

NOVACON

PROGRESS REPORT 1



**Guest of
Honour**

**Allen
Stroud**

**8th – 10th
November
2024**

**Palace Hotel
Buxton**

COMMITTEE

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STAFF

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A WORD FROM OUR CHAIRS



So here we go again, another year and another **Novacon** is on its way. This year the role of Chair will be shared jointly between Claire Cartwright and Carol Goodwin. In addition to people from last year's committee, our

numbers have now been strengthened by the return of some familiar faces. These include Alice Lawson (Hotel Liaison), Helena Bowles & Richard Standage (Programme) and Maggie Standage-Bowles. Helena McCallum has moved from Programme to Social Media, while Alex Storer (Logos & Website), Serena Culfeather & John Wilson (Art Show), and Carol Goodwin (Publications) will stay in the same roles.

Our venue remains the wonderful Palace Hotel in Buxton, with its great location, good function space (all on the ground floor) and plenty of space for socialising.

So, what can you expect this year? Well, all the usual. The Scientific Talks, the panel discussions, the Big Sociable Thing on Saturday night, the art auction, some excuse for wine and nibbles on Friday, the beer tasting and guest banquet on Sunday night, and so on – but we can always do with new and interesting ideas from our members, so please contact us with any thoughts.

Novacon is a single-stream convention with a mix of serious and fannish items. We will have the art show and a dealers' room as usual.

We are very pleased that this year's **Guest of Honour** is a man of many talents, Allen Stroud. Allen is a writer of SF, Fantasy and Horror novels and shorter fiction. He is also a composer, an academic and has written lore guides and stories for video games.

With his many interests, I am sure he is going to be a fascinating guest with lots of interesting things to contribute.

Finally, the committee were sad to hear of the passing of Christopher Priest. In addition to his enormous contribution to SF writing, Chris had a long association with Novacon and the Birmingham SF Group and I am sure he will be sadly missed by many of us. Our thoughts and sympathies are with his partner, Nina Allan and Chris' family. *Claire Cartwright & Carol Goodwin*

HOTEL & CONVENTION INFORMATION



Palace Hotel Buxton
Palace Road
Buxton
SK17 6AG

Novacon 53 will be returning to the Palace Hotel in Buxton in the Peak District.

For those who have not been before Buxton is a thermal spa town, with lots of interesting buildings and places to visit for those who wish to venture outside the hotel. These include the Opera House, the Devonshire Dome (once the largest unsupported dome in the world), a restored Georgian crescent and the ornamental Pavilion Gardens. There are supermarkets nearby (Waitrose, Aldi & Sainsburys Local) and plenty of cafés and restaurants, not forgetting the lovely real ale pubs. More information can be found at www.visitbuxton.co.uk.

The whole hotel is light and airy with high ceilings and some impressive decor. And a conservatory. And the longest continuous wrought-iron banister in Britain, or was it Europe? And possibly a ghost. There is a swimming pool and gym/spa facilities. The hotel has a large car park and parking is included for convention guests. As before, all the convention rooms including Programme, Off-piste, Art show and Dealers are on the ground floor. The bars and toilets are also on the ground floor and there is plenty of seating.

There is ramp access at the rear of the hotel for those with difficulty with steps. Please note if you have specific requirements, don't hesitate to contact the hotel directly at **01298 767000** to discuss.



There have been a few changes in the layout this year. The room we used for dealers is now another lounge area with comfy seats and sofas. The dealers will be in the Haddon room which was formally used for off-piste.

Those of you who were at Novacon 51 will remember the Robert Rippon bar. This is being refurbished and should be available when we are there.

We are negotiating some other things with the hotel and will keep you updated.

Convention room rates and Booking

The Room rates have gone up this year. Rates (given below) are per room per night.

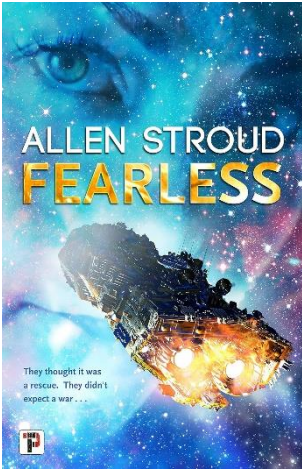
Convention room rates Rooms with Breakfast are: £110 per night for a Standard Double or Twin room (ie £55 per person with two people sharing). Single rooms are £70pp.

To reserve a room call **Central Booking 0333 323 1574** and use the code **NOVA080224** to get our rates. This number is available 8am - 8:30pm, Monday - Friday, 9am - 5:30pm Saturday.

Anyone with mobility requirements should book directly with the hotel on **01298 767000** and use the **option 4**. This number is not available evenings and weekends.

If you have a problem getting through, please email Alison Burnell with your contact details and she will call you back.
alison.burnell@theelitevenueselection.co.uk

GUEST OF HONOUR – ALLEN STROUD



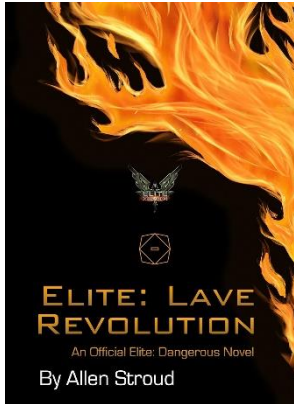
We are very pleased that Allen Stroud has agreed to be our Guest of Honour for Novacon 53.

Allen is a science fiction, fantasy and horror writer, a lecturer and researcher at Coventry University, and Chair of the British Science Fiction Association. He has also been Chair for several Fantasycon's and a past editor of *The British Fantasy Society Journal*. As if that wasn't enough, he also writes for videogames, and in addition he is a composer of music.

Allen completed his PhD in 2017 at the University of Winchester and now works at Coventry University. He specialises in the research and development of fictional worlds that provide opportunities for imaginative storytelling. His research considers the nature of storytelling and he regularly publishes papers on mythmaking, catharsis and immersion. His current work involves a research project called Creative Futures. This partnership between the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory and Coventry University puts science fiction writers in conversation with the MOD to identify the challenges we will face in the future.

Allen writes in a variety of formats and has work published as novels, short stories and in computer games. His SF novel *FEARLESS* (2020 from Flame tree Press) has been praised as hard SF that offers a glimpse of a vividly plausible future for humanity as it colonises the solar system, and in Adrian Tchaikovsky's words, as "fast-paced, gripping hard SF with death in hard vacuum waiting at every turn." It is the first in *The Fractal Novels* series. The sequel *RESILIENT* was published in 2022 and the third in the series, *VIGILANCE* is due to be published in September this year. Alongside the novels, there are also six shorter "episodes" which link into the events in the novels though they can be read as standalone books. These are *EUROPA*, *CERES*, *LAGRANGE POINT*, *TERRA*, *LUNA* and *JEZERO*. In addition, he has published shorter fiction ranging from SF, fantasy and horror in various magazines and

anthologies including *ADVENTURES IN SPACE: New Short stories by Chinese & English Science Fiction Writers* (Flame Tree Press 2023), *Parsec* magazine, *BFS Horizons*, and *CRISES AND CONFLICTS* (NewCon Press) to name but a few.



Turning to videogame writing, he has worked on worldbuilding and novelisations of videogames such as *ELITE:DANGEROUS*. This includes six guidebooks that set out the mythology, biology, societal rules and economics etc which create the background for the games. In other words, an official ‘Lore’ framework for any future writers to use in novelisations etc. He also was a founding and continuing host of *Lave Radio*, a free podcast related to the game. He then

became involved with similar work for *Chaos Reborn*, *Phoenix Point* and most recently, *Baldur’s Gate 3*

Allen is also a composer of science fiction soundtracks, creating orchestral synth tracks for audio dramas, podcast theme tunes and short films. His work on the computer game *ELITE DANGEROUS* involved a novel, an audio drama and music album completed in 2014. Recently he has released the *Fractals* Album – a collection of music that he composed while writing the different stories for his *Fractals* novels/shorter fiction. *Carol Goodwin*

Sources:

Author website – www.allenstroud.co.uk

Internet Speculative Fiction Database - www.isfdb.org

Wikipedia - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Allen_Stroud

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Fiction Series

- *The Fractal Series - Novels* (Flame Tree Press)
 - FEARLESS (2020)
 - RESILIENT (2022)
 - VIGILANCE (due in September 2024)

- *The Fractal Series – Episodes* (Flame Tree Press)
 - EUROPA (2017)
 - CERES (2018)
 - LAGRANGE POINT (2019)
 - TERRA (2023)
 - LUNA (2024)
 - JEZERO (2024)
- *Chaos Reborn videogame*
 - DREAMS OF CHAOS (2016)
- *Elite Dangerous videogame - (HWS Press)*
 - ELITE: LAVE REVOLUTION (2015)
- *The Wisimir Tales (HWS Press)*
 - THE SWORD OF WISIMIR (2012)
 - THE DRAGON OF WISIMIR (2012)
 - THE LORD OF WISIMIR (2013)

Stand-alone Novels

- A BAG OF BEDTIME TALES (HWS Press, 2011 – out of print)
- THE FOREVER MAN (Luna Press, 2017)

CONVENTION TABLES

These are free to anyone who is running a convention. Contact Tony for reservations.

CODE OF CONDUCT

A Convention is a private event and, as such, the Committee has always had the right and the ability to remove any attendee for antisocial behaviour. Over recent years, it has become standard practice for such events to publish a Code of Conduct providing guidelines as to what that antisocial behaviour may include.

The Code of Conduct is a living document. It evolves, intending always to reflect current best practice. The version in use at each Novacon is fixed in advance of the convention, and the version for Novacon 53 will be available on the website (www.novacon.uk/n53/) and will be printed in the convention Programme book. It should be noted that the Code of Conduct

governs not only behaviour at Novacon, but also in certain spaces elsewhere, including but not limited to activity online, such as in messages or replies to Novacon accounts on social media, and posts in Novacon pages and groups.

The Novacon Code of Conduct team receives complete information from preceding Novacon Code of Conduct teams, and passes complete information to future Novacon Code of Conduct teams. It also maintains an awareness of activity which has been of concern to other conventions. For most people, the simple principle of, “Behave like a decent human being,” is enough of a guideline. However, if in any doubt, please consult the Novacon website or contact the team at CodeOfConduct@novacon.uk

DEALERS' TABLES

Dealers' tables (6 ft) are available at £20. Dealers normally have to be a member of the convention but we are happy to talk about this. Also, we are open to discussion if you wish to only come for one day. Contact Tony at the email address on Page 2

CHRISTOPHER PRIEST 1943 - 2024

As I am sure many of you already know, Christopher Priest sadly passed away in February. His wife, Nina Allan issued a statement that “My beloved Chris passed away this evening, He was completely peaceful, and surrounded by love.” (see <https://www.ninaallan.co.uk/?p=6855>).

Chris was a giant in the field of Science Fiction, a friend to many Novacon members, and we will miss his wit, his wicked sense of humour, his talent, and his kindness and generosity. He had a long association with Novacon, having been a regular attendee particularly in the early years. He was a Guest of Honour on more than one occasion, the most recent being at Novacon 50. He also wrote the first “Novacon Special” Chapbook, “The Making of the Lesbian Horse” in 1979.

Speaking for myself, I probably have a shorter acquaintance with Chris Priest than many others, although I have read his work for a long time, starting with the H G Wells’ inspired THE SPACE

MACHINE (1976) many moons ago. He was clearly a gifted writer and by the time I met him at a Brum Group meeting, a well-established and influential author. I don't believe I said much to him at that point, probably a little over-awed but remember thoroughly enjoying his thoughts and anecdotes.

I got to know him a little better in later years, particularly through Novacon. We shared a table at Novacon 50, with US director, Rogelio Fogo who had made a film THE STOOGES, based on one of Chris's stories. That was a thoroughly enjoyable evening when I really saw the fun, sharp intelligence and mischief that Chris was capable of. There was a lot of laughter and it remains a fond memory.



Chris was always generous with his time to others including the Birmingham SF Group and we were delighted when he agreed to become our Honorary President. His last visit in person was with his partner, Nina Allan which was yet again, another entertaining and informative evening.

However, that was not the last we saw of Chris at the Brum Group. When Covid introduced us all to Zoom and online meetings, Chris often joined us online. He always had something interesting or amusing to say and was always a very welcome contributor. I recall noticing how encouraging he was to other authors, offering helpful advice to newer authors or discussing craft approaches or elements with longer established ones. He is someone who I will miss and my condolences to Nina and his family.

If anyone else has anything they wish to share about Chris, please let us know and I am sure we will raise a glass to his memory at Novacon. Goodbye to a “scholar and a gent”. *Carol Goodwin*

DISEASE MITIGATION POLICY AT NOVACON

It has become increasingly clear that even though things have improved since the height of the pandemic, an awareness of the potential for the spread of infectious disease in convention spaces needs to be always considered.

At this point in time, as a minimum, we would ask that:

- All attending members are **fully vaccinated** against Covid where possible.
- We request members to **take a lateral flow** test prior to attending convention.
- If you have any symptoms of an infectious respiratory infection, please do not attend the convention. If you take ill during the convention, please consider isolating yourself from other attendees.

Other specific measures may be announced nearer the convention, and the committee will continue to monitor things. We will keep members up to date with any other proposed restrictions.

200 YEARS OF DINOSAURS



Artist's impression of how Victorian palaeontologists thought *Megalosaurus bucklandii* looked (right), compared with how we now understand it to have looked (left). Image credit: Mark Garlick / University of Warwick.

While dinosaurs as such are science fact, they have always featured in SFF stories, starting from early examples such as A JOURNEY

TO THE CENTRE OF THE EARTH by Jules Verne and THE LOST WORLD by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, through to later examples from authors such as Edgar R Burroughs, Anne McCaffrey, Harry Harrison and the Doyle-inspired JURASSIC PARK by Michael Crichton to name but a few.



Interestingly, (or at least it was to me), 2024 marks the two-hundredth year, since the first dinosaur was given a name in 1824. This was *Megalosaurus bucklandii*, although the word ‘dinosaur’

would not be officially used until 1842, nearly two decades later. The name translates as ‘Great Lizard’ and remains were found in southern England around Oxfordshire.

A model was made of this dinosaur (along with other extinct animals including an Iguanodon) and exhibited from 1852 as a ‘Crystal Palace Dinosaur’ – a hugely popular public attraction. The models were designed under the direction of Sir Richard Owen and represented the best scientific knowledge at the time. (Some of these still exist at Bromley’s Crystal Palace Park and are Grade 1 listed for those who wish to see them.). Unfortunately they thought it was an “amphibious” quadruped, whereas later studies indicated it was

actually a carnivorous biped (see above illustration). The Iguanodon was also found to be a quite inaccurate portrayal. Some 200 years later, the Megalosaurus (and



also the Iguanodon) are featured in a 2024 special set of Commemorative Stamps issued by the Royal Mail. These were issued on 12th March, and consist of eight stamps, showing dinosaurs and other prehistoric reptiles. The new designs are by illustrator, Joshua Dunlop and are based on scientific data provided by the Palaeontology department of the Natural History Museum. For those interested, there is also a second set featuring fossil discoverer, Mary Anning and three of the fossils she unearthed along the shoreline of Dorset.

Co-incidentally, it is 100 years since the 1st issue of commemorative stamps from the Royal Mail, and there is a set of 10 stamps issued on April 16th to celebrate this event. Each stamp features three historical images, including science related ones such as Halley's Comet, British Achievement in Chemistry and Architects of the Air. *Carol Goodwin*

NOVACON ACCESSIBILITY POLICY

Novacon is committed to making our convention as accessible as possible for our members. We are still working with the hotel to see what is feasible given the nature and age of the Palace hotel. Once this is complete, we will publish a detailed policy, via the website and convention publications.



MEMBERSHIP LIST APRIL 2024

- | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1 Allen Stroud | 9 Helena McCallum |
| 2 Jen Williams | 10 Magdalen Standage-Bowles |
| 3 Carol Goodwin | 11 Richard Standage |
| 4 Claire Cartwright | 12 Alex Storer |
| 5 Tony Berry | 13 Serena Culfeather |
| 6 Helena Bowles | 14 John Wilson |
| 7 Alice Lawson | 15 Noel Collyer |
| 8 Steve Lawson | 16 Martin Smart |

- | | |
|----------------------|------------------------|
| 17 Vanessa May | 48 Alan Woodford |
| 18 Pete Randall | 49 Marcus Rowland |
| 19 Sue Jones | 50 Christine Davidson |
| 20 Jamie Scott | 51 Michael Davidson |
| 21 Dave Hicks | 53 Roger Robinson |
| 22 Peter Hicks | 54 Morag O'Neill |
| 23 Cat Coast | 55 Tim Stannard |
| 24 Pauline Morgan | 56 Paul Dormer |
| 25 Chris Morgan | 57 Flick |
| 26 William Goodall | 58 Ian Sorensen |
| 27 Chris Bell | 59 Yvonne Rowse |
| 28 ½r | 60 Sally Rowse |
| 29 Gwen Funnell | 61 Hazel Ashworth West |
| 30 Peter Wareham | 62 Jackie Burns |
| 31 Stephen Cooper | 63 Jean Thompson |
| 32 Nick Mills | 64 David Langford |
| 33 Tommy Ferguson | 65 Alexander Clarke |
| 34 Caroline Mullan | 66 Kevan Grayson |
| 35 Brian Ameringen | 67 Kate Solomon |
| 36 Emjay Ameringen | 68 Malcolm Davies |
| 37 Harry Payne | 69 Niall Gordon |
| 38 Hal Payne | 70 Adrian Snowdon |
| 39 Jodie Payne | 71 Alan Fleming |
| 40 Omega | 72 David Bamford |
| 41 Bridget Wilkinson | 73 Kevin Mortimer |
| 42 Claire Brialey | 74 Neil Simpson |
| 43 Mark Plummer | 75 Ian Maughan |
| 44 Chris Stocks | 76 Andy Sawyer |
| 45 Tim Kirk | 77 Peter Newman |
| 46 Steve Dunn | 78 Karen Fishwick |
| 47 Anne Woodford | |

ART SHOW

If you want to show your art it is free to convention members, but you will need to reserve space. So, contact us to discuss what you need and so that we can do a little planning. If you have any questions related to the art show, please contact Serena.