

HELICON 2



Progress Report 1

Helicon 2 will be held over the Easter weekend 2002 (March 29th to April 1st) at the Hotel De France in St Helier, Jersey. Our email address is helicon2@smof.demon.co.uk and our website is <http://www.helicon.org.uk>. Attending membership is £35 until 1st January 2002. Memberships should be sent to 33 Meyrick Drive, Wash Common, Newbury, Berks RG14 6SY

C

hairman's Introduction

As I look out of my office window at the post Christmas snow I think back fondly to the warm Jersey springs we enjoyed for Contrivance and Helicon. The island has a warmer climate than mainland Britain. Although it is only 8 miles by five miles it is packed with beautiful scenery and attractions. One of the most popular of these is the award winning Jersey Zoo, now called the Gerald Durrell Conservation Trust. If you visit there be sure to see Columbia, the Ring Tailed Coati which I have adopted.

John Richards is determined to keep you away from the scenic attractions, during the convention, by putting together one of the most comprehensive and interesting Eastercon programs I have seen. He and his team have planned items that will get even me out of the bar. Many of these items will feature our guests, Brian Stableford, Harry Turtledove and Peter Weston. I would like to thank them all for agreeing to come to Helicon 2 and look forward to seeing them there.

I would also like to thank all the committee, staff and everybody else who has helped so far. Special thanks to Steve and Guilia for not quite lynching me for being the last person to submit their copy for PR 1. It's all Bill Gates' fault.

Finally I would like to thank all of you out there, for joining Helicon. Without you it wouldn't be a convention. See you on Jersey.

Martin Hoare

H

otel

Many of you will remember the Hotel de France from Contrivance in 1989 and Helicon in 1993. Unfortunately, in 1994, it was badly damaged by fire. A lengthy restoration has produced many changes. The old basement has been turned into a new reception area. There is also a large lounge with comfortable furniture, and, being on the same level as the road, it is now much more accessible. The old basement conference rooms have gone and the Jersey Photographic Museum has moved to a house in the grounds. A sweeping staircase connects reception with the main conference floor.

At the west end of the hotel there are the baroque Golden and Minstrel rooms. Each has a capacity of 120 making them ideal for medium sized program items. Next to them is the Empire room, the third largest room in the hotel. This has a capacity of 400. Across the drive is the 600 seat Lido. The Lido shares the building with the Ciné de France,

Madisons nightclub, a fitness centre and on the roof, an outdoor swimming pool. The Ciné is one of the two cinemas on Jersey, the other is the Odeon, which served as the German army headquarters during the occupation in World War II.. We will be trying to get a European premiere of an SF film for the convention.

For those who like the softer life, even though Jersey weather is a little warmer than the mainland, there is a heated indoor swimming pool as well.

There are now two restaurants in the hotel. The Gallery Restaurant with its own bar and outdoor terrace has an excellent value table d'hote menu, as well as full a la carte. The steps and wheelchair lift which connected the old part of the hotel with the new Atrium restaurant have now been replaced with a long gentle slope. The Atrium restaurant will be used for breakfast and will have a range of snacks and bar meals during the day. Next door is the Starlight room which will be used for the banquet. The largest bar is now the Library bar. The hotel has promised us beer at local pub prices (currently about £1.50) for the convention.

Andrew Parker, who runs the chocolate shop in the hotel, is hoping that we will break the unbeaten sales record we established at Helicon in 1993. If you can't wait until 2002 you can buy online at <http://www.maisonstlouis.com/>.

The hotel now has 320 bedrooms. The older rooms have all been refurbished to a very high standard. They even have an extra phone socket to plug in your computer.

The centre of Saint Helier is only fifteen minutes walk from the hotel. On the way you will pass a large number of budget hotels and bed & breakfasts. Jersey has a very low crime rate and it is safe to walk around at any time. The Jersey Tourism web site lists guest houses for as little as £15 per night. Their web site is <http://www.jtourism.com/>. The De France has a web site at <http://www.defrance.co.uk/>.

Programming: An Introduction of a Sort

Well, if you are going to have a theme you might as well go for a big one. Not so big as to become meaningless. After all a theme that doesn't add some sort of structure to deliberations as to what goes in and what goes out isn't worth having. But big enough to allow you to do just about anything you want with the judicious application of a few metaphorical screwdrivers, a certain amount of squinting and a smidgen of casual brute force and ignorance.

For Helicon 2 we decided that we should take the White King's advice; to start at the beginning continue until we got to the end and then stop. However we wanted to do this with everything, at least everything that we could fit into a long Easter weekend. Further we didn't want to limit ourselves to actual things. We wanted to start with big bangs and the laying of giant eggs by cosmic chickens and end with both fire and ice and anything else that we could convince the Treasurer was an absolutely necessary expenditure. We wanted to take the path less taken and to wander down whatever byways took our fancy as well as map out the direct route for then to now.

Having decided that that was what we wanted to do, we tried to come up with a simple name for that theme. Then we had a drink and decided to forget it and just try and ask awkward questions instead.

- Why do observable phenomena which, we can assume, have remained consistent over the past few centuries have radically different interpretations over that period?
- Why do people still think that they all laughed at Christopher Columbus when he said the world was round when neither he nor they did any such thing?
- Is there any justification for the assumption that the future will resemble the past on any level?
- Who was at the first filk session?
- What were the events that led up to the ruling that “No costume is no costume”?
- What are the rules of Ghoddminton anyway?
- What might have happened if Katherine of Aragon had had a son? (has anyone done this one yet?)
- At what point do you need “outside influences” for Hitler to win?
- Are books which have “outside influences” working with the Nazi’s just attempt to avoid dealing with an entirely human heart of darkness?
- Would we have “media fandom” if we hadn’t had Star Trek?
- What can I, personally, do to change the future?
- If these are the times that try men’s souls exactly what legal system are they using?
- Even if you had one of those reality tester things that Greg Bear was on about how could you tell that it wasn’t broken?
- Has anyone ever described a Utopia that wasn’t incredibly boring?
- Who would win in a fight St Thomas Aquinas or Ayn Rand?

Eventually, of course, you have to stop asking awkward questions and get on with things. But that’s for after the closing ceremony. In the meantime if you want to talk about history; real, revisionist, alternate, future or just down right made up on the spot, to discuss the evolution of special interest groups inside and outside of fandom, to identify paradigm shifts in a context that has nothing to do with marketing, or to debate whether nit-picking is a legitimate critical technique for Science Fiction and the precise difference between a Mulligan and a McGuffin then get in touch. Even if we can’t get you on the programme we can swap questions over a drink or two?

John Richards

Ode to a Grecian Hugo

On a shelf in Harry Turtledove's living room, a Greek amphora sits next to a Hugo. "That's the one that survived the Northridge earthquake," Harry explained. "It is, of course, a

copy. I got it at Pier One Imports about 30 years ago." The Hugo? "No, that's genuine. It's for *Down in the Bottomlands*, the best novella of 1994." The Hugo and amphora – along with the telescope that sits nearby and the heaps of books that clutter every horizontal surface – are fitting symbols of a career that has had many turnings.

Harry could well have been an academic – he was on track to be an astronomer in college, but while browsing in a used bookstore he found a copy of L. Sprague De Camp's *Lest Darkness Fall*. The book changed his life, leading him away from matters stellar and toward a fascination with history and cultural conflicts. He flunked out of Caltech at the end of his freshman term, spent a year at Cal State LA getting his grade point average to the point where it was visible to the naked eye, then relaunched himself on a dedicated study of Byzantine history.

He got his degree and teaching credential, but along the way something unexpected happened – he discovered a skill at writing and actually managed to sell a fantasy novel. Success followed success, and he abandoned the halls of academia for good. If he had stayed on that path, where would he be now? "A mercenary academic, struggling for tenure, I guess," he mused. "Positions in Byzantine history only come available when somebody die, sometimes not even then. I'm happier doing what I'm doing, telling lies for a living. I was a perfectly competent teacher, but I think I'm a more than competent writer. I'm doing exactly what I want to do. It's a happy accident that I was born into a society that is wealthy enough, that has enough people reading the same language, that someone can make a living as a writer. There aren't many languages in the world even now where that's true, and throughout history, most writers have had to have another job to pay the bills." The study of Greek culture did come in handy, though – many of Harry's early works involved cultures which resembled both contemporary and ancient peoples of the Middle East.

Harry's recent works show less influence of ancient societies. "I've done about what I can do with it for now," he explained. "I wrote a straight historical novel a few years ago set in the Byzantine Empire under the pseudonym H N Turteltaub, and I'm using the same pen name for a set of seafaring adventures set in Hellenistic times. That will allow me to keep my Greek fresh – I was reading the *Odyssey* in the original last night, which was kinda fun. It has been 30 years since I formally studied Greek, and it was nice to know the grammar still works even if my vocabulary has shrunk." In Harry's pleased smile it is easy to see the scholar he might have become, a historian teasing meaning from some forgotten fragment of a manuscript.

Harry's skills at academic research have been useful in many of his other projects, notably the acclaimed Civil War novel *The Guns of the South*, in which he used an incredible wealth of historical detail. Harry modeled the Southern regiment on a real one, with results that were quite unexpected. One of the major, and seemingly unlikely, characters of the novel was suggested by a real person – a private who fought with distinction until a military policeman's search brought forth the revelation that this particular soldier was a woman disguised as a man. "I saw that incident in the record of the regiment, and said thank you to the universe," Harry remembered. "It was too good not to use. I used all sorts of other things too – I found a detailed description of a ring worn by Jefferson Davis's wife, and I found a place on the book where it fit in perfectly. Nobody who reads the book is going to

really know all the things in there that are true, but hopefully the whole book will have the ring of truth."

Harry has written many works in other periods, always with a twist – an Eighteenth Century America in which ancient humans never crossed the Bering strait and the forests teem with animals which survived as a result – such as mammoths, giant sloths, even Neanderthals. A modern world in which the government tries, and mostly fails, to regulate the use of magic. A Second World War in which the Allies and Axis united against a common enemy that came from space. Other books are set in worlds that never were, a mystic and ancient Asiatic landscape in which the gods play with human fate, a fragmented planet in which every sliver of land has been fought over for generations. Every printed piece has the depth and vividness of real cultures, real people, and that is what is at the heart of a Turtledove story.

Standing in the cheerful clutter of the house in not-particularly magical or mystical Canoga Park, it can be hard to connect Harry the man with Harry the scholar and author. Scholarly authors are supposed to be imposing, a bit distant, definitely on the serious side. This doesn't quite fit Harry's tendency to interject puns and jokes into even deep discussions, or his modest, unassuming personal style. "I speak to the world through what I put out on paper. That's one of the nice things about being a writer rather than an actor or a musician," he explained. "I'm not a public person, a Harlan Ellison or Steven King. I wouldn't want to be Steven King, the man can't even go outside in his own town without being mobbed. The science fiction community does have celebrities, but on a smaller scale." Harry seems to revel in his quiet life, in the fact that he can spend time with his family.

In fact, spending time with the whole Turtledove family is a delight – like Harry, his wife Laura and their three daughters are writers, all possessed with sharp wits and a talent for barbed humor. "Straight lines are dangerous in this place," observed Harry on an occasion when his wife and middle daughter had both hit me with zingers. The lively repartee within the household is vastly entertaining, and shows a closeness and intelligence that are several cuts above the average American family's dinner table conversation.

Seeing Harry so comfortable in this environment, it's inevitable to ask if he has ever wished to live in any of the worlds he has created. His answer is unequivocal. "No," he said with finality. "For one thing, comfort and any time before the middle of this century are mutually exclusive. Little details like antibiotics, dentistry and anaesthetics make a big difference, one which is grossly underestimated in most fiction. For another, I delight in the incredibly easy access to information we have now. Even before the Internet, I could go down to the UCLA library and find out just about anything I wanted to know. Most times before now, if you were curious, you stayed curious, or you invented your own bizarre explanation for something."

Harry Turtledove has the best of two worlds, one the modern and accessible society we all live in, the other the wonderful, often primitive, but exciting worlds that live within his own head. Civilisation and Harry Turtledove's career both started with the Greeks, and like both they move onward in wonderful directions, one day at a time.

Richard Foss

Membership List (as of 8 Dec 2000)

266	Allcock, Lisa	219	Culpin, Rafe	323	Hollingsworth, Mary Ann
267	Allcock, Philip	164	Curry, David	107	Holström, Anders
119	Allwood, Paul	270	Dallman, John	322	Holström, Anders
256	Ameringen, Brian	204	Damesick, Mike	214	Horst, Marc ter
229	Anderson, Diane	299	Davies, Stephen	330	Horvei, Sidsel
234	Anderson, John	224	Dawson, Guy	251	Housden, Valerie
236	Anglemark, Johan	280	Dawson, Susan	194	Illingworth, Marcia Kelly
235	Anglemark, Linnéa	298	De Cesare, Giulia De	193	Illingworth, Tim
259	Armstrong, Andrew	304	De Weerd, Peter	258	James, Daniel
268	Armstrong, Helen	217	De Wolfe, Simon Mark	153	James, Rohdri
126	Baker, Dr. A.C.	325	Dearn, Simon	314	Jezaard, Neil
307	Balen, Henry	318	Dellesert, Chantal	276	Keen, Tony
188	Barker, Trevor	167	Detering-Barker, Zoe	122	Kievits, Peter
135	Beach, Covert	198	Docherty, Vincent	158	Lally, Dave
27	Bell, Chris	177	Donaldson, Christine	209	Lawson, Alice
182	Bellingham, Alan	181	Dormer, Paul	210	Lawson, Steve
218	Bernardi, Michael	171	Drysdale, David	324	Leder, Erhard
160	Bisson, Simon	237	Dunn, Owen	295	Loveridge, Caroline
301	Björklind, Thomas	104	Dunn, Stephen	303	Lundwall, Karin
300	Björsten, Maximilian	279	Edwards, Lynn	302	Lundwall, Sam J.
285	Blair, Paul	180	Edwards, Sue	128	Mabey, Peter
185	Bloom, Kent	147	Ellingsen, Herman	103	MacLaughlin, Bobby
145	Boekestein, Jaap	261	Ellis, Sean	269	MacNeil, Helen
326	Bospoort, Wim van de	262	Ellis, Tamasin	277	MacNeil, Justin
272	Bradley, Jill	102	Emmerich, Udo	208	Maughan, Ian
271	Bradley, Phil	197	Ent, Jan van 't	156	Maughan, Janet
162	Bradshaw, Bridget	239	Ewing, Allison	157	Maughan, Robert
169	Bradshaw, Simon	240	Ewing, Calum	159	McLean, Rory
161	Branscombe, Mary	241	Ewing, Fergus	110	Meredith, John
211	Brialey, Claire	130	Figg, Mike	282	Miller, Andrew
124	Brignal, Gordon	278	Fine, Colin	286	Miller, Judith
184	Brown, John	108	Flatt, Brian	281	Miller, Ray
199	Buckley, E.D.	129	Flood, Ronan	283	Miller, Sue
233	Burns, Bill	246	Ford, Mike	115	Mol, Marianne
123	Burns, Jackie E.	174	Francis, Susan	311	Morgan, Cheryl
232	Burns, Mary	150	Frihagen, Anders	252	Morgan, Chris
249	Burton West, Roger	207	Funnell, Gwen	250	Morgan, Pat
227	Böttcher, Hans-Ulrich	313	Gibbons, Joe	196	Morley, Tim
149	Callan, Simon	327	Goudriaan, Roelof	200	Morman, Mary
253	Carnall, Jane	106	Grant, Simon	328	Morse, Lynne Ann
125	Clements, Dave	205	Grover, Steve	287	Mowbray, Steve
134	Cochrane, David Eddie	225	Gunnarson, Urban	273	Mullan, Caroline
274	Cohen, Malcolm	294	Harris, Colin	255	Norman, Lisanne
293	Cohen, Peter	316	Harrison, Harry	221	O'Donnel, Andrew
289	Cooper, Chris	315	Harrison, Joan	109	O'Hanlon, Rod
186	Cooper, Stephen	183	Headlong, Julian	292	O'Neill, Ken
312	Cosslett, Keith	154	Heitlager, Martijn	176	Oldroyd, Paul
284	Croft, A J 'Andy'	116	Held, Jim	228	Pargman, Michael
189	Crow, Johathan	238	Hepburn, Alasdair K.	223	Parry, Arwel
62	Cruttenden, 1/2 r	139	Hoare, Martin	230	Patterson, Andrew
666	Cruttenden, Wendy	231	Hollingsworth, Mary Ann	144	Paterson, Joan

220	Patton, Andrew	152	Sapienza, Peggy Rae	143	Tibs
215	Peek, Bernard	245	Scott, Mike	163	Tompkins, Dave
290	Perera, Mali	131	Shepherd Figg, Janet	257	Tompkinson, Deborah
190	Persson, Tommy	191	Shipman, Linda I.	260	Treadway, Paul
195	Phillips, Val	308	Sieber, Rene	254	Tucker, Frances
212	Plummer, Mark	175	Sinclair, Mark	GOH05	Turtledove, Guest of Harry
306	Porter, Andrew	166	Smithers, Dan	GOH02	Turtledove, Harry
317	Potts, Silas	165	Smithers, Lucy	132	Twine, Terry
155	Pritchard, Ceri	117	Southern, Christopher	226	Ulvang, Cristina Pulido
168	Pritchard, Marion Naomi	113	Southern, Jennifer	222	Ulvang, Tor Christian
148	Pritchard, Steve	170	Spiller, Michael	111	Valois, Tobs
136	Putte, Larry van der	GOH01	Stableford, Brian	310	Vasilkovska, Olena
179	Reap, Colette	GOH04	Stableford, Guest of Brian	309	Vasilkovsky, Alexander
101	Recktenwald, Thomas	242	Stage, Jesper	173	Waller, Mark
187	Rees, John C.	264	Stepney, Susan	206	Wareham, Peter
140	Reynolds, Patricia	243	Stewart, Barbara	297	Webb, Alan
172	Reynolds, Trevor	244	Stewart, John	291	Webb, Gerry
263	Rigby, Jullie Faith	133	Strandberg, Lars	305	Weller, W. A.
201	Robinson, Roger	247	Streets, Marcus	GOH06	Weston, Eileen
112	Rogers, Tony	248	Streets, Rae	GOH03	Weston, Peter
202	Rogerson, Steve	329	Sund, Björn Torre	216	Whitehead, Nik
137	Rosenblum, Howard	288	Swan, Lesley	265	Whyte, Charles
138	Rosenblum, June	127	Taylor, Alison	141	Wightman, Colin
296	Rosenblum, Michelle	178	Taylor, Ian	142	Wightman, Sarah
213	Rothman, Stephen	321	Ternent, Calvin	146	Wisse, Martin
105	Rowland, Marcus	319	Ternent, George	118	Woodford, Alan
275	Sachs, Marjorie	320	Ternent, Linda	114	Woodford, Anne
151	Sapienza Jr., John T.	192	Tibbetts, J.R.	203	Yalow, Ben

Rates

Helicon's address is 33 Meyrick Drive, Wash Common, Newbury, Berks RG14 6SY
 Attending membership is £35, supporting/junior (12-16) £18 until 1/1/2002. Child (6-11)
 membership is £5. Please note that all membership details will be held on our database
 but will not be given, lent or sold to anyone else, except the 2003 Eastercon.

Helicon 2, 33 Meyrick Drive, Wash Common, Newbury, Berks RG14 6SY

I enclose £..... for attending/supporting memberships of Helicon 2

Name: _____

Address: _____
