

## Rumours about Dave Langford!

Dave's been a guest at a lot of Picocons, but he doesn't seem to come any more. There have been lots of reasons given by paranoid IC students (Oh no, Dave hates us, what did we do?), some of which I put to Dave, who disappointingly said they were unfounded. My favourite reason is the one where Dave was sitting at home in Reading one spring Saturday, when his doorbell rang. He answered the door, to find two young men waiting outside, with a motorbike and a spare helmet. One of the men grinned, took off his helmet, and asked Dave if he'd like to guest at a Picocon. "Okay," said Dave, "when is it?" They gestured towards the bike and replied, "Now."

*Dave sheds the truth:* I like that too, but it didn't happen -- I've always come by train to Paddington and walked across Hyde Park. And haven't (thank goodness) been on a motorbike since the 70s.

Then there's the rumour that Dave was a guest at Picocon one year, but didn't find the out until he turned up. Or the "reason" for his (as it turned out, not actually existent) antipathy to Picocons being because he wasn't met at a train station once, and thus decided he was being "badly treated". Again, both false. Must make up some better rumours next time!

As (Picocon 4) approaches, it brings to me happy memories of Picocon 1. I've never quite been sure just what made Picocon 1 so special, maybe it was the way Mike Morcock just dropped in, or Christopher Tolkien sent us an original one of his father's doodles by way of an apology for his absence. It did look, though, as if there was a large dirty rain cloud in our silver lining, but Harry Harrison didn't turn up in the end (he was too busy ripping Stanislav Leon off at the time, I suppose, in his soon to be published 'The Stainless Steel Kat saves a Hack writer from bankruptcy yet again'), but he did send a games book of what would have happened if he did. The talks were a sheer pleasure from George Lucas's 'A Switch in Time and I'll make Nine (Episodes)' and '101 Depraved Things to do with an Ewok or the Seamier Side of Star Wars'. I've always wondered about certain names—Hans Solo, Leia Organa—well now I know. IC SF won the Science Fiction charades despite getting 'XLYSBRHJCLLY The Unpronounceable' as one title. Their opponents were

stumped by 'a little know work by the Swedish 17th century proto-sf writer Otto Bold. Live roleplaying was much in evidence but due to the failure of TTALT (Treasure Trap Arms Limitation Talks) several more headless bodies were transported to the bowels of Life Sci, were hoards of gibbering failed doctors were unleashed to practice their art. However wholesale slaughter was stopped by the banning of Thanganive the Inscrutable's fireball when Chemistry refused to let him sign for twenty litres of napalm. Arthur C Clark sent us a telegram of congratulations which he then denied he ever sent (see his forthcoming series of 'Arthur C Clark's Mysterious Messages'). So with fond memories of Picocon 1 I am completely confident that Picocon one-vee will surpass even its greatest heights.

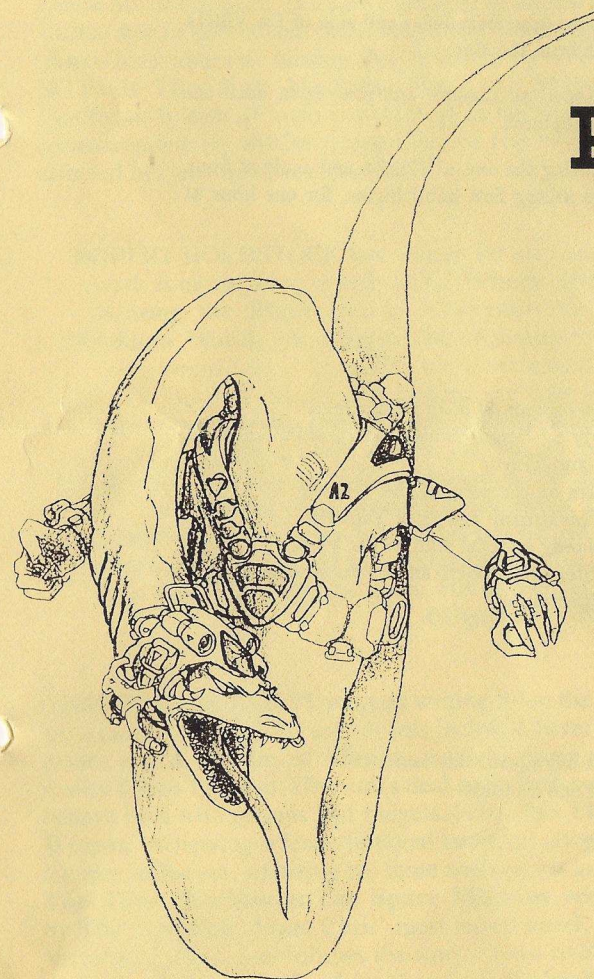
PS Picocon one-vee will take place on Saturday 15th Feb and will start at 10am (it will be repeated via a time-warp in 1857)

From Felix, Friday 24th January 1986  
The aforementioned and long-awaited account of Picocon 1!

icSF.

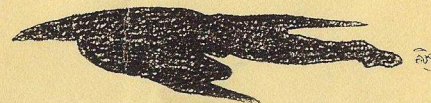
# The Picocon

## Papers



Picocon XIII

See the display of past posters in the Ents Lounge, and guffaw at the photos of past Picocons. Where are they now? If you spot anyone in the photos at the con, ask "Do you come here often?"



## Picocon 13 - General Information

- Badges — Please wear *all* times. Without it you will not get into the various talks or panels.
- Food — Available at 12noon - 2pm from left hand side of Da Vincis. There are also pies available from the Bar.
- Bar — Da Vincis Bar will open at 12noon, and stay open until the Trad Bar opens next door at 6pmish.
- Union Bookshop — Twice during the day, at 12noon and again at 5pm, the Union Bookshop will be selling first hand books, for one hour at each of these times.

We would also like to thank all of the following:

The helpers — Stu, Gordon, Andy S., Helen-Louise, Sam, Robin, Andy G. and Tim

Set You for the artwork on the posters and T-shirts

Our sponsors — Pat McMurray and Rick Yagodich

IC Union, especially Mandy and the staff at Da Vincis

And of course, our three guests, Stephen, Robert and Chris for comming to entertain us!

We hope you enjoy your day here!  
Bug and Sandals

## Picocon 13 - Guests of Honour

STEPHEN BAXTER first became known to many British SF readers through his short stories in **Interzone** and other magazines. Much of this fiction was set in his 'Xeelee' sequence, comprising an imaginative and vividly depicted future history that put many in mind of the works of Larry Niven. His first novel, **Raft**, cemented his growing reputation; the description of the life of human refugees thrust into a universe where gravity is a force ten million times stronger than in our own as a hard-sf tour de force justly compared with **Tau Zero** and **Mission of Gravity**. Stephen's subsequent output has maintained its quality but also increased its breadth. As well as further Xeelee stories and novels (including **Flux** and **Ring**) he has written SF-Victoriana (**Anti-Ice**), alternate history (the forthcoming **Ares**) and a highly-acclaimed sequel to HG Wells' **The Time Machine**, **The Time Ships**. Arguably one of the most significant British SF writers to emerge in the last ten years, Stephen's continued success seems assured. He will be giving a talk on HG Wells' time at Imperial, and how it affected his writing of his fiction.

ROBERT HOLDSTOCK has written far too many books to be listed here. His earlier work is easily recognisable as SF (**Where Time Winds Blow**, **Earthwind**, **Eye Among the Blind**), but he is currently best known for his dark, woody fantasies (**Mythago Wood**, **Lavondyss** and subsequent novels). These deal with the powers in old, virgin forest, where the racial archetypes and historical figures carried in the minds of its visitors are given substance, and time and space do not behave in the way of the outside world. The richly descriptive language makes the setting of the stories, Ryhope Wood, seem almost real, though its dangers, and the brutal nature of its inhabitants, wouldn't make it a place you'd want to live in. Many of Rob's short stories (collected in **The Bone Forest** and **In the Valley of the Statues**) provide explorations into side roads from his novels. He has written a phenomenal number of other novels, published pseudonymously, most famously the novel that was included with the **Elite** computer game. His new novel, **Ancient Echoes**, a retelling of the Gilgamesh myth, is to be published in May this year.

CHRISTOPHER PRIEST stopped writing SF in the 1970s, but SF fans don't seem to have caught on yet. His early novels included **Inverted World**, a tale of a hyperbolic planet, and **A Dream of Wessex**, where a group of people are involved in a virtual reality future England. His books deal more with people and society and the way they behave than with gizmos and gadgets, books like **The Affirmation** and **The Quiet Woman** eschewing science fictional trappings altogether. Chris has claimed HG Wells as a major influence, admiring his fame and success in his heyday; he has pastiched Wells' **The Time Machine** as **The Space Machine**, and Chris' **The Glamour** was inspired by **The Invisible Man**. Chris' most recent novel, **The Prestige**, is also set in Victorian Britain, and follows the story of two rival stage magicians trying to uncover each others' illusions. The twin themes in this book, the misdirection of layers of truth and illusion, are further brought out by the book's structure, a series of journal entries by four different diarists. His talk at Picocon will be on the research into stage illusions that he undertook for the novel.

# Timetable

Time	UDH	Da Vincis
9.30 am	Start: Registration	
10 am	Games	Meet up to "Mob the Star Trek Exhibition"
11 am	Talk: Robert Holdstock	Inane vids start
12 noon	Panel: Writing in other peoples universes.	Food and Bar open
1 pm	Panel: Have Vampires Evolved?	
2 pm	Talk: Stephen Baxter	X-Files episode
3 pm	Panel: The X-Files - Responsible for heightening American Paranoia?	Food closes - Bar remains open
4 pm	Talk: Christopher Priest	
5 pm	Plays in the Dealers Room.	
6 pm	Panel: The Perils of Being Pigeonholed.	
7 pm	Live Lemmings	Discussion: The state of Student Fandom.
8 pm	Wind-down	

## The Picocon Papers

As you may have noticed, this is Picocon 13. We didn't pluck this number out of thin air, oh no, we have a long and glorious history behind us! To put paid to, or perhaps substantiate, the opinion that Picocons are always shambolic affairs run by well meaning incompetents, I proudly present an account of the doings of students of long ago. Lovingly researched by quizzing lots of ex-IC members, reading old newspapers, and digging out the old posters from the bottom of the ICSF library cupboard.

Picocon	Year	Guests	Chair
<b>Pico-Con</b>	1984	Dave Langford, John Cowrie (sic)	
<b>Picocon π</b>	1985	Dave Langford, Gerry Webb	
<b>Picocon 4</b>	1986	Brian Stableford, Dave Langford	Dave Clements
<b>Picocon 5</b>	1987	John Brunner, Dave Hardy	John Salmon
<b>Picocon 6</b>	1988	Terry Pratchett, Mike Scott Rohan, Dave Langford	Tom Yates
<b>Picocon 7</b>	1989	Dave Langford, Terry Pratchett, Gerry Webb, Dave Lally	Simon Bradshaw
<b>Picocon 8</b>	1990	Bob Shaw	Amanda Baker
<b>Picocon 9</b>	1991	Dan Abnett, Alex Stewart	Steve Newhouse
<b>Picocon10</b>	1992	Dave Langford, Brian Stableford	Alex McLintock
<b>Picocon11</b>	1993	Colin Greenland	Bridget Hardcastle
<b>Picocon12</b>	1995	Iain (M) Banks, Dr. Arley Anderson	Gidon Moont and Bridget Hardcastle
<b>Picocon13</b>	1996	Chris Priest, Rob Holdstock, Steve Baxter	Gidon Moont

**But what of Picocon 1?** As you may have noticed from the listing above, there is a little confusion about the early years. The first Picocon I can find mention of in Felix (the College newspaper) is the so-called Pico-Con held in 1984. However, I am assured by "a source" ie Brian Haunton that a Picocon 1 did happen, in 1983 in the Life Sciences building, for a tax dodge or other such bureaucracy-fiddling reason.

So, source, what was it like? "Oh, er, it was an excuse for lots of alcohol... er,er, I remember a drunken haze... er, Dave Langford was there!"

This is a far cry from the account of Picocon 1 printed in Felix in 1986 (see back page) but probably a lot closer to the truth. Possibly it was named *ex post facto*, when the attendees realised they'd just held a con, and they rationalised the numbering later.

This alcohol-induced haze accounts for a lot of anecdotes I didn't get about Picocons; apparently they "all just merge into one" after enough beer. Still, undaunted I press on:

**Pico-Con** claimed to have such delights as Thunderbird 6, Call My Bluff, and talks from Dave Langford and the "Renowned SF personality, John Cowrie".

**Picocon π** also had a talk by Dave Langford, and held the dreaded ICSF vs. Astroscoc charades match. No record has been kept of the victor.

Dave Langford spoke again at **Picocon 4**, as did Brian Stableford, Blade Runner and a UFO episode were shown, and ICSF and CUSFS battled it out in a two-round quiz (and we're not talking beer, here! Or maybe they were...)

**Picocon 5** saw a move from the Union Building to the Biology Seminar rooms. This was the only piece of information on the very artistic poster. The article in Felix claims a victory and a narrow loss to IC versus Cambridge, and another quiz was held this year. Dangermouse episodes were shown, with Scanners shown over supper time. And The Hunger later in the evening, for those who didn't manage much supper.

**Picocon 6** featured another very artistic poster, whose design was taken from the cover of *The Light Fantastic*. Unfortunately the chap from GraffitiSoc who screenprinted it put his own name on as copyright, which did slightly miff a certain GoH! This Picocon also featured the famous Varsity Herring Fight over the Unicorn Oxford vs. Cambridge bid. Matt Bishop of OUSFG did battle with someone (no-one will admit who) from CUSFS in Beit Quad with a Cod.

**Picocon 7** "It went wrong." Simon Bradshaw, Chair. (Actually it probably went OK, but owing to various hassles it was a big panic behind the scenes - Simon)

One of these Picocons, the ICSF charade team was thoroughly hammered by Beccon's. When ICSF had fallen way, way behind, the audience took pity on them, and said that Beccon should only be given difficult charades, and ICSF should only be given easy ones. And still the difference between the scores increased... Should have got the Beccon team to do their charades with only one arm.

**Picocon 8** saw publication of The Waking Edge, ICSF's first fanzine in several years. The most memorable moments of **Picocon 9** were watching Dan Abnett do half his talk with his flies undone, and hearing Alex Stewart's Law of Life, viz. that there is never enough garlic bread.

**Picocon 10** was completely unmemorable, but had Dave Langford at it. As did a posh restaurant, booked in advance by the committee, which turned out to be closed.

It rained on the day of **Picocon 11**, and very few people turned up (though they claimed it was because they hadn't heard about it). Due to a combination of the small turnout and the three programme streams (overdoing it by about two), the con didn't take off as well as had been hoped. Apathy and disillusionment reigned among ICSF ("We're all dismal failures,") and there was no Picocon the following year. This Picocon was held on Sat March 13th. I knew I should have listened to that funny bloke who warned me to "Beware the ides of March!"

**Picocon 12** was held on a Sunday, fun was had with bars getting drinks out of them and dragging Iain Banks from them (well, from the anime programme held therein). The programme was strongly sciency/lit (for a Picocon!), including a panel on "When should the laws of science be broken for the sake of fiction?"

**Picocon 13** : insert anecdote of your choice here!

### World's first ever SF convention was a Picocon - shock!

Forget about that petty bickering between various American and UK groups as to which of their 1936-7 events counts as the first ever SF convention, Picocon has you beat! Back in the late 19th Century, a chap called HG Wells was a student at Imperial College. He liked science fiction. He even wrote a bit himself. Some of his published stories can even be seen on display in the Haldane Library. This was, of course, ICSF's first fanzine. Now, HG wasn't alone in this enthusiasm, oh no. He had a chum, name of Huxley, and every so often they'd get together in the Union Bar, sink a few pints and throw a few science-fictional ideas around. It's not inconceivable that they'd get a few more friends round to chat too from time to time, from nearby towns. This would have been an early Picocon, and therefore the first SF convention in the world, ever.