

# 38 NOVA CON

**An overweight, over-the-hill, beer-swilling, borderline-alcoholic sf fan with a superiority complex and an unhealthy obsession with fanzines and con-running?**

**You make that sound like a bad thing.**



## Progress Report One

### **Novacon 38**

**Date: 14th-16th November 2008**

**Venue: Quality Hotel, Bentley, Walsall, (off M6, Junction10)**

**Guest of Honour: Ian R MacLeod**

**Fan Guest of Honour: Vernon Brown**

**Membership & Enquiries:** Attending membership costs £36 until Easter, after which it is £38 (or £42 on the door). Postal registrations should be received by 4<sup>th</sup> November 2008; after this date, please join on the door. Children under 12 attend free; 12-16, £10.00. Cheques and postal orders should be made payable to "Novacon 38" and sent with your completed form(s) to: **Steve Lawson, 379 Myrtle Road, Sheffield, S2 3HQ**. Further information is available at <http://www.novacon38.org.uk>

**Room Rates:** £38 per person per night for people sharing twin/double rooms and £50 pppn for single rooms (inclusive of full English breakfast). NB: hotel booking forms, and deposits equivalent to one night's stay per person (£38 or £50), must be received by Steve Lawson no later than **4th November 2008**. Cheques for room deposits should be made payable to "The Quality Hotel". Enquires regarding hotel bookings should be sent to Steve Lawson at the address above or e-mailed to [xl5@zoom.co.uk](mailto:xl5@zoom.co.uk) (tel: 0114-281-1572).

**Advertising Rates:** Advertising is welcome for both the next two progress reports and for the programme book. The rates are as follows (fan rates in brackets). Progress reports: professional £35 (fan £15) for a full page, £17.50 (£9) half-page, £9.50 (£6) quarter-page. Programme book: £80 (£35) full page, £50 (£17.50) half-page, £27.50 (£10.50) quarter-page. Anyone interested in advertising should contact: **Martin Tudor, 24 Ravensbourne Grove, Willenhall, WV13 1HX** ([empties59@btinternet.com](mailto:empties59@btinternet.com)).

**Advertising Deadlines:** PR #2, 1<sup>st</sup> June 2008 (mailed in July); PR #3: 27<sup>th</sup> September 2008, (mailed in October); programme book, 17th October (to be distributed at Novacon 38).

**Book Room Rates:** Tables (6' x 2'6") cost £20 each for the whole weekend. To book a table, you must be a member of the convention and return a completed booking form (enclosed with this progress report).

**Committee:** Our Glorious Leader Helena Bowles (chair), 38 Harold Rd, Smethwick, Warley, B67 6LJ ([helena.bowles@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:helena.bowles@tiscali.co.uk)); Tony Berry (hotel liaison), 68 Windsor Road, Oldbury, B68 8PB, ([morbius@zoom.co.uk](mailto:morbius@zoom.co.uk)); Alice Lawson (treasurer) and Steve Lawson (registrations), 379 Myrtle Road, Sheffield, S2 3HQ ([xl5@zoom.co.uk](mailto:xl5@zoom.co.uk)); Richard Standage (programme), address as Helena Bowles above ([richard.standage@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:richard.standage@tiscali.co.uk)); (Martin Tudor (publications, with help from associate editor Steve Green), 24 Ravensbourne Grove, Willenhall, WV13 1HX ([empties59@btinternet.com](mailto:empties59@btinternet.com)).

## Living in the Future

*Helena Bowles*

Whose future are we living in?

Because we *are* living in the future.

One of my favourite TV programmes *ever* is *Life on Mars* and one of the things I love about it is that it faithfully recreates the world of my childhood. I was four in 1973 and I clearly remember the homespun nature of our lives. The hand-me-down, homemade clothes, the playing out in the street all evening because while we had telly, it wasn't the all pervasive influence on our lives that it has become...

Now I am 39 and I am just beginning to realise that my generation has lived through a rare kind of revolution. Oh, change always happens with time but, really, give or take an inside loo or colour telly, life in the early seventies was not so much different to life in the fifties.

Life in the nineties, however, was unimaginably different to the seventies. The promise made by embryonic technology in the eighties came to fruition and the world is so different that my children can never really understand my childhood in the way I could understand my parents' youth (or even my grandparents'). Something as simple as being unable to contact somebody - literally not having any option for getting a message to someone - is something they can only imagine. My son researches his homework in the corner of the living room. He'll likely never see a card catalogue or bound set of abstracts in his whole academic career. In my childhood, libraries were places of great importance to me. Places of entertainment and the exciting promise of unknown knowledge. My children can bring the unknown into their home.

They said the railway was "a device to make the world smaller". What would they have made of the global superhighway? When the best and worst of the world can be brought directly to our sofas? (To steal someone else's words: "When they sold us the information superhighway, they didn't tell us that at one end would be the world's junkiest flea-market and at the other the world's scariest porn shop.")

Science fiction has a good track record of anticipating future technologies and their physical consequences. Communication satellites are the classic example, and with plasma screen tvs we're approaching the good old wall screen, but what about the social consequences of our technology? Did anyone predict phenomena such as Second Life? The cyberpunk authors may have come closest, but did anyone really foresee where the computer revolution would take us?

This has been said several times, but did the planners of places like Canary Wharf consciously or unconsciously create the futuristic visions of their childhood? It certainly looks like it. Are we as a global society, in fact, creating as our present the visions of the future we internalised in our past? And, if so, whose vision are we living in?

And that gives us the theme for our convention: "Whose future are we living in?" Utopian, dystopian, revolutionary or just business as usual?

One thing we will be doing this year is having certain key texts that we would if possible, like members to be familiar with. The first books we are requesting you to read, reread or refresh your memory of are:

**1984 by George Orwell, and  
*Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley.**

Why those? Because of a remark made by Ken MacLeod a couple of Novacons back. He pointed out that *1984* is held up to us as a kind of social warning, yet the society we live in is far more closely related to Huxley's *Brave New World*. It was one of those comments that set off explosions in my head because, by ghod, he's right and the implications of that are rather frightening. And that will be one programme item at Novacon 38.

Try to read the books. Yes, they're classics, but like most classics, how many of us have actually read them or thought about them within the last 20 years? Let's bring fresh eyes to them.

Our Guest of Honour this year is **Ian R MacLeod**, who fits our theme because of his excellent work with alternate histories (see the review of *The Light Ages* on page six of this PR).

We also have a Fan Guest of Honour: an elder statesman of fandom, and chair of the first Novacon, **Vernon Brown**.

So dig out those old books and come prepared to discuss and argue.

## Our Guest of Honour: Ian R MacLeod

Ian R MacLeod was born in Solihull in the West Midlands in 1956, and has **mostly lived in and around Birmingham ever since**. Having decided to study law at Birmingham Polytechnic, he emerged a few years later with a lower second honours degree.



After various jobs, he ended up in the Civil Service, which gave him the opportunity to write. His first sale "1/72nd Scale", to *Weird Tales*, was nominated for a Nebula Award for the year's best novella. It was soon followed by sales to *Interzone* and *Asimov's*, so when his wife Gillian became pregnant in 1990, Ian was very happy to have a go at being a full-time house-husband and writer.

Since then, he's sold about 30 short stories to most of the main sf markets, and has been nominated for the British SF Association Award and the James Tiptree Award. His first novel, *The Great Wheel*, won the Locus Award for the Year's Best First novel and his second, an alternative history story entitled *The Summer Isles*, won the World Fantasy Award as a novella and the Sidewise Award, whilst his story "The Chop Girl" won the World Fantasy Award for short fiction. His two most recent novels, *The Light Ages* (see review overpage) and *The House of Storms*, are both set in a world close to our own, where magic is the driving force of the industrial revolution. Currently, Ian also teaches English and creative writing part-time.

[An autobiographic piece by Ian R MacLeod will appear in PR#2.]

## ***The Light Ages* by Ian R MacLeod** **Review by Helena Bowles**

This is a world very like our own, where many elements are completely familiar, which only emphasises the points where MacLeod cleverly drops points of utter *difference* into the text. From the opening sentence:

*"I was born Robert Borrows in Bracebridge, Brownheath, West Yorkshire late one August Sixshiftday afternoon in the seventy-sixth year of the third great cycle of our Ages of Industry, the only son and second child of a lower master of the Lesser Guild of Toolmakers,"*

MacLeod sets out his stall. The skilful placing of "sixshiftday" so close to the down to earth, everyday location of "Bracebridge, Brown-heath, West Yorkshire" gives us everything we need to know about the setting and tradition of this novel. It references a type of coming of age story well-known from the Victorian era. MacLeod is writing quite consciously in the tradition of such novels as (most particularly) *Great Expectations* or *North and South* as he tells the tale of Robert Borrows, son of a poor industrial family, his family tragedy, and his subsequent journey to London and efforts to change the static society he was born into.

About 300 years before the opening of the story, Borrows's society discovered "aether", a magical source of power that could be used as an alternative basis for industrialisation. Ordinary guildsmen mine and refine the aether and the Grandmasters shape it into support for such things as railway tracks and engines or buildings. This ability to use the aether to facilitate industrial creation has led to a stagnation of the practical sciences that in our world led to skill in building and creating. Engineering prowess is unnecessary when aether will support and hold together the most fantastic designs. Another consequence of the use of aether is the continuation of rigid social structures that in our world were eroded by industrialisation. Borrows lives in a world where being born into a family of the Guild of Toolmakers defines ones destiny absolutely.

Aether has its dangers. In a manner analogous to radiation, exposure to aether can cause a progressive degeneration of the body into fantastic shapes and forms that end with a creature that is no longer human physically or mentally. These creatures are known as changelings and are kept in asylums away from the communities who

view them with shame and fear. When Borrow's mother becomes affected by aether, it catalyses a change in Borrow's that results in his abandoning the caste system he has barely questioned all his life and travelling to London as a guildless man.

Before his mother's death, Borrow's is introduced to the mysterious Mistress Summerton, her ward Annalise and a mystery that connects them with his mother's subsequent death. The structure of Borrow's meeting and relationship with Annalise appears to be one of many deliberate references to *Great Expectations* and Pip's encounters with Estella and Mrs Havershaw.

*The Light Ages* is not a comforting or comfortable read. The whole novel is pervaded with an unrelieved Peakeian sense of melancholy and loss. The result of the social revolution Borrow's becomes involved in provides no easy resolutions and the message, if you want to look for messages, seems to be that revolutions in politics are never even a qualified success. Borrow's does not achieve happiness or closure (or even the girl) and the poverty and injustices that underpin the lives of the working class are not changed in any significant way. This melancholia is reinforced by that glacially slow and stately pace of the narrative and the beautiful dreamlike prose.

MacLeod's writing is lyrical and of a type rarely encountered in genre fiction. The closest in style would probably be China Mieville, but where Mieville makes the rundown worlds he envisions incredible MacLeod takes the fantastic and deliberately shows it as mundane. Borrow's world is full of the strange, beautiful and, to us, amazing. To Borrow's they are everyday, dull or offensive. In many ways *The Light Ages* is one of those novels which use fantasy tropes but are otherwise far more in the tradition of the mainstream literary novel (in a similar vein to Kostova's *The Librarian* or Niffenegger's *The Time Traveler's Wife*). Perhaps what we are seeing is the last of the genre boundaries falling and the production of the mainstream / fantasy intergenre novel? Whatever. This a hugely original take on the genre and shows us exactly what fantasy looks like in its rare grown-up form.

[*The Light Ages* is available in UK mass market paperback by Simon Schuster / Pocket Books UK 2003 / 2004, ISBN 0743462440.]

## A Personal History of the First Novacon

Vernon Brown



Writing a personal history of the first Novacon has points in common with writing a history of sf, a major one being where to draw a line between prehistory and history, or whether the transition is, in fact, a gradient, while another is to decide what is germane to the issue. So perhaps a bit of scene setting is in order first.

To anyone born after the first moon landing, the lack of public awareness of science fiction before then is as inconceivable as a lack of mobile phones would be today. Few, if any, adverts using it, few major films or serious tv / radio productions, few sf based expressions such as "Triffid-like". More to the point what fans there were did not advertise themselves as they do nowadays. I was born in 1939 and was certainly reading sf by my first year at grammar because I remember submitting a one page sf story for homework and being praised for it, which was remarkable in an era when any mention of sf was met with the rejoinder "Oh yes, little green men in flying saucers". After leaving school. I started to work at Aston University so between work and an active social life by the mid-sixties I had met hundreds of people from all walks of life but found not one with the slightest interest in sf. Then things changed and Novacon's foundations were laid.

One day in late 1967, a poster advertising the formation of a university science fiction group appeared on a notice board near my office. I was there early, and during the course of the evening I met more people interested in sf than I had thought could have been found in the whole of the city. It turned out that a post-grad called Bob Rickard had been a member of an informal Birmingham group which had met in one another's houses but recently disbanded, so he had put up the poster hoping that he could find enough like minds within the university to form an Aston-based group. He had and the University of Aston SF Group, of which I became a committee member, was formed.

Our meetings were informal, often having a guest to talk with us, which is how I encountered Peter Weston and his fanzine *Speculation*. Pete can be quite persuasive and soon had us all collating and

stapling in one of my labs that had long clean benches. We also met for days out and, in 1969, attended our first con, Galactic Fair '69 in Oxford, which was an eye-opener. We looked eagerly for another one, but without luck, Eastercons being the only cons around. Then we heard about a one-day fantasy con to be held in Leeds and went there. It was totally different from Galactic Fair '69, the fans having hired a function room, arranged a very informal programme and left it at that. The contrast between the cons was a topic of conversation for several meetings thereafter, evolving into thoughts of organising a con ourselves, midway between the two in length and programming, at which point matters remained for a while.

Some time later, we were collating when the subject cropped up again, but this time Pete's voice cut across the conversation, suggesting that we *do* something rather than just talk. Thus galvanised, we did so. Here, Pete's knowledge of what to look for in a con hotel was invaluable. He was already entertaining thoughts of a resurgent Brum Group and of running the 1971 Eastercon, so we spent the next few months looking at possible places to hold these events. Finally, we decided on the Imperial Hotel for the ASFG convention and the Brum Group meetings, and the De Vere in Coventry for the Eastercon.

The Imperial, situated in Temple Street in the centre of Birmingham was an ideal site for our con, with reasonably-sized function rooms, our own bar and sufficient bedrooms for the number of fans we hoped would come. The staff were friendly and the prices reasonable, although I, as chairman and sole signatory, would have problems if things went wrong. Now for a name. The con was to be in November 1971, so I suggested Nov, which, from a different root, can mean new, as in *nova*, a new star. All of which gave us NOVACON, although I can't remember why we made it all uppercase. Incidentally, there was no NOVACON 1 - that would have been presumptuous; the con was referred to as NOVACON until it happened, and as "the first Novacon" thereafter. We also needed a guest of honour and were most pleased when Jim White accepted. We advertised, contacted booksellers and possible speakers, and gradually put a programme together.

We were unsure of fannish interest, so aimed for a programme running from noon on Saturday to noon on Sunday, with a Saturday dinner followed by a fancy dress parade. This would allow fans to arrive on Saturday morning and leave on Sunday afternoon. In fact, they arrived on Friday and left as late as possible on Sunday. I'd

hoped for about 130-140 attendees, enough to circulate but not so many that cliques would form; we ended up with 144. We also wanted to do something different as a souvenir, so I ordered a special handstamp, Ray Bradbury created an illustration and we produced a commemorative cover, to my knowledge the first sf one in the UK, if not the whole of Europe.

Finally, *the* weekend arrived and passed in a blur. I had been introduced to the staff on the previous Thursday and given a walkie-talkie so any problems could be nipped in the bud, the films we had arranged to show before and after the programme went without a hitch and everyone seemed happy with the programme / dinner / parade. The bit that I do remember was my introductory speech. Being unused to a fannish audience, I had cut it to the minimum, something on the lines of "Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. My committee and I hope that you will enjoy this convention. May I introduce our guest of honour Jim White. Thank you". I had spent some time earlier practising this in the deserted con hall with a dead microphone, so was at a loss when the audience listened to me with broad grins on their faces. Then I was told that the mike had been live to the rest of the hotel and that people had been regaled by my exercises over their lunches.

Then it was time for the closing ceremony. To our delight, everyone present voted to make the con an annual event and, for reasons of continuity, it was formally handed over to the newly reformed BSFG and NOVACON became the Novacon series of cons. Although the time was ripe for more conventions, it's interesting to speculate what would have happened had I not seen that poster, joined the ASFG, provided the lab for collating and Pete's interjection, suggested the name and stood surety with the hotel. In a multitude of parallel worlds, are there a multitude of almost-NOVACONS or are there none, or doesn't it matter to the storm which butterfly flutters its wings?

[Photo by Pat Brown, 2008]

Don't forget, this progress report has gone out to every member of Novacon 37. If you received your copy by post, please check the membership list on page 17 to see if you've joined Novacon 38 yet. If your name's not there, please join NOW!

## The Way the Future Was (with apologies to Fred Pohl)

Tony Berry

We are living in an alternate universe. It's not the one we should be living in; it's not the one we were promised. So what went wrong?

The Space Race proper began with the launch of Sputnik 1 in 1957, the year I was born. I like to think they put it up to herald my arrival, but somehow I doubt it. Then in 1961, Uri Gagarin was the first man in space. I was too young to realise that the Americans were soiling their pants over this, thinking the Soviets would soon have nuclear weapons in orbit. Kennedy took the decision to regain the lead and the country's self-esteem by putting a (American) man on the moon by the end of the decade, no matter what the cost. The existing and successful X-series rocket plane project was sidelined, and Werner von Braun was given unlimited funding to build his giant boosters. Over the next few years, missions got nearer and nearer their goal until on 21 July 1969, the Eagle landed. Incidentally, the maiden flight of the Concorde was also in that year, heralding a new era of supersonic air travel. Mmm, yeah.

My brother is six years older than me, and we were both keen readers of comics; every week, *The Eagle* and *TV 21* would drop through the letter box. Nothing would be heard from us until he'd read his *Eagle* from cover to cover and I'd done the same with *TV21*. Then we swapped. The Sixties were all about technology and what it could do for us. Science fiction was doing well then with comics and magazines, whilst on tv there were the Gerry Anderson and Irwin Allen series and the likes of *Quatermass*, *Out of the Unknown*, *The Outer Limits*, *Star Trek* and, of course, *Doctor Who*. I watched what I could (sometimes from behind the sofa) and, like everybody else, I knew that the future was Out There for the lucky ones, with the rest of us at least being able to hurtle round the world in flying cars and hypersonic aircraft before returning home to be greeted by the household robot.

When Apollo 11 landed in the Sea of Tranquillity, it was obviously the first step towards the stars. There were no video recorders then, but I stuck a microphone in front of the tv and recorded the landing and takeoff on reel-to-reel tape, which is still in a box somewhere at my mother's house. This was it. The future was here. Armed with the briefings in *Eagle* and various other publications, I knew that the next

step would be the establishment of an orbiting space station, from which scientific studies could be carried out into the effects of long periods in microgravity, development of new materials, drugs, food-production techniques etc. Meanwhile ever more ambitious Moon landings would culminate in the construction of a permanent moonbase - just like in *2001: A Space Odyssey* - by about 1985. From these foundations Mankind would build towards the Big One: a footprint in the red sands of Mars in time for the new millennium.

This was going to happen, no doubt about it. Many of the people working in the space programme at NASA and places like JPL really believed it, because they had read and seen the same stuff I did. Unfortunately, they were not responsible for the budget. The cost of putting a man on the moon was astronomical (fnaar fnaar) and the politicians who didn't give a toss about anything beyond the next election wanted to know why they should spend billions doing it. Meanwhile, the general public quickly lost interest in the whole enterprise as well. There was a bit of excitement when Apollo 13 went bang, but by the time Apollo 17 landed, it rated barely a mention. Then it was over. Skylab was launched and did research for a while before falling back on us, and the Shuttle was developed to get people up there.

And that's basically the way things have stayed for over 30 years. We've launched probes, built the Hubble telescope and now the ISS, but never *gone* anywhere. The Shuttle wheezes on and occasionally blows up, but there is nothing to replace it. The Concorde was scrapped for no reason, and remains the only supersonic passenger plane (I don't count Concordski). Honda has a robot which can walk up stairs. Gee. Computers are getting pretty fast, but try holding a conversation with one. Cars don't fly.

No skiffy future at all, then? Well, we do have mobile phones and ipods, digital cameras and DVDs, flat screen TVs and the internet. So the communication and entertainment side of things is looking okay, but it's still a hugely disappointing world for *Eagle* Boy as we head towards 2010. I can't get into a car, tell it to take me to the London Eye, then sit back and read. Maglev trains do not charge across the countryside at 300mph. The chances of me going on holiday to the slopes of Olympus Mons are looking slim, and anyway, there's no household robot to look after the place while I'm gone. And I don't have a jetpack.

Now I'm the first to admit that expecting all this to happen was hopelessly optimistic and quite romantic, but looking back I did expect a damn sight more than we've got. Unfortunately, I don't think any world leaders are sf fans. I can only conclude that, on one of the numerous occasions when the future diverges, we got shunted into this one around 1970, while somewhere in the alternate universe there are people on Mars. We was robbed.

## 2008 Nova Awards

### Steve Green

In 1973, Novacon instituted the annual Nova Awards to celebrate achievement in British science fiction fanzines. Originally handed down by a panel of judges, these accolades are now decided by all Novacon attendees who can demonstrate a basic knowledge of current fanzines.

Following Novacon 32, the three existing categories - best fanzine, best fanzine writer, best fanzine artist - were extended to cover fanzines produced in Eire. In addition, electronic fanzines are now eligible, provided a file hardcopy is lodged at 33 Scott Road, Olton, Solihull, B92 7LQ, UK. The current rules and a list of known eligible fanzines are available at the Novacon 38 website.

The 2007 Nova Awards were presented on 6<sup>th</sup> November 2007 by Novacon 37 guest of honour Charlie Stross. Special thanks to Charlie, to Ray Bradbury for designing and producing the statuettes, to Ann Green for processing the ballot forms and to the 30 members who voted. The full results were as follows.

Best Fanzine: *Prolapse*, edited by Peter Weston (43 points); 2, *Banana Wings*, ed. Claire Brialey & Mark Plummer (38); 3, *Tortoise*, ed. Sue Jones (19); 4, *iShoes* (11); 5, *Plokta* (9); 6=, *Gotterdamerung Redux*, *Procrastinations* (7); 8=, *Demeter's Daughter*, *I Knew the Porridge Was Trying to Tell Me Something* (5); 10, *Brum Group News*, *Fanzine of the Teledu* (4); 12=, *A Cry For Help*, *Foundation & Empire*, *Head*, *Outlaw Mutation Boogie* (3); 16=, *Inca* (2); 17=, *Clues & Gropes*, *Motorway Dreamer*, *Phlizz* (1). Best Fan Writer: Mark Plummer (32 points); 2, Claire Brialey (30); 3, Peter Weston (19); 4, Yvonne Rowse (9); 5, James Bacon (8); 6=, Tanya Brown, Sue Jones

(6); 8=, Julian Headlong, Tony Keen, Max (5); 11=, John Coxon, Mark McCann (4); 13, Giulia De Cesare (3); 14=, Abi Brown, Niall Harrison, Rob Jackson, Dave Langford, Ang Rosin (2); 19=, Tommy Ferguson, Flick, Christina Lake, Kari Maund, Dave Spencer (1). Best Fan Artist: Alison Scott (26 points); 2, Sue Jones (19); 3, Sue Mason (17); 4, Anne Stokes (7); 5, Arthur "ATom" Thomson (6); 6=, Steve Jeffery, Pete Young (4); 8=, Peter Harrow, John Toon (3); 10, Flick (1). A single second-place vote for Taral Wayne was disallowed, as he is not resident in either the UK or Eire. Best Fan (awarded by the Novacon 38 committee): Peter Weston.

### Hotel Information:

The Quality Hotel at Bentley, Walsall, is situated beside Junction 10 of the M6 - so access by road couldn't be easier. The nearest railway station is Walsall and the nearest InterCity railway station is Wolverhampton. Full details about travel will appear in our third and final Progress Report.

The Quality has 150 twin / double rooms - no singles. The rate for twin / doubles is £38 per person, per night. The hotel has agreed we can use a number of these as singles, at the special rate of £50 per person, per night. So, if you want a single room, complete the enclosed hotel booking form *now* - singles will be allocated on a strict first come, first served basis. Children under five will be accommodated free of charge, and children aged 5-12 will be charged £10 per night (all prices are inclusive of full English breakfast, or you can exchange your voucher for a baguette at the bar later in the day if you miss breakfast). All residents will be able to enjoy full use of the Quality's leisure club, which comprises indoor heated swimming pool, spa-bath, sauna, solarium, and gymnasium.

For those who insist on a single but don't book in time, there are overflows nearby, but you'll need to book direct. The Premier Travel Inn is a 10-minute walk from the Quality (15 minutes back, as it's uphill on your way back); contact them at Bentley Green, Bentley Road North, Walsall, WS2 0WB, telephone 0870 197 7258, or [www.premierinn.com](http://www.premierinn.com). On the other side of Junction 10 is the more expensive Village Hotel on Tempus Drive, Tempus Ten, Walsall, WS2 8TJ, 0870 701 4444 or [www.village-hotels.co.uk](http://www.village-hotels.co.uk).

For further information contact: Steve Lawson (see page two).

### Operations:

As we are sure you are aware, Novacon, like most conventions in Britain, is run by volunteers and we can't have too many of them. So, if you are willing to help out at the convention – anything from moving chairs to helping with tech ops or working on the programme – please contact: Steve Lawson (see page two).

### Children's Facilities:

Although, as in recent years, Novacon 38 will not be organising an official creche, we will have a room set aside for younger members to amuse themselves. Please note any use of this facility will be strictly the responsibility of their parents.

### Artshow & Auctions:

Novacon will once again be running a packed artshow, with many of the items featured in Sunday's arts and crafts auction. We'll also have our CD:ROM art display up and running. Do contact us at once if you want to exhibit your artwork.

Members can also enter items in both the Novacon book auction (Saturday) and the Novacon arts & crafts auction (Sunday). Please advise the Registrations Desk immediately upon arrival if you have items for auction. A 10% commission is charged on all sales.

For full details, contact Steve Lawson (see page two).

### Novacon's RNIB Raffle:

As usual, we will be selling raffle tickets to raise money for the Royal National Institute for the Blind's "Talking Books for the Blind" project. If you have anything you would like to donate as a prize for the raffle, please contact Martin Tudor at 24 Ravensbourne Grove, Willenhall, WV13 1HX (empties59@btinternet.com). Make sure you buy a ticket or two from the Registration Desk as well!

### Dealers Room:

If you wish to book tables in the Dealers' Room, please complete the relevant section of the membership form enclosed with this PR and return it to Steve Lawson. If you are already a member of Novacon 38 (see page 17 for the list of current members), simply endorse the form accordingly and complete the appropriate section.

## Ken Slater (1917-2008)

### Rog Peyton

It is with great sorrow we report the death of Ken Slater. Ken (pictured right, receiving his "best fan" Nova Award at Novacon 27, in 1997) passed away in hospital from peritonitis on Saturday, 16<sup>th</sup> February, just a month after several Birmingham SF Group members helped him celebrate his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday. His daughter Susie was with him at the end, and he slipped away peacefully with Susie holding his hand.



Ken started selling sf through mail order back in 1947. Sixty years later, he was still selling books at Novacon 37, ably supported by his family.

His impact on science fiction and fandom in the UK was immense. Before the late 1960s, the only place to obtain imports from the USA was through Ken's Fantast (Medway) Ltd. His catalogues were essential to any self-respecting sf fan. In those catalogues, he not only sold books but gave info on conventions, fanzines etc, and generally publicized any fannish event completely free of charge.

He was a founder member of the British Science Fiction Association, a winner of the Doc Weir Award and guest of honour at several conventions. From 1953 to 1959, he was the resident book reviewer in *Nebula SF*, the Scottish prozine.

When I first contacted fandom back in 1961, virtually the first thing I was told was "You must get Ken Slater's book catalogue". When I met Ken at my first convention in 1964, he was sitting in the tiny bookroom (he was the *only* sf bookseller in those days) surrounded by copies of brand-new US import paperbacks. That was the moment I can quite honestly say that "Ken Slater changed my life." I had this dream of doing the same. It took me several years, but soon I was doing exactly the same thing: selling books at conventions.

Now, Ken is no longer with us. The bookroom at conventions will never be the same again.



## Novacon 38 Membership

as at 9<sup>th</sup> March 2008

A 26	½r	A 5	Alice Lawson
A 22	Michael Abbott	A 30	Gavin Long
A 72	Brian Aldiss	A 29	Caroline Loveridge
A 18	Brian Ameringen	A 52	Peter Mabey
C 19	Meriol Ameringen	A 77	Ken MacLeod
A 39	Barbara-Jane	G 1	Ian R MacLeod
A 4	Tony Berry	A 37	Ian Maughan
A 3	Helena Bowles	A 61	Pauline Morgan
A 73	Ray Bradbury	A 62	Chris Morgan
A 74	Carol Bradbury	A 17	Caroline Mullan
A 12	Claire Brialey	A 76	Feorag NicBhríde
A 56	Pat Brown	A 58	James Odell
G 2	Vernon Brown	A 84	Chris O'Shea
A 10	Kevin Clarke	A 15	Rog Peyton
A 32	Cat Coast	A 13	Mark Plummer
A 53	Steve Cooper	A 55	Thomas Recktenwald
A 28	Margaret Croad	A 78	Alastair Reynolds
A 46	Steve Davies	A 38	Roger Robinson
A 47	Giulia De Cesare	A 45	Tony Rogers
A 48	Paul Dormer	A 82	Gavin Shorrock
A 79	Tara Dowling-Hussey	A 81	Ina Shorrock
A 16	Stephen Dunn	A 42	Adrian Snowdon
A 54	Sue Edwards	A 7	Richard Standage
A 66	Vikki Lee France	A 11	Tim Stannard
A 50	Gwen Funnell	A 41	Chris Stocks
A 43	Niall Gordon	A 75	Charles Stross
A 8	Steve Green	A 14	Neil Summerfield
A 9	Ann Green	A 80	Jennifer Swift
A 51	Dave Hardy	A 40	Marcus Thierstein
A 71	Harry Harrison	A 27	David Thomas
A 24	Julian Headlong	A 20	Neil Tomkinson
A 31	Dave Hicks	A 21	Alison Tomkinson
C 33	Penny Hicks	A 25	Dave Tompkins
A 83	Alex Holden	A 57	Martin Tudor
A 70	Dave Holmes	A 64	Jim Walker
A 65	Steve Jeffery	A 49	Peter Wareham

A 68	Al Johnston	A 23	Anne Wilson
A 63	Sue Jones	A 59	Anne Woodford
A 69	Steve Jones	A 60	Alan Woodford
A 67	Dave Lally	C 36	Rachael Wright
A 44	Dave Langford	A 34	Peter Wright
A 6	Steve Lawson	A 35	Anne-Marie Wright

G = Guest  
A = Adult member  
C = Child member

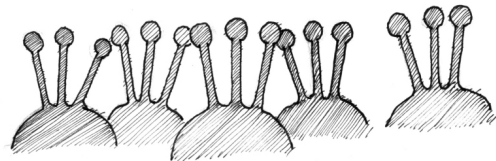
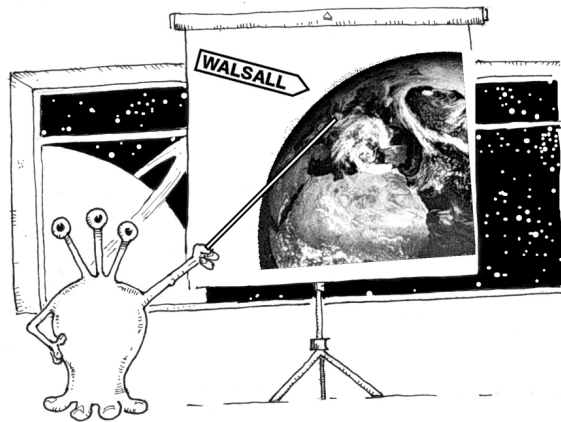
### Acknowledgements

Thanks to Ian R MacLeod, Vernon Brown, Rog Peyton, Steve Green, Helena Bowles, Steve Lawson and Tony Berry for their written contributions for this progress report and the website. Thanks also to Dave Hicks for his logo, cover illo and cartoon, Pat Brown for the photo of Vernon Brown and the Plokta crew for the photo of Ken Slater. Special thanks to Steve Green (my associate editor), and to Kevin Clarke and Steve for running our website. All errors and uncredited contributions are the responsibility of Martin Tudor.

Rog Peyton's tribute to Ken Slater was first published in the March edition of the Birmingham Science Fiction Group's monthly newsletter. Membership costs £16 per year, and meetings are held on the second Friday of each month at the Briar Rose Hotel, Bennetts Hill, Birmingham. For further information, write to 5 Greenbank, Barnt Green, Birmingham, B45 8DH, or check [www.bsfg.freesevers.com](http://www.bsfg.freesevers.com).

Printed by Paper & Print, Stratford Road, Solihull.

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