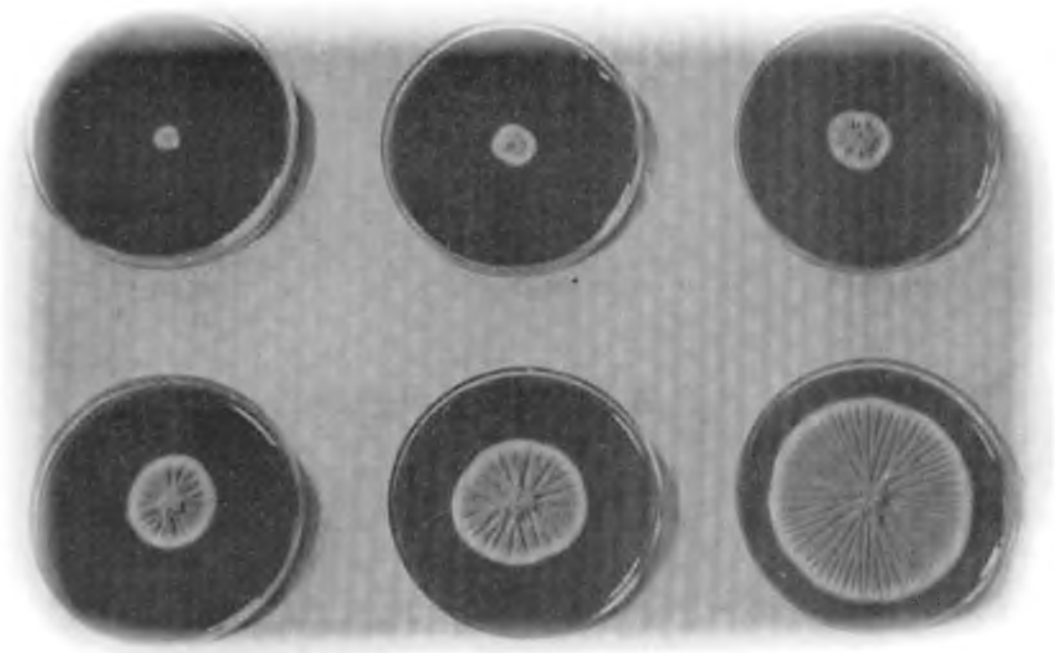


SEACON 03

54th National British Easter Convention

Progress Report 2

April 2002



GUESTS

(IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER)

CHRIS
BAKER
(Fangorn)

CHRISTOPHER
EVANS

MARY
GENTLE

Hanover International, Hinckley
18-21 April 2003

THE COMMITTEE & CONTACTS

Paul Oldroyd	Co-ordinator & Programme (he's the very annoying 'completer-finisher' – don't you just hate that type of person?)
Ped Badlan	Minister without Portfolio – keep us on the straight and narrow
Tony Berry	Hotel Liaison (“Who volunteered? Oldroyd threatened to tell everyone that I enjoyed . . .”)
Noel Collyer	(“No, no, no, no... yes!”) Operations
Chris Donaldson	Memberships (bung her loads of money)
Julian Headlong	Science programme and interesting minutes supremo
Eve Harvey	Publications & Finances (“OK Paul, I can't think of any other excuses not to take on this job”)
John Harvey	Publications & Communications – oh yeah, just try to get him communicating!
Yvonne Rowse	Programme and doyenne of fun

Other Conscripts

Claire Brialey & Mark Plummer	Fanthology
Tim Broadribb	Tech Manager.
Tanya Brown	Website
John Dallman	Publications
Vincent Docherty	Finances
Dave Hicks	The Return of Elmer T Hack

Membership Rates to 1/11/02

Full attending	£40	US\$60	Euro 70
Supporting	£22	US\$35	Euro 37
Child rates (ages at time of convention)			
Infant (up to 5)	Nil		
Child (5-11)	£6	US\$9	Euro 10
Junior(12-15)	£22	US\$35	Euro 37

Contact Addresses

Post: Seacon 03
 8 The Orchard
 Tonwell
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 SG12 0HR
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E-mail: memberships@seacon03.org.uk
 info@seacon03.org.uk
 programme@seacon03.org.uk

Website: www.seacon03.org.uk

eGroup: This is for members of the
 convention only; if you want to join
 contact john@seacon03.org.uk and
 quote your membership number

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Front Cover - Dr Alexander Fleming's petri dishes (Why? Read Julian's piece.)	
Artwork page 3	Jim Barker

PAUL'S PIECE

Sometimes it's difficult to know where to start introductions to Progress Reports, particularly when the convention is still over a year away and there's very little happening. Unfortunately, this time it's not. Rog Peyton has had to resign from the committee due to the problems he has had in keeping Andromeda afloat.

As many of you will know by now, Andromeda ran into serious difficulties earlier this year, and has now had to close. I can't imagine what that must feel like to Rog, but I feel like a part of my life has vanished. I first stumbled across Andromeda at Summer Row in the early '70s after seeing an ad at Birmingham University. Since then (apart from a brief flirtation with Amazon, which could never guarantee a first edition) it has been my first place of call when looking for a book. Rog himself says that life on the dole is not much fun: he's spending much of his time at Andromeda carrying out a stock take. He says he would like to put on record his thanks to the Andromeda staff who – even after they were made redundant – came into the shop and helped him prepare for the receivers. All of us on the committee wish Rog all the best for the future, and hope to see him at Seacon.

The better news is that Tony Berry has volunteered to take over hotel liaison duties from Rog. Thanks, Tony, and welcome. His first task is to carry on negotiations with the hotel to get the bar prices down and a decent beer in!!

The programme sub-committee has put a rough draft of the programme together – it's always amazing to me how much of the programme writes itself! We will of course be holding all the expected "events", and hope to repeat the fireworks that were so successful at Paragon. (Julian Headlong promises to put on an alternative programme item for the people who wish to Avoid Big Bangs.) At present the programme is simply a series of boxes that have labels such as "light media SF item" or "Serious heavyweight SF lecture". By the time of the next PR we will have fleshed this out much more.

We have invited all of our Guests to be involved in drafting the programme, and are holding a weekend in the summer when committee and guests can start seriously planning programme content. If you have an interest in contributing to the creation of the programme, please send an email to programme@seacon03.org.uk with your suggestions. Remember – we are particularly looking for items to do with Milestones in SF (in any media) and Cutting Edge Science. We also have a programme strand for meetings or events that you or your group would like

to run. Let us know what you would like to use this for, and if you have a day/time preference for when it is scheduled.

Noel is starting to put his Ops team together – Tim Broadribb has agreed to act as our Tech Manager. Again, thanks and welcome Tim. Volunteers for the Ops team will of course be very welcome. Volunteering forms will be available in the next PR, or you can visit our website at www.seacon03.org.uk where an electronic form will be available.

I hope that we will see most of you at Helicon or Novacon this year – come and see us at the Registration desk if you need anything, or would like to put in a request to the Committee (now, did I really mean to say that?).

Paul Oldroyd

The Return of Elmer T Hack

Back in the 1970s a much younger Christopher Evans, ably assisted by a much younger Jim Barker, introduced to the wider world a certain Elmer T Hack. Elmer was one of the most prolific and controversial writers in the 1970s when, at the age of 35, he'd already published 64 novels and innumerable short stories. His early exploits were seen in the BSFA's journal VECTOR; an interview with him conducted by Chris Evans was published by



Christopher Priest in *Deadloss 2*, and the BSFA published the complete story in 'The Best of Elmer T Hack'.

Not much has been heard from him in the intervening years, but now, in the 21st century, a much older Dave Hicks has, with the kind permission of Chris and Jim, decided to revisit Elmer to see how the years have treated him. In this and future Progress Reports, we are hoping to bring you up-to-date with Elmer. You never know, if there is enough support out there, we might be able to persuade him to come to Seacon03!

CHRISTOPHER EVANS

Good God! It's a quarter of a century since I met Chris Evans for the first time. I'd wondered why we looked so different. We met in the crowded One Tun, a pub in London, at a once-a-month SF gathering. We both had more hair then. He wore a leather jacket and blue jeans, me an anorak and cords. Damn, we were sharp! We discovered we had Offa's Dyke in common: he'd been born on the side generally associated with the Welsh; me on the side that is more English. Being Europhiles, then as now, the only enemy was the divide itself, which we bridged quickly. We shared childhood stories of our up-bringing, he in the Tredegar Valley, me on the Romney Marsh. These reminiscences did not raise a lot of laughs. But we certainly laughed when we talked about adolescence and first love. The central section of Chris's 1985 novel *IN LIMBO* contains some of the funniest writing about early (hilarious) romance that it's been my pleasure to read. I can't be sure, though I think I'm on the right track, but it feels personal. Then, as now, he can easily out-write Martin Amis when it comes to relationships.

We founded and edited four issues of the BSFA's *FOCUS* magazine for writers, bullying friends and others for articles, anecdotes and insights. That was great fun. In the late-80's we edited *OTHER EDENS*, tales of the fantastic. We had our agreements and disagreements, but the only time I recall our sitting staring at each other in utter confusion was when reading a 'thesaurian' submission by John Clute.¹



With this amazing levitating loaf, we can make the US space programme obsolete!

"What in God's name is an 'entablature of salamanders loosed suddenly into a myoclonic can-can'?"

"I have no idea. Let's publish it and see if anyone else does."

Chris's novels have always been surprises and delights; he catches you off guard. After the grim Orwellian study of alienation, *THE INSIDER* (1981), he produced *IN LIMBO*; you feel for Carpenter, its narrator, as you feel for a friend in trouble, but a friend with a sense of humour. It's a remarkable novel. Then a different sort of creativity: *CERI* (1985)², who would grow into the image of his father! (Just kidding, Ceri.) After that he wrote a dazzling series of stories, *CHIMERAS* (1992), in which he indulged fully his love of politics and the exotic. With *AZTEC CENTURY* (1993) the exotic came from Mexico to Europe in the form of Aztecs in flying balloons, conquerors from a world never conquered by the Spanish. Princess Catherine's story – she narrates it herself – is delicate, poignant, heroic and bloody

chilling! Alternate histories old hat? Read this one! Chris's last published novel *MORTAL REMAINS* (1995) takes you to Pluto, to other spacey places in very strange ways, and back to an astonishing vision of Earth. It does what he so often does: leaves you with images that you want to go back to. You want to know what happens NEXT. I feel this about *Da Capo*, his 2001 Interzone novella. The story weaves together several strands of bio-technology, and asks questions that leave you gagging to see what other insights the writer has. Chris doesn't write a lot, but

The Return of **Elmer T. Hack**

**AFTER 23 YEARS HE'S
BACK ON THE SCENE...**



**...THE SAME WINNING
SMILE...**



**...THE SAME STEELY
GAZE...**



**...YEP. HE HASN'T
CHANGED A BIT!**



he makes everything count. I like that.

Why doesn't he write a lot? Well, one reason may be his best production of the 90's: GWEN (1999)! (Yes, the sparkling Fiona had a little something to do with it). Strong-willed, funny, watchful, drop-dead gorgeous. Gwen? 75% her father's child.

There are writers whose words matter, and writers who natter with words. Chris Evans is of the former class, and class it is, so if you don't know his work already, you have a year to seek it out and treat yourself!

Rob Holdstock, 2002

¹ *Eden Sounding: Other Edens 2*

Production Manager: Faith Brooker

As part of our Milestones in Science and SF theme, Julian looked back to 1903 in PR1 to the birth of Orville Wright. Now we move on 25 years to see what happened in 1928.

JULIAN'S PIECE

An Enquiring Mind and an Untidy Life

Scientific progress isn't always nice and tidy. Sometimes it's a thing of procrastination, messy laboratory benches and contaminated glassware.

In 1928 in St Mary's Hospital, Paddington, a rather untidy man made an interesting discovery while throwing away some smelly agar gel. He noticed that the glass plates he was growing bacteria on had also started growing mould. Nothing strange there, the plates had been sitting around for a while. But he noticed an odd thing – the bacteria next to the areas of contaminating mould had all died.

A simple observation, but an acute one made by a gifted and enquiring mind, that gave the world penicillin, and a certain Dr Alexander Fleming fame, a Nobel, and a knighthood. Not bad for a mouldy plate. A little later he commented "One sometimes finds what one is not looking for". Something I try to bear in mind whenever I work at St Mary's, and

spend ages not looking for a parking space.

As well as kick-starting the biotechnology business, 1928 also saw the birth of space opera, that Buck Rogers stuff, the publishers Gollancz, Philip K Dick, Kate Wilhelm, Jim White and Robert Sheckley. A pretty good year.

The first space opera was published in *Amazing* – EE "Doc" Smith's "The Skylark of Space". Before the *Skylark*, most spatial adventures took place within the confines of our solar system, as did the first Buck Rogers story – "Armageddon 2419" by Philip Frances Nowlan, again in *Amazing*.

Smith used the whole galaxy for his stage. And sometimes one or two others. And sometimes had fun smashing them together. One little solar system was way too small for the ambitions of a high-flying chemist like Smith.

The *Skylark* starts in a surprisingly earth bound manner, in the laboratory of a rather untidy government scientist working at his messy laboratory bench with his strangely contaminated glassware. The gifted and acute scientist, Dr Richard Seaton, notices something odd about his glassware when his apparatus lifts off from his bench, flies out the window and leaves the earth heading for outer space.

He, of course, observes this singular event with the pair of binoculars that all good chemists keep close at hand for occasions like these.

Having discovered a working faster-than-light reactionless spacedrive in his electrolytic bath, the acute Dr Seaton goes on to acquire in quick succession: a super-explosive, a starship, and an arch-enemy. And all without the use of a government grant.

Those were the days.

Penicillin can cure those that are ill, Spanish sherry can bring the dead back to life.

Sir Alexander Fleming

The Return of Elmer T. Hack

FIRST I'M INVITED TO BE A GUEST OF HONOUR AT SEACON '03...



...NOW 'NADIR CLASSICS' WANT TO REISSUE ALL MY 'GOODMAN OF THE GALAXY' NOVELS.



IT ALL CAME AS QUITE A SURPRISE...



...I DIDN'T THINK THE POST OFFICE DELIVERED TO CARDBOARD BOXES!



YVONNE'S PIECE

'Well people, the next PR's out for Eastercon and since we don't want to report in detail on the programme yet, we need something else. Any suggestions?'

'We could do an item on the social side of committee life. That'd be interesting to various people; those interested in running a convention and wondering if it'd be fun, those who like human interest and the scurrilous-gossip-mongers.'

'Hm. Perhaps. I'd have to vet it first.'

'What, and edit out all the scurrilous gossip? No chance mate. You won't get to see this until way after it's too late. You know. When the proof-reading takes place. Two days after it comes back from the printers. So. Who is going to produce this fine piece of writing?'

<Hard stares from all round the table (full of cleaned plates and empty wine bottles).>

'Me. Oh no. I've got a fanzine to get out for Eastercon. And I only have vague recollections and, and...oh alright then. But it'll be late. Just see if it isn't. You'll regret it.'

Um. Let's see. The Social Side of Committee Life. It all seems to revolve around the Oldroyd/Donaldson dining room table. Lots of good food. Huge quantities of wine. And ten minutes worth of minutes. My first meal there was wonderful. I got the vegetarian meal plus most of the rice because the rest seemed to be on the pernicious low-carb diet. And as I remember, Chris was labouring in the kitchen under the burden of the Most Appalling Hangover the World Has Ever Seen. Caused, I might add, by the low-carb diet. Really. You see, the night before we had met at the Arthur C Clarke awards.

I was very impressed when my invitation turned up. 'Gosh,' I thought. 'I've really arrived now. I've been invited to the Science Museum for a gathering of real sercon people. There'll be authors there. There'll be proper BSFA fans there. There'll be nibbles on plates and wine and everything.' Were there nibbles on plates? I don't think so. But there were some very nice, very attentive young people who kept topping

the glasses up.

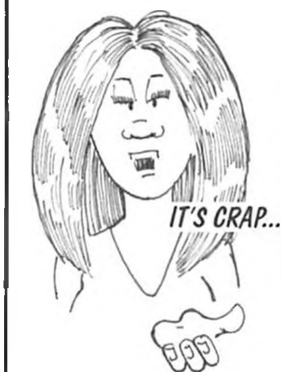
I look back on the evening through the mists of time and too much wine and try to remember pertinent happenings. I crashed the queue (carrying a hat in a box) to join Paul, Chris and Julian. Almost immediately they told me about The Diet. This sad failing is obviously a failing of all dieting people. I've done it myself. I've stood there and droned on endlessly about what I've eaten that day and how good it makes me feel (through teeth gritted to breaking point) whilst watching disapprovingly as other people tuck into proper food with lascivious gusto. Harumpf! Am I by any chance on a diet at the moment? Well, yes. A bit. I ate five plums for breakfast then...what? Oh yes. To the point. Which was that it really didn't take them very long to tell me what they'd eaten all day. Two eggs. Each. For breakfast. Which was a long time away at that point.

They let us into the building eventually where we wandered around saying 'Hey, look at this. Wow.' And other such erudite comments. We followed people who seemed to know where they were going until we reached the barrier formed by people giving out glasses of wine. 'Oh yes please,' we all said inadvisably, with all the enthusiasm of the sort of people who don't get offered free glasses of wine very often. And then we drank them. And then helpful people came along and topped them up again. And again. For goodness sake. Who organised this shindig? Don't they know what fans are like? Oh. Yes. They do. They just hadn't counted on people drinking on completely empty stomachs.

So anyway. We mingled merrily. We chatted intently to people we only usually see at conventions. We even chatted to people we don't see at conventions anymore. The technical name for those people being authors. Generally they seemed to be quite a nice bunch. Ken MacLeod, who is after all one of our favourites, ended up doing sterling babysitting service with Jonathon Cain. I was astonishingly impressed.

The Return of Elmer T. Hack

FOR YOUNGER READERS, DR MANDY FARRELSOHN OF THE SF FOUNDATION WILL REVIEW ELMER T. HACK'S WORK...



...COMPLETE CRAP! HE'S THE WORST SF WRITER EVER! HOW DARE THEY REISSUE THIS HACKNEYED DRIVEL!



IT'S AN OUTRAGE! THE IDEA OF HACK IN PRINT AGAIN MAKES ME WANT TO STRANGLE SOMEBODY!



DR FARRELSOHN, THANK YOU.

MY PLEASURE.



He didn't drop the child or anything. I like a competent man.

After the mingling and the wine drinking came the awards, with a video of Arthur. A very few people became tense. The rest of us were quite happily relaxed. The winner was announced as China Miéville (do I really need to get my character map out? I suppose so. Seeing as Pan managed to. Let's see. Ah yes.) China Miéville. All the authors relaxed, smiled, did the usual good loser thing, China spoke briefly (what about? No idea. I have a vague recollection that he was a jolly fine chap) then we went back to socialising and the helpful people went back to glass topping duties.

And then, alas, alack, far too soon, before pub turn out time even, they politely asked us to leave. It took a lot a careful ushering, with fans darting off in all directions ('I never noticed that before' and 'Ooh, just a second' and 'Isn't the exit over here?') but eventually we were left standing on the pavement outside the fabulous Science Museum, longing and longing, like those stood outside Faerie, for the free wine and exotic pleasures now denied us. 'Oh well. Might as well go to the pub then.'

Before we did, however, the final evil enchantment was performed. Full of Award Wine, empty of food, Chris was ready to weave her spell. She draped herself elegantly over Noel and whispered sweet promises in his ear. Noel resisted gallantly. 'No, no,' he protested. 'I will never do that. Don't ask it of me.' Julian and Paul looked at me expectantly. I put my scruples away in my hatbox to keep them fresh for when committee duties are over and attached myself somewhat less elegantly to Noel's other side. 'All she says is true,' I cooed. 'Everything can be yours. Just promise us one thing. Be Ops for us and you can have anything. Anything.'

Of course later he denied ever having said, 'Oh all right then, I suppose,' which, in the circumstances was much more enthusiastic than we had any right to expect. But by then it was too late. We had him inked in on the committee and there was no escape.

And then Chris, Paul, Julian and I went back to Chris and Paul's house in a taxi that took us over every single speed bump in the whole of London, took hours and cost a fortune. But that was fine. Our machinations had succeeded. We had Ops.

Eastercon GOH Fanthology

As we mentioned in the last PR, Seacon03 is planning, a fanthology featuring relevant fannish writing from past Eastercon guests of honour. If you've got any queries or suggestions, contact **Mark Plummer & Claire Brialey** (email: banana@fishlifter.demon.co.uk), or write to 14 Northway Road Croydon Surrey CR0 6JE, UK

Advertising Rates – Progress Reports

The following rates will apply for any adverts placed with us and paid before 1 November 2002, even if it is for publications after this date. Camera ready copy is assumed (preferably on disc). If we have to do any additional processing work, this will be charged extra.

	Fan	Professional
Full page -----	£30	£100
Half page -----	£15	£50
Quarter page -----	£8	£30

The committee will decide at its own discretion (and the view of the judges is final!) on what is fan or professional. Colour will be quoted separately. Rates for inserts will be quoted individually depending on the size and weight.

Rates for the Programme Book and for flyers to be included in the Membership Pack will be published in the next Progress Report.

For further information, or to place an advert, contact John Harvey at the convention address or via e-mail at john@seacon03.org.uk.

Progress Report 3 Copy deadline 1 October 2002

Hotel Details

Hanover International Hotel, Hinckley.

If you want to get more information about the hotel - Hanover International Hotel, Hinckley - you can find them on the web: www.hanover-international.com/hinckley.

Hotel booking forms will come with PR3 in November 2002

Room Rates: Per Person Per Room Per Night

Single rooms ----- £45.00

Double/twin rooms ----- £32.50

Triples/family rooms ----- £25.00

For those who find even these rates too much, we are undertaking a review of alternative hotels and will publish a list, with costs and location, in the next PR, which will contain the hotel booking form for the Hanover.

MEMBERSHIP LIST

As at 1 March 2002 (all Attending except where marked (S) for Supporting)

GoH Chris Baker	116 Mike Figg	8 Rog Peyton	87 Andrew Stephenson
GoH Christopher Evans	54 Colin Fine	18 Philip Plumbly (S)	67 Susan Stepney
GoH Mary Gentle	69 Brian Flatt	14 Mark Plummer	55 John Stewart
1 Ped Badlan	167 Susan Francis	105 Silas Potts	56 Barbara Stewart
2 Noel Collyer	156 Alison Freebaird	143 Kelvin Proctor	95 David Stewart
3 Chris Donaldson	46 Anders Frihagen	144 Judith Proctor	188 Mike Stone
4 Eve Harvey	31 Gwen Funnell	65 Colette Reap	195 June Strachan
5 John Harvey	140 Carolina Gómez Lagerlöf	145 Thomas Recktenwald	83 Lars Strandberg
6 Julian Headlong	141 Niall Gordon	109 Trevor Reynolds	43 Kathy Taylor
7 Paul Oldroyd	121 Robert Gorman	110 Pat Reynolds	44 Ian Taylor
8 Rog Peyton	157 Steve Green	187 Julie Rigby	138 David Thomas
9 Yvonne Rowse	158 Anne Green	72 Roger Robinson	160 David Thomas
21 Michael Abbott	114 Steve Grover	50 Tony Rogers	80 Tibs
185 Andrew A. Adams	81 Urban Gunnarsson	86 Mic Rogers	84 Dave Tompkins
25 Paul Allwood	153 Helen Hall	48 Steve Rogerson	124 Barry Traish
29 Brian Ameringen	166 Dave Hardy	89 Howard Rosenblum	30 Paul Treadaway
142 Kevin Anderson	139 Colin Harris	90 June Rosenblum	132 Jan van 't Ent
168 John Anderson	53 Andy Hayton	91 Michelle Rosenblum	47 Larry van der Putte
169 Diane Anderson	192 Dave Hicks	159 David Row	68 Mark W. Waller
22 Margaret Austin	173 Sue Hobson	39 Marcus Rowland	32 Peter Wareham
82 Mark Bailey	174 Andrew Hobson	150 Jim Samuel	170 Gerry Webb
147 Barbara-Jane	59 Valerie Housden	99 Mark Sinclair	171 Alan Webb
58 Trevor Barker	42 Tim Illingworth	176 Sally Sinclair	103 Nik Whitehead
27 Chris Bell	111 Marcia Kelly Illingworth	62 Mark Slater	66 Charles Whyte
64 Alan Bellingham	10 Rhodri James	35 Martin Smith	135 Bridget Wilkinson
49 Michael Bernardi	146 Wilf James	75 Roger Smith	112 Anne Wilson
125 Jaap Boekestein	165 Richard James	198 Frank Smith	129 Martin Wisse
133 Hans-Ulrich Boettcher	199 John Jarrold	179 Robert Sneddon	11 Alan Woodford
182 Simon Bradshaw	180 Ben Jeapes	164 Adrian Snowdon	88 Anne Woodford
183 Bridget Bradshaw	196 Jeremy Johnson (S)	113 Ian Sorensen	108 Ben Yalow
100 Michael Braithwaite	155 Neil Johnstone	92 Jenny Southern	104 Mark Young
77 John Bray	175 Sue Jones	190 Chris Southern	
12 Claire Brialey	131 Amanda Kear		
93 John Brown	97 Tony Keen		
78 E.D. Buckley	163 Paul Kincaid		
51 Mary Burns	162 Maureen Kincaid Spelle		
52 Bill Burns	19 Dave Lally		
184 Robert Burton-West	45 Dave Langford		
149 Kim Campbell	16 Alice Lawson		
191 Cat Coast	38 Steve Lawson		
76 Elaine Coates	161 Judith Lewis		
33 Felix Cohen	126 Colin Lilley		
63 Chris Cooper	127 Katherine Lilley		
94 Steve Cooper	148 Oscar Logger		
117 Jane Cooper	178 Gavin Long		
118 David T. Cooper	177 Caroline Loveridge		
119 William Cooper	40 Peter Mabey		
189 Baby Cooper	98 Ian Maughan		
151 Del Cotter	120 Rory McLean		
194 Gail Courtney	186 Alex McLintock		
193 Cardinal Cox	13 Pat McMurray		
60 1/2r Cruttenden	102 John Meredith		
107 John Dallman	122 Ray Miller		
197 Julia Daly	123 Andrew Miller		
41 Steve Davies	70 Pauline Morgan		
181 Peter Day	71 Chris Morgan		
28 Giulia DeCesare	101 Tim Morley		
57 Zoe Deterding-Barker	36 Tony Morton		
26 Vincent Docherty	37 Carol Morton		
154 Tara Dooling-Hussey	20 Caroline Mullan		
24 Paul Dormer	85 Andrew Norcross		
17 John Dowd	130 Gytha North		
73 David Drysdale	136 Andrew O'Donnell		
128 Stephen Dunn	106 Roderick O'Hanlon		
61 Roger Earnshaw	137 Ken O'Neill (S)		
23 Martin Easterbrook	34 Krystyna Oborn		
15 Sue Edwards	134 Brian Parsons		
152 Lynn Edwards	79 Joan Paterson		
96 Herman Ellingsen	74 Andrew Patton		
115 Janet Figg	172 Mali Perera		

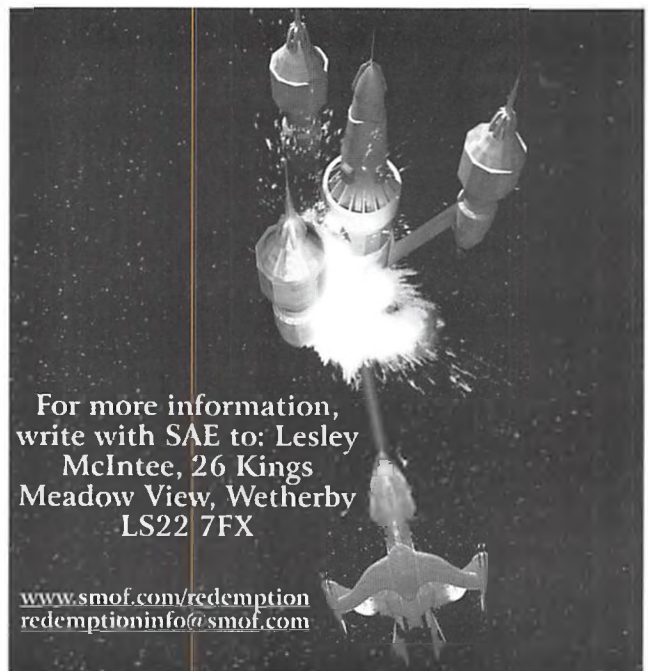


REDEMPTION '03

21 – 23 February 2003

Ashford International Hotel, Ashford, Kent

Celebrating 25 years of Blake's 7



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Meadow View, Wetherby
LS22 7FX

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redemptioninfo@smof.com

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