

7.30-8.15pm). Saturday the table will be open from 10am to 6pm (but closed during the Guest of Honour spot, 3-4.30pm) and Sunday from 10am until the Awards Ceremony - after which it will be someone else's problem. See you at the con.

How to Get There by Tony Morton

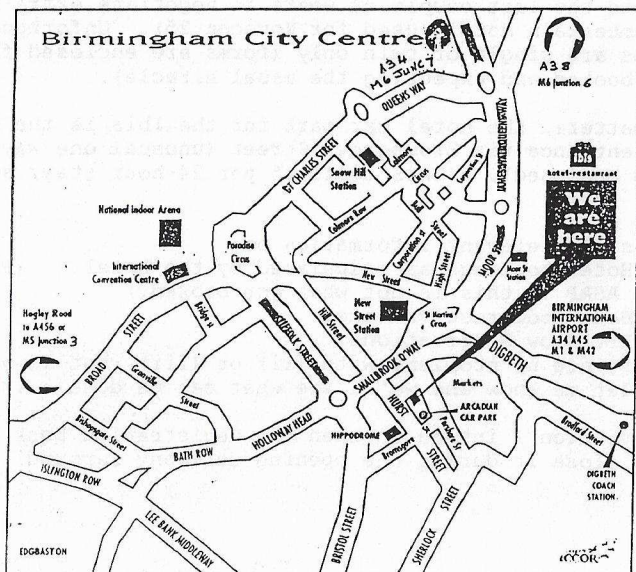
From the North: M6 to Junction 6 (Spaghetti Junction). A38M flyover/Tunnel. Turn left into Bromsgrove Street - you may miss this because of where the tunnel exits, so Wrentham Street, then first left (Kent Street) on to Bromsgrove Street.

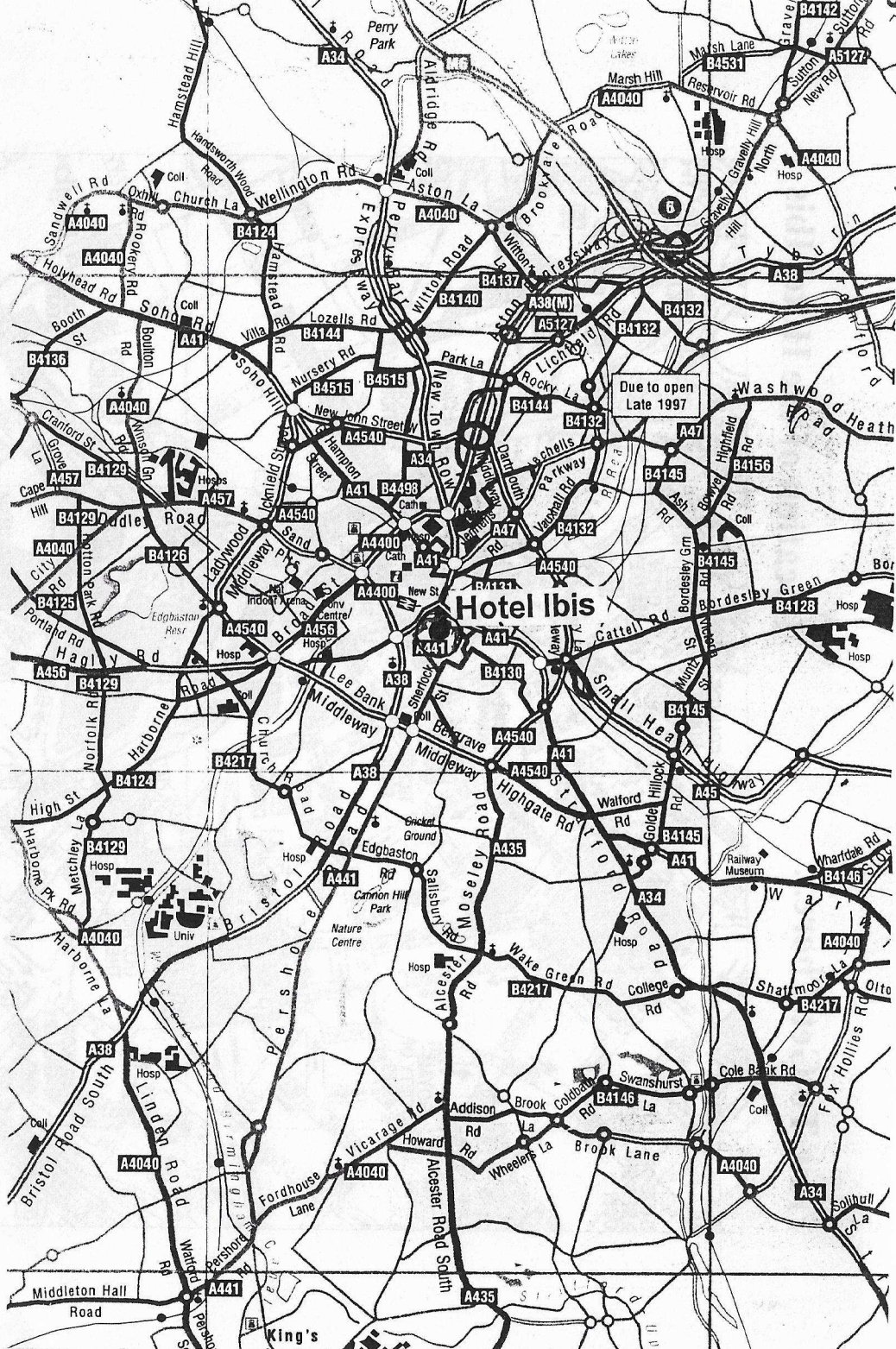
From the South: M40-M42 to Junction 2. Take A441 (Pershore Road) to Sherlock Street, left to Hurst Street, right at lights to Bromsgrove Street. OR M40 - M42 to Junction 3. Take A435 Alcester Road South), left on to Belgrave Middleway (Ring Road) and right on to Sherlock Street.

From West: M5 Junction 3. Take A456 (Hagley Road) to Five Ways, down Lee Bank Middleway and left into Sherlock Street.

From East: A45 (Coventry Road) to Bordesley Circus island, follow Ring Road (left) to Belgrave Middleway, then right into Sherlock Street.

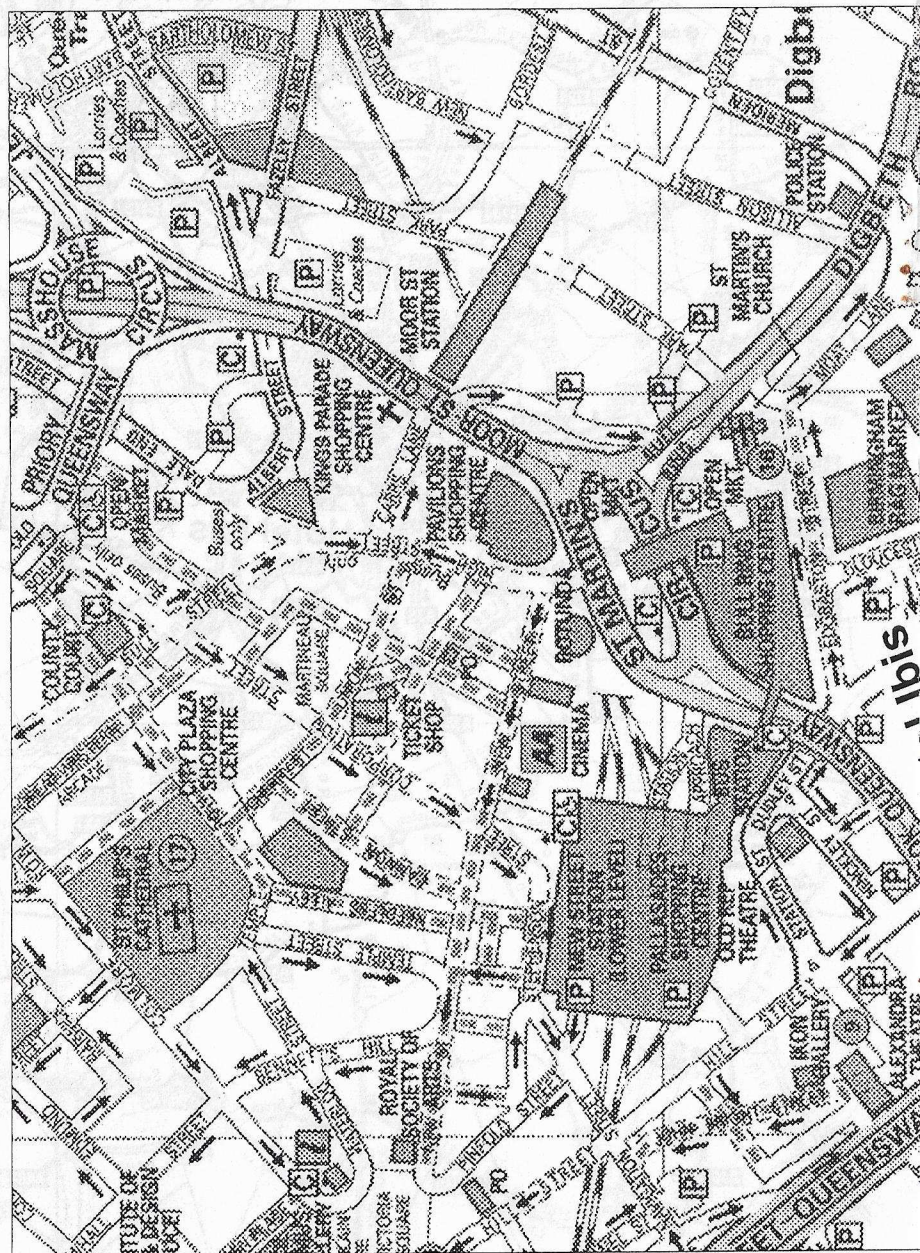
By Bus/Rail: From New Street Station - leave via the exit to the car park (the doors on the RIGHT), through the car park and turn right down Smallbrook Queensway (with the Rotunda behind you). Down to the crossing by Centre City/Forte Crest Hotel, cross to Hurst Street, down to corner by Mr Egg and the Ibis is facing you. From either the Bus Station or the Coach station consult the centre-spread map in this Progress Report.





How To Get There...

Location of the Hotel Ibis



DAVID GEMMELL: Gatekeeper by Pauline Morgan

The imagination is the key to the gates between worlds. Some people cannot unlock the gate and are unable to glimpse anything other than their own mundane world. Others can see, but haven't the courage to pass through. Every gate has its Guardian. Some warn you to stay away, others entice you through to certain death. David Gemmell invites you to explore and in many of his novels you will find a gate to other worlds. Step this way and let us pass through together.

Gateways between worlds feature heavily in the majority of Gemmell's novels and use of them seems to be increasing. In the Drenai novels they play a relatively minor part, secondary to the role of the Great Battle and survival against the odds. In the Sipstrassi novels they begin to come into their own with the power locked within the stones acting as a key and their Atlantean wielders being the guardians. But most of his other novels also contain gateways.

THE KNIGHTS OF DARK RENOWN doesn't fit into either of the other series, being set in a world completely separate from them. In this world the knights of the Gabala once protected the people from evil. When their task was complete they passed through a Gate and disappeared from human ken. All that is except Manannan, who lacked the courage. Brave enough in the face of physical danger he was unable to take the final step into the unknown. Evil is insidious and without the knights to prevent it, it is returning. Even the outlaw, Llaw Gyffes, a kind of Robin Hood figure cannot prevent the spread. Manannan's dilemma is whether to pass through the Gate to try and persuade the Knights to return, or to throw his waning talents against the Duke of Mactha. Manannan, like so many of Gemmell's leading characters is someone who doubts his own powers.

Trying to condense everything into one volume makes this a less fulfilling novel than most of Gemmell's earlier books as he has tried to include a multiplicity of plot strands instead of concentrating on a few important characters. It is rather crowded.

MORNINGSTAR is another book that is designed to stand alone and contains precursors for BLOODSTONE, the third of the Jon Shannow novels. Like other recurring themes, this one takes another look at the genesis of legends and the truth about heroes. Heroes always seem (according to the stories) to be nobly born, chivalrous and honest, mighty warriors who willingly offer their lives in the defence of king and country. Gemmell's heroes are the opposite to this and Jarek Mace is no exception. He is a self-centred thief who just happens to be in the wrong place at the right time. As the Angostin battle hordes advance across the countryside, burning everything in their path, the people need some hope to cling on to if their personal fights for survival are

to be worthwhile. Initially, Mace's actions are those of self-preservation but as the stories of his exploits spread, coloured by the need of something to believe in, the name Morningstar becomes a banner and a rallying cry. Mace/Morningstar is forced into a position where he has to decide whether to turn his back on those who fight in his name and preserve his own skin, or lead a desperate and possibly suicidal attempt to repel the invaders. He makes his choice, influenced by travellers who pass through Gates because Gates don't just take us between worlds, they can take us through time.

A ring of standing stones makes an ideal gateway, a focus for the power that is needed to activate them. Young Thuro discovered this in GHOST KING (one of the two Arthurian Sipstrassi novels). The Hawk Queen novels also rely heavily on the use of Gates delineated by stone circles. The heroine of the first (IRONHAND'S DAUGHTER) is Sigarni. With hound and hawk she lives wild. Her best friend is a dwarf. The country is one in subjugation and while the Highlanders are few and scattered they believe that a leader, descended from the great warrior Ironhand, will come to banish the invading Outlanders. Sigarni is actually the daughter of the long dead Ironhand but grown up in his future having been brought through the Gate as a baby. But the highlanders will not accept a woman as their leader unless she can produce Ironhand's crown as proof of her inheritance. It is hidden in a world beyond the Gate so she, Ballistar the dwarf and Ironhand's ghost go in search of it with startling consequences. The person who brought the child Sigarni to safety was Caswallon. THE HAWK ETERNAL (1995) is Caswallon's story. The Highlanders of his time and world are threatened by the Aenir, a warlike race bent on conquering the country. Even within his clan, Caswallon is an outsider. He is the kind of rebel that young men seek to emulate and older men despair of. Somehow he has to prevent the invaders wiping out the clans. He is aided and abetted by Taliesin. There are hints given about Taliesin's origins but to the clans he is a sorcerer. He controls the Gates and is the principal link between these two books. Gemmell develops his theme here that there are myriads of possible futures. Taliesin has been exploring them. He is looking for the Sigarni who survives and wins all her battles and will manipulate events if he thinks it will achieve his aims. In THE HAWK ETERNAL there is a lot more passings through the Gates than in IRONHAND'S DAUGHTER. They are two books that should be read close together in order to pick up the references as they slot together neatly.

The theory of alternate futures is one that Gemmell had already developed for his final Shannow novel, BLOODSTONE (1994). Here the Guardian Amaziga Archer has been searching for her husband, Sam, who died in the first book WOLF IN SHADOW (1987). In these books the Gates are controlled with Sipstrassi stones, as are the ones in DARK PRINCE (1991). This is one of Gemmell's two historical novels. The Gates are guarded by Aristotle and he sends Parmenion through in search of the young Alexander who has been abducted. Gates are a useful and convenient device, but generally Gemmell uses them well, bringing his stories into cycles

and allowing past, present and future to intermesh. A poorer author would have used them to excuse plot errors.

So, if the pressures of your life are beginning to overwhelm you, speak to the Guardian. David Gemmell will send you through to another world, for the adventure of a lifetime.

The Nova Awards by Tony Berry

New readers start here: Originally created in 1973 by the late Gillon Field, the Nova Awards are presented annually for work in fanzines. Until 1981 only one award was presented, to "Best Fanzine" and decided by a committee of well-known fans. In 1977 voting was extended to all "Active Fans" who were members of Novacon, and then in 1981 two further awards were added: "Best Fanwriter" and "Best Fanartist".

For a fanzine to qualify for the 1996 award, one or more issues must have been published between 1st October 1995 and 30th September 1996. For a writer or artist to qualify, they must have had at least one piece of work published for the first time between those dates. A "Fanzine" is defined as an amateur publication which is concerned with sf, fantasy, sf and fantasy fans and related subjects, copies of which may be obtained in exchange for other fanzines or in response to letters of comment. An "Active Fan" is defined as someone who has received six or more different fanzines during the year (different publications, not different issues of the same publication. The various official organs of a group, society or convention do not count as different fanzines).

Voting is open to full or supporting members of Novacon 26 who meet the requirements above, and can be made by post (a ballot should be enclosed with this Progress Report) or at the convention itself.

Old hands start here: Fanzines received during the past year:

ANORAK REDEMPTION #1: Nigel E Richardson, 35 Cricketers Way, Kirkstall Lane, Leeds, LS5 3RJ.

ANSIBLE #99-110: Dave Langford, 94 London Road, Reading, RG1 5AU.

ATTITUDE #6-7: Michael Abbott, Pam Wells, John Dallman, 102 William Smith Close, Cambridge, CB1 3QF.

A BALANCED DIET: Paul Kincaid, 60 Bournemouth Road, Folkestone, Kent, CT19 5AZ.

BALLOONS OVER BRISTOL #9-10: Pete and Sue Binfield, Top Flat, 160 Wells Road, Totterdown, Bristol, BS4 2AG.

BOB #9-11: Ian Sorensen, 7 Woodside Walk, Hamilton, ML3 7HY.

CONRUNNER #20: Ian Sorensen (address as for BOB).

THE DISILLUSIONIST #1-3: Anthony J Shepherd, Flat C, 39 Birdhurst Road, South Croydon, CR2 7EF.

DREAMBERRY WINE: Mike Don, 233 Maine Rd., Manchester, M14 7WG.

EMPTIES #16-17: Martin Tudor, 24 Ravensbourne Grove, (off Clarkes Lane), Willenhall, West Midlands, WV13 1HX.
 EYEBALLS IN THE SKY #10: Tony Berry, 55 Seymour Road, Oldbury, West Midlands, B69 4EP.
 FANS ACROSS THE WORLD NEWSLETTER #52: Bridget Wilkinson, Ground Floor Flat, 8 West Avenue Rd, Walthamstow, London, E17 9SE.
 FROM THE KELPIES POOL #4: Alison Freebairn, 19 Wateryetts Drive, Kilmacolm, Renfrewshire, PA13 4QP.
 FTT #19-20: Judith Hanna and Joseph Nicholas, 15 Jansons Road, South Tottenham, London, N15 4JU.
 GOTTERDAMMERUNG #7-7^{1/2}: Mark McGann, Tommy Ferguson, James McKee, 42 Ava Drive, Belfast, BT7 3DW, N. Ireland.
 HAVE BAG, WILL TRAVEL #1-4: Martin Tudor (address as EMPTIES).
 INTERESTING TIMES: Rhodri James, 18 Harvey Goodwin Avenue, Cambridge, CB4 3EU.
 MALACHITE GREEN #1: Mike D Siddall (and Alison Freebairn), 133 Duke Street, Askam-in-Furness, Cumbria, LA16 7AE.
 NEVER QUITE ARRIVING #4: Christina Lake, c/o 21 Sunnyside Place, Belmont, MA 02178, USA.
 PLATYPUS #5: Simon Ounsley, 25 Park Villa Court, Leeds, LS8 1EB.
 PLOKTA #1-3: Steve Davies and Alison Scott, 52 Westbourne Terrace, Reading, Berkshire, RG30 2RP.
 POGONOPHOBIA #1-3: Alison Freebairn (address as above for FROM THE KELPIES POOL).
 SALIROMANIA #10: Michael Ashley, 9 Blakely House, Kelmore Grove, Woodside, Bradford, BD6 2RF.
 SIDDHARTHA #2: Ian Williams, 18 Weldon Avenue, Grangetown, Sunderland, Tyne and Wear, SR2 9QF.
 SNUFKINS BUM: Maureen Speller (address as A BALANCED DIET).
 TASH #14: Tommy Ferguson (address as GOTTERDAMMERUNG).
 TRINKETRY: Alison Scott, 42 Tower Hamlets Road, Walthamstow, London, E17 4RH.
 THE TUDOR DYNASTY: Bernie Evans, 121 Cape Hill, Smethwick, Warley, West Midlands, B66 4SH.
 WALLBANGER #15: Eve Harvey, 8 The Orchard, Tonwell, Herts., SG12 0HR.
 WAXEN WINGS AND BANANA SKINS #2: Claire Brialey, 26 Northampton Road, Croydon, Surrey, CR0 7HA AND Mark Plummer, 14 Northway Road, Croydon, CR0 6JE.
 ZORN #4: Mike Scott, 2 Craithie Road, Chester, CH3 5JL.

All of the above are available for "the usual" which means in return for letter of comment, trade, article, or a large self-addressed, stamped envelope.

[If your fanzine is not listed above and you're sure it is eligible, send a copy to Mr Berry at the address below; if your eligible fanzine is not listed above and you're sure you did send a copy to Mr Berry then (a) his cats have eaten it, (b) his postman has eaten it, or (c) most unlikely of all - he has lost/forgotten it; whichever contact him at the address below and your fanzine can be listed next time.

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

Membership List as of 6.10.96

152 Brian Stovold
153 Andrew Ferguson
154 Andrew Wilson
155 Lorna McLaren
156s Stephen Johnson
157 Sarah Main
158 Rob Jones
159 Martin Lenaghan
160 Carl Davies
161 Ken Slater
162 Mark Valentine
163 Colin Harris
164 Nadja Tegen
165 Ros Calverley
166 Chris Walton
167 Bridget Hardcastle
168 Simon Bradshaw
169 Dick Jude
170 Dave Tamlyn
171 Denis Lecocq
172 Helen Oldroyd
173 Thomas Atkinson
174 Sally Sinclair
175 Mark Sinclair
176 John Harvey
177 Eve Harvey
178 JT Rolfe
179 Krystyna Oborn
180 Elaine Coates
181 Mark Slater
182 Tony Berry
183 Freda Warrington
184 Mike Llewellyn
185 John Bilton
186 Mark Plummer
187 Henry Newton
188 Cherry Newton
189 Neil Tomkinson
190 Alison Tomkinson
191 JWF Richards
192 Anne Sudworth
193 Warren Hudson
194 Evelyn Murray
195 Susan Bell Romero
196 Guy Dawson
197 Gary Faber

198 Dave Hicks
199 Cat Coast
200 Ian Shaw
201 Mike Scott
202 Phil Stephenson-Payne
203 A Vincent Clarke
204 Alan Sullivan
205 Nigel Furlong
206 Sabine Benneman
207 Philip Cooper
208 Alison Scott
209 Steven Cain
210 Ben Brown
211 Felicity Fletcher
212 Pat McMurray
213 Julia Daly
214 Martin Smith
215 Caroline Wilson
216 Austin Benson
217 John Bark
218 Robbie Cantor
219 Paul Hood
220 Iain M Banks
221 Anne Blackburn
222 Rafe Culpin
223 Dave Langford
224 Margaret Austin
225 Martin Easterbrook
226 Darroll Pardoe
227 Mike Siddall
228 Dave Wood
229 Les Escott
230 Avedon Carol
231 Rob Hanson
232 Chris Tregenza
233 Jess Bennett
234 Al Johnston
235 Steve Green
236 Anne Green
237 Steve Davies
238 Giulia De Cesare
239 Patrick Curzon
240 Phillip Nye
241 Tara Dowling-Hussey
242 Andy Sawyer
243 Ian Sales
244 Jan Orys
245 Mark Simmons
246 Ray Bradbury
247 Rog Peyton
248 Rod Milner