

# PNNewt 5

Just Got Off The Plane from Jersey Edition



**plokta.con Announces Site, Guests**  
<plokta.con> **Release 2.0** will take place from **1-3 June, 2002**, at the **Hilton at Basingstoke**. The guest of honour is **John Meaney**, author of *Paradox* and *To Hold Infinity*. Join by sending £25 to the cabal (see address in colophon) by 25 May or by handing money to a cabal member at the Dead Nurse.

## Not Exactly a Helicon Report

My Eastercon seemed to be comprised mainly of hanging around either the not-a-crêche, or spending hours chatting with friends old and new over delicious, slowly served food. With no quick con buffet, we were reliant on huge teams of matching waiters, who whisked plates away with alacrity, as if to cover up the fact that the kitchen was understaffed and overwrought. Meals taken in this way could last for many hours.

The beautiful weather over the first couple of days reduced the level of convening going on at Helicon. At any given time many people were off exploring the island. I rapidly gave up on trying to meet up with specific friends, surrendering instead to the serendipity of chatting to whichever fans happened to be around at the time. It was a smaller Eastercon than usual, but it felt much smaller than it actually was. I lost count of the number of times that I said it was a shame that someone wasn't at the con, only to discover that they were. Most notable in this regard was Naomi, who was sighted by several people in the manner of the Scarlet Pimpernel.

Until the dead dog party on Monday night, there was never a sense of the gathering of clans that you expect at an Eastercon; but small pockets of fans everywhere you went.

Some aspects of Helicon were poorly planned. Registration, in particular, was an early crisis, with vagaries of mailing list software and an added layer of weird Dutch bureaucracy. The desk eventually opened hours late and only able to register the 3/4 of members for whom there was an envelope, weird bureaucratic slip (to be signed and returned before the valuable con bag was issued) and badge. The others were contained in an ever-expanding pile of problem cases.

Sometime on Friday, visiting aliens extracted my brain and replaced it with the mind of somebody who wakes at 6am, eats lots of fresh fruit and no artery-hardening English breakfast, and gets to bed comfortably before midnight. Luckily I returned to my own self on Saturday, but I was worried for a while there.

On Saturday night the assembled crowd in the Golden Lounge decided to take up silly games. There was consternation when it seemed that no remaining fans were flexible enough to do the Astral Pole. Was this the end of the silly games of our youth? Michael Abbott, once famous for his technique, had acquired Zen Master status. Spurning mere corporeal broomsticks, he deftly demonstrated the Virtual Astral Pole.

One person after another tried and failed, before Steven Cain restored fannish credibility with a solid but unstylish success. Once he'd paved the way, several others matched the feat. But much later, veteran Astral League members Tim Illingworth and Peter Wareham turned up to demonstrate how it should be done.



*You do the hokey cokey and you turn about*

Of course, the Astral Pole is a well-established fannish tradition. But new to this crowd was knurdling, the fine art of bottle walking. Damien Warman had not tried this before, but quickly got the knack, repeatedly beating his previous score and eventually producing a world record knurdle some three feet further than anybody else managed.



*We don't need no steenkin' gravity*

Every so often, Martin Hoare turned up to run a practical time travel workshop. In each case, his radio-controlled clock sturdily

travelled through time at the rate of one second per second.

The following night, Tanya helpfully tattooed all comers, using a kit she described as a cross between washable tattoos and Magnetic Poetry™. Initially the phrases made some sense, but the various tattooees quickly determined that surreal slogans were more fun. Typical was Damien's "Lights Home, Nobody On".



*...choices, choices...*

Popular locations for tattoos included upper and lower arms, with a smattering of bare bellies, bald heads and cleavages. Caro opted for the latter, announcing "easy come, easy go".



*On the Bust of a Barmaid from Sale...*

We stepped out on Monday night with Austin, Caro and Nolly in search of whatever food was available. As an Easter Monday special, every restaurant was either closed, dull, full, or advertising "Futebol" and totally unsuitable for vegetarians. Eventually we found Le Petite Pomme, which was not full, excellent in all respects, and already populated by the rest of the *Plokta* cabal (and the ghost of Dr Plokta, who had caught his flight two hours earlier). Rather disquietingly, although the bill included an amount for wine, we were invited to leave whatever we felt the food was worth. This had the effect of

making us feel simultaneously guilty about not leaving enough and worried that we'd been overcharged. It's a cute approach, but I'd have preferred—and happily paid—honest prices.

The TAFF candidates, **Tobes Valois** and **Chris O'Shea** were much in evidence, cheerfully propping up the bar at both ends of the sobriety continuum. When I went to sleep at 4:45am on Tuesday morning, they were both still going strong. Earlier, TAFF administrator **Sue Mason** had cheerfully humiliated them by setting them behind a large piece of card with a hole in it, and asking the audience to suggest what their bodies should look like. TAFF ballots are available online or with this *PNNewt*, and need to be returned by midnight on 2 June.

The generally good weather meant that most people took the opportunity to explore Jersey. We went to the zoo, where we got the chance to meet the other primates. The lead gorilla was in the habit of explaining to any passing human males that he was the dominant gorilla, that (for example) Michael Abbott and Steven Cain were not dominant gorillas, and that they should come on if they think they're hard enough. They didn't.



*My, what big teeth I've got*

As ever with Jersey cons, the convention drifted slowly away rather than stopping. There were many people hanging around on Monday night, rather fewer on Tuesday morning, and a hardcore of cocktail-swilling trufen by nightfall. There are probably people in the bar still, knurdling away to themselves.

### **Off To Blackpool in 2004**

There were two bids for 2004, Concourse (one bid—two sites) and Concurrence (one bid—infinite sites).

Concourse beat Concurrence by many votes to few (no detailed count was taken, and votes for no award and abstention were not called for). There was then a vote between the two possible sites for Concourse, Blackpool and Heathrow, and Blackpool won, also by many to few.

Their guests of honour will be **Mitchell Burnside Clapp**, **Danny Flynn**, **Christopher Priest**, **Philip Pullman**, and the *Plokta Cabal*'s very own **Sue Mason**.

The Convention Re-enactment Society (a Croydon-based organization) also announced its intention to bid to run Eastercon in Kettering in 1957, and distributed flyers. This would have been a convention combining traditional values and cutting-edge technology. Kettering in '57 — you know it makes sense! It turns out that although some fan histories identify this con, there is no supporting documentary evidence. If it didn't happen, the Eastercon numbering might work after all. Or it might not.

### **Helicon Award Results**

These were announced following the Masquerade. The Doc Weir award was won by the multiply competent Dave Tompkins.

#### **BSFA Awards:**

**Novel:** *Chasm City* by Alastair Reynolds

**Short Story:** "Children of Winter"

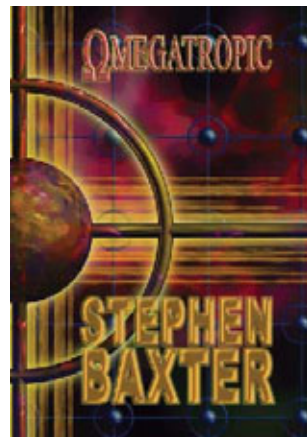
(Interzone 163) by Eric Brown

**Artwork:** Cover of *Omegatropic* by Colin Odell

**Non-Fiction (a new category this year):**

*Omegatropic* by Stephen Baxter (published by the BSFA)

Great big pats on the back all round for the BSFA, demonstrating the obvious merits of a single organisation both publishing books and making awards. Curmudgeons at *PNNewt* HQ reckon that unless the BSFA wants its awards to become a laughing stock, it ought to think seriously about withdrawing its books from the nominating process. We've not read *Omegatropic*, but we still think it's fair to judge the cover by its cover.



*"If you don't like it, you should all make sure to vote for pictures of spaceships next time"*

Just remember, chaps, the BSFA membership apparently reckon this is better artwork than Bryan Talbot's astonishing *Heart of Empire* CD-Rom.

### **Glasgow Unopposed for 2005**

The deadline for groups to file a bid to host the 2005 Worldcon was 2 March 2002. That deadline has now passed and the only bid to have filed is that for Glasgow, Scotland.

The site of the 2005 World Science Fiction Convention (Worldcon) is due to be chosen at ConJosé, the 2002 Worldcon. Glasgow still needs to face a vote as the members of ConJosé could still choose to reject its bid

and pick an alternative site at the convention. However, such a move would be unprecedented.

To vote in the site selection ballot you must be a supporting or attending member of ConJosé. In addition, you must also pay an advance supporting membership fee of \$40 to join the 2005 Worldcon at the time you vote. Every voter receives a supporting membership in the 2005 Worldcon regardless of which site wins the election.

### **Rumours of GUFF Candidates**

While I was hanging around the bar on Monday night, an unidentified source told me that **Doug Bell** and **Pat McMurray** both intend to run for GUFF this year.

Doug is co-editor of the Nova-winning fanzine *Head!* along with his partner Christina Lake, who has consistently been one of the UK's best fanwriters and editors.

Doug has also produced several fanzines of his own.

Pat, meanwhile, is ubiquitous in UK conrunning fandom, having been on the committee of the 1996, 1997, 2000 and 2002 Eastercons, and working on most of the others since entering fandom.

He's also the caretaker of The Memory Hole Annex, a repository for convention documentation and other paraphernalia. Much of this has been lovingly catalogued and the catalogue, with much interesting information, is available online.

Pat's only fanzines to date are the three issues of his one-sheet Attitude conzine *Altitude*.

### **RIP**

**RA Lafferty**, master of the SF short story, **Harry Kramer**, proprietor of Now and Then books in Kitchener, Ontario, **Martha Beck**, popular Midwestern fan, and **Cherry Wilder**, New Zealand author and fan.

### **Beat the Drum Slowly**

Meanwhile, after years of being coaxed to just print one more wafer thin fanzine, the *Critical Wave* photocopier has shuffled off this mortal coil, joined the bleeding choir invisible, and hung up its toner.

### **Memestream**

Spoof Eastercon Bid **Concurrence**: <http://www.cobrabay.freemove.co.uk/concurrence.html>, Real 2004 Eastercon: <http://www.eastercon.com/concourse>, New Clarke Award website: <http://www.clarkeaward.com>, <plokta.con> release 2.0: <http://www.plokta.com/plokta.con>.

The *Plokta News Newt* is the dead tree edition of the Plokta News Network, undigitised by **Alison Scott**. It's a bit first principles this time, because my broadband is down for the very first time ever. I am bereft. *PNN* includes regularly updated news for SF fans, along with other interesting stuff, and you can read it online at <http://www.plokta.com/pnn/> or sign up for emails. Newt by **Sue Mason**. Photos by **Alison Scott**. Send news, LoCs and feedback to **Alison Scott**, 24 St Mary Road, Walthamstow, London E17 9RG or to [locs@plokta.com](mailto:locs@plokta.com). Issue 5, April Nurse, 2002.