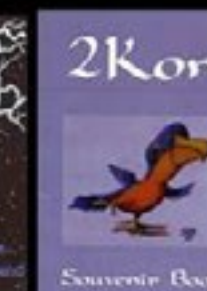


Journey Planet

1978-2018

40 Years of Glasgow Conventions
An Introduction

1978



2018

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Cover composed by Vince Docherty
Featuring Bill Burns' button and badge collection pieces
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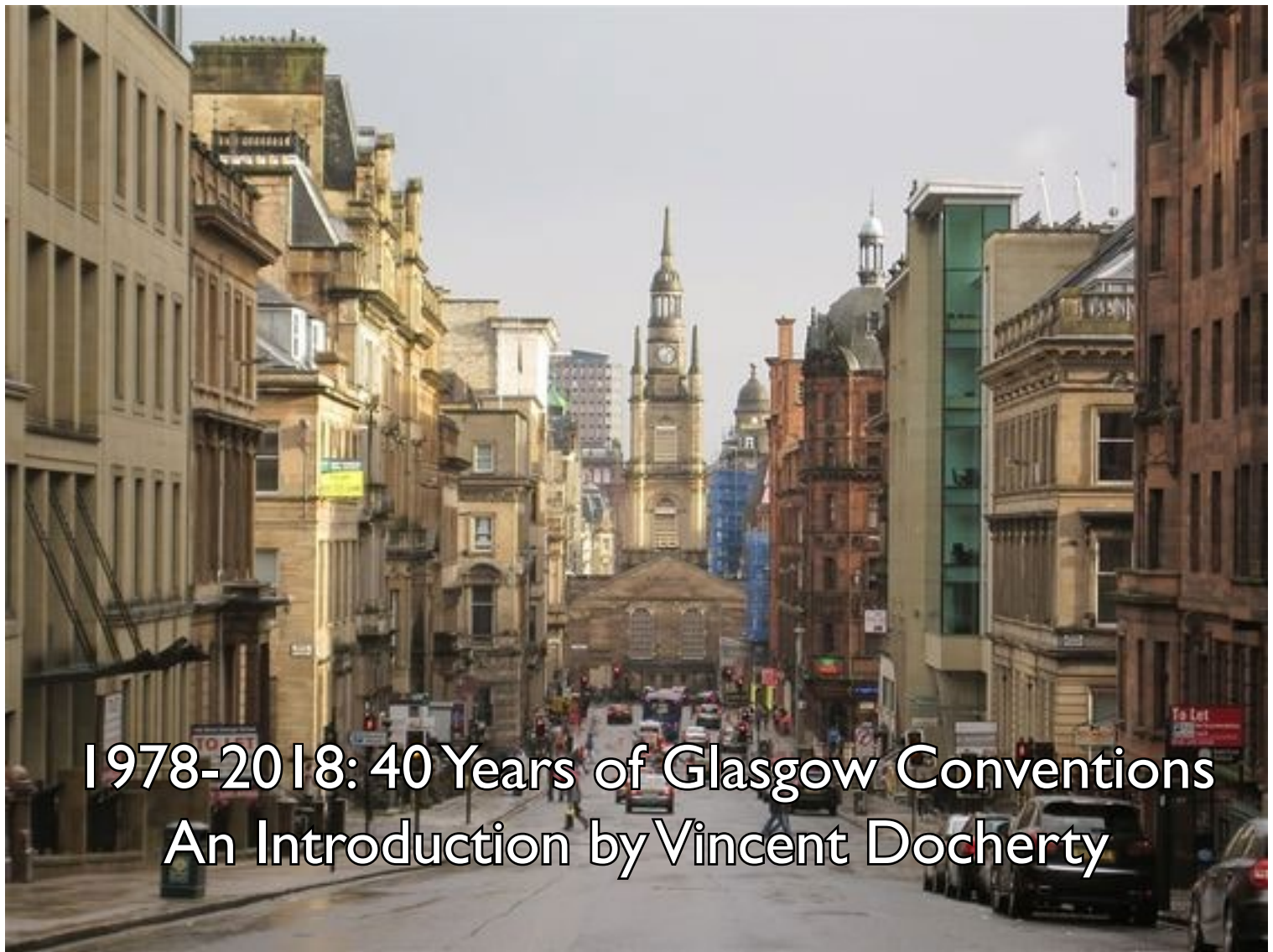
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James Bacon - Vince Docherty - Chris Garcia - Mark Meenan



1978-2018: 40 Years of Glasgow Conventions

An Introduction by Vincent Docherty

In July 1978, the first SF convention in Glasgow, and Scotland, Faircon'78, took place. Named after the traditional 'Glasgow Fair' holiday in the last two weeks of July each year, it was held at the Ingram Hotel in central Glasgow, with Guest of Honour James White, and organised by the local fan group 'Friends of Kilgore Trout' - F.O.K.T. or 'Trout' for short. It was my own first convention, aged 16, and I remember it fondly.

Since then, Glasgow has been host to dozens of local conventions, seven Eastercons (the Annual British National SF con) and two World SF conventions, both of which I co-chaired. The current series of Satellite conventions continues their strong run, and there are serious discussions about Glasgow as potential host for future Eastercons and Worldcon.

With the 40th anniversary of Faircon'78 coming soon after Satellite 6 in May 2018, Mark Meenan and I felt that it would be good to recognise the milestone. James and Chris have kindly supported us in hosting this short introduction to the anniversary in Journey Planet. We hope it will interest and intrigue you, and that it will trigger memories, both written and photographic, which can be collected in a more

comprehensive anniversary publication in time for Satellite 6.

For this issue we have obtained a selection of articles and reviews about a number of the Glasgow conventions, which should provide a flavour of the events, the approach of the organisers and something about the wider influence that Glasgow cons and fandom have had over the last four decades.

The initial series of Faircons and Albacons, running 1978-1988, were known, in fact were infamous for, their energy and creativity, and a willingness to try new things ranging from the sublime to the ridiculous. To be honest, much of that came from not knowing that there were limits to what's possible, as well as not understanding the limits of our own competence at the time. That included inviting some of the biggest names in SF internationally, attracting large numbers of fans from beyond the UK, especially Ireland, the Netherlands and the Nordic countries, a strong focus on SF&F film, and any number of fun and silly events including the custard pie fights - with real custard! Many fans and guests who attended any of those initial conventions still speak fondly of them.

Three British National Eastercons were also

run by Glasgow fans, in 1980, 1983 and 1986. Albacon'80, the first, was named both for the Albany hotel which hosted it, and for Alba, the Scottish Gaelic name for Scotland. This was the first Eastercon held outside England, which apparently was a concern to some. Con reports from the time, also mentioned in Ansible, mentioned various controversies, including internal committee conflicts, but the convention itself was reasonably successful, and the Eastercon came back to Glasgow twice in the following six years, and four further times to date. (Interestingly all the 1979-1986 Eastercons alternated among Leeds, Brighton and Glasgow.)

The increasing visibility and popularity of the Glasgow cons during the 1980's led the local events to grow to near-Eastercon size and as a result a lot more attention was focussed on how to run conventions successfully and to retain good practices between events. 'Con-runner' as a label and identity (including an eponymous fanzine) became common alongside existing fannish labels. This coincided with a period in wider UK-fandom with visible tensions among various groups due to perceived different approaches and philosophies about convention content, size, and the importance of fannish history and culture, particularly fanzines. (In 1984 for instance, the Eastercon Seacon'84 - the largest Eastercon to date, combined with Eurocon - was followed by the first Mexican, Tynecon II, with it's a strong focus on literary SF.)

Following 1988 several of the regular con-runners in Glasgow chose to take a break and there was a transition to a new wave of local conventions during the 1990's and 2000's retaining the Albacon name and then to the Hyptheticons and Convivial, as well as a successful series of Star Trek conventions. The late 1980's included the 1987 Worldcon in Brighton on which many Glasgow fans worked and which resulted in a new generation of con-organisers becoming active across the UK and subsequently in the successful 1990 Worldcon in The Hague. The cross-fertilisation of the events, coupled with huge advances in personal communication technologies, led to a gradual shift in UK con-running from a city/local group-based approach, to one where committees increasingly brought in members from many locations, something that has become something of a norm now, with exceptions of course. Many fans, including myself, now often work on conventions in many locations and the UK Eastercon and Worldcons hosted in the UK typically have committee and staff from across the UK and other countries.

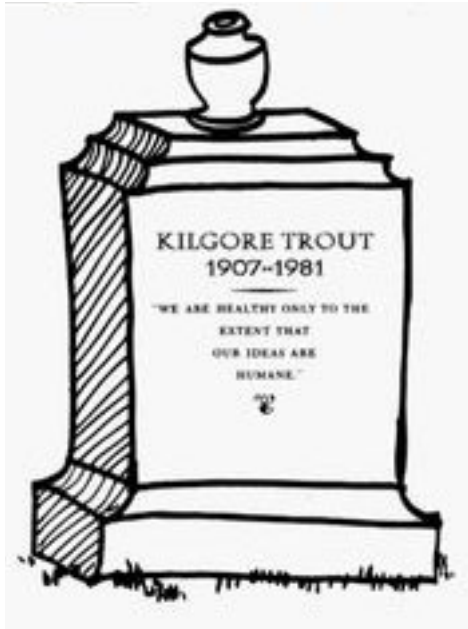


Vince's Early Leadership Training...

Running since 2007, the current series of Glasgow-based conventions are the Satellites, which retain much of the characteristics of the last 40 years of Glasgow cons, with a very strong focus on Science and Space. These included the successful 2014 Eastercon Satellite 4, whose science-GoH, Dame Jocelyn Bell Burnell, has been selected as a GoH by the upcoming 2019 Worldcon in Dublin. Satellite 6, to be held in late May 2018, will be close to the 40th anniversary of Faircon'78, and we will recognise that and celebrate appropriately.

Looking back over 40 years it's hard to understate the significance, enthusiasm and energy of the Glasgow conventions. The history and infrastructure of the city itself have no doubt contributed - with three Universities, a rich science and technology background, many suitable facilities (the UK Eastercon has been held in four different hotels in the city, with others possible), strong support from local authorities, many local fan groups and societies, and of course the many fans, writers, artists and others who have each contributed and given something back to the wider science fiction community and genre.

The articles in this issue highlight many of the points I've touched on here, in various styles and from different perspectives. We are very grateful to the writers and/or rights holders. We would love to hear more stories, and get photos and articles from the last 40 years, and to include them in a comprehensive memory book to be made available in time for Satellite 6 and the 40th Anniversary. You can reach us at journeyplanet@gmail.com



Origin of Trout by Jim Campbell

The Glasgow SF Group had its genesis in 1974. That year the British Eastercon (Tynescon) was held in Newcastle in conjunction with a SF Film festival. I had been attending Eastercons for two years and had up until then, met no other fans from north of the border. However at Tynescon I bumped into another Glaswegian fan by the name of Ian Black. Ian and I arranged to meet up once we had returned home, and Ian recruited 4 other people, one of which was a published author whose name I am unable to recall. The first meeting was in a hotel bar in Paisley since the author lived nearby and the next was in a rundown bar called The Dunrobin across from Strathclyde University. After the first meeting, I never saw the author again, and our group shrank to 4. At the second or third meeting, the subject of what to call our group reared its ugly head and after some discussion, someone (I don't remember who) suggested an "in joke", and The friends of Kilgore Trout were formed.

At first, our little group grew slowly, but once a change of Venue found us in Wintersgills Bar in the west end, our numbers began to increase, until eventually forty to 50 people regularly attended every week. Ian Black tired of the group within a year, but remained supportive, and went on to become a playwright and travel writer. The group eventually moved from Wintersgills and the numbers attending declined, But that chance meeting of two Glaswegians in 1974, eventually resulted in Glasgow hosting a number of conventions including Eastercons and Worldcons, something that those two founders would have found incredible.



Convivial – 29-30th May 2004, Central Hotel Glasgow. By James Bacon

A review by James Bacon – originally appeared in Tommy World edited by Tommy Ferguson.

I had decided quite some time ago, that I would be going to Convivial, perhaps the striking vision that the committee posed, all dressed in Victorian garb, and the promise of good fun con were too much to ignore.

I had intended to meet Stefan Lancaster and Dave 'Elvis' Elder at the con. At the last moment, the lads had to pull out, for honourable reasons. My good friend, Mick O'Connor took great advantage of this, and after a bit of a chat, decided to come along with me to the con.

Mick is a very grand fellow, as he introduced me to the world of Science Fiction fandom. He was the storekeeper, and I was the fifteen-year-old comic fan, and after we got to know one another very well, it was he who suggested I go to an Irish Science Fiction Association.

I did. That's where I started.

I had decided that this trip would be a trial run for Interaction. I have had enough with Ryan Air, this shower of Bastards now charge £4/€6 for every killo over 15 kilogram's. No self-respecting con-goer can afford such a bill, with the luggage that a fun con requires, costumes, junk, weapons, pistols etc.

So road and ferry were the order of the day. I can fit a considerable load in the car, and with 2005 in mind, a convoy may be a very efficient way for Dublin and Irish fans to get across.

We left Dublin at 6.30 am on Friday the 27th of May. We arrived in Belfast at 8.40 am, making good time and with more than enough to spare to enjoy a hearty breakfast in a greasy spoon on Belfast Docks. The Ferry was rather dated, but adequate for our three-hour journey. We chatted and enjoyed coffee, and it was very relaxing. Of course, when we drove off the ferry, we were immediately selected for, well I don't know, interrogation, would that be the word. We were of course travelling from one part of the

United Kingdom to another, but two lads with Beards in a Republic reg'd car, random check no doubt.

After they had checked Mick's Bus Pass, and looked quizzical as I spouted off about science fiction conventions, we were off, heading up the western coast of Scotland, a beautiful part of Britain. We arrived in Glasgow, at around 4pm, which gave us ample time to get lost and then find our hotel.

We checked in. In true ejit fashion I had booked our room late, but we were lucky, the Dali Lama was in Glasgow, and rooms were sparse, but the University has a superb rooms, unbeknown to most, and it proved very satisfactory.

We entered the Central Hotel, a wonderful building, built as part of the Central Station. It feels special, unique and just like the Shepperton Moat House, Hanover Hinckley and Royal Marine Dun Laoghaire, all home from homes. My first con in the Central Hotel was an Albacon, a bloody good venue.

I must say that from the offset everything seemed well and dandy. I met a number of UK fans whom I know, and within no time we were off with doctor Sage's Scandalous Diversions. Live action Worms and Russian Roulette were a great start to the convention.

Later on Friday, the gambling, although thinning out the disco of some of its dancers, was definitely a personal highlight of the weekend. The Hellfire gambling club was a superb idea, here further chips, were available to purchase, all funds going to charity, to supplement the few in everyone's membership pack. Roulette, various versions of Poker and Black jack were all being played with a certain amount of abandon.

Helping to the clear gambling heads was the absinthe, a shot of which was free to all members,

“it is always hard to get people to dress up”

further shots available for £2, and of course, being a high roller, well, the Absinthe Fairy was pissed and wearing feck all, literally, so the sugar burned and the betting continued.

I heard at this stage that the convention had broken even, and the committee who were all in appropriate attire, were well chuffed.

Later, once the music had finished, I went to two different room parties, both proved interesting to say the least and it was 4.30 am as Mick and myself walked back to our hotel.

Saturday saw more fun and games, and then a variety of Quiz's, talks and Interactive items.

The great South American Amphibious Calamity saw everyone making Frogs out of Paper, which was then followed by Croquet. Mick and myself occasionally adjourned to discuss matters Ted White, and some fans always populated the bar. It was nice to see so many fans from various parts of the UK. I was chuffed to see that so many had made the long trip up from London, but shocked at some of the train fairs.

The few serious talks were both entertaining and well delivered.

In the evening there was a dinner planned. I am not a big 'dinner' fan, myself, but this one worked out really well. I was so surprised that so many people actually took the time to dress up! Everyone was. This was fantastic, as it is always hard to get people to dress up.

The dinner was brilliant. I was pleased with the food, it was tasty, initially my plate was rather sparsely filled, but I requested extra potatoes and refused to say enough till the plate was overflowing. It was interesting, only after I had repeatedly asked for potatoes, did my fellow dinners' have the gumption to do likewise. I suppose that's the English for you, as most of them were. An Irish man loves his spuds.

There was a bit of Rebellious action, its strange, I had been primed before hand, and asked to intervene in an after dinner speech that the Chairman was going to make. As soon as our esteemed chair had started, I shouted out ' Brits Out', most people laughed,



“Glasgow is truly a lively city.”

and when I shouted it again, there was further laughter. The third time though, people were not so sure, and the laughter was turning into raised eyebrows and questioning looks, I then got more vocal, and could see that people were not so sure what was going on, just for a split second.

Of course I then whipped out a concealed Colt Army single shot .45, and immediately everyone realised it was theatre, and the room erupted in laughter, maybe relief, as I chased the chairman off.

Brandy and cigars were on offer at this stage and then there was The Ceildhle, which in my own personal opinion was a thorough success.

I must say though that a lot of that has to go down to the excellent choice of band. Previously pretentiousness at two other ceildhes run at conventions had annoyed me, but this band were excellent.

It's a brilliant opportunity to grab a woman or man and throw them about the place at high speed, without getting in trouble and the dance floor was often full. It was great craic. Meanwhile drinks and games were going on.

The night ran pretty late, the gambling had really taken hold and five-card hold up was the order of the day in the bar once the dancing had finished and again it was interesting to stroll back to our hotel at 4.30am, Glasgow is truly a lively city.

Sunday started off even, as were introduced to Fencing. I must admit that the fencing really caught my eye and I am considering looking into that sport, although if I did take it up, it might be a miracle, as I seem so busy with various hobbies of an SF nature.

Steam was next, but no boring panel was this. I was of course impressed with both the Train Set and the building of steamboats, despite getting somewhat scalded for my efforts, it was a bloody good and involving panel. This was science in action, I imagine the guys who ran the con, all being PhD types have taken part in many such experiments; but I loved it.

Continuing the gambling theme, we then had stuffed toy racing, the race was excellent there was some real tension in the air, and the odds were well worked out. To make it more interesting after the first race various handicaps were spaced to perfection, creating further tension, differing odds, more shouting and a good laugh.

After this, Mick and I left the hotel, and went on a quick spin on the Glasgow Underground. It only takes about 38 minutes to go around the whole loop, and it was an odd journey but worth it.

It got better when we got back as we then were able to play and race Helium filled dirigibles.

Sunday night turned into a blur. There were loads of raffles and prize giving's and then it was to the bar, out to another bar where Jugs of Pimms were £4 and food was bloody good, and then back to the hotel bar and drinkies and cards late into the night. I bided adieu to many a friend, and upon return to the hotel at 5am, there was further chat about Ted White, such an influential fellow. It was nice to see the dawn.

The next day we departed, the journey to Stranrayer was quick and pleasant.

AS Mick and I stood in the sun on the dock in Stranrayer, we both noted that although we were tired, we were filled with contentment and warmth, a sort of jubilation, that we both had had a great weekend. It was so nice to go to a convention that I would have been proud to run or even be involved with. I must say all my expectations were exceeded, which was better than pleasant.



JAMES WHITE

SECTOR GENERAL

*Four tales of medical disaster—
and imaginative recovery*

THE SCOTTISH INFLUENCE ON SECTOR GENERAL

by

James White

Albacon II Guest of Honour Speech

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen, if the programme isn't running late. Because of the, at times, controversial content of this speech, and the necessity of allowing more time for the questions which might arise because of it, I would like to make it a bit shorter than usual. Not short, of course, but just a few minutes on the shorter side of interminable.

Once again I appear before you in the increasingly familiar position of Guest of Honour at a Glasgow convention. The first occasion was Faircon '78, when the place and the people were strange to me, the accents were even stranger, and the con committee were very strange indeed (Well, some things don't change), and the odd disaster which occurred from time to time was viewed as a breathtaking innovation. At subsequent Glasgow conventions I maintained a low profile (not an easy thing for me) until two years ago, for a reason I did not understand at the time, I was invited to be Toastmaster.

Little did I suspect that I was already being groomed for the Big One, this, the national Easter convention, Albacon II.

But there is worse to come ...

It is reportedly not true, and they themselves will strenuously deny it, that the Glasgow convention committees are finding it increasingly difficult to choose, from among the drunken and depraved ranks of the science fiction professional writers, one who is least undeserving of the honour. The con committee has problems enough, you will appreciate, without having to worry about unpredictable behaviour from a maverick Guest of Honour.

It is for this reason that they are trying to employ one on a permanent basis; one who is easily led, or driven; one who is a harmless little pussy-cat. I must be content merely to make this startling -- also amazing, fantastic, analogous and Azimovistic -- disclosure. Far be it for me to suggest anyone for

this vitally important post of Permanent Guest of Honour. However, it is possible that I, myself, possess a few of the necessary qualifications. For instance, I am completely against the consumption of alcohol, in moderation; my convention misbehaviour is exemplary; and I can be very easily influenced -- by a pint of heavy or a wee Drambuie. Even Bruce Saville can get me to do things for him, by administering a quick kiss, a Glasgow Kiss, in the kneecap.

Regrettably, I no longer look as distinguished and debonair as I have done in former years. The eye-patch has gone.

This is a pity in some ways, but, let's face it, that eye-patch was something of a mixed blessing. True, it gave me a certain dashing, devil-may-care air which was irresistible to the birds. But the only birds it really affected were parrots, who kept shouting piratical phrases at me, and messing up my nice St Fantony blazer, and threatening my virility with the dreadful disease Psittacosis. One of the most dreadful things about Psittacosis is trying to spell it.

As well, both the eminent Doctor Cohen (Where are you, Jack) and the nice, wee, totie Dr Patterson (Hiya, Joan) will confirm that among parrots.) Psittacosis is an unspeakable social disease -- how many parrots have you heard talking about it? -- and any young, misguided bird unfortunate enough to contract the disease is immediately ostrichised.

Even though the eye-patch is gone, the magnifying glass is still needed. This tends to slow down the delivery of my speech, as well as setting it on fire if the sun is shining, and I am very sorry about this. So much so that I'd thought of asking Peggy, concealed behind screens, of course, to read the speech while I stood here and mimed. But she has a very clear soprano voice, and this may have given people the wrong idea about me.

But enough of the health and social hazards of wearing an eye-patch. This speech is concerned with the influences, both malignant and benign, of the northern Gaels on the development of the most recent Sector General stories. It is entitled, naturally enough, "The Scottish Influence on Sector General", or more simply "The Influence of Scotch on Sector General," or "Sector General on the Rocks," or whatever title seems most appropriate to such serious and scholarly discussion.

A great many people, in addition to the Glasgow fans, have told me what to do with the Sector General series. Some of the suggestions have been improper, not to say physiologically impossible. Others have been beyond even my imaginative scope. What form, for example, would the DT's take in an

extra-terrestrial alcoholics ward?

I mean, what kind of monster of the drink-disordered mind could be worse than the big, brown-eyed (six of them) and multi-tentacled nurse who is wheeling round the pill trolley? In such a situation the patients might be terrified, not by the variety of friendly horrors who are looking after them, but by solid, inanimate objects. Boxes or furniture, for example, would be particularly frightening to a bunch of soft-bodied, squishy and alcoholic aliens - and sharp-edged, angular, structural supports of the ward would be worst of all because, wait for it, they are made from girders.

Some of these suggestion I have been impelled to use, because of psychological pressure, you understand, or physical coercion.

I well remember the time a couple of Faircons ago, when we were being run out to the airport. Well, actually it was the mini which was running us out to the airport, with minimal supervision by the driver, who was otherwise engaged in introducing us to the concept of intelligent but medically deprived budgerigars.

We were made to feel that budgies, too, were God's creatures, and fully deserving of Sector General's care and medical expertise instead of letting the Hudlar and Tralthan heavies hog all the available resources. Extra-terrestrial budgies, he insisted, were the salt of the Earth. Although his meaning was clear, he seemed to be geographically confused, and we hoped he knew where the airport was. He did, at least, the car did, and we were driven round and round the car park until I promised, on my hypocritical oath, to give budgerigars their proper place in Galactic Federation's Health Service.

Certain safe-guards were necessary from the legal standpoint, of course. This excitable, highly intelligent, light-gravity species was given three legs -- each one of them, I mean, not the whole species -- to avoid the risk of ordinary terrestrial budgies suing me. The race is known to the Galactic Federation as the Nallajim. The 'jim' is, of course, obvious and 'nalla' spelled backwards ... Subtle, huh?

In the same story -- a novelette called Survivor in the latest SG book -- poor little Prilicla is nearly killed by a creature called a Dewett.

For those of you who have never read a Sector General story, tsk-tsk-tsk, I should explain the basic premise behind the treatment of sick extra-terrestrials in the hospital. Simply, it is that a life-form cannot be affected, or infected, by the germs evolved by another off-planet species -- the e-t pathogens are incapable of reacting with any organism which is the

product of a completely alien environment and evolution.

This is a bit of a cop-out, I know, but to do otherwise would mean that human and e-t medics would not be able to meet and talk, much less treat each other -- I mean medically, not alcoholically -- without all sorts of protective clothing and barrier nursing procedures being necessary, and this would seriously slow down the action.

But while e-ts cannot be affected by other e-ts diseases, several members of the Friends of Kilgore Trout, and some other folks as well, have put forward ideas based on the exception which might prove the rule. The Dewett life-form seems to be one of these exceptions, and Prilicla, the empath, is the being most at risk.

I don't want to give away the whole plot, but I will say that the Dewett is a nice, placid, completely harmless and rather charming entity -- so long as one treats it with deference and respect, tells it it is a fine person, panders to its every whim, and plies it with its favourite tipple. However, should one of these rules be contravened, the effect on the convention, I mean the Hospital, would be terrible to behold.

The Dewett is, withall, a very serious, conscientious being who worries constantly about the behind-the-scenes operations of the hospital the availability of suitable accommodation, the proper provisioning of the various kitchens; the administration of sickness benefit and e-t staff pension schemes, the urgent need for a department of e-t chiropody (Thornaster the Tralthan Diagnostician-in-Charge of Pathology for example, has callouses on all six of its feet, which is why the nurses call it Corny Thorny); It also makes frequent mention of the fact that proper consideration is not being given to the disposal or recycling of e-t body wastes.

You can see that the Dewett has a very tidy mind -- no, tidy, not tiny -- and it asks awkward questions on subjects like these, a new batch every year. Another idea used in the latest SG book, which had its origin at a Glasgow convention is in a story called Investigation. In this story the ambulance ship team are involved for a time in the practice of forensic medicine. When they arrive at the scene of the disaster they find, not simply a wrecked ship, but evidence of a heinous crime.

Pieces of the crew lay scattered about the vicinity of the wreck, as if some agency had been at work with an extra-terrestrial chain-saw. There were twitching heads and tails and limbs all over the place, resembling nothing so much as a CUSFS room party.

I can't remember who it was who came up with the idea originally, before it was cleaned up for the story. But if the sick mind responsible would persuade its host body to stand up, it can receive its egoboo.

Some of the plot suggestions have been unusual, even if one makes allowances for the condition of the alcohol-impregnated minds making them. For example, there was the suggestion that Dr Prilicla, the insectile, timid and extremely fragile empath should go berserk and beat up its colleagues. Ridiculous, you say. But even ridiculous ideas merit consideration (if one is desperate or drunk enough), and suppose the being was not Prilicla but a look-alike, with muscles? This particular entity is one of the new characters being introduced in a story I am currently working on.

I share the superstition held by many authors about discussing, in detail, work which has not yet been completed, much less accepted for publication. But I can talk about the story in general terms, I think, without losing the urge to finish writing it -- mostly because I haven't a baldy notion how it will end yet.

The working title is Diagnostician, and it is a novel in which Dr Conway, having served with distinction on the senior medical staff of Sector General for more years than he (or I) cares to think about, is being considered for a position of one of the medical elite, one of the hospital's Diagnosticians. This will be the sixth, and probably the last book in the series, As I have already said, it introduces a new recruit to the ambulance ship's medical team, a character called Dr Danalta who, among its many other attributes, is a most effective and rapid shape-changer -- with a sense of humour which is not always appreciated by its colleagues.

This Danalta, whose physiological classification is TOBS, belongs to a race of shape-changers who evolved on a planet whose environment was incredibly hostile, and the natural weapons that its dominant life-form evolved were perfect offensive and defensive mimicry. The species is fantastically strong and virtually indestructible, with the ability of extruding any protective tegument, limbs, internal and external organs, sensory and communication equipment at will.

While an entity with such powers can easily reproduce the extremely delicate structure of a Cin-russkin like Prilicla, the TOBS is a heavy creature who cannot lose mass during such a change.

Can you imagine such a Prilicla replica (that is hard to say), a Prilicla look-alike with its egg-shell body, pipe-stem legs and filmy wings perfectly reproduced, but in material so dense as to resemble neu-

tronium? The thin, diamond-hard legs of this Prilicla would do more than scratch the furniture, and I hate to think of what would happen if some heavyweight Hudlar or Tralthan bully tried to kick sand in its face. There is also the incident where Conway expresses a need for the delectable Pathologist Murchison in Danalta's hearing, when she was on duty at the other end of the hospital. The TOBS, anxious to please its boss, tried to oblige with a perfect piece of mimicry. Fortunately, the substitution is discovered before anything of an X certificate nature can take place.

For these reasons the being is treated with caution, but it is an entity with great enthusiasm and ability and hopefully, the TOBS will be given opportunities in the future for using its considerable talents for the general good.

In the new story Conway, instead of solving individual medical puzzles in a blaze of glory, will, because of his increased responsibility, will be engaged on on-going, long-term problems which have been concerning the hospital for years.

One of these is the tragic and apparently insoluble problem of the FOKT.

The FOKT's inhabit a world in the same galactic sector as the Rollers, leeches and strata creature described in Major Operations – the planet Drambo. For this reason I was going to call their world Drambuie. Then I thought that I would be more subtle and call it Goglesk.

The intelligent, sometimes, denizens of Goglesk had a very interesting evolution. They began as a species of giant plankton which grew so large that a role reversal took place and they began eating the eaters. This was accomplished by them linking up to form a group entity when threatened by predators, and this instinctive defence mechanism remained with them when the FOKT's left their oceans and became dominant on land.

Visually the physiological classification FOKT is an erect, egg-shaped being, very shaggy around the head and with their flanks covered by long, multi-coloured hair which falls naturally into an attractive, criss-cross pattern, the colours of which seem to serve some important family or tribal identification function.

When threatened with danger, real or imagined, the hair rises and stands out straight until a number of the beings have huddled together for mutual protection, then the individual strands -- which lie laterally and vertically, remember -- insinuate themselves under and over those of their neighbours until a large number of FOKT's have, in effect, woven themselves together into an enormous, carpet-like

group entity with an overall tartan pattern.

But the problem, nay the tragedy, of the Gogleskans is that, although individually of a very high intelligence, when they become impelled to form a group, a marked deterioration in the overall IQ becomes apparent. As well as the reduction in the quality of the mentation, physical movements become wild and unco-ordinated, they find it difficult to communicate verbally, illogical and extravagant acts, many of them laudable, become the norm, and the proportion of blood in their alcohol supply becomes negligible. Apt indeed is the saying taken from ancient FOKT lore, "As thick as two plankton ..."

Truly the FOKT's are a sad case, and at the moment Conway is unable to answer the challenge of a race whose whole is considerably less than the sum of its parts. In desperation, I had thought of making the Chief Psychologist the hero of this case.— O'Mara would size up the situation and prescribe multiple doses of therapeutic schizophrenia. This is an old trick, but it just might work. But somehow I don't think Judy-Lynn del Rey, who has a terrific sense of humour, after office hours, would accept a story with that ending.

I have no idea what to do about the FOKT's at the moment. But the story is only half written, and maybe a solution will be suggested before the convention is over. The Gogleskan situation deserves a happy ending.

And speaking of happy Things, there is an aspect of Sector General's work which I have studiously avoided in the past, in spite of many requests by one of the people here to describe the process in detail. Invariably, the request was preceded by a spell of nudge-nudge, wink-winking. Yes, you've guessed it, extra-terrestrial nookie. Well, in the next book I shall spend some time on one particular aspect of this thorny problem, -- extra-terrestrial sex-change procedures.

I make no apology for not making no mention -- I seem to be losing myself in a welter of negatives -- of the physical movements and positions associated with this activity, as practiced by the eighty-seven different intelligent life-forms which make up the Galactic Federation. The process is very repetitious and boring, for non-participants, and when more than twenty limbs are in simultaneous motion, and other Things are going on, it becomes very difficult for the author to describe.

On the other hand, or foot, or tentacle, the sex-life of the FROB Hudlar combines variety with a beautiful, almost classic, symmetry, and Conway is involved with a patient who changes its sex from male

to .female, then back again.

The Hudlars are ... peculiar ... in this respect. A healthy, adult and active male will, after several months hard work in the X-certificate area with its partner will, after conception has taken place, find that its resources have become depleted, and it loses interest. By the time baby Hudlar arrives Dad's speaking membrane is registering several octaves higher, its endocrine system has gone into reverse, and it is well on the way to becoming a female. Meanwhile, the process of giving birth has caused a similar reversal in the mother who has now gone distinctly Butch. For a few months there is a stage where they don't know whether they are coming or going, but since this is the period during which their infant requires the maximum of care and protection, their confusion causes little psychological hardship.

Eventually the situation clarifies itself, and Mama-that-was starts acting like a hopeful father-to-be and, after a decent -- maybe that should be indecent -- interval of nookie, father-that-was becomes a mother-to-be. And so it goes on, with each parent taking turns to be mother. This is probably the reason why the minor psychological aberration, male chauvinism, is unknown among Hudlars.

From the foregoing you will have gathered that the Scottish influence on the Sector General stories has been considerable in recent years, and my difficulty in pronouncing some of the longer words would indicate that I have also been influenced by the Scotch. But now it only remains for me to answer any questions you may have, and to thank everyone concerned for inviting me once again to Goglesk, I mean Glasgow, as Guest of Honour.

Thank you.





The SECC and the Glasgow Convention Bureau by Mark Meenan

I first visited the SECC in the summer of 1987, a short time before Conspiracy. The “Big Red Shed” as it was known locally had recently been opened and we thought it might be a suitable venue for a future UK worldcon. Vince Docherty and I met with the SECC convention sales manager Roger Ware. Right from the start the SECC proved good to work with.

Construction of a hotel on site had just started, it was then called the Forum, but shortly after opening it changed its name to the Moat House, it is now a Crowne Plaza.

As the details became firmer it became apparent that the costs in using a convention centre in the UK were considerable and not affordable, however the SECC pointed us to a Subvention Scheme that had been set up to help. At the time there were 3 partners in the SECC consortium – Glasgow City Council, Strathclyde Regional Council and the Scottish Development Agency - the subvention application process was coordinated by the Greater Glasgow Convention Bureau and Tourist Board. A subvention bid document was prepared and submitted. At the time SF conventions were somewhat unusual to the people on the committee which made subvention awards. However by this time I had had a

number of meetings with the SECC and the Convention Bureau and they supported our case. I was called to a meeting of the committee to present our case – the meeting went well and shortly afterwards the subvention was approved. This made it financially viable to run a worldcon in Glasgow and so the bid was able to proceed. By this time Roger Ware had left the SECC and had been replaced by Ali Wright, she was very helpful and came out to a few worldcon’s before the vote in 1992. When Ali Wright retired from the SECC we were invited to her retirement do.

Before Intersection was held the Convention Bureau launched the Glasgow Ambassador Programme to help bring conventions to Glasgow – representatives of various conventions were invited to the City Chambers as part of the launch event. The newspapers were and the Convention Bureau asked me to take part in the photo shoot along with the convenor of Strathclyde Region and the Lord Provost of Glasgow City and so appeared in the local newspapers.

The relationship with both the SECC and Convention Bureau continued to be strong and after Intersection and Interaction, by this time the Head of the Convention Bureau was Scott Taylor who had been the General Manager of the Central

Hotel, during Intersection and 2Kon, and the Sales Executive we meet is Aileen Crawford. They continued inviting both me and Vince to meetings to learn what is happening in the SF convention field, they were very keen to have us back again and showed continued interest in Science Fiction conventions in general. Subvention is only available to conventions held at the SECC, however they provide other support in hotel negotiations and room bookings. This has proved very helpful to the Satellite conventions in particular where they helped secure venues and hotel bedroom accommodation.

The convention bureau arranged Civic receptions offered to both worldcon's and the eastercon Satellite 4 – a senior member of the council attended to welcome the convention to Glasgow and delivered a speech to members. I suspect thanks to a good speech writer on the staff who had a genuine interest

in Science Fiction, they seemed very knowledgeable on SF at Satellite 4 they quoted the movie *Forbidden Planet* and the writings of George O Smith.

Scott Taylor has recently moved on from the Convention Bureau but Aileen is still very keen on a continued relationship and is offering help to the UK in 24 bid and future eastercons and local conventions. Our current contact at the SECC is Jennifer Roddie. I recently had a meeting at the SECC and their technical manager, Tony Edwards, asked to come to the meeting, he had been there at both Intersection and Interaction and was keen to show what their new equipment could do and how it could enhance any future worldcon. This is typical of many of the staff at the SECC, quite a few of them have been there for years and remember hosting Intersection and Interaction. .



Timeline of Glasgow Conventions

| | | | | |
|------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------|--|
| 1978 | Original Faircons & Albacons | Faircon'78 | | |
| 1979 | | Faircon'79 | | |
| 1980 | | Hitchercon 1 | Albacon'80 (Eastercon) | |
| 1981 | | Faircon'81 | | |
| 1982 | | Faircon'82 | | |
| 1983 | | Invention | Albacon II (Eastercon) | |
| 1984 | | Albacon'84 | | |
| 1985 | | Albacon'85 | | |
| 1986 | | XIICon | Albacon III (Eastercon) | |
| 1987 | | Albacon'87 | | |
| 1988 | | Albacon'88 | | |
| 1989 | | | | |
| 1990 | | | | |
| 1991 | Second wave of Albacons | Albacon'91 | Speculation (Eastercon) | |
| 1992 | | | Scone (Unicon 13) | |
| 1993 | | | | |
| 1994 | | Albacon'94 | | |
| 1995 | | Hypotheticon | Intersection (Worldcon) | |
| 1996 | | Albacon'96 | | |
| 1997 | | Hypotheticon | | |
| 1998 | | Albacon'98 | | |
| 1999 | | | | |
| 2000 | | | 2Kon (Eastercon) | |
| 2001 | | Hypotheticon | | |
| 2002 | | | | |
| 2003 | | | | |
| 2004 | | Convivial | | |
| 2005 | | | Interaction (Worldcon) | |
| 2006 | | | Concussion (Eastercon) | |
| 2007 | Satellite Conventions | Satellite 1 & Confounding Tales | | |
| 2008 | | | | |
| 2009 | | Satellite 2 | | |
| 2010 | | | | |
| 2011 | | | | |
| 2012 | | Satellite 3 | | |
| 2013 | | | | |
| 2014 | | | Satellite 4 (Eastercon) | |
| 2015 | | Satellite 5 | | |
| 2016 | | | | |
| 2017 | | | | |
| 2018 | Satellite 6 | | | |



40 Years of Glasgow FANDOM by Cuddles

Faircon 78 was the first mainstream SF event to be held in Glasgow (hell, Scotland), lovingly assembled by members of the local fan group The Friends of Kilgore Trout.

It was my very first convention too: I read about it in small Glasgow Herald article and the rest, as they say, is history.

Since then, there have been 4 Faircon's, 11 Albaccon's (3 of those were Eastercons), 3 Hypotheticons, several media themed events themed, Victoriana SF, Pulp SF & Horror, a Prefab Trout, (so far) 5 Satellites and the city has hosted 2 Worldcons. I'll try and give a sample of some of my best memories.

ALBACON 80: the amazing banquet with entertainment by a terrible dance & music floor show (I can't remember the name but it's not worth the brain trauma), Jim Barker spent a lot of time in the Fan Room wearing a sign that said "I absolutely refuse to say why I resigned from the BSFA!" The tannoy making lots of announcements relating to Slartibartfast. Missing the kidnapping of the fake Bob Shaw on the Sunday by various local fans, who tied him to a lamp post, doused him in vibrant food dye then fire hosed him! I had to leave early due to flu but fans lived off the anecdotes & photos for months!

The name of the convention stimulated a lot of debate and it became a running joke, "Who's this guy, Al Bacon?" It was originally believed that because it was held in the Albany Hotel - now a big hole in the ground after being demolished about 10 years

ago – that was the reason for the choice but in fact, it's Gaelic for Scotland:Alba.

HITCHERCON (1980) was held over the local Glasgow holiday weekend in September, which started the tradition of hosting a small relaxing event after a Glasgow Eastercon. Douglas Adams was an extremely popular guest and the Ingram was packed. It was equally cramped the following year with John Brunner and Ken Slater as guests, so FAIRCON moved into the Central Hotel in 1982 and the venue became the spiritual home for many Glasgow events.

FAIRCON 82: Harry Harrison being asked for an autograph by a Dalek. The same Dalek that freaked out passengers buying tickets in the station when it was wheeled past them in a conga line!

SHORE LEAVE (1982): the first Star Trek convention in Glasgow.

ALBACON II (Eastercon 1983): LiftCon, which resulted in a broken ankle for Colin Speirs and a huge bill for the committee!

ALBACON 84: Anne McCaffrey came over from Ireland and was disappointed to discover that Harlan Ellison had cancelled, fairly close to the convention weekend, and had asked Norman Spinrad to be his replacement. The following year, HE made it and Anne came back, graciously introducing his Guest of

Honour speech. This was one of the few times that the largest function room in the Central Hotel was packed beyond capacity and I still have a recording of that speech. Inspired by the public announcements from the station, HE also wrote a short story whilst he was staying in the Central but for the life of me, I can't remember which one!! And he doesn't like Irn Bru, which he exclaimed was the worst soda pop he'd ever tasted.

ALBACON III (Eastercon 1986): Clive Barker outlined the hazards of horror writing at Eastercon, wondering at the strange viewpoint of editors: it was okay to have an explicitly graphic demon gang rape but the bit where the woman has a pee in the bushes had to come out! John Jarrold, who led the rousing Eastercon Bar chorus most nights, assisted & accompanied by Neil Gaiman and anyone else who knew the words!

XIIcon (1986): Harry Harrison turned up hobbling on crutches, after a fall at home just days before. The nasty wound needed daily cleaning & dressing, so I ordered supplies from my mum, who was working night duty at Stobhill Hospital, and diligently provided tender, nursing care over the weekend! As a reward, Joan made it her mission to ensure that I remembered to eat and would stuff fruit, crisps or sweets into my pockets. She kept this up at every convention we attended! David Brin had brought me Hershey Bars: "What? I bring these all the way from California and you can't eat them?" I was on a chocolate ban due to chronic migraines and ended up sharing them in the con bar!

ALBACON 87 & 88 were the last of the 'original' events with guests including Josephine Saxon, Brian Stableford, C J Cherryh, Terry Pratchett and Heinz Wolf. Despite Worldcon returning to the UK in 1987, ALBACON still had a respectable warm body count of 600. The Martian theme in 1988 was supported by the con bar on Saturday evening, where the Orson Welles broadcast of *The War of the Worlds* was played in the background and many fans turned up in period outfits. Emma Fork turned up at the masquerade as a Mars bar and John Riddell entered as a Martian tourist!

PREFAB TROUT (1989) softened the blow after ALBACON with a couple of days of fun & fannish silly games, helped along with guests Gus McAllister and Iain Banks.

ISOCON 4 (1990): where I first met Alistair Gray.

FANTASIA (1990): introducing Bob Rankine to the alcoholic splendour of B52 cocktails the night before the con opened! Despite making a loss, the auction allowed us to donate several hundred pounds to CHAS (Childrens Hospice Association Scotland).

ALBACON 91: back at the Central Hotel with Alan Dean Foster, Chris Achilleos and Colin MacNeil. A small group of enthusiasts put together a dark, atmospheric walk through a specially designed corridor complete with Space Marine escorts, haunting James Horner music, face huggers and a scary surprise waiting for all those brave enough to enter! Down in the main hall, you could faintly hear some of the music but there was sufficient distance and brick to muffle the screams! This later became the highly successful ALIEN WAR experience!

The late Professor John Salthouse nearly brought the house down with his chemical *Son et Lumiere* show. Special insurance dispensation had to be obtained, fire alarms & smoke detectors were turned off and Glasgow University's Alchemy Club provided additional safety equipment. John loved coming along to ALBACON, mainly because the audience was much more enthusiastic about blowing up digestive biscuits than most of his academics and he loved the social aspect of cons. He couldn't attend in 1998 but recommended a friend, Professor Edwin Dawes, a member of The Magic Circle. Accompanied by his wife, Professor Dawes presented a very interesting lecture and demonstration about the history of performance magic. John Salthouse made one of his last convention appearances at 2Kon, the British National Eastercon in 2000 and sadly left this world in October 2008.

SILVERCON: one of the first big Star Trek conventions, where I first put forward the idea of female Q beings to Richard Arnold, which he said would never happen. I did though, (ST:TNG S6). John de Lancie was amazing.

SCONE (unicon 1992): Emma Fork dressed as a classic Alice in Wonderland and Jim Campbell, who cleared 8 stairs in one step without falling or injuring himself. An amazing feat of drunken acrobatics.

ALBACON 94: Colin MacNeil created a cartoon of Darth Vader with an Alien wearing Bermuda shorts, planning a holiday to Glasgow. It quickly became an

iconic ALBACON image and during a press shoot the night before, we had them out on the station concourse. Wedding guests, watching from the Court Lounge, sent someone down to find out what was going on and ended up in the Evening Times! We got her contact details and forwarded a copy of the picture to her. That's a weekend she'll never forget!

Bob Asprin, drank the bar dry of Jamieson's Whisky on a daily basis, resulting in bar staff making frequent sprints to the nearest local for more bottles!! Honestly, the committee did tell them! Unexpected walk ins were Jody Lynn Nye and Janny Wurtz & Don Maitz (who were also celebrating their wedding anniversary that weekend), who were joint conspirators with Bob for setting up Pete Morwood for his birthday. In the middle of the masquerade, Pete was asked to stand in the centre of the room: a little hat was placed on his head and the audience burst into song, the banners raised up and the poppers exploded. Gifts were given and a birthday cake was presented! Fangorn was our artist guest and gave us permission to use one of his MYTH book illustrations for our programme book. Douglas Hill had never been to a convention before and was completely overwhelmed when he got the invitation but had a great time and made some enduring friendships. Sadly, he died in 2007 following a road traffic accident and The Last Legionary trilogy remains one of my favourite YA stories.

Ralph won Best of Show in the Masquerade as Sister Harrier (a costume inspired by an RPG Nuns With Guns) wearing a mini Habit, stockings, suspenders, thigh high boots with 3 inch stiletto heels and lots of guns, accompanied by the music of Peter Gabriel's Steam! As he completed his victory walk, I announced our engagement: with the exception of maybe two people, nobody had noticed the ring I was wearing. What a surprise we gave to everyone!

CONUNDRUM (1995): Majel Barrett Roddenberry commenting, at the disco, "Wow, you guys know how to throw a party!"

INTERSECTION (Worldcon): the sudden death of John Brunner, Teddy's amazing masquerade entry and launching Electrical Eggs UK.

HYPOTHETICON (1995): Gill Jones dressed as a staked vampire – yes, a stake sticking out of her chest - trying to dance Strip the Willow (no pun intended) at the ceilidh!

ALBACON 96: Harlan Ellison having to cancel due to heart surgery. David Gerrold stepped in as guest on his behalf and his son, Sean, spent most of his time in the computer games room!

ALBACON 98: Terry Pratchett and Rodney Matthews talking about their collaboration on TV show Lavendar Castle, giving space to HOMELAND (a Highlander TV series themed event), after they lost their own venue at very short notice and finally, Ray Harryhausen making a rare public appearance, discussing his long career and demonstrating some of his remarkable models. It really was the jewel in the crown and of all the events I've been involved with over the years, this was THE ONE!

HYPOTHETICON III (1999): Michael Sheard and Nicholas Courtney double act. What a blast!

2KON (Eastercon 2000): SMS doing the Wacky Races in the masquerade! Think we nearly broke one of the big chandeliers! Every bedroom in the Central was filled for the first time!

CONVIVIAL (2004), a Victoriana & SF event, which was probably one of the last cons to be held in the Central before it closed.

INTERACTION (Worldcon 2005): Ian Sorensen teamed up with Phil Raines and Jackie McRoberts in the early 90's to form Reduction Absurdum. Their stand-up performances poked the fun at just about anything: Telly Tubbies, Bladerunner and eventually, taking the Star Wars phenomenon to new (lower) levels, Lucas Back In Anger at Interaction (63rd Worldcon in Glasgow 2005): bigger cast, bigger props, huge performance arena and an attempt at the biggest public Kazoo playing performance for the Guinness Book of Records. Don't think we did it, though! Visiting Forry Ackerman in hospital, after sustaining scalding burns in his shower during the convention weekend. Always took him chocolate eclair cakes, which he said were 'galaxies better than the slop they serve as food here'!

CONFOUNDING TALES (2007): Pulp SF & Horror weekend including a Speak Easy Disco complete with china tea sets & inflatable Tommy guns, the Flash Gordon inspired wedding on the Saturday night and spending most of the Sunday, dressed as a Cultist with Ralph and Lindsay. The TELADU crew ran a fabulous programme item, which we were asked to judge, where teams presented ideas for a horror movie.

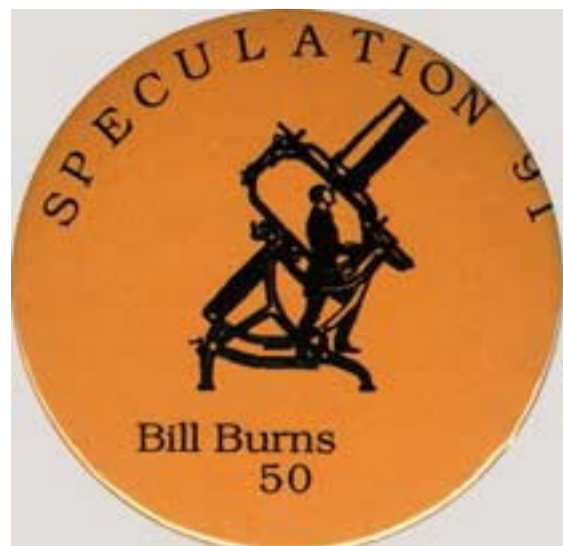
Also, Lindsay carried around a small bag of pilchards and whenever someone remarked on the smell, we would cry out, "The Deep Ones are coming!"

Other highlights of Glasgow cons include The Rocky Horror Picture Show and the infamous Custard Pie fights, which were regular features and certainly the messiest! The hotel chef's insisted on making real custard, dyed into incredible Day-Glo colours (Gobby Green, Yucky Yellow and Poxy Pink)! Damn that stuff was slippery: once the protective tarpaulin got 'wet' it was treacherous. Worst of all, it was always mingin' (Glasgow slang for smelling really bad) and the task of disposing it was never pleasant. Eventually, it just got too messy and dangerous, so it was dropped from the programme around 1985. It did make another, brief appearance at one of the 90's ALBACONS but watching Omega bounce rather spectacularly (her score was 9, 10, 10, 9, 10 from the judges for artistic trauma) and injure her coccyx was the final straw.

When they weren't running conventions, some fans were making movies: FAIRCON Strikes Back, Bar Trek, Conrunner and Raiders of the Lost Con were filmed and produced in Glasgow. Production culprits included Chris O'Kane, Ian Sorensen, Bruce Saville, John Allardice, Mark Meenan and Mike Molloy. During filming of Conrunner at the Central Hotel, an antique glass door was broken and that was a rather expensive outlay! The films have been transferred onto digital media but they still look dreadful! Just the kind of thing for the late night programme, when everyone is too pissed to notice.

Glasgow fandom remains proud of that convention heritage: high profile guests, great programming and relaxed mayhem! SATELLITE events, which started in 2007 and have already done an Eastercon, continue to prove that Scottish fandom is alive and kicking. See you in the Crowne Plaze for SATELLITE 6 in May 2018.

[NOTE - There are a few other cons not listed in this time period: I either can't remember any juicy anecdotes or I never went to them. I've only included the ones held in Glasgow but I have notes on some of the Edinburgh ones too: Concert, RaCon, Silicon.]





53rd World Science Fiction Convention

24 - 28 August 1995, Scottish Exhibition Centre, Glasgow

GOHS: Samuel R. Delany, Gerry Anderson, (fan) Vinç Clarke, (filk)

Recalled by James Bacon

Interaction the 1995 Worldcon, by James Bacon. Originally written by James Bacon in 2005 for a Worldcon issue of Drink Tank edited BY Chris Garcia.

I had thought I might be able to write some sort of professional and coherent report about Inter-section, but now as I read it I realise it was just one huge non-stop continuous socialising and drinking and cavorting monster of boisterousness.

Jesus it was mental!

IT was defiantly an experience.

I set out with a crowd of fellow Irish Science Fiction fans, from Dublin to Glasgow. We had opted for the rail and ferry route and it wasn't too expensive and flights were exuberant. I was 21 and had been to a couple of English conventions at this stage, and knew there would be some people from Inconceivable and zz9 at the con. The amount of Irish people going over was good about 20 in total, and a brace of us took the train and ferry together.

My main mission was to help with the Eurocon bid, that Octocon, the national Irish SF convention was making for 2007. I had agreed to staff the fan table and had Irish posters and loads of tourist information. Along with information about Sproutlore, the now official Robert Rankin Fanclub which I was running and the current Octocon, which was on in October, and of which I was a committee member.

The trip was lively, we played games of Magic, a card game of sorts, with a hint of strategy, and it was

good fun all round as we casually drank. I was sharing a room with James Peart and he was flying, being a barrister and all, time was a rare commodity to him and he had opted for this route.

We arrived in Glasgow on the Wednesday evening, that's about the only day I am sure I know what I actually did. We immediately went to the convention centre, the SECC, by Taxi from the station, to set up the Octocon stall and to get our registrations and what not, and it was an awesomely humongous place, nothing could have prepared me for it, as I had yet to see the Birmingham NEC and the closest thing we have in Ireland is the Victorian built Royal Dublin Show, which pales into comparison.

We picked up memberships, and the big packages, I looked through the convention read me, which was so beautifully presented along with the huge convention souvenir book, and went in search of the fan area.

In a corner of what eight years later I was to learn was hall 4. This vast aerospace hanger was the venue for a variety of different items. The Fan area was one corner, it felt like the furthest dankest corner and I wandered over to the deserted spot, I could see dealers the other side of a partition beavering away and I wondered what to do with the small bunch of Irishness that I had brought along.

I wandered about and found a table manned by a nice fellow by the name of Andy, who allowed me to store my stuff below his table. He then started

emptying cartons of condoms onto the table and he explained it was the safer sex table and he was in some sort of Gay and Lesbian SF group, all of which I noted with a sense of aplomb and I discreetly pocketed some johnnies. I gandered about a bit longer and returned and met with the rest in the lobby.

I found out I shouldn't have been in there at all, but smiled my way around harsher remonstrations and blagged that I had arranged to leave stuff with Andy, which sorta got me away scotch free.

I met James Pearto. (pearto) We had some drinks in the main concourse of the SECC and then the various Irish split our separate ways. In the meantime, I had impressed my own peer group by greeting many people whom I had gotten to know at my previous UK conventions.

Pearto and I went back to our hotel. I can no longer remember the name, but it was a block of a building, the lower floors weren't the hotel, and you went up a lift to the reception, bar and breakfast area, further up were our rooms. We dumped our bags in the room, and decided to have a few drinks in the bar, and then began our encounter.

A group of English guys were in the bar, initially they were standoffish, I assumed they were business types, and we got on well enough with them, they soon learned we were Irish people, and all was good, we were invited back to one of their rooms when the bar closed, whereupon some really good scotch was offered. We were chilling out relaxed, and they seemed to be enjoying our company, then one of the blokes broke down in tears, some sort of stress and pressure releasing, it appeared that we were the first people this group had socialised with for some time, I was a bit worried, but Pearto a Criminal Barrister and a man of much intelligence read the situation, G-Men.

They were an undercover Inland Revenue team, VAT men as they said, ID was produced, in case we thought they were lying, they allowed their guard down, they showed us suits worth more than a couple of months pay, they were on a major operation and had been posed as business people for some time, living off as much expenses as they needed, and now here were two 'other' people who they could genuinely socialise with. Eventually we bid them adieu and went to bed.

Not what I had expected.

He next morning Pearto got me up in time for breakfast and we enjoyed it greatly, Nothing like the buffet breakfast. I stocked up on rasher sambos and had enough to last me through the day, something I went on to do every day, even Pearto helped with the concealment.

We decided to walk to the convention, as we went we passed one of Iain Banks fabled Espedair Street unfinished walkways, and stood and looked at it. Onwards and once at the convention, I was offered loads of free books, I was totally taken aback by all the stuff. I then chilled out for a bit and had a look through the con programme after setting up the Irish fan table, couldn't believe how many programme items were on. I had brought a flag and found, as I wandered about a long piece of wood about 20feet long and attached it to the table one I had secured a flag to the top of this pole. It was near a vent of some sort so it flew nicely.

It was quiet as everything and everyone was seemingly still gearing up. I met some friends I knew from my first UK convention, Incon II: Inconceivable. These guys, whom I had met and some of whom had been to Octocon. In this batch of UK people were names that would always be remembered me included Stef Lancaster, Anne Stokes, Jim De Liscard, Mieke Benzler, I think Alison Freebairn was there along with Jess and Chris, but I cant be sure.

They were all helping with ZZ9 Plural Z Alpha, the Hitchhikers Guide to The Galaxy Appreciation societies table, known as Zed, Zed, Nine. They were a great bunch and I chatted with them and found out what was good to go to.

Anyhow a lot of Thursday apart from being at the Fan Table, I am not sure exactly what I did. I remember meeting many people, being introduced to publishers as I was young and enthusiastic and I remember being invited to a book launch that evening which was across the corridor, and I was again meeting editorial and marketing types, who seemed to enjoy my Irish accent and the way I bounded about, I suppose, not that I was paying too much attention.

And so onto the evening activities, here it gets blurry, and I have gone looking for a programme book to see if I could work out exactly what was when, but its all melded into five mental nights of debauchery and fun.

The first night I remember we were in the Forte Crest Hotel, strangely I had to meet someone there this year in Glasgow, and its very similar to how I remember it.

I remember that it was the night that the cons were bidding for Worldcon, and there was Boston and Baltimore and I think some other place all handing out free booze, a gift if ever there was one.

So there I was, I had my Irish friends, and some friends I had made at previous cons, who were all there, abnd new riends I had already made thanks to these and I knew a few people, so Mick and meself

decided to queue up for a drink at the Boston Table, now, they were handing out beer, these nice eastern seaboard characters, and we got to the top of the Q and Mick said, 'are you only serving beer', and so they did, and Mick said, 'can I have a southern comfort and Ice please', and they gave him one, and he said, 'can I have one for the wife please', and he pointed at Phil(omena) and they gave him a second, and I said 'Can I have the same please', and they gave me two too.

We poured in lemonade much to peoples disgust but this was great, and we chatted and laughed and there was a bit of boisterous behaviour but not too much.

After a few more runs, Boston was running out of the hard stuff so, I went to see what the boys from Baltimore had on offer.

I got to the table and asked what was on, and this fellow all bedecked in wonderful pirate gear and with two huge long moustaches, sorta growing from the corners of his lips, said it was Rum and Coke, and did I have a glass, I didn't, so I went a got a pint glass and jumped the Q straight back to him, he was cool with that. But he was surprised I had such a big glass, and he put a whole load of rum in, and then a fist of ice and then some coke. He was older than me, and we chatted despite the Q, others were serving, his name was Grinner, and I asked why, and he said cause he was always grinning and to prove it he gave a big Grin, I returned the pleasantry. I would love someday to meet Grinner again. So he advised in a big brother sorta way that I should drink about a quarter of the glass and come back and get a top up, so Off I went back to my Irish friends who were intermingled with the ZZ9 crowd.

I offered my pint glass around as people were surprised to see me on the cokes, and everyone enjoyed a swig of rum and coke, and after about 20 minutes I wandered back up to Grinner and asked for another and he was rather taken aback, but could see I was very sober, so served me again. After another such refilling a few of us went up to the Cabin Bar.



Now the Cabin Bar was halfway between the function space, which was the ground floor on one side of the building, and the reception that was the first floor or ground floor on the other side, as the building was on a sloppy big hill.

The Cabin Bar.

I reacquainted myself with Billy Stirling, one of my favourite Scottish Fans, met his pork chopped side-burned friend Trevor and met a dashing gentleman from 'the Republic of Texas' a man called Randy Sheppard.

It was a small bar. One side were cubicles with seats and chairs therein like a dinner, but higher walled, then there was a long bar on the other side. There was a very small wooden floored area at the entrance, where earlier there was some piping or dancing, and then at the other end, were windows at odd angles out into the real world.

This was a great spot I felt and soon we were drinking and chatting as only fans can in bars, and soon it was midnight, and I knew that the bid parties were wrapping up at some stage, so asked what time the bar closes at, you can imagine my surprise when I was told it didn't. I also asked would there be an issue with bringing a drink up from the party downstairs, and the concept that corkage had been paid and that would be fine was explained to me, then I was told by some one arriving that the bid parties were closing, I immediately ran back to the function space, on my toes, blasting past people like a man possessed.

I barged past a Gopher, who told me the room was closed, I shouted in at Grinner, he gave me a wave, sufficient for me to sneer at the gopher and walk by, Jesus I was cockily confident and I gasped at Grinner, can I have some booze...

He wasn't in charge, but they had cases and cases of Rum, I explained I was going to be up a while and that beer costed money and that I could do with some of his free Rum, he hadn't anything to put Rum into, the glass shortage earlier now heightened in my mind. I looked about, and ran across the room, found a Pint Glass, while he found a number of Pitchers, and he dumped their watery dreggish contents out, he then took his time and gave me pitchers of Rum, with a couple of cubes of Ice and a dash of coke on top. I promised I would share it, there was so much.

I returned triumphantly back to the Cabin Bar, feted when the pitchers of rum were seen by all, and became the Rum God all night as I doled out measures as required by all, in return a coke or two was bought for me and I had mixers for this potent mix.

The night was excellent as usual there was much toot and bollix talked, and we had a great time, and as it went by people left and wandered off to bed. I then found out that Billy was staying in the same hotel as Pearto and myself; Pearto who had a beer with us had departed. Randy though, bedecked in his Texan Flag Bow Tie and Cumberbund stayed the distance as did a group of hardcore heavy drinkers, the laugh was mighty, the bar staff tremendously friendly, and as the rum ran out, and we could see daylight slicing through the windows, Billy and myself decided to head back to the Hotel, it was now 7am.

Staggering back at dawn, arm in arm, meandering our way back to the hotel, it seemed like Glasgow was a mountainous terrain, falling into rooms at eight in the morning, and this is where James Peart, Irelands most prolific Worldcon attendee comes in.

'So I am fast asleep and I am disturbed by this tremendous crashing and banging as James comes into the room, and falls into a sitting position on his bed, then his torso shudders backwards, he lies spread out on the bed and he starts snoring, instantly. It was eight o'clock anyhow, so I got up, had a shower, got dressed, The alarm went off as I had set it which slightly jars James a bit and then said to him, 'hey James, get up, the con starts in an hour' and this creature rises like a Frankenstein, slowly rising, groaning and making unnatural noises, he gets up, has a shower, and we got breakfast. Then we went back to the con, he had about 10 minutes of sleep.'

During the Day it was Irish Fan Table and eating and wandering and chatting.

Was it the next night that it was lifts and Fireworks.

I remember the fire works, I was in a Bar, and Mick found me, and explained that time was of the essence, we went in search of a view, myself and my great friend, and we found a load of function rooms on the top floor of the hotel he was staying in, again the forte crest and we found many darkened rooms and armed with some beers and some thing to smoke we watched the fireworks, it was really very impressive, standing in the dark, so high up, we were then interrupted by a bunch of Americans, who first off turned out the light, we gave them looks and they turned it off, then they joined us against the wall of windows and as Mick and meself went 'jaysus'. 'fucking hell', 'that's grea', 'wow' our fellow con goers insisted on going 'ooooohhh' or 'aaahhhh' in a synchronised manner. They informed us this is the done thing, and that we should join in, we gave them looks and continued with our effusiveness, and when done we went back to the bar.

This hotel had nice lifts and there were bunch of us in the lift, and I remembered the Blues Brothers, and started to hum the Girl from Ipanema, and so did the whole lift and we went up and down and as the doors opened fans would either balk or join us, and soon the lift was jam packed and the sounds of Ipanema were drifting up and down the shaft as we hurried to our no where destination, playing the lift floor buttons like a drunken pianist, it was tremendous laugh, and it only paused momentarily when a hotel manager joined us, she was surprised we went quiet and slowly I started to hum and then someone else did and when she left we were doing and daahing the song in full gusto, she just smiled as she walked off.

Then there was the night that we went to the Central Hotel, this wasn't quite so good as the selection of booze was mostly Russian Vodkas, being younger I had little appreciation for these hard drinks and good folks, and I was also a bit wary of the Russians, perestroika may have kicked in, but the Vision of an evil Soviet Army parachuting across Europe and the knowledge that Long John tactical Nukes were ranged eastward was always close to my mind, it was a youth thing, I had visited East Berlin in 1990 and the soldiers and oppression will never leave my mind, sovietism sucked, of course back then I was much more sure about things, but wrong none the less.

I found myself into bed at about, 2am, and got some decent sleep, the fact that I had had ten minutes sleep in the previous forty two hours didn't seem to effect me too badly.

I went to a programme item, one of two that I went to. Despite the fact that I had studiously gone through the programme and circled everything I had wanted to see, so far after a number of days I had socialised like some sort of speed freak, hunting out friends to make and know.

The programme item in question was about Scots Gael, and of course being fluent in Irish, or Gaelic or Gaelige, depending on where you're from, I was keen to attend and listen in, as I might actually know something about the subject.

I enjoyed it, as the similarity between the two languages would be the same as American English and English English, but as usual when it came to actually formulate the language in an academic manner, it all goes to shit and the spelling and wordage and grammar was nothing like anything I knew, I would have had a better chance understanding Welsh.

The other panel I went to was the ultra exciting and riveting European science fiction meeting, Jesus, I nearly wanted to slit me wrists, but of course,

I was there along with other Irish Fans hoping Ireland would win the Eurocon moniker for Octocon in 1997. I was at that stage on my third Octocon committee, I was asked onto the committee when I was 18 and although I didn't realise it, in few short months I would be co-chair of the National Irish Science Fiction Convention and I was only 21.

Ireland won the bid, mostly because Robert Elliot came in and gave a speech; he went on to chair the convention, well to be the chair of the convention for two years. I had already taken nearly 100 pre-supporting memberships for the bid, although that was nearly everyone who wandered anywhere near the fan area, I was persuasive and it was very quiet over in that corner! So we had flyers ready to convert members and get supporting memberships in, should we win.

I ended up not being involved much with the Eurocon, I opened a bookshop instead.

I met Andy at some stage that gleefully told me that he was now a Delaney's Child. He told me this was some sorta club they had set up, bring all the Gay and Lesbian SF fans together under one banner. I was pleased. He then reported on how the Club he was part of, had been out clubbing and the local Gay bars had special things on, like guys dressed as superman, music from SF movies coming on when they arrived, he seemed so happy, I was chuffed and jealous, it all sounded so great.

Back to The Cabin Bar

So somewhere along the way, Baltimore won the bid for the Worldcon, sometime in the future, I really wasn't paying any attention down the back, and way too busy chatting to so many people and drinking to worry, but this meant most importantly was that there would be more Rum and Coke.

Now, we were at the party and the rum and coke was ably flowing, Grinner who had remembered me was looking after me and I had a couple of pints of the stuff and I went up to the Cabin Bar. There were a good crowd of English fans therein and I remember an incident that was quite hedonistic.

I remember many of my friends were drinking in this cubicle, and there was a couple, and what started as discreet kissing turned into heavy petting and then slowly some of us started to leave as their intensity grew. So everyone left, privacy and seclusion being the order of the day and I remember someone standing guard. I knew the bad ones you know.

Again the booze flowed well this night and there were many more people I knew about all laughing, playacting, horse playing and generally having lots of boisterous fun without damaging anyone, too se-

"I have no idea what happened that night."

riously. I acquired some Rum to last us into the night and we were chatting and drinking and I had drinks bought for me, it was wonderful, like I had a huge bunch of older brothers and sisters looking out for me, who would wink and nod, it was great fun, and again it was an early morning stagger back to our hotel, but this time I got a few hours sleep.

I remember the last night as this was terrific fun, I hadn't volunteered or anything at the convention but there was a Gopher thank you party, which had benefited from all the left over bid booze, and of course, not being a gopher of any sort I was not allowed to enter.

I found an Irish Fan, who not only was a gopher but had worked up the ladder to be the Gophers mom pet or something like that, he had about eight ribbons, at this stage I knew I would never be allowed past the bouncer gophers in the party displaying that many ribbons, as I had naively thought they would surely know a fellow gopher with such ranking and see me for the imposter I was, now I know it wouldn't have made a bit of difference. So I fashioned a method to have most of the ribbons in my pocket and waved the sole gopher ribbon as I walked in and I found some others who had blagged their way into the party, and they were cabin Bar Boozers and ZZ9'ers. I drank heartily and I remember at one stage having a fight with the floor, but that's OK, perhaps I was drunk.

I have no idea what happened that night.

Then too soon it was time to go home, and I bid farewell to many fans and a number of pros. I had bundles of business cards, I still have them, fans, who had their own made, Randy's with his legal symbols, publishers who wanted to tout books, a variety it was great.

I took home many books, I seemed to accumulate loads of free stuff, not as much as Pearto, though he has this adage that you should take one of everything and then study it later when you are relaxed, less you miss out on something, he was totally taken with Worldcon and has been to everyone since. I had many zines, fanzines, zines of clubs or one sheets produced by people I know,

We again went home on the train and Ferry and it was a grand trip home. I had arranged a few days off and slept for about 2 days when I got home. It was terrific.



Convention Review

Interaction: the 2005 Eurocon & Worldcon

by Jonathan Cowie

Actually this was not the 63rd World SF Convention in Glasgow but the 2nd; for that matter it was not the 28th Eurocon in that city but the 2nd. Somehow in this space-time continuum there were 61 other annual Worldcons and 26 Eurocons held elsewhere. Convention co-chair Vince Docherty, in the souvenir book, mused that this might well have been a follow-up to the 1938 Glasgow Empirecon, or Commonwealth con as part of the Empire Exhibition as opposed the 1939 Worldcon in conjunction with the World Fair but enough of Vince's musings: the rebel colonist presence was significant.

If you have not heard of, or been to, a science fiction Worldcon before then a quick paragraph of explanation may be appropriate. It is the annual gathering of SF folk - professional, commercial, enthusiast, buff and fan together with the occasional SF-loving scientist. Two out of three Worldcons are held in the USA but roughly three times a decade

other countries get to host it with the decision being made by registrant vote. The Worldcon has been held in Britain five times previously, the last of which was Glasgow in 1995 and just seven times previously in all of Europe. Worldcon attendance these days is typically between 4,000 and 6,000 (Interaction had over 5,000 registrants and some 4,100 actually attend), who gather for four or five days to socialise and attend some of a few hundred programme items (panels, film screenings, talks etc.,) run across several parallel programme streams covering book, film, TV and other areas of SF, not to mention drop in on an art exhibition, commercial dealers' hall, and a fan stall and display hall. Much business, socialising, catching up with distant colleagues, past acquaintances and friends, not to mention making new ones, takes place. This in a nutshell is what Worldcons are but which simply does not do justice to the reality which itself is a little surreal (and exhausting)...

Overview

Interaction was very successful as a Worldcon once again demonstrating that Europe can run these events at the appropriate scale and efficiently. As such the committee can relax with the knowledge that they have waved the SF flag this side of the Pond despite European fans not having the benefit of a Worldcon on their doorstep most years from which to hone convention-running skills at such a scale.

The venue was the Scottish Exhibition and Convention Centre on the north bank of the Clyde just to the immediate west of down-town Glasgow. The Moat House Hotel and Camponile provided much of the accommodation, as did half a mile away the Hilton, Holiday Inn and Mariot, with the Hilton being the venue for night parties.

The programme was wide-ranging and nearly always very good (well at least on the science front) with a number of special items. The Green Room folk were also very competent but the team running the Moat House half of the operation were by a long chalk very effective, welcoming and tackled problems head on. (Nice one folks.)

The dealers room had a reasonable number of stalls and seemed to be very busy. The book dealers seemed happy with a number reporting brisk trade. Meanwhile the distance between the conference centre and the evening party hotels was not a problem. Taxis were cheapish: Glasgow really has one of the best value taxi fleets in the UK. However even if you did walk it, as I did one night purely for exercise and to see more of the Clyde, it was only 15 minutes. Other than some of our transatlantic cousins who did comment on this (in passing I must stress), nobody else mentioned it, though clearly it had been on the Committee's mind given the distance estimates given in the pre-convention Progress Reports.

Yes, there were a few problems but nearly all of these were beyond the committee's control. On the Guest of Honour front Bob Sheckley's illness was a tragedy almost entirely out of the committee's hands. (Other than you have to expect such when inviting the more mature: but on the other hand it is the elderly SF authors and personalities that have the track record that makes them especially worthwhile inviting so it is a question of taking the rough with the smooth.) However Bob's wife and stepdaughter were there and perfectly charming. Another problem was that hotel accommodation processing in a number of instances could have been smoother but then this can be a regular hassle and those experienced of SF conventions (or scientific symposia) know full well

the benefit of carrying a complete set of documentation. (Had I not I could easily paid for an extra day as well as not had my Infotel deposit knocked off my bill - a potential extra £140 (US\$240) as they lost the financial record of my Infotel booking so necessitating a call to the agents.) Furthermore I did hear a couple of folk (including a previous Hugo winner about The Moat) complain bitterly about hotel attitude. (Fortunately mine was OK other than the obvious disdain when leaving in asking that they change my unspent room service deposit refund into English notes; of which I can understand but equally of which they should find routine for guests departing to south of the border.) However, for the most part, provided requests made of staff were absolutely mundane, and it was not a time of peak activity (such as early in the evenings in the Moat), the service was good. (A bit too efficient once when I went to see hello to someone at the very next table for literally 30 seconds to find my half full coffee had been cleared away despite the presence of my bag and belongings.) But as I said such problems were largely out of the committee's hands.

The bottom line is that Interaction was the best European-venued Worldcon to date and so (again) raised the bar for future events if this trend is to be continued. This is not to say that there were no problems. Interaction had its share of minor glitches and there was a problem in it realising its sense of vision. These I cover below but should not detract from many of the principal organisers receiving the gratitude of the international SF community for a job for the large part done very well indeed!

Venue

A conference centre is a conference centre is a conference centre. Though the UK has many exhibition centres it has few conference centres with sufficient beds to house a convention of 4-5,000. Indeed there are only two such places, Glasgow and Brighton. The problem with the Glasgow venue is that the main Scottish Exhibition and Convention Centre (SECC) does not have a sufficient number of small rooms accommodating a few hundred. In 1995, when the last Glasgow Worldcon was held, one of the main halls had partitions dividing up the science, fantasy, literary and another stream. The problem was that noise from one stream affected another resulting in a detrimental cacophony. This year the problem was surmounted by using the Moat House Hotels function rooms. However this meant a somewhat tedious trek between the two sites. The distance was short enough to be workable, but long enough to be a bit

of a pain especially if trying to get to successive programme items in each of the two venues. However this was simply an inconvenience and the exercise did no harm.

Food availability in the Scottish Exhibition & Conference Centre (SECC) was plentiful but expensive. Unfortunately there is nothing the organisers could do about this. As the SECC is one of just two appropriate venues in the UK for a Worldcon, you have to lump it or leave it regarding on-site means of keeping body and soul together. Suffice to say that prices were nearly double those from analogous outlets in central London! I presume that this high cost is so because these outlets have overheads to maintain even on days when the SECC has no function running. Nonetheless if you are not on business expenses (and again I assume that most SECC functions are business-related) this is a pain, but one not unique to European Worldcons.



Programme

Can we take it as read that there were some 400 programme items covering the genre's spectrum and fantasy too. Ditto that there is inevitably a curate's egg mix but with so much choice those attending had access to many great items. So taking this as read where were the problems lurking. Let's lift the carpet on an otherwise excellent mix of activities...

Rightly or wrongly (and I do not want to get into a debate here) Worldcons, at least those this side of the Atlantic, give off the vibe that they are all about SF books and writers but that 'there is also other stuff too' (this is actually a quote from a promotional article written by a committee member). Which means that if you are primarily into cinematic, TV SF, comics/graphic novels, gaming and so forth the image presented is that this is 'other stuff' and the Worldcon is not primarily for you. To be fair the Interaction committee must have picked up on this vibe for less than a month before the event its press release no44 stated: "Fans of film and TV science fiction will not be ignored in the programme of events for Interaction, the 63rd World Science Fiction Convention..." and that: "There is a myth that Worldcon is exclusively about books and authors," he [Vince

Docherty] said. "Nothing could be further from the truth. The science fiction family includes fans of all aspects of the genre including film and television, anime, art, comics and gaming, and Interaction will make them all welcome."

Now of course Worldcon regulars know that this is not so but it is nonetheless the vibe so often given off and Vince obviously discerned such. (Just colour block out the space in Worldcon promotional literature by area of interest and you'll see which dominates and which gets the best positioning.) I mention this because I know of a number of more media and film orientated SF groups who did not attend (or from which only one or two of their members attended) Interaction. OK, so what you need to do is to look beyond the promotional presentations and note those words 'there is also other stuff too' because by rights the sum total of all this other stuff probably balances the sum total of space and time devoted to SF in its written form. Further, because there were up to 16 (yes, 16!) parallel programme streams, even if you only liked film, games, graphic SF, anime, TV or whatever, you could spend your time entirely on these specialisms at least twice over. I stress this because if you were not at Interaction, and are primarily into film and TV SF, you may not want to pass up on the next European Worldcon (though it is unlikely to be in the UK itself for around a decade). There really was the proverbial something for everyone.

The downside was that with so many programme items there were a number of last minute changes which had to be reflected on daily update sheets. Some of these were unavoidable but some were not. For example, those who decided not to come to the convention (high £:\$ exchange rate was one reason cited), and who did not withdraw their offer of participating on the programme as soon as they were aware of their not going to attend, should be noted and kept off future programmes as such behaviour puts an unfair and avoidable pressure on the organisers and so is unacceptable. Regarding the committee side, some irriot decided that every miniscule programme change including change of a single panel participant warranted listing on the daily update sheets which made them far longer than really needed: I heard a number of programme participants, green room staff and attendees note this absurdity (and did not hear anyone praise the rigorous detail of the daily change sheets). However this was a problem of execution and not programme design. As said, there was plenty going on with much choice for everyone.

Having said this, while media and film SF dimensions were firmly catered for (despite the big film-makers being reluctant to play ball), their profile in the programme timetable was (as for many a Worldcon) decidedly marginalised. (Again this is one reason why SF media and film fans feel that Worldcons really aren't meant for them. It is a double whammy. Not only is the advance promotional literature largely irrelevant to them but the programme timetable on the day sidelines them.) All that was said about the anime and video programmes, in the 128 page timetable booklet was on half of page 23, was that they were in the Castle Suite in the Moat House Hotel. Details of what was being shown there only appeared on separate daily programme sheets and were not in the programme timetable booklet. This meant it was impossible for those wishing to attend such items to plan ahead comparing what would be shown with the other programme streams, let alone get a feel for whether the stream needed checking out. Now I know that some media programme organisers will say that they only know the final selection of copyright approved screenings a short time in advance of the con, but this argument is decidedly limp. With the years of planning a Worldcon one actually gets permission for screening from a good proportion of items sufficiently in advance to be included in the programme booklet and just a comparative minority too late. Here the thing to do would be to schedule as much as possible and just keep a few blocks of hours a day for the last-minute stuff. Problem largely solved and at least the media and film dimension is included in the daily grids getting the same profile as other items. As it was I heard that one couple into media SF, for whom Interaction was also their first Worldcon, had failed to discover that there was a media programme: they were going by the programme grids in the timetable booklet and had skipped page 23 in the introductory section. Furthermore the film listings were limited to just the title, place and time on just the daily 'major events, readings and autographing' pages of the programme. Indeed that the GamerZ premiere was for a film (as opposed to a role-playing or computer game launch) was not mentioned on this page and only discernable later in the programme booklet from the reception that was cited. Going by the programme booklet's schedule grids, Interaction appeared to be largely devoid of films. There was not even a timetable booklet listing of films to be shown that (as any SF film fest goer would expect) had the basic information of title, year made, director, synopsis paragraph and length! Film buffs and media SF fans had to make an extra

effort to elucidate what was happening, assuming that is they had discerned that there was something to elucidate in the first place. The media SF couple mentioned above also happen to be part of a local SF society of a score or so, and have returned to it with a somewhat negative image so that I doubt the next European Worldcon will see attendance from that quarter. Now this problem is not unique to Interaction but has occurred at a number of Worldcons in recent years. I will not dwell on this now but for more see the discussion section.

Meanwhile in addition to an anime stream, there was also a programme stream of media SF. Organiser Dave Lally said that the contents ranged from rags to riches. Items included fan films and independent shorts of varying quality from amateur (but fun) to nearly professional. Calvert films on the fan side and Silverbell on the independent short movie side were two groups that I arranged (as last minute assistant to the programme stream). Then of course there were screenings of the Hugo nominations and, the last day of the convention screenings of the long and short form dramatic presentation Hugo winners. Further to all this there were also unofficial media events run separately from the convention which could only be discovered if you asked the volunteers running these streams.

The lit-crit stream had the theme 'A matter of Britain' which will no doubt be covered by the e-zine *Emerald City*, so I won't duplicate matters here.

Science Programme

Well, being the Science Fact & Fiction Concatenation where else does one start, or focus, but with the science programme. To sum up, what might the science prog have achieved? Arguably an MBE for one Simon Bradshaw. Simon was the leading light behind the science programme and from the afore comment you may rightly deduce that the science prog was rather on the successful side. Many topics were covered and the vast majority of the programme was very well attended indeed. Not only was the science programme good but most of it was of a high standard (the climate change items notwithstanding). Having said this I suspect that maybe one or two (and only such a minority) of the science items originated elsewhere (i.e. from another wing of the programme team) but the majority clearly came under Simon's ambit and this should be rightly engraved on some black monolith orbiting Jupiter.

The science prog featured science panels, lectures and slide shows on: SF TV scientists; The psychology of spaceflight; The origin of life; The science

commons (actually more about the open access or journal subscriber models); Next astronomy missions; Teraforming at home (a sort of can we sort out global warming type panel (which I missed... rats)); Copyright my DNA (which had the potential to be brilliant but I also missed it); Pseudo-hard SF (more of which later); Blogging science; SF and social science (well, this was almost science); Moving in time and space; What's new in astronomy; The XCOR rocket company; Clones children or long-lives; Character vs. science (in SF (but strangely none of the panellists appeared to be scientists so maybe this came from one of the other programme streams?)); Science of aliens (which was actually a (Kensington) Science Museum exhibition preview); Just how different are the arts and sciences research? (Another panel I regretfully missed, but I bet that Dave Clements (astrophysicist (from Imperial no less)) and Liz Williams (who apart from being an interesting science fantasy writer actually has a post grad degree in the philosophy of science) gave folk a run for their money, Farah Mendelsohn I suspect would present the arts 'research' view (she being into SF studies whose academic activities to date, as far as I know, have developed firmly along the arts line), while Tony Keen being a Roman History researcher could hold the middle ground other than I understand history is largely an evidence-based discipline, unlike the arts); Exploring the planets; Huygens on Titan (with David Southwood of whom more later); Tall technical tales (real life lab anecdotes); Climate change (more of which later); Space science sacrificed? (is NASA turning away from science towards flagship manned missions?); The medical hazards of space; The end of the space age; and last but not least - Science denial (again of which more later).

The centrepiece of the science programme had to be securing of Prof. David Southwood of the European Space Agency (ESA) as one of Interaction's special guests. I suspect that in terms of size of budget responsibility, David Southwood is probably the most senior scientist to have attended a Worldcon,



certainly a European one. Even though he could only attend for a day and a half he none the less managed to participate in four or five programme items: primarily those concerned with planetary exploration. Not only did his contribution to Interaction fit in with one of the genre's most common tropes - space exploration - but was also of contemporary interest given ESA's recent Huygens probe landing on Saturn's moon Titan. But David Southwood's talk was not restricted to science (though that would have been fine enough) but also included references to SF. Simon Bradshaw told Concat' that David Southwood, "enjoyed himself enormously (as did his wife) and regretted only being able to stay for a day and a half. He was very impressed at the level and depth of interest he experienced and I think we may well not have seen the last of him." This sentiment is one I am sure that many attending the science programme will share.

My own participation in the science programme was restricted to a couple of panels and one and a half talks. (Yes, half a talk, all will be revealed shortly.) The first panel was entitled 'Pseudo-Hard SF'. Ellen Asher, John Douglas, Ian McDonald, Geoff Ryman and myself were given the brief: 'Fiction that looks superficially like science-oriented SF, but on closer examination is little more than a hackneyed rehash of Frankenstein or some such. Michael Crichton has a lot to answer for!' This was a little unfortunate because 'science fiction' is after all 'fiction' and so fictional science is allowed. However I did point out that some scientists do unwarrantedly limit science's potential. For example, following the release of the film Jurassic Park several scientists pointed out that DNA could not survive scores of millions of years even in amber (including on a Channel 4 documentary) and so I was delighted when shortly after Nature published a paper on weevil DNA that had largely survived in amber that long. No, my bug bear is not with pseudo science, as that is allowed if you are to have FTL drive or time travel or whatever, but when the science or pseudoscience is inconsistent even within the framework of the story. Then the author is being sloppy. However the largest chunk of the panel's time was spent with author Geoff Ryman discussing the 'new' debate that calls itself 'Mundane SF' in which only scientifically plausible science (even if futuristic) can be used. So there is no FTL or time travel as such, and space colonization is not galaxy-wide but within the solar system. It was an interesting debate (more so than I can convey in my summary). For what it is worth I guess I am not entirely convinced at the necessity with 'Mundane SF' for such strictures especially as science is developing so fast that virtual-

ly anything is possible. After all the so-called recent 'teleportation' of photon experiments could lead to the creation of an ansible. Anyway, the bottom line is that nobody walked out and the panel room quickly filled up to standing room only.

My other panel, also well attended, was entitled 'Science Denial' for which we were given the brief: 'From creationism to rejection of global warming, there is a rising tide of world-views that deprecate or explicitly reject the scientific consensus. Why the rise of such beliefs, and is it appropriate for SF to engage with them?' With me on the panel were Guy Consolmagno SJ, Paul McAuley (moderator), and Petrea Mitchell. My contributions included global warming (naturally), AIDS not being caused by HIV (as some have erroneously alleged), and the UK government's handling a few years ago of genetically modified crop separation distances (it's a long-story not widely known). However I was positively delighted by Guy Consolmagno's contribution. For those who do not know of him he is a scientist from the Vatican but who frequently views himself as a missionary for science to the Church. He called for scientists who are church-goers to explain evolution and other issues to their non-science congregation fellows as they may be listened to where as a visiting non-religious scientist, no matter their expertise, would not. I recommend future Worldcons and Eurocons securing Guy as a special guest. He would be well worth paying the travel expenses. Finally, we also had a useful contribution from the audience which pointed out that with regards to issues such as animal lab work that scientists tend to view the matter objectively weighing up costs and benefits using logic, whereas animal rights objectors use a different scale of good and evil determined by the heart. No wonder that dialogue between the two camps is fraught.

Now we come to my saga of my one and a half talks. I recount this as I know that many Worldcon programme participants (not just those at Interaction) will probably have had similar experiences at one time or another so perhaps any conrunners reading this might care to take note. Also it demonstrates that Interaction had its hiccoughs but that, like this instance, they were not major. To cut to the chase, when I first responded to the call (about a year ago) to contribute to the programme I included one of my audio-visual (AV) talks as these in the past have gone down rather well (indeed I have given one at every UK venue Eurocon to date). I pointed out that I would need two screens, an overhead projector and a slide projector. Then, with just a month to the convention, I was told that my climate change talk

would only be half an hour (or 20 minutes allowing for 5 minute change-over beginning and end or 10 minutes allowing for another 10 minutes question and answer). Now it does not take a genius to realise that it is very difficult to squeeze an audiovisual feast into such a short time frame let alone one on a complex topic such as climate change. I pointed this out and, to be fair the scheduling committee, the organisers quickly grasped the line of reasoning. Then a week or two before the event they said that an hour had become free and did I want to swap slots the downside being that this would not be reflected in the programme booklet but on the daily update sheets. An hour slot (or 50 minutes allowing 5 minutes turnaround at either end or 40 minutes with 10 mins Q & A) was perfectly workable, and so I agreed to give the talk a day early...

Naturally, being an audiovisual talk I wanted to check that the audiovisual equipment was there, especially so because at the previous 1995 Intersection Worldcon they forgot and the AV equipment turned up halfway through. So I turned up to the Green Room an hour early to enquire and they sent me to ops. Ops was quite quiet at the time so I soon was able to explain the situation but to a seemingly disinterested lady who brusquely pointed out that the AV requirements were clearly on her list and so not to worry. (Dateline: Friday 11.15 to protect the innocent.) I have to say I was not particularly satisfied with this but one has to accept such and so off I went to sort out my slides. Now for once for one of my talks the room was not packed but just reasonably full. My concerns though were with the absence of the second screen and overhead projector. Yes, you guessed it, they had not turned up! Using the wall as a screen was not an option because, unlike the same-sized room next door, the audience was facing the window that had a loose (folding) blue curtain. The tech ops guy arrived to say that he could not find an OHP and wished that he had been notified earlier (cf. the lady in ops). The tech guy was genuinely doing his best to be helpful and the OHP duly turned up half an hour later but without a screen. Meanwhile I had long-since started to wing my talk but half the audience immediately started to walk out... Now, I know that my talks are famous for their AVs, and that without them some of the extra magic goes, but I have never had that reaction. (Usually the reverse, people drift in and stay.) Actually it transpired that half the audience were expecting a talk on SF and feminism. Why they thought a bloke would be giving such a talk who knows: perhaps at last we have equality between the sexes? Anyway, depleted audience and AV prob-



pointment were insistent. As it happened I was having a two hour break between commitments (I was only planning to check out the art show) and, though I did not have any AVs or even notes, we found a space on the balcony and so I gave a very short presentation followed by a lengthy Q & A session to a score or so. Bless them, the Moat Green Room staff cottoned on to what was happening and surprised me with a real ale - nice one. An hour later and I wound up and was then further surprised by being separately asked to consider going to give science programme items at two future-bid Worldcons in North America. If either win I will have to consider my carbon budget.

Without dwelling further I felt it worth recounting this tale (especially for conrunners' benefit) as such problems were a) avoidable at the prog planning stage, and b) rectifiable had the ops room lady bothered to pass on the concern. All she needed to have done was to ask the technical people had they actually physically got the equipment to hand? The techs would have realised that they had not and could have sorted it all out in

lems aside, I did the best I could and naturally I ran out of time... So perhaps there are some lessons to learn from all of this. First, do allocate time appropriately to programme item format. Talks with multiple AVs last longer than talks with single AVs which in turn last longer than talks without any AVs. Second, last minute programme shifting is not a good idea. Third, don't expect anything more than basic equipment at a UK Worldcon. I for one certainly will not, being hit twice is quite enough thank you; though I have never had this problem at smaller conventions or even at those in Eastern Europe. But the story does not end there...

Later the tech guy comes up to me and says that he has found that the SECC next door was awash with OHPs. Coincidentally this encounter took place the next day at the time when I would have given the original half -hour presentation. There was a crowd in the corridor and someone must have recognised me because suddenly I was being asked when the climate talk would begin? I pointed out that it had been shifted to the previous day, but many in their disap-

good time. So there you go.

Eurocon

Interaction was not just a Worldcon but a Eurocon too. It was here from my partisan perspective that Interaction on one hand, and ESFS on the other, really missed an opportunity. However do not think that I am pointing the finger at Interaction's organising committee what happened was the result of the Eurocon dimension to the event being minimally co-ordinated and part of this is clearly down to the European SF Society (ESFS) not being as organised as it might. This last in turn is due to ESFS failing to have evolved over the past couple of decades even though its circumstances have changed as Eurocons have: the Eurocon these days is annual (not biennial), there is now regular competition to hold these events, and indeed the European landscape has changed (for a start it is not so divided east-west). Anyway, as far as attending Interaction was concerned, one knew that it was meant to be both a Worldcon and a Eurocon but the Eurocon dimension was minimal and swamped

by the Worldcon dimension. Consequently while at a Eurocon and a Worldcon the Eurocon and Hugo Awards are arguably the respective convention's climax, at Interaction the Eurocon Awards were tucked away. Further, there was no official announcement of the Eurocon Award winners to the World at large from Interaction per se (as I found out after the event when the science journal Nature got in touch regarding whether their win was genuine or not).

The Eurocon Awards themselves were voted on by blind ballot. Nominations should have been received in the two months prior to the convention. Indeed one was, but the ESFS officer concerned had an erratic e-mail system and so that was lost (even though the other officers were copied they thought the matter was in hand). The business meeting was divided into three daily sessions with the nominations taking place during one and the pitch and blind vote in the second. The way ESFS has done this to date is that there are two official delegates per nation who vote. The reason for this is to sure that there is a balance of view across Europe even though the local Eurocon and neighbouring countries have more people, and so could dominate, that year's event. The problem with this is that as Eurocons have grown, so Europe has also evolved. Some countries (like Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia) have fragmented while others (such as East and West) Germany have amalgamated. Further, this ESFS system does not demographically reflect either national population let alone the size of a country's SF fan base. Here the UK, with its large population and con-going community, misses out unless one separates out England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, which some Eurocons have done in the past and others not. And what of semi-autonomous states like Aosta? This last admittedly is not usually a problem but can be if the Eurocon takes place in one (such as it did with Jersey in 1993). ESFS national representation is something that urgently needs to be addressed by the officers if the Eurocon Award is to increase its validity and standing. However at Interaction while the UK had two votes, it had three delegates in that in addition to Jim Walker, Ian Watson and I shared the decision making for one vote. (As it happened we agreed on everything apart from one category of which I had inadequate knowledge to make an informed decision, so Ian led on that.)

The good news in terms of this year's awards was that there were a number of healthy nominations in each category but when it came to the vote the winner won by a healthy margin. The results can be found on the autumnal 2005 news page. As indicat-

ed there were plenty of nominations but it is worth pointing out (especially for those putting forward future nominations) that the Award tends to go to those whose work or activities have touched more than one European country: the Award is after all a European one.

Awards aside, let's return to the question of how much Interaction was a Eurocon? Well, apart from a couple of items, such as a panel on non-Anglophone SF, the ESFS business meetings, and the designation 'Eurocon' on the cover of the programme schedule booklet, a list of past Eurocons in the souvenir booklet, there was little to signal that Interaction was a Eurocon. Maybe I missed a lot, but that was the impression I got, and a few others independently raised this point in conversation so I know that I was not alone. Indeed on at least three separate occasions I heard genuine (if unresolved) debate as to whether a future Worldcon should also be a Eurocon? On the plus side the Worldcon provides an opportunity to showcase European SF and fandom to the international SF community. Further, some Europeans might not have the time, or alternatively the money, to attend two international events in the same year (though 1987 and 1990 did see separate European events to the European-venued Worldcons those years). On the downside it may perhaps be inevitable that a joint Eurocon would be almost totally swamped by the Worldcon dimension and so it might be better to use that focussing solely on ESFS promotion rather than have it as an actual Eurocon. As indicated, my sense of these conversations was that most Eurocon regulars had a sense of the pros and cons but indecision ruled. This was probably in no small part due to Interaction being such a successful event in its own right; nobody wants to separate the Eurocon (even ones that have low profile) from successful events. Nonetheless, this is yet another nettle the ESFS officers need to grasp if there is to be maximal synergy between combined Euro-Worldcons.

Meanwhile back at the ESFS business meeting. Prior to the event Dave Lally (ESFS Treasurer and Interaction ESFS liaison) had worked on the constitution, indeed he and I met up in London (was nominally assisting him/Interaction to secure fan and independent films) and, among other ESFS things, discussed the constitution. A couple of days later Dave, well in advance of the convention, circulated the ESFS officers and one or two of us ESFS groupies outlining his proposals. This was all, it turned out, a waste of time as another ESFS officer announced at the business meeting that the version of the constitution we were working from, and which was on the



ESFS website(!), was out of date..! (Again it was the ESFS officer with the erratic e-mail system...) It was all a bit of a farce and this housekeeping will have to wait until next year's Kiev Eurocon. However it is one of a number of things indicative that ESFS is not currently firing all cylinders. To give another example: one of the ESFS officer posts is that of Treasurer, yet ESFS has not had any funds for at least a decade! Meanwhile Interaction designating as its ESFS liaison person someone distracted with running a complete programme stream, and who additionally had their own internal ESFS commitments, places simply too many demands on one individual. Even if ESFS was geared up to the task such a liaison link was virtually bound to fail... In short ESFS was not in a position to make a proper pitch to the Interaction committee as to what was required. Let's move on.

The future Eurocon bids. Well, as I mentioned, these days there is inevitably competition to hold future Eurocons. So let's start with the markers placed for 2008. While there was no vote on Eurocon's 2008 venue at Interaction, potential bids putting down markers for future years was welcome and, if they are serious, if they don't win they can then marker the following year and are almost certainly to get that unless there is something really flawed with their bid or if the competition is really fierce. Those putting down markers for 2008 included Italy (Milan) and the Russians (Moscow). Then there was the contest for 2007. See the previous link for details. This was the big decision. At the end of the day, despite a reasonably firm bid from the Irish, the Dane's won. (The Irish had most of the nuts and bolts in place, such as the venue, but had not grasped the Eurocon philosophy and vision. This really showed.) Denmark will be an expensive Eurocon to attend so sorting the venue and accommodation out will be

important. Translation will also be required. They are considering a university city so their adopting the Timisoara model (where local foreign language students are attached to groups of three or four convention visitors and so get a free weekend of conversing in the language they are studying) should be possible. Alternatively there is the Dortmund model whereby a third of the items are in the language of the Eurocon venue, a third in English and a third bilingual of solo lectures/talks/slide shows where a translator is provided. To date Eurocons have been either/

or, tending to adopt either mainly the Timisoara or mainly the Dortmund model. No Eurocon to date, as far as I know has adopted both whole-heartedly. Could Denmark in 2007 be the first?

Then there was news of next year's Eurocon in Kiev. Some progress has been made and the picture of the venue building and surroundings is impressive. Yet at this stage (with just half a year to the event) there should have been more news. Yet am I worried? No, and neither should you. This is why. One, the organisers are understandably behind because they had to deal with Robert Sheckley's pneumonia following the Eurocon dry run. Secondly, they have organised a number of SF events and have, I understand, semi-commercial backing. Third, Boris (the convention Chairman) seems to have his head screwed on. So if you have any doubts then please put them aside and consider the Kiev Eurocon in March. (Also check out our news column for the autumn news column. Remember the Concat' news col regularly covers Eurocon news with a Eurocon short-cut on the news index page.)

Finally there was a request off left field from the Israelis. They wanted to pitch for a Eurocon. Alas Israel is not in Europe (even if it does participate in the Eurovision song contest). It was not clear exactly what was their motivation. It could be that they want to link in with fandom in nearby countries. Fair enough. It could be that they can use such an event to get local sponsorship. Equally fair enough. There may be some political motive. This would be a decided no no. Yet whatever it is that drove the Israelis to approach ESFS they need to be open and up-front with the ESFS officers. If so they may get somewhere, though not endorsement to run a full-blown Eurocon. What may be possible is a possibility afforded by the ESFS constitution for an ESFS Euroconference

(such as the 2003 2nd International Week of SF in Timisoara, Romania). What the Israelis need to do is to float some ideas with ESFS great and the good and then, once honed, pitch them at next year's Eurocon in Kiev. That meeting could well be interesting.

At this point it is worth mentioning that following the three ESFS business meetings it was possible to chat not only to other European fans and professionals whom one only sees at rare Euro-gatherings, but to meet those who hardly ever make it to events outside their own country due to international socio-economic disparity. For example, some central Europeans one may only encounter two or three times a decade and mostly when one is in their, or their neighbouring, country. Hungarians are typical in this respect and I was pleased not only to renew a Hungarian acquaintance made at the 2nd International Week but briefly meet one of the editorial staff of the newly resurrected Hungarian magazine Galaktika [Galaxy] which won a Eurocon Award. The publication is full colour with SF short stories, and not just from Hungarian writers but those from the British Isles and North America too. In addition it also features short science and technology items. Then there was the publisher of Mir Fantastiki [The Fantastic World]. That publication reflects the comparative strength of the Russian SF market which itself is something largely unrecognised by its Anglophone counterpart. SF is big business in Russia and many make a very comfortable living from the genre thank you very much, but with the small snag that the Rouble has little value outside of Russia and its immediate neighbours: and this is just a small snag if you are a native to that part of the World. Many Russian authors have book print runs that their North American and Brit counterparts only find in their wet dreams. Mir Fantastiki is different from Galaktika in that it has carried one fiction story, but instead is effectively a review magazine showcasing both Russian and Anglophone SF, fantasy and horror, in written, cinematic, televisual and computer game forms. The issue I picked up even had a non-fiction article about Leonardo Da Vinci's fantastical blueprint inventions, rocketry and artificial (electronic) replacement human eyes. The closest we have in the West is SFX magazine which is itself a good-across-the-genre review but perhaps a little too dominated by televisual SF for my tastes: Mir Fantastiki seems to have a better balance. The magazine has only been going since 2003 but if it hangs in there and makes its 10th anniversary then, such is its quality and contribution to the genre, I'm sure it would be an extremely strong candidate for a Eurocon Award. Anyway, such encounters offer a window into an al-

ternate appreciation of SF, a kind of parallel universe, and it is this kind of thing that, for me, makes Eurocons so special.

World SF Business

The World SF Society's business meetings I failed to attend but you can see a summary within Concatenation's 2005 autumn news.

Other services

The dealers room had a reasonable number of stalls and seemed to be very busy. The book dealers seemed happy with a number reporting brisk trade. Indeed both Porcupine and Becon Publications carried our Essential SF and shifted a couple of score of copies - the surprising thing was that the trade between the two was different with the stall without the A2 promotional poster with review quotes selling far more: odd that. Other specialist small press books doing well included the afore mentioned Becon's Soundings: Reviews 1992-1996 - by (Locus reviewer) Gary K Wolfe (ISBN 1-870824-50-4). Other book dealers included Rog Peyton (formerly of Birmingham's Andromeda), the Fantasy Centre (Holloway Rd, London) and 'At The Sign of the Dragon's' Richard and Marion van der Voort (formerly from East Sheen and now relocated to west Scotland).

Half the dealers' hall was devoted to the art exhibition and young adult activities. Alas I made two attempts to see the art show but did not secure an island of time sufficiently big to check my bag in and out and see the show. So unfortunately for the first time out of the half dozen or so Worldcons I have attended I missed the show, but hear that it featured many works that were well up to the usual high standard.

However the dealers hall was not exactly big. The largest category of dealers seemed to be book related, but there were others there too probably equally as many. There was a stall selling nifty cyborg models, another (Dragon Site) models of dragons, fairies etc., and another specialising in T-shirts (Off World Designs). There were also a few specialist publication stalls including for Albedo I Ireland's specialist written SF publication. In one real sense one has to thank these dealers for in the main they were very much tied to their stalls and so missed much of the convention. True, they were there for business or at least to promote their semi-commercial fanac, but they did work hard without getting the benefit of the rest of the convention as the average attendee could. However I had expected more dealers. Where were SFX, Starburst or 2000AD? Perhaps I missed them?

(Though former 2000AD editor Alan Grant did appear on some panels.)

The exhibition hall saw more stalls and, naturally, exhibitions. These included those for some conventions including future Worldcons and Worldcon bid. It was also home to the Eurocon display that I produced with colour reproductions of programme book cover, photos, and 20 pt mini-reviews or the programme timetable. I have to say that I supplied this to Dave Lally with several gaps. (I created the core of the display very late in the day when I found out that a) that Interaction had no material for a Eurocon display, and b) that Dave Lally was unaware that he was down in Interaction's Progress Report 4 as being responsible for ESFS liaison and the Eurocon exhibit!) As it was I had been seconded to assist him on the appropriate Interaction sub-committee the month before Interaction (nearly a year after I originally volunteered) to help with independent films for the video programme. As there was little I could do so late on the film front, I thought it best to help him with this other dimension. (Conrunners note: Although I am pleased to report that all of the few independent movie makes I contacted in the short time available were very positive about screening their work free in exchange for distributing leaflets and PR). Dave gamely filled most of the Eurocon display voids I left with copies of material mined from Pat McMurray's convention archive, and some handwritten information. Nonetheless, Interaction very nearly did not have a Eurocon display.

The exhibition hall's really eye-catching displays in the exhibition hall were undeniably the original Tardis (or is it TARDIS?) control console together with a full-sized police box. This display raised money for Macmillan Cancer Relief. There was also a near-full-sized 'stargate' complete with a fairly 'realistic' (can anything 'unreal' be 'realistic?') looking dimensional watery effect. Both exhibits saw people posing by them. And again demonstrated that there were things for media SF fans, though it has to be said that these two were the most visible draws for TV fans. Which brings me on to the low visibility of stalls for some specialist groups. Maybe I missed them but I would have thought that well-organised groups like the Dr Who Appreciation Society, Fanderson, Six of One (The Prisoner society (is this an oxymoron?)), would have each had a stall to showcase their activities, wave the flag and maybe pick up a few members. Ditto where were the fantastic film folk from Bradford, Leicester, Manchester, and London? They could have combined to have a stall or ensured that their leaflets were distributed - Filthy Pierre (marvellously),

as usual for Worldcons, brought his collapsible display holder that accommodated literally a hundred or so leaflets, so the opportunity was there. Don't get me wrong, the Worldcon was a huge success but it was far from a showcase of British and European SF and more of a large hotchpotch, but still a delightful one, to explore. Of course had it been more rounded then maybe there would not have been the space, but it seemed that the facilities could have accommodated a little more had there been the demand and an extra 1,000 attending would not have swamped matters. Besides, I understand that 'space' is the final frontier.



Parties

For those who have only been to conventions just one-side of the Pond, there is a difference in how SF convention partying is conducted between North American, British Isles and western continental European convention. With Angle and Celt conventions much of the socialising takes place in the bar and so such conventions tend to have a good central bar and lounge area. In North America there are room parties. These are held in large rooms or suites very often hired for the purpose, and the groups putting them on tend to do so to promote some aspect of fandom, SF interest or a forthcoming convention or con-bid. Brit Isles conventions do have room parties but these are usually in people's hotel rooms and so are smaller and usually more private affairs. Western continental European cons also have small room parties but often these are more serious affairs with book readings and such, as opposed to out-and-out partying. Of course there are no hard and fast rules and the afore is only a generalization.

Anyway, at Interaction, it being a Worldcon and as two out of three Worldcons are North American, the American style room parties took place each night. I have to say that until recently I was not a huge devotee of these and the four European Worldcons I previously attended saw a group of a dozen or more

of us go out to a restaurant for a leisurely meal before hitting the fan bar late at night. However partly being the only member of the Concat core team attending Interaction, and partly because I found the parties at Torcon 3 a useful way of mining information before settling down with folk and friends, I am a bit of a convert. Interaction had many parties in Glasgow's Hilton and brilliantly these were listed with a map in the programme timetable booklet.

In addition to the usual parties for the forthcoming Worldcon for Japan in 2007 there were also bid parties for 2008 and 2009 together with a more tentative bid party for Australia in 2010. It was positively a delight to see a range of European national parties including: the Germans 50th anniversary (where a number talked fondly of Brit fan and book-dealer Ken Slater whose fannish 'Operation Fantast' helped start German fandom shortly after the war), friendly Norwegians', Swedish and Finnish fandoms. And of course there were European fans around including reporters for European websites (such as Spain's Silente Ciencia ficcion [Silent SF www.silente.net]). There were also the ZZ9 Hitch-hiker lot who asked that you bring your towel and Sproutlore - Robert Rankin fandom. Now this was the only author-based party scheduled other than a book launch but Rankin's work stand out on their own being a sort of cross between Doug Adams/Stanslaw Lem and a certain Britishness (that probably was not explored in Interaction's lit-crit stream theme 'the matter of Britain'). Strangely though I heard that one (Irish) Dave Lally almost did not make it in as apparently the party was for the Irish only, but I suspect (indeed hope) that his leg was being pulled. Unfortunately Robert could not make the convention as he had fallen ill during the PR tour of the UK for his new book *The Brightonomicon*. I understand he recovered in August.

British real ale was also available in the foyer outside three of the larger party rooms in the form of Houston brews. Yes, British real ale for Houston as you know is the home of Glasgow's aerospace, being located as it is not far from the city's international airport. (Attention at the back: were some of you muttering about Texas?) A few of Houston's brews were on offer including some of their prize-winning beers which brave Americans tried. (The less venturesome ones apparently stuck to some sort of lemonade called 'Bud'.)

Of course the parties had their humorous moments and many of these will be personal and to be appreciated experience in context. So I will skip over the serenading, jelly, and leather episodes and simply cite Ian Watson's orgasmachine incident. Now

you see our Ian has written this book, *Orgasmachine* (or *Orgasmatron* (depending on translation)). You may not have heard of it as it has not appeared in English, but is a big hit in Japan (and France). Indeed such a hit that three Japanese ladies dressed up as characters from the book, with one having a huge clockwork key stuck out of her back, were at the Japanese party. The ladies were busy promoting Japan's forthcoming 2007 Worldcon and letting people have their photo taken with them. So when this smartly dressed, thin, guy in his early-60s poses with them they politely giggle and a few snaps are taken. Then one of them checks out his name badge and shrieks. This infects the other two and hysterical minutes pass, as the man's identity is Ian Watson is revealed, before an embryonic semblance of calm is restored. By now other Japanese around want to take pictures and much merriment and flashing ensued. Oh, how we laughed. (We did. Really, we did! OK, maybe you had to be there.)

Then there were the commercial parties. These were promotional affairs largely held away from the Convention Centre and the convention parties, mostly in the town centre. I only went to a couple of these and they were great for networking. Fortunately one I went to was deemed by those who did that circuit as the best in terms of setting and spirit which was the HarperCollins party celebrating their Voyager imprint which was having its 10th anniversary (and at which its editorial director kindly agreed to subsequently give Concat' a short interview. Voyager has a new fantasy coming out, *Temeraire* which is set in an alternate eighteenth/nineteenth century with the war against the French. A French ship is captured and a dragon's egg found, about to hatch... Anyway with this book in mind the Voyager folk held their party on *The Tall Ship*, a sailing cum steam hybrid in Glasgow harbour. We each got a shoulder bag with a *Temeraire* sample chapter (which was quite good really considering I am not a huge fan of fantasy), and a pirate bandana and eye-patch. All Jolly Roger fun (without of course any Roger being jollied). However, according to others, the party with the best food, and lets face it sometimes nourishment not alcohol goes down well, was the Gollancz bash in the city centre.

To round off this section a mention has to be given to the 5-timer party hosted by Pete Weston. Pete ran my first Worldcon, in Brighton 1979 (just a few weeks before I first helped run a con, *Shoestringcon I: Google it you wish as 1979 saw much fanac in Britain*). Anyway the idea behind the 5-timer party was that to attend you must have been to at

least four of the four previous European Worldcons with Interaction being the fifth. A few of us chatted about successive Worldcons and the conclusion was that they all have got better and better as the years went on. Pity then those to come who will organise the next British Worldcon for the standard is now quite high. Consequently it was most appropriate that Paul Oldroyd was presented with a replica Hugo for his services as Chairman of the 1987 Brighton Worldcon.

The climax, if you can call it that (and some did), came when Pete gathered the faithful around for a 'hum and sway' that he learnt at the knee of Ted Tubb and Ken Bulmer (to this day only a few know that they only had one patella between them). Pete sat the assembled cross-legged in a circle before invoking the most sacred spirits of fandom so that all present could walk tall at the convention the next day. The gathering then took a deep sup of whatever drink was in front of them before linking arms and the hum-sway began. The proceedings were rounded off with a blessing for the organization of Worldcons and the productions of fanzines.



Hugo Awards

The Hugo Award ceremony is something I have never attended at any of the Worldcon's I've been to, largely because it usually is a long-winded affair lasting two or three hours. However this year only two hours were allocated for the ceremony, which to some appeared wishful thinking. Paul McAuley and Kim Newman were the masters of ceremonies and, did, by all accounts a great job moving things briskly along with much humour. This I can sort of testify as they finalised their routine on the

train I was on to Glasgow. Things ran so smoothly that it was all over in around an hour and a half. This has to be somewhat of a Worldcon record, certainly for recent times. Indeed the coaches to take people to the Hilton for the parties arrived (on schedule) half an hour later. So score another hit for Interaction organisation. As for the winners the results are listed on our Autumnal 2005 news page. The Hugo losers and winners party itself was held in the Exhibition Centre's 'Armadillo' and run by next year's Los Angeles Worldcon team.

Discussion

Let me make it absolutely clear that Interaction was hugely successful but let's not be complacent. Let's not hide from some of the problems that may well resonate beyond the convention, even if they will hardly affect Worldcon regulars and so might be thought to be irrelevant. If thinking strategically, beyond 'book fandom' who largely drive Worldcon, and there is a sincere desire to attract young blood (or even share with young blood some of the excitement SF book reading brings), then you have to engage the interests the young blood have. While I cannot speak for the US I can say that outside of book fandom, SF fans in the UK that are interested in film and TV SF are markedly younger. Further, in terms of market size (consumers) and business (money) rightly or wrongly film and TV SF is far bigger than that for SF books. So the question is how does one involve the SF film and TV communities? (Assuming that is this is what European Worldconrunners want?)

Then there is the question of Worldcon's internationality. Worldcons are rightly or wrongly dominated by the US. Fine if you are happy with this but some might argue that for a variety of reasons (including diversity, fostering growth, interest, and living up to the name) the Worldcon could be more international than it appears to be at present. So what sort of Worldcon did Interaction's organisers want and what did we get. Well again let me say that for the vast majority (that went) we got a really great time so thank you committee..., but beyond our own selfish enjoyment what were its possible failings? Now I'm sure the committee are all grown up and can stand a little scrutiny, but again I reassure them and all the folk who contributed to Interaction (myself in a small way included) that the following discussion is not in anyway meant to be derogatory of any single soul or grouping. Equally it is useful to be aware of and discuss the reasons why the refrain 'this is a really great convention but pity that...' could be heard in a number of quite different and disparate guises. So what sort of a convention was wanted?



Worldcon or Eurocon? Literary or media? There's the rub. Now the aforementioned problems Eurocon, media, and film fans had are not entirely trivial. Yes, arguably Worldcons are for many about meeting and seeing people active within the SF community (professional and fan) from all over the World. However for others it is for a specialist interest and others still as a showcase of SF in its various forms and a chance to sample the spectrum of the genre's formats. In short it is a number of things to different people. Worldcon committees therefore need to decide what sort of convention they wish to run for what sort of person? If it is to be mainly SF in its written form then fine, we know where we stand. If it's a gathering of the clans to socialise, then fine we know where we stand. If it's to be an SF show case, then fine... Have (as European venued Worldcons are concerned) a strong Eurocon thread... Ditto, ditto. I hasten to affirm I am not personally canvassing for any one particular type of Worldcon against another. I am, though, stating that each Worldcon needs to have a clear vision as to what it seeks to do, and promote this vision in advance in a co-ordinated way, and try to realise this vision on the day.

This is a three-legged stool. Without the vision any individual Worldcon is just like any other Worldcon that runs on considerable momentum: x thousand get together have a good time and we dish out the Hugos. There is nothing wrong with this and there is no need for the vision promotion and realisation legs. Equally you can't realise a vision if there is no vision in the first place. Ditto having a vision and attempting to realise it without the promotional leg. For my money there was a sort of a vision but its promotion was piecemeal and so it was not (fully?) realised.

It was apparent in the years before the event that Co-Chair Vince Docherty did have a European

vision. The pitch he made to the 2003 Finnish Eurocon bid session for 2005 was that Interaction should not be solely a Scottish Worldcon or even a UK one, but be European. He echoed this, later that year, in his Fan Guest of Honour speech at the 2nd International Week of SF. Indeed, as stated above with regards to Interaction's press release 44, he equally recognised that the media folk felt disenfranchised. So he did his bit to raise concerns in good time. The thing is that 'vision', its 'promotion' and 'execution' form a three-legged stool necessitating all three for it to work. The Co-Chairs cannot be expected to deliver on all these fronts. Now, having had several conversations with Eurocon great and good as well as (individually) a dozen members of a media SF group, some thematic points did begin to emerge. I am not going to specify all the solutions but there are several things that might be done. I have just musings, initial thoughts only and as such not appropriate to this convention review. However they might be useful so I have appended them in a separate page in what, for want of a term, I call the 'Armadillo proposals'. (Had this been the 1980s I'd have submitted these points to Ian Sorensen's Conrunner.)

Final words

As I said at the beginning of this review, Interaction was very successful as a Worldcon once again demonstrating that Europe can run these events at the appropriate scale and reasonably efficiently. As such the committee can relax with the knowledge that they have waved the SF flag this side of the Pond despite European fans not having the benefit of a Worldcon on their doorstep most years from which to hone convention-running skills at such a scale. The committee can therefore sit back knowing that they have acquitted themselves more than duty necessitated. Pity then the European Worldcon organisers that follow as once more standards have been raised.

Jonathan Cowie

Finally, a quote from the convention newsletter overheard from a taxi driver: "I've just seen a Klingon in a kilt. You don't see that very often. Not even in Glasgow."

Thanks. Additional information and comment provided, among others, by: Brian Ameringen, Eric Arthur, Tim & Corinne Atkinson, Simon Bradshaw, Anthony Heathcote, Dave Lally, LOTNA members, Roberto Quaglia, Roger Robinson, David Stewart, and Jim Walker. However the views expressed above should only be attributable to the reviewer.



Confounding Tales. 25-27th May 2007

Reportage by James Bacon written in 2007 which appeared in an issue of The Brentford Mercury.

A fun convention is the opposite of a Dull Convention. Now most fans will have fun at whatever convention they are at, regardless, so the description is really misleading. The notion behind a fun convention is that it should be fun, these usually means energetic, involve games and social activities, be all inclusive, try and break down cliques and yet there may be talks and a number of common con themes, but there is an active effort to do 'different' things to entertain the attendance. There is also an expectation that there will be a bit of silliness and a considerable amount of drinking.

Since 1985 there have been over a dozen fun cons. They all seem to follow a similar ethos and when compared to the likes of Novacon or Eastercon are very different. Still they are run by SF fans, and there are quite usually a lot of SF themes used to extrapolate games and activities.

This year, the guys who brought a Convivial in 2004 came back and returned with Confounding Tales and it was been bloody brilliant. It was on in Paisley, a suburb of Glasgow, near the Airport, in the Normandy Hotel. The theme was the Pulp Fiction of the thirties.

I was working, actually studying, I have been training to become a Train Driver and I had completed my first 3 months of classroom work. I finished at work and headed from Paddington to Euston to get a train to Glasgow from London. I got here a bit late

anyhow, but in time for the gangster Speakeasy, which had an interesting selection of music, but the fashions was amazing. People really put a huge amount of effort into the costuming aspect, and some of the Molly's looked splendid and there were many violin cases and spats to be seen. I spent a lot of time catching up with Mick O'Connor from Dublin, who had travelled over with me in 2004, and was back and on his own this time. It was good to catch up, and we had a few beers.

Saying hello to others, chatting and enjoying the vibe took up most of the later part of the evening and I must admit I was shocked to find myself getting to bed before 1am, but I was also knackered and I wanted the weekend to be good.

The con was split into 3 rooms. The Talkies which is self explanatory, Vaudeville and the dealers come bar. The hotel itself was interesting in that it had much more function space available, but we have the older side, I reckoned, and this again is something that a fun con sometimes needs to do, get the cheaper bit.

The first programme item I went to was To Mars by Rocket. This was fun; we built rocketry type vehicles using balloons and then had to compete in a variety of tasks from hitting a target to flying the furthest. I was impressed by a side bar baking soda and vinegar job, but I think balloons are a much safer method of rocketry and this was much better.

Then continuing the flight theme we had Indoor air races. I should point out that I was be-decked in black flying jacket, compulsory shorts and army boots with a nice white neck scarf. Now this was clever and fun, and played I with Flick and Mick. There were 6 inch long small polystyrene planes with 2 charged motors, remote control jobs, they worked perfectly for the size of the room, which had a circuit laid out. Direction and power were the aim, and each pair of contestants had a flyer and ground crew, as apart from one or two really lucky or skilled pilots, the planes would inevitable succumb to gravity. Again a lot of inspiration here and the choice of small plane made the game very workable and damage free. Great crack

Satellite I is a Glasgow one day convention which is celebrating the advent of the fiftieth anniversary of the first satellite this September. They had agreed to take one programme item, to help promote their convention. This was good fun as the whole room was broken up into about seven teams of four or five people, and then teach team had to guide a blindfolded satellite to a planet. The key was each turn a different satellite name was applied to the blindfold and it was a test of planetary knowledge. A nice mix of science and activity.

Next up then was the tree stump of death. Now this was based upon a scene from Flash Gordon, the 1980's movie. The current chief Scout and Blue Peter presenter, Peter Duncan had an eleven second scene in teh movie. He is a Tree Man in Arboria who has come to age, and there is a grotty tree stomp, with a Tree Beast somewhere within, and as a passage to manhood, one inserts your hand down one of the hollowed out trunks and the beast gets you or doesn't. As I walked into the room somehow the convivial guys had built a Tree Stump of Death. It worked. I was really impressed and as usual the simplicity of construction - amazing.

Then it was onto 'how will they survive that' this was a selection of the classic black and white serials, which ended on a cliff-hanger. I never realised just how crap these were. Like many people, I had watched Flash Gordon and Zorro, the two best known perhaps, as reruns a kid and seen quite a few others had two. The selection was varied, all thirties fare, and funny with it. The 'solutions' to the OH My God! Situations were at time pathetic and also pitifully bad in an amusing and pleasing way.

The evenings main event was the wedding celebrations of the space baron, along with a ceilidh and buffet. WE were entrtrtained by a live Ceilidh band

who helped everyone get the idea, and everyone dressed very nicely and many took part in the high octane traditional dancing. The Space Baron then appeared at various times to accept a ldy. The best was a committee member Helen who was absolutely terrifyingly horrifying as she berated the Space Baron, gave him a real ear bashing and made me piss myself with laughter, funniest moment of the con. It seemed so realistic, she must be an actress. The buffet was a very cosmopolitan selection of grub and the drinking continue and contained.

Sunday I enjoyed Breakfast in the company of my good friend, Mick, who was suffering a bit, but not too badly. Breakfast was good, although the meat things were odd, but such is the way in Scotland, they are not afraid of their meat up here, they love it, and when the meat runs out they shove any ould bit of blood or lungs or guts into some intestine and fry it up, lovely stuff, and so here there was no shortage of colestoral and hot coffee.

I was down in time to have a wander around the dealers room/cum bar. The Sign of The Dragon were present, and in true fun con style, they had come out to support the con and I supported them with a small purchase.

Marion and Richard from Sign of the Dragon are situated in Wigtown, so I asked lots of questions about the town and I had decided that we would spend a day or two at the town, buying books.

The first programme item I attended on the Sunday was the 'learn how to fight like Errol Flynn.'

Interestingly in no time at all I was wielding a fencing sword or sabre or foil or something like that, well actually it was a white plastic tube, but I imagined it was a sabre thing, as it swished through the air. It was good. Simon who is an accomplished fencing instructor and a stage fighting chorographer. We had two hours, fist off it was explained that we would be fighting for the stage, so everything is a bit exaggerated, and also very planned out. Then we practiced moves, counting them out in slow motion and then we were split off into pairs to create our own little scene. It became apparent that the acting had little to do with an actual fight as some moves would be suicidal in a fencing competition, but we got on and had a go.

Then there were gentleman sports, a selection of competitive games among the gentlemen, including the infamous return of the frogs and foam and also the cocktail challenge race.

Following this I hung around for Battle ships. I wasn't sure exactly what sort of strange twist the

confounders would have for us, but it turned out they had made a super size battleship board which worked quite cleverly, with the marker pieces being gambling chips. The game got better as the real ships were faced against a range of chthulu monsters and even though there were less Monster hit points, they were smaller and it was a hard game for the regular navy. I had a go and really enjoyed it, such a simple way to make a great game more fun.

Sooner than I could believe it was time to go to the Closing ceremony already. The weekend had flown by so quickly, but as always there was a really cool twist in the tail as the committee surprised us all with a historical change of garb and teased everyone horrendously with what might be a really good idea

for a convention.

There were 33 programme items, and I maybe got to about a third of them. The programme was very well thought out and broken nicely between talking and activities. I leaned towards the more active and participational items, but like always, it was the things that one doesn't see that in retrospect one wonders most about.

As we sat around in the hotel on Sunday evening amongst friends we polished off the litre of fine scotch and it was really very pleasant indeed.





Burnt to the bone.

by James Bacon

Originally written before he was recruited as an Area Head for Interaction, James pondered the negativity that he encountered about the second Glasgow Worldcon from UK fans, especially so at Novacon 2004, his first Novacon

'Hhhhuuuurrrraaaaaahhhhhh'

In the upstairs lounge of a very nice pub, in the centre of Dublin, a resounding cheer went around the room. It had just been announced the Glasgow had won the Worldcon bid for 2005.

Worldcon, Glasgow 1995, Intersection, that name just conjures up the most magnificent of images, even now they are so vivid and clear, it was such a roller coaster of a convention, so much went on. I remember the parties, with all the free beer and more importantly spirits, an unending flow of rum courtesy of Grinner a Baltimore bidding bloke, the Bostonians giving us Irish lads whiskeys, and one for our wives too, so kind.

The Cabin Bar, not just a place to drink, but also a spot to spend the whole night, drinking free rum, enough for everyone, and nice cubicles for those intimate moments, there was surely a good time going on.

I had such a ball, it was great fun, and I always feel good when I think of it all. It makes me wonder then when my gushing enthusiasm about Intersection or the new bid for Worldcon isn't received with the usual smiles and nods of acknowledgement when I mention it at cons and Pub meetings in England. Did I miss something?

I know I was younger, twenty one, naïve, new, and bursting with energy, like I only went to one panel, and a bid session, over the whole con, there was just too much going on, did somebody die? Ok, sorry,

someone did, John Brunner, but that's OK, if I am offered a choice between dying in my bed and dying at a con, I know which choice I'll make.

So why is that there is a palpable smell when I mention Intersection, and more recently the Worldcon bid. The mumbles and shaking heads, the smell is discernable, it's the smell of unhappy fans, as they mutter unheard utterances under their breath, all I ever hear is, mumble...bloody...Worldcon...mumble...kill...mumble...

never...mumble... mumble...mumble.

Everyone smells it, the smell of dissent, the smell of discord, the smell of division, the smell of distaste, the smell of disappointment, the smell of disgust, the smell of distrust, the smell of disparity. It grips your nose like a finger jabbed up your nostril, a soiled finger, hideous and pungent. The only dising you don't get is 'dis-taff', cause that's a piece of wood, apparently.

So what's the smell?

Well I asked about, hey I am glutton for punishment. Some of the answers were quite surprising, and as I talked to a diverse bunch of people, I got an equally diverse range of answers.

The first reason for the slight cynicism was history. Apparently in 1987 there was a Worldcon, and it burnt out a lot of people who then went on the long walk.

1987? Holy shit I was thirteen, fumbling at my flies, sniffing at drink and writing letters to Tharg. I asked Stef what it was like, he was there. 'I wish I had made friends at the con, it would have introduced me into the scene sooner, it was great.'

Well history is that, but surely Intersection was different, wasn't it? Apparently not quite, as a lot of people also felt that they had a 'hard time,' and again there was a bit of 'burnout.' I didn't even realise this, I just assumed that after doing something as huge and amazing like a Worldcon that you would take a break, anyhow, the same thing happens with Octocon every three years or so. People get burnt if they do too much. The way to avoid burnout is to only take on a set job, with set out tasks, and stick to it, pacing yourself. You also need enough people.

I can see though that there is a case where there could be pressure put onto people to help, for the cause, as one would say over here, but is there a better way. I looked at the current Worldcon site; I was looking for the staffing structure. You know the who's who, that every con has. They had one, and it looked good, and they promised to have a full structure up by 2004. This got me thinking, a rare occurrence.

So I thought, and a while went by, and I had an idea; why wait till 2004 why not have the structure up now, listing the positions available, as opposed to listing them when filled.

Why not have a web page that details exactly what each position entails, from Division head down to gopher, with every level in between.

A precise explanation of the position, including how many hours a week it would involve in the run up to the con, how many weeks, months or years you will be involved, the experience required for a position of this level, and the amount of time that you will be 'on the job' during the convention.

Then it could be explained what each division specialises in, its no good having a guy volunteer for tech if he can't change a light bulb, or be in charge of gophers if his inter-personal skills are non-existent.

Listing then the positions that are available in each division, and perhaps having a graphic for the structure, again all online, would create interest and show exactly what was available and who you'd be working with. This would also allow people to say, 'well I wont volunteer for that division as I know James is a wanker' so you don't end up with infighting

either.

As people volunteer, they can be selected, informed of their position, perhaps one lesser than expected even and then the whole structure can slowly be built up over time, ahead of schedule, and visible on the net.

A Volunteer form, requiring detail, could easily be put online, also once you become a member the form could be dispatched, it would be an easy and efficient way to gather help.

There could be a volunteer register, listing those who are Worldcon Volunteers.

With a positive attitude, it could turn the worm, people love being involved, imagine telling all the moaners, and whiners, that 300 gophers have already volunteered a minimum of two hours gophering a day, and its only 2003. Ha! screw you.

There could be Worldcon Volunteer parties every six months, even for gophers, so that a camaraderie gets built up, and people looking in, think more about joining up.

This committee seem to be very clued into what they are taking on, but just cause I know that doesn't mean it will stop the whingers. Yeah the only way to beat the bastards is to be pro-active, if burnout is perceived to be an issue, openness will show a different picture and that perception has to then change.

Being open and displaying info online is a simple and effective solution.

People will volunteer, especially if they have a chance to think through the commitment they are making, are allowed to make a leisurely decision and now that they are wanted, needed even.

Then there are further thoughts. In the real world a company gets a discount if it promotes something to its staff. Well wouldn't Worldcon Volunteers be a big body of people, who would deserve discounts and thanks to their form, would be easily informed of said promotions?

I think so, and if there were a register, I would happily offer a discount to Volunteers at the next con I run, in actual fact, I will, better than offering it to students, they can volunteer as well. Interaction could easily ask for a discount for their Volunteers, it would be a good thing to offer, from everyone's perspective and some of the fecking ejits might even turn up and pay at the door.



Enditorial - A Glasgow Visit

by James Bacon

The time between Christmas and New Years is a down time for most, and despite working Christmas day itself, I had planned to be about and so when Vince mentioned he would be home in Glasgow, setting up a day to hang out seemed like a delightful idea. His family, from Australia were over visiting with his Mom in Glasgow so, a chance to say hello.

Vincent is one of those people who really paces things nicely, I had no idea exactly what we would be doing, but that was part of the attraction, it would all be good, and so already relaxed.

Vince Docherty has one of those very serious jobs, where, there are no doubt rewards but also considerable pressures, and fandom is lucky to have his experience and knowledge, which he shares. His thoughts and musings, questions of self reflection and insight, are the Spice Melange for con running fandom.

I am kindly popped into a first class carriage, the Train Guard at London happy to chat for a few moments, and my own currency of guile, cheek and a smile gets me a bit of traction. The four and a half hour journey is thoroughly pleasing, the train travelling at 125mph, leaning gently into curves, presenting views that one forgets might exist in the UK. The train neatly glides north and soon I notice the suburbs of Glasgow, soon crossing the Clyde and going directly into Central Station.

Here, I meet Vince Docherty. I adore the station, it is really in the heart of Glasgow, and is designed as such that there are windows all looking down on the concourse, but full of life, bars, restaurants and a hotel, all loom around, and their curved windows offer a place to voyeur people and trains.

We walk into the Central Hotel. I have been in this hotel for four conventions. The Parties during the 1995 Worldcon where my friends enjoyed the

Moscow bid Vodka so much, I loved how the hotel was on the station, and the bars, but really I got to love it with my one and only Albacon, 2kon and then Convivial. These three cons were the business. In fairness I knew very few people at Albacon, but that didn't stop some Clockwork Orange Cosplay and too much drinking. The laughter was always mighty.

On this visit, myself and Vince go in and the Central Hotel has had a huge renovation job, and the place has changed, in fabulous ways. Gone was the feeling of once great grandeur and back is style and elegance and renovations attempting to find the finest use, not the most expedient, or the most economic, but an effort to find the essence of this grand railway hotel. Gone are the little bar that I spent a lot of time in, on the first floor corridor that goes north to south and the open area where we all, well Stef, Elvis, Dave, and Alison Freebairn as night turned slowly into day, Elvis bought bottles of aftershock for us to all enjoy. and we set fire to 'Psycho' Dave, a former para-trooper, which got a mention in *Ansible*.

From *Ansible* 154 May 2000: *Mark's Favourite 2Kon Moment: 'A clump of Sproutlore/ZZ9/Aliens Stole My Handbag people were hanging out in the bar in the early hours of Sunday morning. One was wearing shorts and the others were merrily singeing the hairs on his legs. Just to pass the time, you understand. A barman came out to investigate the source of the strange burning smell, but was presumably content that there was no risk. "It's all right," he yelled back to a colleague. "They're just setting fire to one another."*

The beautiful bar spaces now are just so nice, and we relax and sit in sumptuous chairs, and enjoy what was once a function room. Of course I love the ability to watch out of the windows in the champaign bar that overlooks the concourse. Here

without doubt there was some great times, now I would worry about holding a con here, it feels like we might soil it.

We get to audaciously wander around and see the function rooms, no one seems to mind and I get to see the incredible changes and original design and architectural elegance uncovered, loved and unleashed. This hotel is fabulous.

It was always amazing to be able to get off the boat train from Ireland, and be here at the Con Hotel. Glasgow is a convention city. That is the reason I visited it. I reflected on this. How often had I been to Glasgow, to just visit Glasgow. Rarely. I have been for Two Worldcons, three Eastercons, two fun conventions, an Albacon, a Staff weekend for the 2005 Worldcon, a couple of site visits of the SECC, one well into the 2005 con phase to assist with input on space.

Of course, unknown to most, I am an alumni of Glasgow Caledonian University, in the sense that I got a qualification from them, and in fairness did visit it once, for a day, to finish off a work related diploma. They forgot to schedule my presentation and questioning, which was an interesting experience but squeezed it in, in that academic style of 'carelessness, it's OK, no one cares really'. There's no student union bar, and to be honest, when I did visit the Students Union it felt like some northern Tory outpost. It was most un-Scottish and odd, I was out of place. I did have a lovely impromptu lunch invitation with a professional psychologist who who mistook me for a lecturer, but she thought that being a Train Driver was more fun. Of course I may go back and do the Degree, it is a science degree, maybe in 2019 after the other thing I am doing.

With Vincent guiding me, for my knowledge of Glasgow is befuddled by rose tinted notions and dreamfully pleasant times, addled with drink and the focus on finding a sushi place or some such, and seeing the statue with the traffic cone on it, or getting to AI comics and Forbidden Planet I am soon guided onward.

From the Central Hotel we walk to Queen Street. There is a lot of work going on in the station. I realise that in many respects that I am viewing Vincent's view of the city. We popped into the Town Hall where a book of condolence was being signed for those who recently passed in a horrific road traffic accident, where a bin lorry lost control. We went in to pay our respects, and it was hard not to notice how lovely this building was, even in this poignant moment. We saw St Aloysius school and church and then we found the Inhospitable Inn.

I have it in a note here, that it was what once was the Ingram Hotel, and now the Mecure, but I stand to be corrected and indeed, my co-editor Vincent will have corrected it, by the time you read this, so you will never know, if I was initially wrong.

We walked onwards, and to Kelvin Park, Kelvin Gorge, past some lovely churches, and then to the top of Kelvin Park. From here we walked down to Future Shock, which was closed, but had the look about it that made me wish it was open. I have of course been there before, but it was cluttered and untidy, but then, that can be nice too. On my last visit, I also found a nearby Oxfam that had a stupendous stack of *Battle* comics, and at something ludicrous, like 35 pence each, and so, I bought them all, and got a deal and a discount and spent £40 on about three years worth. A nice memory.

This was near a pub, Wintergills, and so we went there to have some drinks.

The home of Friends of Kilgore Trout. FOKT.

Of course to me FOKT was a type of alien identification in James White's stories, of *Hospital Station*. These were, probably my first and favourite series of science fiction books, that I came to in 1991, at the insistence of James Peart, chair of Octocon, as he felt it was just not right that the committee not know the works of their guests, and so we all went and started reading up on the novels of those we had not done before, I was 17 and it all went well, in fairness, I read *Storm Constantine* our GOH first, and a couple of others, but then fell foul, I read *Hospital Station*. This was the first of James White's novels, then *Star Surgeon*, then *Ambulance Ship*, then *Sector General*, you can see I fell into a trap, and in between read short story collections, soon I was the James White expert on the committee, and despite occasional diversions I continued and loved them. My knowledge of FOKT was based on these books and of course the amazing *White Papers*.

James White's *Sector General* stories used a unique four letter classification system that helped describe the species quickly and effectively, as one would require when the hospital is a multi species environment. Gary Louie explained in *The White Papers* explained this, and indeed produced a classification list, of which FOKT was one:

Classification: FOKT

Planet: Goglesk

Species: Gogleskan

Individuals: Healer (hone and child

The Gogleskan FOKT resembles a large, dumpy cactuslike plant whose spikes and hair are richly colored

*in a pattern which seems less random the more you look at it. A faint smell comes from the entity, a combination of musk and peppermint. The mass of un-ruly hair and spikes covering its erect, ovoid body are less irregular in their size and placing than is at first apparent. The body hair has mobility, though not the high degree of flexibility and rapid mo-bility of the Kelgian fur, and the spikes, some of which are extremely flexible and grouped together to form a digital cluster, give evi-dence of specialization. The other spikes are longer and stiffer, and some of them seem to be partially atrophied, as if they were evolved for natural defense, but the reason for their presence has long since gone. There are also a number of long, pale tendrils lying amid the multicolored hair covering the cranial area, used for contact telepa-thy. Its voice seems to come from a number of small, vertical breath-ing orifices which encircles its waist. The being sits on a flat, mus-cular pad, and it has legs as well. These members are stubby and concertina-like, and when the four of them are in use they increase the height of the being by several inches. The being al50 has two additional eyes at the back of its head~obviously this species has had to be very watchful in prehistoric times.**

I was oblivious to the connection when I first read the books, although James himself, took great pleasure in telling me about the connection. Although I admit, he probably had to explain it a few times, I have never been quick on the uptake. Vince can attest.

So this was all very pleasant, to be sitting in Wintergills, which felt like a real pub. Of course matters get more confusing when we add in the second Bob Shaw, and I am at a loss to comprehend issues between Faircon and Albacon, but that is all OK, for on this visit, we sit relaxed and imbibe.

Past the clock work orange. This has a particular memory for me, for I took time out of congoing to go with my best friend the now late departed Mick O'Connor and we did the whole circuit. marvelled delightfully to our selves about its diminutive scale, but we did it, and enjoyed it so, and the thought always makes me smile.

We then make our way to somewhere new, the Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum – there is a Spitfire hanging from the ceiling and there is an exhibit taking place, which we take the opportunity to view. This is decadence for me, no rush and lots to see, it is a very nice place.

Mark Meenan meets us here, and we chat and catch up. Mark is very sensible, but also, I have the fondest memories of laughter in his presence, maybe to do with Yafa at the 2005 Worldcon, or LX the 2009 Eastercon, where we worked together, but he has a wry way. Indeed, his approach, while orthodox

and proper, is always erring on the side of fannishness, and I approve. A realistic approach, that remembers that Fans and Fans. And he doesn't mind if I drink his aged single malt the way I like it, mixed, and that to me is the real measure of an understanding and friendly fan. Like some occasional band of adventurers, when we do journey, himself, Vince and so many others, it is always memorable, and great fun.

We head off to meet family members and enjoy a meal out, relaxing as it is. The day does not at all feel long, and it is always a pleasure to meet the Docherty clan. Mark drops me back to the red and silver sleekness of a West Coast Main Line train, and I am soon on my way south, on the last train from Glasgow to London before the sleeper, and it gets me back in timely fashion for the tube west.

This was all unique you know, not only because Vince grew up here, but it is a fannish home. It is like Dublin for me, but I am a frequent fannish visitor to Glasgow. There are not many cities in the World that have this attraction. Boston and Chicago and the Bay Area have it for me, mutiple cons, multiple visits for me, I am very lucky in that regard. Places were multiple cons have taken place and that can draw me to memories, and amenities and sfnal places or book shops are special.

I am certain everyone has fond memories of a variety of cities, but Glasgow, has some especially fabulous ones for me. I probably need to expand my knowledge of book shops next time I am there, hopefully in May for Satellite**, my second one.

As ever, many thanks to all our contributors, and permissions to reprint articles, and speeches, it was very welcomed. This issue really came together in that piece of time between Christmas and New Year, and I am grateful to Vince and Mark for their willingness to engage in what has been a very intense endeavour.

*Bruce Pelz and Gary Louis full work can be found on <http://www.sectorgeneral.com/articlesclassification.html> where they gave permission for it, and other articles to be hosted.