



*of the Australian Science Fiction Foundation*

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P.O. Box 4024, University of Melbourne, Vic, 3052

## New Committee for 1993

At the AGM held in conjunction with the picnic to celebrate Roger Weddall's birthday at the Botanical Gardens, on Sunday, the seventeenth (17th) of January 1993, the new committee for 1993 was elected. While the personnel remain unchanged, the positions filled have undergone a radical transformation.

- (New) President: Jane Tisell  
(Jane was elected onto the committee as an ordinary committee member late last year after the resignation of Mark Loney)
- Vice President: Alan Stewart
- (New) Secretary: Donna Heenan  
(last year Donna was the Membership Secretary. Her new position was filled variously by Mark Loney and Clive Newall last year)
- Treasurer: Carey Handfield

### Ordinary Committee Members:

- Cath Ortlieb (last year she was president, but has decided she lacks time this year to fulfil the role, and has chosen to take a back seat. We thank her for her several years of dedication in the role of president.)
- LynC responsible for publicity
- Clive Newall responsible for memberships (& mailroom manager)
- Gerald Smith

The mailing address remains the same since the publicity officer and the membership secretary share that address.

ALAN STEWART  
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2/92

## Annual President's Report for the Australian Science Fiction Foundation:

The Foundation, in its own quiet way, is doing quite a bit to help foster SF in Australia, though we'd like to be able to do a great deal more. With more involvement by the SF community, particularly by joining and/or offering suggestions, even more could be done.

1992 was not a good year for our investments as interest rates were so low. The transfer of our account to a Credit Union, which Mark Loney mentioned in his report last year that we were investigating, was finalised. The interest rate is better and there are fewer charges. This has enabled us to maximise our funds. The Foundation continued to provide money for short story competitions and for seed loans for Natcons. Although Syncon did run at a loss, we have been promised that the loan will be repaid when possible. In these difficult times we cannot always expect the cons to make a profit. In the past we've been very lucky that not only were the loans repaid soon after the con, but often a donation was given.

At the 1990 AGM, Alan Stewart suggested the Foundation present a jury award to people who have done a great deal for science fiction over the years. 1992 saw the Foundation present the Inaugural Chandler Award to Van Ikin at Syncon '92. As prior commitments prevented Chandler's widow, Susan, presenting the award, Nick Stathopoulos (one of the Guests of honour) graciously agreed to do it. Terry Dowling accepted the award on Van's behalf. The response to the selection of Van as the first winner has been very positive and I remind everyone that nomination can be sent to the Foundation at any time. The award doesn't have to be presented annually. Our thanks go to Alan, for not only suggesting and doing all the preliminary work but for also finding the very impressive plate with the distinctive design that was used for the award.

It is pleasing that the Foundation's membership has increased slightly this year. We would, however, like many more to join, or at least provide new ideas for the Foundation to promote SF in Australia. As Membership Secretary, Donna Heenan is organising membership cards and negotiating for the possibility of members obtaining some discounts at shops, etc.

I would like to thank all the committee members for all the time and effort they've put in this year. Both personally and on behalf of the Foundation. I would like to especially thank Mark LOney who had been secretary since the A.S.F.F. was re-formed in 1988, and who resigned a few months ago to take up a post in Washington. Not only will we miss his skills as secretary but his friendship and ideas. We wish him well.

With the recent birth of our second child it is my intention not to stand as president again. I want to thank all the committee members, over the years, for all the support I've been given.

Cath Ortlieb



LIABILITIES:                    nil                    nil                    nil                    nil

#### MEMBERS FUNDS

Open balance at November 1st	\$9482.37	\$9619.79
Surplus (Deficit) for year	\$ 132.42	(\$192.24)
Closing balance at October 31st 1992	\$9619.79	\$9427.55

Carey Handfield  
Treasurer ASFF Inc  
16-Jan-93

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#### Membership Report:

Most memberships have now lapsed and are due for renewal. A renewal form is enclosed for all such members. Please continue to supply us with your support. Once renewal numbers have been finalised a full report will be available.

Clive Newall, Membership Secretary.

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#### Publicity Officer's Report:

Last year saw publicity take a much lower profile than in the most recent years. The reasoning for this was twofold, the first was that previous Instrumentality's were deemed to have been costing the members too much, and the second was that their distribution was wider than necessary. The obligation is to inform our members about the Foundation's activities. Members of the wider SF Community can have access to the information by joining. This reasoning also saw the number of issues drop from six (bimonthly) to two (as required) per annum.

The Instrumentality has, however, been readily available at the major conventions, as have flyers detailing our activities. It is hoped that this will be sufficient to remind people of our existence and our worth.

LynC  
Publicity Officer

## BOOK REVIEWS

In light of Terry Pratchett's upcoming visit to Australia, it somehow seems appropriate that he dominates this issue's review Column.

### The Carpet People

Terry Pratchett  
(Transworld Publishers, UK, 1971, revised 1992. ISBN 0 385 403046)

Ever wondered about the origins of the nomes? Now meet an even smaller bunch of nutters. The tribes of the nomes live all around us, specifically under the floorboards, but the carpet people live in the grit at the base of the carpet hairs of a single room, and build castles out of a single crystal of salt.

For the first time in the history of the carpet, it is being vacuum cleaned!

When their village is destroyed, the quarrelsome munnings - nominally part of the Dummii (read Roman) Empire, set out to find a new home. This is the story of their travels and how they come to save the Empire.

Terry Pratchett at his comic best yet again. A light good fun read for all ages.

If you enjoy this, try his nome trilogy as well: Truckers, Diggers, & Wings. (For Children of all ages.)

LynC

### Truckers

A Picture Corgi Book

Terry Pratchett  
(Picture Corgi, 1992, ISBN 0 552 527351)

This is the picture book related to the TV series for the book Truckers. The TV Series is produced by Brian Cosgrove and Mark Hall, of DANGERMOUSE, and WIND IN THE WILLOWS fame. As with all books of this nature I found the text somewhat disjointed and the pictures too static - so it was tested on my ten year old nephew - Robert. Having looked at the book he couldn't wait for the TV series to start in October, even going to the lengths of extracting a promise out of us that we would record it for him. Also without even reading the text, he had no trouble identifying the main characters in the novel from their puppet depictions in the picture book. It would seem from these reactions that the producers have "got it right" for their target audience .

LynC

## Only You Can Save Mankind

Terry Pratchett

(DoubleDay - Transworld Publishers, 1992, ISBN 0 385 403089)

The first of a series of adventures about Johnny Maxwell (the second is Johnny and the Dead). Johnny is one of those misfits who fail to get noticed by everyone but who is actually quite bright and when required, can think very fast on their feet. His parents are in the process of separating and have little energy for him, and Johnny is a tad depressed about it all. He is "lent" (a polite word for piracy) a game called ONLY YOU CAN SAVE MANKIND. It's a typical shoot-'em-up, but ... wait a minute... - The ScreeWee want to surrender????!! How, what, which, where, huh???

If you are expecting the laugh a minute DiskWorld books you will be disappointed, although humour is not entirely absent. When Johnny is trying to describe which one of the group of misfits he hangs out with is him, Kirsty goes through the entire group, except him and Johnny describes himself as "...the one who kind of hangs around and no-one notices much", to which Kirsty replies "Who? I didn't see anyone." When his father tries to have a heart to heart talk to his son, Johnny wonders as his father leaves if he shouldn't have asked him where the manual for the Dishwasher was while he had the chance. He has black coffee for breakfast because its safer than the milk which feels lumpy when he shakes it. Puns, are not entirely absent either, but they are not part of the storyline. The game is described as being:-

"Suitable for the IBM PC, Atari, Amiga, Pineapple, Amstrad, Nintendo. Actual games shots taken from a version you haven't bought."

This is neither the first nor the best story about a computer game which comes to life, albeit in dreams (Gillian Rubenstein's Space Demons would still receive my accolade in that department), and the tone does drag a little until a real protagonist (Kirsty/Sigourney) joins in the battle to free the ScreeWee from Game Space. However once Kirsty does join Johnny, there are some very interesting observations about our imagination and its effect on our perception of reality.

Interesting, a little unusual, but low key compared to Terry's normal output.

LynC

## Reaper Man

Terry Pratchett  
(Corgi Books, 1992)

"If I claim I have a billion  
And I want to trade it to you for a million  
I just left that reefer man"

Harlen Lattimore and his Connies Inn Orchestra

Terry Pratchett suffers from an attack of the coys that makes Piers Anthony appear the model of harsh realism. There are other similarities between Anthony and Pratchett. Pratchett is addicted to Puns and produces light, entertaining, superficial science fiction/fantasy that, at worst, is reminiscent of the interminable Xanth series, and at best, is a pale echo of Douglas Adams "Hitchhikers" series.

Reaper Man is the second of the DiskWorld novels I've read, and I will admit that it had me laughing aloud in places, one of those places being a bus just drawing into the Forest Hills Shopping Centre, much to the amusement of the uniformed school girls in the seat opposite. The cause of my stifled guffaw was that Pratchett recycled the old Red Indian joke that usually has the punchline "Why do you ask Two Dogs Fucking?" Pratchett is too shrewd a writer to quote the exact line. He knows how to retain his library sales. What he says is "*he'd have given his right arm to be called Two-Dogs-Fighting*" and one can almost picture Michael Palin from Monty Python's Flying Circus delivering the line. In much the same way, W.C. Fields' comment "Water. Ugh! Fish fuck in it." becomes bowdlerised. Referring to the way salmon migrate upstream, we get:-

"What'd they do that for?"

"Well... it's all to do with breeding."

"Disgusting. And to think, we *have* to drink water."

Reaper Man is a real plum duff of a novel, with English references scattered like currants throughout. There can be few science fiction novels that start by referring to Morris Dancing and which drop in the occasional reference to the puppet Sooty or the English Caricature of Australians as beer swilling louts with corks on their hats who live entirely on prawns. Lewis Carrol also rates a mention in the naming of Treacle Mine Road. I rather suspect that the American audience will miss ninety percent of the jokes, but that's about par for the course. (Not all references are for the English: Indiana Jones rates a mention on page 270.)

The book entwines three sub-plots, two of which derive from the major plotline in which Death has been sacked for developing a personality and so has been demoted to mortal. Pratchett has Windle Poons, one of his major characters, dealing with his new-found status as a member of the undead - he has been left in this limbo because Death in person is supposed to attend to the disincorporation of Wizards. The unco-ordinated life force released because Death isn't on duty is causing all sorts of poltergeist activity, allowing Pratchett to continue his lampoon of academia by examining how the staff of Unseen University deal with a real problem. The third sub-plot has

to do with a malevolent entity infiltrating the DiskWorld.

The major plot is where one gets the impression that Pratchett has indeed sold his billion for a million. There have been numerous treatments of the idea of the death of the personification of Death and this novel adds little to them, other than a rather saccharine love story that somehow incorporates elements of HIGH NOON. The Reaper Man gets too little of the plot and becomes little more than a cameo in his own book. The Death of Rats has more personality and more potential as an independent character.

The strengths of the book are in its bizarre cast of characters and in its parade of old jokes and puns. The Undead fan club that Windle Poons becomes involved with are rather predictable, but Poons himself is as entertaining a character as I've encountered in light fiction, and the terrible Mrs Cake is worth the price of admission.

In summary, Reaper Man makes a good piece of tram reading. It doesn't tax the mind excessively and has some good lines. Sadly it does not do its subject matter justice.

Marc Ortlieb

### Expatria

Keith Brooke

(Corgi, 1992. ISBN 0 552 13725 1)

Expatria is the name of a planet settled by Humans where electronic technology has been largely abandoned and pseudo feudal societies exist in uneasy peace. In this civilisation of cults, such as the Death Krishnas and Conventists, one society attempts to extend applied scientific knowledge and manage to communicate with orbiting humans. Apparently the original 'Ark' ships of their exodus are still inhabited and there's news of an approaching ship from Earth...

Keith Brooke spins a tale of a possible future colony, isolated and lapsed into a society resembling our own recent past. The rediscovery of technology plotline strikes the reader with being apparently smarter than the protagonists. The level of civilisation on Expatria, being so close to our own, leads to easy suspension of disbelief. Only a couple of animals mentioned in passing, and the two moons, indicate that this planet differs from Earth. The setting makes little impact as the main conflict comes from interactions between characters, and is usually due to political machinations.

It's a fairly easy read, with nothing much to think about or ponder, as action carries most of the story. With a sequel already published (Expatria Incorporated), and the fact that the words 'first of a two-book series' appear on the back cover, it's hard to see Expatria as much more than a 'set-up' or establishment novel. We've been given the background of two almost warring societies, and bits about a different third, all soon to be upset by an external force, the Earth ship. This 'soon-to-be' aspect echoes through this novel, and perhaps lessens its impact. Interesting and competent, but perhaps just part of a greater whole.

Alan Stewart