



on the 1951 Festival S.F. Convention

Chairman:- E.J.(Ted) Carnell
Secretary:- A.Vincent Clarke
Treasurer:- Charles Duncombe
Committee:- Audrey Lovett H.Ken Bulmer
 Fred Brown Ted Tubb
 Jim Rattigan E.E. Arnold

Projectionist:- Kerry Gaulder
Recording:- Jim Burch
Music:- Records supplied by Arthur O.Clarke
 and Bill Temple

Dear 'Festivention' Member,

As you were unable to attend the Festival Convention, we are sending you herewith a copy of the programme, and here is a short report. A Souvenir Booklet is being compiled from recordings and personal reports...we are at present weighing the respective merits of printing, duplicating and lithographing....and one will be sent to you when it is published. This may not be for two or three months, as there is a large amount of material in the recorded speeches to sort out, and arrangements will be made to reproduce many of the photographs that were taken.

Owing to the uncertainty of many people as to whether they could attend and address the Convention, the programme was inevitably a last-minute affair. Even then changes were made, such as the 'Guest Authors' session on Saturday, which had been reserved for S.Fowler Wright and I.O.Evans. In the event neither came, but as previous sessions had over-run their time there was no hiatus.

PRELIMINARY MEETINGS

The final week before the Con. was a very busy period as last-minute arrangements took place, but eventually Thursday, May 10th saw a large crowd of visitors at the 'White Horse'. Estimates vary, but there is little doubt that at least 80 were present, and probably about 90 passed through during the evening. Every now and then the Secretary, who had secured half-a-table in one corner, wormed his way through the crowd to pass out admission tickets to those who hadn't received them through the post, and the voice of Charlie Duncombe, our Treasurer, rose above the general high noise level as he extolled the merits of paying in advance.

Amongst the many overseas visitors present were the Ackermans and Lyell Crane, the Northern Irish fans, and Mr Abas, his brother and his wife from Holland. Professor A.M.Low, pre-war President of the 'Science Fiction Association' looked in for a short time during the evening but said he was unable to attend during the weekend. Another well known figure from SFA times, Doctor W.A.Gibson of Scotland was also there, and at the main sessions.

The Convention Committee retired to the Private Bar for their deliberations, eventually to leave the Secretary and Treasurer to official business and to rehearse the plays to be given during the weekend. These had been presented at U.S. Conventions, and had been sent over to Ted Carnell who translated the more esoteric references into modern English s.fism. As it happened, various changes in the cast on that day caused a complete change over of parts, but at least the voices raised in a mystic chant contributed to the volume of fantastic sound that shook Fetter Lane.

A similar meeting took place on Friday night, though only about 40 were present, leaving enough room for a darts match in the usual corner. Amongst new visitors were old-time fans D.W.F.Mayer and Sid Birchby, and during the evening a number of Northerners arrived; Mike Rosenblum, Max Leviten, Rick Dalton and Derek Pickles and his sister Mavis, amongst others. Artist Alan Hunter, who was there with his wife, was one of an interested group who discussed with Ted Carnell the cover of the next 'New Worlds', the original of which he had and which represented a startling departure from previous policy. On both evenings, and especially on Thursday, the 'London Circle' was present in force to meet visitors.

MAIN SESSIONS

Disaster nearly overtook the Committee's arrangements on Saturday morning when the duplicating machine on which the programme was supposed to be printed refused to work. The full, and uncensored story will be contained in the Souvenir Booklet, but here we'll only say that by tremendous efforts the programmes were eventually delivered during the lunch break at half-past one. By that time, the introductory sessions were over, and at 2.00 Ted Carnell opened the main Convention. Walter Gillings, who has had a great deal of bad luck in the past in his many efforts to establish s.f. in this country, was rather pessimistic as to the success of future attempts in that line, but Forrest J. Ackerman in the next address gave a detailed account of the s.f. field in the States which must have lead to a great deal of argument in the breaks between the sessions on the difference between the two countries.

William F. (Bill) Temple, one of the very few s.f. authors who can write with genuine humour, introduced a lighter touch into the Con. with his account of a space-ship powered by the mitogenetic-rays given off by onions, and the plight of a crew when their food-supplies ran out and they had to start eating their fuel.....we hope to reproduce Bill's mss. in the Souvenir Booklet, so will not go into details.

The S.F. Soap-Opera Company scored a resounding success with their play of a typical s.f. hero and heroine marooned on a desert planet; this play and the later 'Who Goes Where' in the evening were both recorded and disc records may be taken of them. Further details of this will be given later.

Following the tea break, a recording made when the 'Evening News' wrote a report on the 'White Horse' was played, in which authors Clarke, Temple, Youd, Harris, editor Ted Carnell and others took part. A short discussion followed, and then piles of magazines were taken to the tables in front of the audience, and the first auction began. Ted Tubb (whose first pro. story appeared in the current 'New Worlds') is always in demand as auctioneer, for he is undoubtedly the best, and funniest, s.f. auctioneer in this country, and even those who had no intention of buying took great enjoyment in sitting and listening.

After the buffet and dinner break, which produced an enormous queue at the buffet tables, John Keir Cross and Paul Capon were introduced, and J.K.C. spoke at length and very entertainingly of the inside story of the B.B.C. and their reactions to science-fiction. It was, they thought, not real enough. Arthur C. Clarke followed with his experiences of television and his reactions to television make-up.

It was then announced that as by unfortunate circumstances a 9.5mm projector was not available, it was doubtful whether 'Metropolis' could be shown at all, though if a projector could be obtained the film was available for the next night. 'The Lost World' made in 1925 and based on Conan Doyle's fantasy classic was then shown. For it's age it was remarkably good, and thoroughly enjoyed by the audience. The formal programme ended about 10 pm and guests broke into a number of groups and sightseers who examined the tables on which books and magazines were displayed, and the numerous fantasy drawings which covered the walls.

The Sunday sessions began with a talk on the policy of New Worlds which led to such a hot discussion that Lunch break was 20 minutes late. On resumption, international science-fiction, and fandom, were discussed by Lyell Crane, Forrest J. Ackerman and his wife, B. Abas of Holland, M. Gallet of France, Ken Paynter of Australia, Sigmund Ostlund of Sweden and Walt Willis of Belfast, who in the shortest but funniest speech told completists of a new s.f. work...written in Gaelic!

The International Award, which in it's finished form will consist of a Bonestell-type space-ship in chromium plate standing on its fins mounted on a stand with a cigarette lighter, was awarded to George Stewart for 'Earth Abides' and Ley and Bonestell for 'Conquest of Space'. Ackerman received the award on their behalf.

After tea break, Wendayne Ackerman gave an interesting discourse on Dianetics, and two of the leading exponents were present to answer questions after the sessions. So many books and magazines were available for auction that the last was not sold till after the dinner break, and with a film show consisting of two rocket-experiment shorts (one in colour lent by Arthur C. Clarke, and 4 fan-made fantasy shorts lent by Forry, the Convention ended at 10.15. Some guests formed parties to visit the festival on Monday, and a farewell meeting at the 'Havelock' in Grays Inn Road that night brought 30 stalwarts to say farewell and to start planning the 1952 Convention!