



Under the Christmas Tree...

(Photo by Keith & Jacqui Smith)

Issue XXXIX - Nov-Dec 2013

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Musings from Under the Mountain

It was club meeting last night, and although too few of you turned up (with good reason I'm sure; it's only a week until Christmas after all), a most satisfactory time was had by those who were present.

I'll admit that Keith and I weren't sure that anyone was going to be there when we arrived just after 7:30 pm, but there was Nicolette waiting for us, so we unpacked the box, and while Keith fetched the tea and coffee, I set up the projector. We helped ourselves to a hot drink and a home-made biscuit (Keith had been baking, you see), and then got started, beginning by looking over the obits in Novazine, mainly because that's what was on the screen when I turned it on. More people wandered in as we chatted about the likes of Tom Clancy and Doris Lessing... and about ironing.

The obits were followed by a brief discussion of upcoming events (the January meeting at the Smith house is planned to be a movie evening). Next came the quiz on the subject of the late Fred Pohl (which is included in the article about Pohl and his work on page 4). I'm afraid we'll never know who won, because I forgot to ask for the scores! But I don't think that anybody really cared. Then, I shared my collection of Pohl ebooks, and added some Dr Who videos for Martin and Raewyn to enjoy (Did you know you can get an entire series of Dr Who onto a single USB stick? Technology never ceases to amaze me... except when it comes to space, where the dreams of my youth are far from realised).

Meanwhile, Keith took over the projector and entertained people with a astronomy talk, complete with pictures of the nova in Centaurus (you can read more about that in his "Sky at Night" article). We finished the evening with a viewing of the first episode of the (rather silly but fun) kidult fantasy comedy *Yonderland*. All in all, it was a varied and entertaining evening, and it's a great pity that there weren't more people there to enjoy it. There is a lot to be said for celebrating the things we enjoy as a group

in person even when there are so many other ways to communicate these days—there are things that digital technology simply does not convey. Else why bother to go to live performances? Why visit an art gallery or a museum? Why travel at all?

Keith and I have done a fair bit of travelling over the last twelve months or so—to Australia in November last year for the Solar Eclipse, and then this year's Big Trip around the World. We visited several museums and art galleries, among them some of the world's greatest—the British Museum and the Louvre. We saw the Mona Lisa, and we saw the crowds also seeing the Mona Lisa; and that's part of the experience I think, not just your own reaction to a great work of art, but the reactions of other people around you. And I suppose that's why we like to gather together with other fans to view movies, and enjoy as a group media events such as the Doctor Who Specials this year.

Looking at the Mona Lisa in the Louvre—Photo by Keith



Another valuable aspect of visiting places in person is that you get a sense of scale, and of the actual size of things. Stonehenge seemed to me to be somewhat smaller than I expected in real life, whereas the Arc de Triomphe was rather larger—and surrounded by the crazy traffic of the Place Charles de Gaulle, so that it is only accessible by subway. While it might be artistically satisfying to have twelve avenues all meeting at the same huge roundabout,, it's not exactly safe! But, that's Paris for you... Rome wasn't what I expected either. What the documentaries don't really convey is the crazy mishmash of the ages, buildings from ancient, medieval, classical and modern times all mixed together. Sometimes in the same building! We found a church near the bus station that was a fusion of the Roman Baths of Diocletian with the architecture of Michelangelo...

If travel broadens the mind, then it must be said that ours are much wider than they were back in 2012. One can only hope that this is a good thing! All in all, we had a pretty good year, and we wish you all the best for the next one.

Jacqui Smith, Editor

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by
Jacqui
Smith

The Jade Rabbit Has Landed...

Another Chinese achievement in spaceflight made the news recently, with word of China's Chang'e (Jade Rabbit) rover successfully landing on the Moon, marking the first soft landing on the Moon since the last Russian Luna probe in 1976, and the arrival of the first wheeled vehicle there since the Russian Lunokhod rovers and the Apollo astronauts' moon cars in the early seventies. This is only one of several areas where China's space program is surging ahead; it's already the third nation after the USA and Russia to launch manned space missions, and could well have a permanent space station and be launching manned Moon missions by the 2020's. Other nations are also making advances in space missions; India had recently launched the Mangalyaan probe to Mars, and even Iran (a nation we in the west generally don't think of as an emerging space power) has reported a second successful suborbital flight with a monkey aboard.

In looking over the nations that are making the early steps into space today, there seems to be a disconnect between the societies and cultures that are making those steps, and the science-fictional dreams of the past about what humanity in space would be like. To read the early space operas of the pulp magazines of the 1930's, one could be forgiven for thinking that it was an exclusively English speaking, fair-skinned Anglo-Saxon and Celtic cosmos that lay ahead of us.

Although by the time Gene Roddenberry produced Star Trek in the 1960's he was making some steps towards presenting a multicultural cast of characters aboard his vessel, there was still a predominance of white English-speakers depicted as advancing onto the final frontier. However, as recent events indicate, the fair-skinned Anglophone world doesn't have a monopoly on the technical ability and spirit of exploration required to launch a space program. (Indeed, at the moment, NASA's programmes are falling on hard times, while other nations are maintaining reasonable space programmes.)

Regardless of skin colour, culture, language, or national identity, ultimately we're all human, and the urge to increase our knowledge of the universe we live in is something that transcends minor differences between nations and races. Although the Chinese and Indian programmes offer some promise, in some ways the nation to watch in space may be Iran. It's doubtful that China's programme could be enough of a challenge to spur the fortunes of the US space programme (the Chinese and American economies are simply too closely entangled for the two nations to become serious rivals in any renewed Cold War), but Iran is a strong enough regional power, and still a bitter rival of the US, that if their first steps, although they're still very much preliminary, do lead to a serious space programme (possibly including manned missions), that could be the spur needed for the USA to revive a competitive space race (although it would naturally be a much smaller scale affair than the original USA vs. USSR space race).

Sometimes rivalries can also lead to peaceful cooperation; the USA and the former USSR began to work together as long ago as 1975 with the Apollo/Soyuz mission, and in the post-Cold War world, cooperation between the USA and Russia in space is now so routine that, in a slightly ironic twist, at the moment buying a seat aboard Soyuz missions is the only means available for US astronauts to reach space.

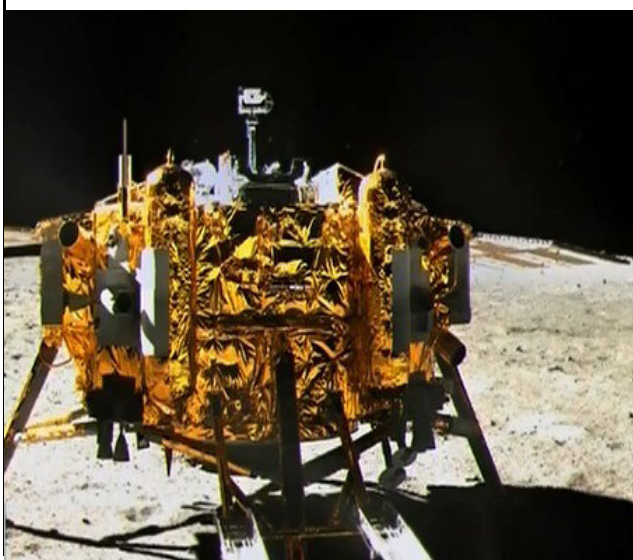
Although any such US/Iran rapprochement remains a long way off, the fact that the Iranian regime has recently agreed to intensive Western monitoring of its nuclear program gives hope that even the hardest line regimes can be persuaded when it's in their best interests to talk to the other side. (The recent deal may be a sign that economic sanctions have compelled the regime to seek relief for Iran's economy, rather than that their policies have fundamentally changed.)

If Iran does establish a viable space programme, it will probably also draw the interest of Western inspectors; after all, rockets launched from Iran that can reach space would have more than enough range to reach Israel. If the regime has agreed to nuclear inspection to establish that their nuclear programme is strictly peaceful, maybe the door is open to similar inspections to confirm that any future Iranian space program will also have peaceful intent.

This may be the challenge for the science fiction writers of today; if they can realistically portray all the nations of the Earth, regardless of race, language, culture or political rivalries, working together to advance the common human dream of space exploration, maybe that will get people of all cultures used to the idea of working together in space for real. Perhaps a time will come when English, Russian, Mandarin, Hindi and Farsi will all be spoken freely aboard the future equivalents of the Starship Enterprise...

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all the club, keep safe over the summertime, and we'll see you all at upcoming club events in 2014!

Alan Parker, President, Stella Nova



by
Alan
Parker

RIP FRED POHL

I suspect that the first book of Fred Pohl's that I read was *Gateway*. Published in 1977, when I was at University, it still stands as one of the classics, and what's more it still works even given thirty-odd years of technological development since, which is pretty impressive really. I don't think the later Heechee novels work quite as well, mainly because they de-mystify the Heechee, but that's my opinion, and they still beat a lot of the dross that's out there these days.

The biting satire on consumerism in his "Merchants of Venus" series was critically acclaimed at the time and remains very much relevant today. Also well worth considering are *Age of the Pussyfoot* for its exploration of future shock long before the term was invented, *Man Plus*, *Jem*, and any number of his short story collections.

I met Pohl at Denvention 3 in 2008, when he was 88, and you can see from the photograph that though he was plainly getting on in years, he still had a lively smile, and was more alive than many who are much younger. At the time he was publicising *The Last Theorem* which he completed for Arthur C. Clarke. What impresses me is that his writing in 2010 was still sharp enough to earn him a Hugo!



There is absolutely no doubt in my mind that Fred Pohl was one of the science fiction greats, contributing not just to the genre, but to the world we live in. Sadly, it's evident that too many people have not read his work, or they might have heeded the warnings therein. Like many who write (and read) quality SF, he had a eye to the future, and saw what was coming long before "green" became a popular cause. He will be missed.

POHLSTARS QUIZ!

How much do you know about the life and work of Frederick Pohl?

- Pohl's first published work was a poem in the October 1937 issue of *Amazing Stories*. What was its title?
 - Daughters of Eternity*
 - Earth, Farewell!*
 - Elegy to a Dead Satellite: Luna*
 - Let the Ants Try*

- In 1952, in collaboration with Cyril M. Kornbluth, Pohl wrote a critically acclaimed novel which gave us a number of new words, including "soyaburger", "moon suit", "tri-di", and "R and D". What was its title?
 - The [Backspace] Merchants*
 - The Merchants of Venus*
 - The Merchants' War*
 - The Space Merchants*
- From 1959 to 1969, Pohl was editor of which SF magazine that won three successive Hugo awards under his tenure?
 - Astounding*
 - Analog*
 - If*
 - Omni*
- Pohl won his first Nebula for which 1976 novel?
 - Man Divided*
 - Man Minus*
 - Man Plus*
 - Man Squared*
- Which 1977 Pohl novel won four major awards - the Hugo, the Nebula, the Locus and the John W. Campbell Memorial Award?
 - The Age of the Pussyfoot*
 - The Coming of the Quantum Cats*
 - Gateway*
 - Jem*
- Beyond the Blue Event Horizon*, the 1980 sequel to *Gateway*, is one of the most evocative titles in science fiction. It refers to which type of astronomical object?
 - Black Hole
 - Neutron Star
 - Pulsar
 - Quasar
- Pohl also wrote non-fiction, and was in fact a leading authority on which Roman emperor?
 - Augustus
 - Claudius
 - Julius Caesar
 - Tiberius
- Pohl completed a novel called *The Last Theorem* in 2008. This was begun by which then recently deceased author?
 - Arthur C Clarke
 - Harry Harrison
 - Isaac Asimov
 - Robert Heinlein
- Pohl's last Hugo was in 2010 for a work called *The Way the Future Blogs*. In which category?
 - Best Professional Editor
 - Best Fan Writer
 - Best Fanzine
 - Best Related Work
- The death of Frederick Pohl was announced by way of social media just after the closing ceremony of which major 2013 SF convention?
 - Boskone 50
 - ConQuest 44
 - LonestarCon 3
 - Lunacon 2013

by
Jacqui
Smith

(This is my homage to the memory of Fred Pohl and what I consider to be his greatest invention—Gateway and the Heechee. I've updated the astronomy with some more recent findings for the characters to explore, and added a little bit of technological development).

ECCENTRICITY

by Jacqui Smith

Hullo, my name is Jim, and that's short for Jemima, 'cos my parents wanted a boy, you see. And I'm not on Gateway to get rich. No way. I'm here because I'm just monkey curious, and that's the way it is. I was born the child of fish farmers so I had the money. Though I wasn't supposed to spend it getting to Gateway. I wasn't really meant to leave the farm. But there was the accident, and then I got to do what I wanted, and I wanted the stars. Somebody else can look after the fish.

My mates are Harry and Sandra, and they tell me that they are hoping to get rich 'cos they wants to have a family. So is big Joe, though he needs the money so as his little brother can get full medical, and get out of the wheelchair he's been stuck in since birth. And there's Alaska. He don't talk much, not about himself, so I got no idea what he's doing here.

You do know about here, don't you? About Gateway? This rock that's full of ancient alien spaceships? How you get in, and squeeze the button, and hope against hope that it isn't your time to die? I'd already done that, once. In a Three, with big Joe and Alaska, and we went out forty-three days and came back empty. We'd found a dull ember of a star, what the science geeks called a quark star, one step up from a neutron star, but one step down from your actual black hole. Couldn't go near the thing, and it was spewing out hard radiation like nobody's business, so we had to get out of there pretty damn quick. No planets that we could see, and not much else, except a pretty nebula way too far out from the dead star to investigate. Probably created when the star exploded hundreds of thousands of years ago and ate its solar system. Assuming it had one. When we got back they gave us a decent science bonus, but nobody gets rich on science bonuses. And my curiosity was barely sated.

Which is, I suppose, why we were out again within a week, this time all of us, in a Five. Now, I shouldn't need to remind you that a Five is the largest of the three kinds of Heechee craft on Gateway. Looks a bit like a Portobello mushroom with the lander being the stem.

We got in the lander and Alaska took us out on its chemical engine to far enough out that the interstellar drive could operate, and then we clambered through into the capsule. The target selector had already been set by the course programmers, all we had to do was pinch the go-teat. We all took a deep breath as Joe squeezed the knob... and we were on our way.

Nobody knows how the Heechee interstellar drive works, or even what it uses for fuel (you gotta hope it don't run out on your mission, though that wasn't likely to happen to us, this Five had only been out twice). It gets you there in a matter of weeks or months, much longer and you'd starve (it has happened, too many times for comfort). You've got rations for about two hundred and fifty days, give or take, and if you don't get to turnaround by eighty days, then you know you're in trouble. You can tell you've reached turnaround when the golden Heechee coil flickers and you feel the not-gravity reverse direction (nobody know why there's this feeble pseudo-gravitational in FTL flight, but there it is). The reason why you have only two fifty day's supplies is that you need some room to move. As it is, you're in each other's personal space pretty well all the time.

All in all, it was a relief when the golden sparks dancing in the Heechee coil told us that turnaround had come on our twenty-seventh day out. That meant we'd not run out of supplies, and we had less than three months more of putting up with each other in that cramped space. We'd learned to isolate ourselves in our own worlds of books, music, or gaming. Or we networked our phones and played together in shared virtual worlds; anything to break the monotony.

Finally, on the fifty-fifth day, we dropped out of supralight, and found ourselves in a distant orbit around a gas giant, itself orbiting a fat orange K-type star, along with a bunch of moons and a whole lot of smaller rubble, not quite a ring, but close. Things were definitely looking up. We did all the usual stuff; Alaska and I went for a spacewalk, and took the photos and gathered the spectra that the astronomers back on Gateway needed to figure out where we'd been. The others hunted for Heechee signatures among the moons.



by
Jacqui
Smith

We discovered the first weird thing when we computed the orbit of the gas giant, and realised that its orbit wasn't circular, I mean really not at all circular, positively cometary. We had found what the astronomy geeks call an "eccentric Jupiter", which explained why there was so much space junk floating around it, and so little in way of planets in the inner system. The next surprise was that one of the moons, a rocky ball about three quarters the size of Earth, had an oxygen-nitrogen atmosphere and if the sensors weren't lying, liquid water, even plant life. This really was pay dirt, in every sense of the word. Better still, that peculiar radiation that issued from Heechee artifacts was emanating from a number of spots on the surface, suggesting that there might be Heechee remains down there. Unfortunately several of the locations appeared to be under water, and that was one thing we weren't equipped for. Heck, I was the only one in the party who could even swim! So, we picked a target in what currently passed for the temperate zone (with that kind of orbit it would be heading for tropical pretty damn soon), and prepared to go check it out.

We kitted ourselves out in light but tough coverall suits, adding air filters in case there was something nasty in the atmosphere down there, and left Alaska in the capsule (he drew the short straw) while we all scrambled into the lander. Driving the lander isn't hard, a bit like playing a tri-d vid game, you just direct the glowing pointer in the tank to the place you want to go to. We landed in a deep valley near a ravine where the target signal was strongest, and got out onto the mossy landscape (looks like moss, so we'll call it moss, okay). The sky above was grey, and a soft drizzle fell from the sky.

"I dub this world Alaska, because he's not here!" shouted Harry, stamping a booted footprint into the moss.
 "Not cold enough, dear," commented Sally.
 "I don't care what you call it," Big Joe muttered. "It hasn't eaten us yet, that's the main thing."

I didn't argue. Now, the thing you need to know about finding Heechee stuff is that they like tunnels, I mean, they really like tunnels. So it's a case of first find those tunnels. We scanned the cliffs and rockfaces looking for entrances, and eventually found a way in, a narrow passage into the rock. Like most places where the Heechee had been and left, it was pretty damn empty. But not quite. Over the next few hours, we searched and searched and found a handful of artifacts, a bunch of crystalline "prayer fans", some strange glassy things that might have been natural, but probably weren't, a cubical box that we couldn't get open, and alone in the centre of a room, a thing that bent the mind when you looked too close, a bizarre complexity of twisted and turned tubes of Heechee metal. We'd just found the last when our piezophones went nuts. It was Alaska on the capsule.

"Get out of there, get out now!" he screamed at us.
 "Whaa..." I stammered.
 "Flood... it's a flash flood. Run!"

Harry grabbed the thing and we ran, back through the tunnels, we ran for our lives. You see there's one thing we'd forgotten. Something bad in the atmosphere doesn't just mean foul air or bacteria... planets have this thing

called weather, and it can turn nasty. We ran through the narrow passage, and out into the open, where the gentle rain had become a downpour, and a torrent of water flowed down the valley. As we hurried towards the capsule, the water rose rapidly, and soon we were up to our waists, and struggling to stay upright. Joe and Sally got there first, the big man hauling the small woman up through the hatch and inside. I was just about to follow them when I saw Harry slip, hampered by the awkward Heechee artifact he was carrying. I turned back and grabbed him, suddenly realising that there was one good thing about having been a fish farmer. Unlike my companions, former denizens of Earth's teeming cities, I could actually swim. I kicked off and got one arm under his, and began dragging him, with difficulty towards the open hatch. But the thing was dragging him down, holding him back.

"Drop it. We can come back for it. It's Heechee metal. It won't break," I screamed through the storm as I tried to swim towards the lander, hauling Harry behind me.
 "But, Jim, it's worth a fortune..."
 "So, my friend, are you... Drop it!"

And he did. The dead weight gone, we made it to the foot of the lander, where Joe pulled us both, wet and weary, back on board. The flood subsided soon after, but our scans failed to find the object. We'll probably never know what it was, never mind what it was worth. Sure we had a handful of prayer fans in our pockets, but they're found everywhere and they wouldn't win us any prizes. And there was that cube, but who knew where that would get us?

After a bit of research, we realised why the weather on the world we called Alaska was so treacherous. This was a moon orbiting a gas giant with an eccentric orbit which was heading in towards its primary at a rate of knots. Talk about global warming! This was climate change on steroids, and wild weather was only to be expected. We got the lander back to the capsule, but soon concluded that none of us wanted to go back down there, not without a whole slew of equipment we simply didn't have. So we decided to cut our losses and head back home, a little richer and a little wiser in the strange ways of alien worlds.

And there you have it, my friends, that is how a Gateway prospector can find a fortune and lose it, all in the space of a single hour.





*Armageddon 2013
in Pictures*



ARMAGEDDON

2013

by
Keith
Smith

The Sky at Night January 2014

As it turned out, Comet Ison (C/2012 S1) didn't survive its close passage to the sun – at least no one has seen it since, despite a lot of looking along its projected orbit. Or as Monty Python would put it:

“Remarkable object the long period comet. Beautiful tail”
 “The tail doesn't enter into it. It's a dead stone.”
 “It's pining for the stars”
 “It's not pining, it's passed on - Bereft of ice, it rests in pieces, It swept around the sun and joined the rocks invisible. This is an ex-comet.”

While astronomers in the Northern Hemisphere mourn the loss of Ison (C/2013 R1 Lovejoy is currently putting on a good show of its own – just not as bright as Ison was predicted to be) we in the Southern Hemisphere gained a new naked eye star.

In the evening sky, low on the horizon, you will find the Southern Cross and to the right of that are the two pointer stars, Alpha and Beta Centauri. Beta is the closer star to the Southern Cross and, close by, around the half seven/eight o'clock position is a star that wasn't visible a couple of months ago. This is Nova Centauri 2013 aka PNV J13544700-5909080 aka V1369 Cen. This star is usually a fifteenth magnitude object (way fainter than Pluto), but it started brightening at the beginning of December. It was discovered on the 2nd by John Seach in Australia when it reached mag 5.5 and it peaked at 3.5 on the 15th. Currently, today being the 27th December, it's still at 4.4. This means it is still visible with the naked eye at a dark sky site, but a pair of binoculars will let you see it in the city – unless you're dodging bright lights and street lights. I was able to see and photograph it from our front door.

So, what's happening to cause such a massive increase in brilliance? This star is actually a binary composed of a normal star and a white dwarf in a very close orbit.

Occasionally material will be pulled from the other star by the white dwarf which then gets dumped on its surface. When the layer of fresh hydrogen on the surface gets dense enough it ignites in spectacular fashion, exploding in a runaway hydrogen fusion reaction. The

white dwarf itself remains intact and this process can continue in a rather irregular fashion, depending how often, and how much hydrogen it can steal from its companion. So, it's likely to flare up again, but we can't predict when.

What else is in the sky? Venus is still shining low in the west, while Jupiter is appearing earlier and higher in the east after sunset. It is at opposition (it's closest to Earth) on the 6th of January. This year it is occupying the

constellation of Gemini. Venus will disappear from the evening sky around the 15th to reappear in the morning sky before dawn. Saturn and Mars will be in the morning sky as well.

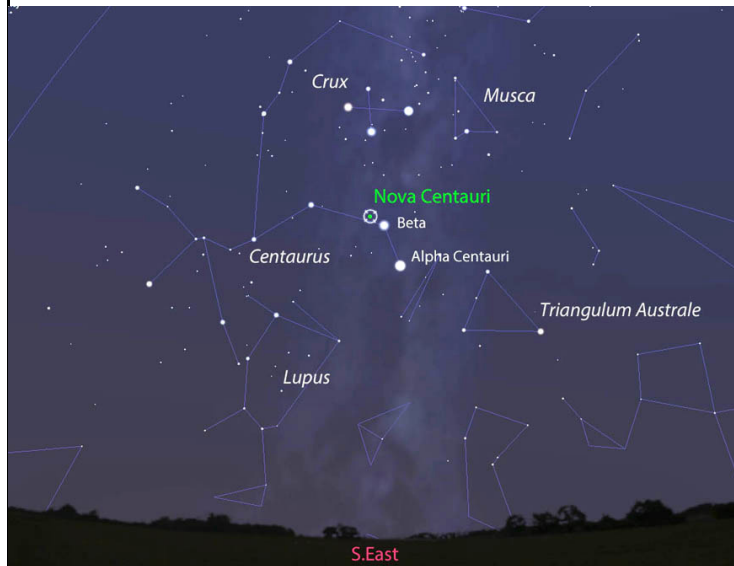
The Southern Cross is low on the southern horizon which puts the Magellanic Clouds up high. Easy seen in a dark sky, they may fade into obscurity in the city. Achernar and Formalhaut can also be seen overhead. To the north, Matariki marks the location of Taurus with Orion, Sirius and Procyon rising in the east. Aldebaran shines a bright orange marking the 'V' shape of the Hyades cluster, even though it's not part of it. If you have a low enough horizon, you may see a bright star in the north below Taurus, which will be Capella (Alpha Aurigae).

Phases of the Moon (January):

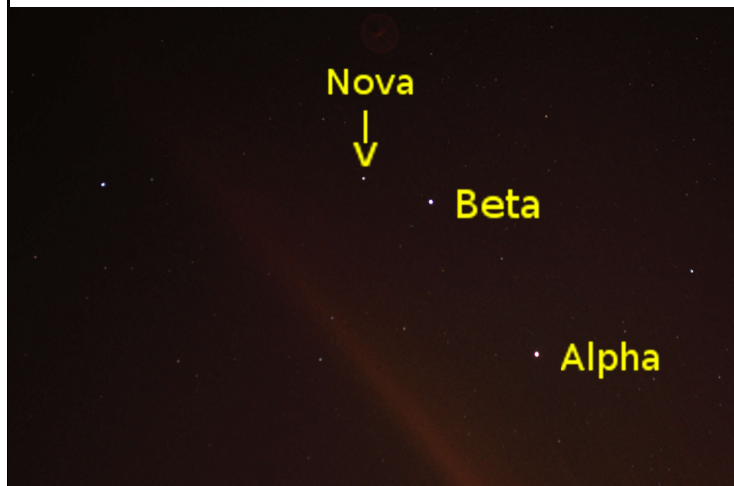
- New Moon—2nd January
- First Quarter—8th January
- Full Moon—16th January
- Last Quarter—24th January

Phases of the Moon (February):

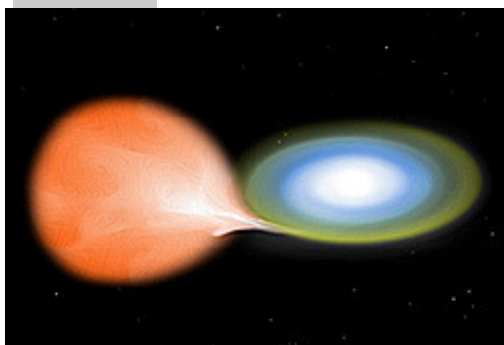
- First Quarter—7th February
- Full Moon—15th February
- Last Quarter—23th February
- New Moon—1st March



How to find Nova Centauri 2013



Nova Centauri 2013 from our back door!



by
Keith
Smith

Uncorked

Broderick Wells

I've been threatened with excommunication if I do not write a column before midnight. All well and good, I could do with a little less religion in my life. (At this time of the year, and due to the flat terrain I currently inhabit, the Wells mansion has been plagued by an infestation of missionaries trying to convert me to their version of the One True Faith. Mormonism seems to have an appeal to the clean cut variety, all of whom are nicely dressed an earnest young people with a sad penchant for bicycle clips. I know they can make a great fashion statement when used worn as earrings, or hung of one's Prince Albert but they do need chroming or gold plating first. Worn around trousers they just look like punk garters for ankle socks. I considered joining, but they screamed in horror when I suggested a celebratory champagne. Equally mysterious are the people witnessing Jehovah. Sorry guys, but Christian theology does state he is omnipresent, which means there's no end of it: wherever you look, whatever you're doing, there he is. So I stayed in and told Jehovah I loved him, a lot, like a brother. He was a good sort and didn't drink more than his share. After that someone threw up in the toilet twice, flushed three times then threw up again. I guessing it was his mates the angels. They get a lot of Scotch and obviously one of them can't hold his liquor. That's Jehovah's story and he's sticking to it. The Seven Day Advent Calendar mob are a bit weird – everyone knows an Advent Calendar has 25 days. But I may have got their take on Christianity a bit muddled. My ears were still ringing from the knees up the Sallies put on to convince all and sundry of the evils of temperance. I made the mistake of standing too close to the euphonium at that party. Judging by the number of dead soldiers on the floor, I sure a few of the band were actually Methylated Spiritualists. Mercifully the local C of E vicar is a wonderful, understanding sort with a soft, droning voice, even if the over-large chairs in his recovery room are a bit close to the derivation of comfort for prolonged revitalisation. He even gave me a word of encouragement the other day, "Wake up!" What did he expect, holding midnight Holy Communion at that hour?) All this door answering has resulted in continual need to put the DVD player on pause. So what have I been watching?

First up has been *Person of Interest*, which has certain sci-fi elements to it. Not quite a Police Procedural, it has Jim Caviezel as John Reese, the Man in a Suit, preventing a specific murder from happening in New York. John is directed to his target by Harold Price, a reclusive billionaire who built the Machine, the security system that identifies terrorists for the government. Only it doesn't just identify relevant threats to national security but also non-relevant threats - to or from individuals. John is also assisted by a couple of NYPD detectives he has co-opted. A cast of recurring characters, snippets of back story and several story arcs make for a good couple of seasons so far.

The remake of *Hawaii Five-O* has a certain charm above and beyond the lovely Grace Park (of *Battlestar Galactica* fame). The cast and gender balance has been up-dated to reflect Hawaii's ethnic diversity, and the police aren't wearing suits in tropical heat. There is the retention of the original theme (data-da-dah data data dah), a conspiracy to explain why Steve McGarrett's father was murdered, Hawaiian-centric crimes (the old series seemed like any old crime show in lei), and the mysterious and highly dangerous Wo Fat. I'd definitely "Book 'em Danno," if they cancelled the third series and my name was Dan.

New Tricks has been as good as ever. James Bolin's character was written out in season nine, to be replaced by a mildly manic Scots detective. The shows are still the usual blend of comedy, drama and subtle misdirection and it still works. Equally British and as amusing is *Sherlock*, with Benedict Cumberbatch and Martin Freeman portray Holmes and Watson respectively very well. The twist is setting the series in present day London and taking full advantage of modern technologies. The episodes are ninety minutes, which allows for lots of storytelling and plot development. And Moriarty is a wonderfully deranged bespoke criminal. Wells Major is theoretically providing season three as a belated Christmas present.

Waiting to be viewed are *Castle*, several seasons of *Taggart* (Mr Taggart, there's been a murrdah.), *The Bomber*, a Russian WW2 mini-series which better have subtitles or there'll be problems, and *The Complete Wind in the Willows* which is considerably more than the story presented by Disney. January had better be long and miserable.



SF MEETS MORMONS AT THE DOOR
There's a reason they're called latter day saints!

(from <http://cheezburger.com>)

Quiz Answers:

1. C. *Elegy to a Dead Satellite: Luna*
2. D. *The Space Merchants*
3. C. If
4. C. *Man Plus*
5. C. *Gateway*
6. A. Black Hole
7. D. Tiberisu
8. A. Arthur C Clarke
9. B. Best Fan Writer
10. C. LonestarCon 3

O B I T S Obituaries

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October 1

Tom Clancy, (aged 66), American author and historian best known for his technically detailed espionage and military science storylines set during and in the aftermath of the Cold War, including *The Hunt for Red October*, and *Patriot Games*. Seventeen of his novels were bestsellers, and more than 100 million copies of his books are in print.



October 5

Ruth R. Benerito, (aged 97), American chemist and inventor known for her work related to the textile industry, notably in the development of wash-and-wear cotton fabrics. She held 55 patents. Why am I not surprised to learn that it was a woman who invented permanent press?

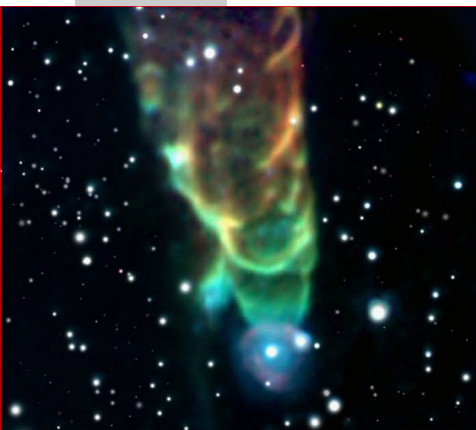
October 10

Scott Carpenter, (aged 88), American test pilot, astronaut and aquanaut, who was one of the original seven astronauts selected for NASA's Project Mercury in April 1959. Carpenter was the second American to orbit the Earth and the fourth American in space.



October 12

George Herbig, (aged 93), American astronomer, at the University of Hawaii Institute for Astronomy. He is perhaps best known for the discovery of Herbig-Haro objects—small bright patches of nebulosity associated with newly born stars, which are formed when narrow jets of gas ejected by young stars collide with clouds of gas and dust nearby at speeds of several hundred kilometres per second.



October 18

Francisco Rafael Arellano Félix, (aged 63), Mexican drug lord, and former leader of the Tijuana Cartel, shot dead while celebrating his birthday in Los Cabos, Baja California Sur, by a gunman disguised as a clown. Yes, really.

October 19

Noel Harrison, (aged 79), British singer, actor (*The Girl From U.N.C.L.E.*) and Olympic skier. He recorded *The Windmills of Your Mind*, the theme tune from the film *The*



Thomas Crown Affair, which won the Academy Award for Best Original Song in 1968—his father Rex Harrison had sung the Oscar winning song *Talk to the Animals* the previous year (1967).

October 22

William Harrison, (aged 79), American novelist, short story writer, and screenwriter best known for writing the short story *Roller Ball Murder* made into the movie *Rollerball* in 1975, for which he also wrote the script.

October 25

Nigel Davenport, (aged 85), English stage, television and film actor, who played in a great many supporting roles, most notably as Sir Edward Frere in *Howard's Way*, but also in *The Avengers* and in *The Saint*.



October 27

Roger McGee, (aged 86), American actor who played Crewman Lindstrom in *Forbidden Planet*.

October 27

George Thomas Thornton, (aged 84), American highway engineer, who was on duty on November 12, 1970, when a 45-foot-long, 8-ton sperm whale washed up on a beach near Florence, Oregon. It was starting to rot and stink, so after rejecting the ideas of towing it out to sea, or burying it (the tide would bring it back or uncover it) he decided to blow it up. With 20 cases of dynamite. "The exploding whale," notes technology news site *The Register*, "showered spectators, the beach and nearby parked cars with blubber and whale bits." This would have been a forgotten piece of news trivia, but for one thing. There was a video, it was posted on the internet in the 1990's, and promptly it went viral, the first video to do so. You can see it here: http://www.honoraryunsubscribe.com/george_thomas_thornton.html

October 31

Toby Bluth, (aged 64), American illustrator who worked on many Disney films and others as animator, Background artist and Production designer. He also had a long career writing and illustrating Children's Books, not to mention performing and or directing, nearly one hundred musicals, both on Broadway and off. Bluth's artwork is prominently displayed at Disney theme parks around the world.



Compiled
by
Jacqui
Smith



November 3
Nick Cardy, (aged 93), American comic book artist, best known for his DC Comics work on *Aquaman*, the *Teen Titans* and other major characters. Cardy was inducted into the Will Eisner Comic Book Hall of Fame in 2005.

William Pollack, (aged 87), British-born American immunologist, who developed the Rho(D) immune globulin vaccine, which since its introduction in 1968, has virtually eliminated cases of Rh disease in unborn babies in developed countries.

November 5
Charlie Trotter, (aged 54), American chef and restaurateur, author of *Gourmet Cooking for Dummies* and several other cookbooks.



November 12
Mavis Batey, (aged 92), English code-breaker at Bletchley Park during World War II. Her work was one of the keys to the success of D-Day. She later became a garden historian, who campaigned to save historic parks and gardens, and author of several books.

Konrad Rudnicki, (aged 87), Polish astronomer, professor at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków. He discovered several supernovae, one of which, found between two galaxies, was the first such discovery to be made in the history of astronomy. He advanced a new hypothesis on the structure of galaxy clusters, and discovered comet C/1966 T1, known as “Rudnicki's Comet.”



Aleksandr Serebrov, (aged 69), Soviet cosmonaut, who graduated from Moscow Institute of Physics and Technology in 1967, and was selected to fly into space as a cosmonaut on December 1, 1978. He flew on Soyuz T-7, Soyuz T-8, Soyuz TM-8 and Soyuz TM-17.

November 17
Doris Lessing, (aged 94), British novelist, poet, playwright, librettist, biographer and short story writer. Her novels include *The Grass is Singing* (1950), the sequence of five novels collectively called *Children of Violence* (1952–69), *The Golden Notebook* (1962), *The Good Terrorist* (1985), and five novels collectively known as *Canopus in Argos: Archives* (1979–1983). Lessing was awarded the 2007 Nobel Prize in Literature. And, yes, the *Canopus in Argos* series is science fiction, whatever the literary snobs tell us.

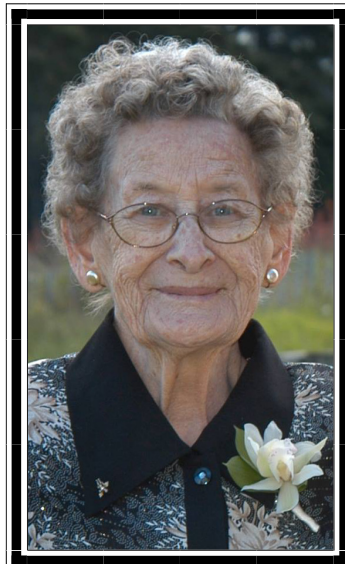


November 19
Marc Breaux, (aged 89), American choreographer and occasional film director best known for his work on musical films of the 1960s and 1970s including *The Sound of Music*, *Mary Poppins* and *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*.

Frederick Sanger, (aged 95), British biochemist, who won the Nobel Prize for Chemistry twice, one of only two people to have done this in the same category. In 1958, he was awarded a Nobel Prize in chemistry “for his work on the structure of proteins, especially that of insulin”. In 1980, Walter Gilbert and Sanger shared half of the chemistry prize “for their contributions concerning the determination of base sequences in nucleic acids”.

Farewell Mrs P.

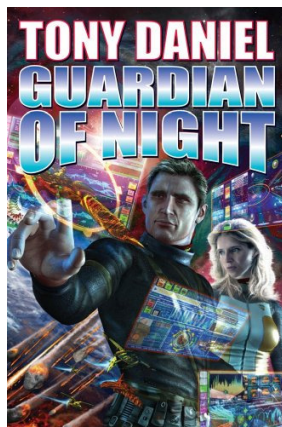
We regret to inform readers of the passing, on Boxing Day 2013, of Mrs Marie Pavletich, mother of Matthew, Maree’s mother-in-law, and a good friend to many club members. She was a kindly woman of many talents and was always ready to help when needed—she made our wedding cake, and babysat our son when he was little, and we were both working. She will be sorely missed.



Compiled by Jacqui Smith

Guardian of Night

by Tony Daniel
Published by Baen
Supplied by Science Fiction
Outreach Project at
LoneStarCon 3
Reviewed by Jacqui Smith



The Science Fiction Outreach Project is a mainly US initiative to get the science fiction media fans who attend conventions like ComicCon into reading science fiction (and hopefully getting involved in SF fandom proper). They do this by collecting donations from publishers etc. and handing them out for free. I collected a nice heap of free books at WorldCon, so many that I was concerned that my suitcase was getting too heavy... the least I can do by way of thanks is to review some of them. Guardian of Night is something of a cross between military science fiction and a spy thriller in the vein of "Hunt for Red October". It involves some of the coolest aliens I've ever come across in the sceeve – Daniel has put a lot of thought not just into their biology, but also their society, even their poetry! Which, considering they communicate by scents, is quite an achievement. He's also done a better than usual job of extrapolating advances in human technology. The plot focuses on the efforts of a sceeve named Arid Ricimer to defect to Earth along with the most powerful ship in the fleet; a defection motivated by the rot within the Administration that runs Sceeve civilisation, and now threatens to become a cancer that would destroy all other intelligent species in a fit of genocidal xenophobia. Daniel's prose is a bit clunky in places, and his characters sometimes lack personality, but that's not unusual in hard SF. I can only add that although it's a complete story, *Guardian of Night* is crying out for a sequel, and I hope Daniel is writing it... because I'd rather like to read it.

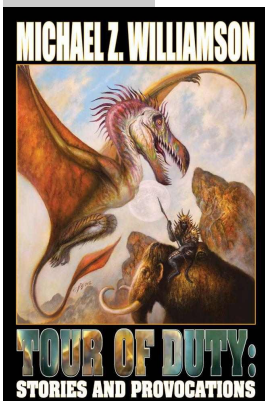
I've been hearing about lately (dogs are better at finding IEDs than any machine yet developed). Williamson's "Freehold" stories were pretty good too. His depiction of warfare seems to me to be some of the most authentic I've come across (I read military SF, but I doubt I'll ever write it, because you really have to have been there). But some parts of this work simply don't work for me, because I'm not keen on guns, and I'm not American. Neither is Williamson, by birth at any rate, he's as British as I am... but you'd never guess.

Jump Gate Twist

by Mark L. Van Name
Published by Baen
Supplied by Science Fiction
Outreach Project at LoneStarCon 3
Reviewed by Jacqui Smith



I'll begin by explaining that *Jump Gate Twist* is a compilation of *One Jump Ahead* and *Slanted Jack*, the first two Jon and Lobo novels, with additional short stories and other material, taking the whole to a hefty 723 pages. I soon realised that I had previously read both novels – and enjoyed them. The stars of these stories are Jon... who has his secrets, his unique powers and unusual origin; and his best friend, a predator class assault vehicle named Lobo, what amounts to an intelligent flying tank. Among Jon's abilities is machine telepathy, which leads to a lot of fun, especially when it involves washing machine gossip. Let's face it, this is science fiction action humour, and that's a tricky combination to get right. Most of the time, authors try it and the result is plain silly. But the stories of Jon and Lobo, while frequently infested with a fine frivolity, are by no means foolish. The science fiction still works, the plotting is complex (in both senses), and the characters are interesting. Sure, Jon is a bit of a prat at times, but that's not unusual in action heroes. This really is science fiction the way they don't make it any more. Which is a pity. Read and remember.



**Tour of Duty:
Stories and Provocations**

by Michael Z. Williamson
Published by Baen
Supplied by Baen Books at LoneStarCon 3
Reviewed by Jacqui Smith

I arrived a bit late to the Baen presentation at LoneStarCon 3, and by the time I interjected something nice about Baen Books and earned a free book from the presenter, there wasn't much choice. That is how I came into possession of this collection of stories and essays, which has one of the strongest militaristic themes I have ever come across. If essays entitled the "Ten Manliest Firearms" are liable to offend you, then this is not the book for you. Being a collection, it's a mixed bunch, even more so than usual; there is fiction, non-fiction, personal anecdote, humour... and a filk on "One Night in Baghdad" that you can pretty well imagine. It's also a mixed bag in terms of quality. One of the highlights is a story called *The Humans Call it Duty* which I found evocative of the tales of animal soldiers

**Wearable Arts:
A Collaboration
Over 25 years**

Published by Craig Potton
Publishing
Supplied by Craig Potton
Publishing
Reviewed by Jan
Butterworth



The World Wearable Arts (WOW) shows have been a remarkable success story for New Zealand cultural events. It is an annual competition and award show that explores the intersection of fashion and art. This book expands on earlier editions with all new photographs. It features the best garments that have been entered in recent years, in a studio setting with close-up details as well as photographs taken on stage during WOW.

This book showcases the diversity and creativity of wearable art and has gorgeous photos. I found the photos stunning and have many favourite outfits as I can't pick just one. The introduction is fascinating, giving the history of the WOW starting as a tiny provincial show before expanding to become a huge event in our capital city. All the photos are accompanied by a brief paragraph explaining each creation and detail the materials used. Anyone with an interest in fashion, design, and the craft arts will love this book and find it inspirational.

Dangerous Women

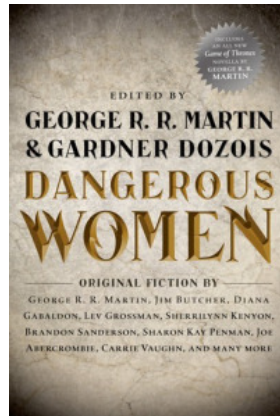
Edited by George RR Martin & Gardner R Dozois

Published by Harper Voyager

Supplied by HarperCollins

New Zealand

Reviewed by Jan Butterworth



The Dangerous Women anthology is a collection of 21 stories that feature strong heroines. It contains the following stories:

- Introduction by Gardner Dozois
- Some Desperado by Joe Abercrombie - A Red Country story
- My Heart is Either Broken by Megan Abbott
- Nora's Song by Cecelia Holland
- The Hands That Are Not There by Melinda Snodgrass
- Bombshells by Jim Butcher - A Harry Dresden story – Set in the Dresden universe, the story takes place a few months after Harry Dresden's death and is told from Molly's POV. Harry's brother, Thomas Raith, has been abducted by the Fomor, who have been making a move on post-Dresden Chicago. And Molly, together with vampire aide Justine and werewolf Andi, sets off to rescue the vampire in distress!
- Raisa Stepanova by Carrie Vaughn – Raisa is a Russian female pilot during WWII who is trying to become one of the first woman aces, pilots who have five confirmed kills, in the world. At first just for herself, but then to prove she is loyal after her brother goes MIA. This makes him likely to be considered a traitor which could stop her family from receiving the meagre rations that the government is handing out during the war.
- Wrestling Jesus by Joe R. Lansdale
- Neighbors by Megan Lindholm
- I Know How to Pick 'Em by Lawrence Block
- Shadows For Silence in the Forests of Hell by Brandon Sanderson
- A Queen in Exile by Sharon Kay Penman
- The Girl in the Mirror by Lev Grossman - A Magicians story
- Second Arabesque, Very Slowly by Nancy Kress
- City Lazarus by Diana Rowland
- Virgins by Diana Gabaldon - An Outlander story. Jamie and Ian as young men in France, before Cross-stitch, making a living outside of the Highlands. It shows a lot of the lessons that made Jamie the man he is.
- Hell Hath No Fury by Sherrilyn Kenyon -
- Pronouncing Doom by S.M. Stirling - An Emberverse story

- Name the Beast by Sam Sykes
- Caretakers by Pat Cadigan
- Lies My Mother Told Me by Caroline Spector - A Wild Cards story
- The Princess and the Queen by George R.R. Martin - A Song of Ice and Fire story – This is a history of the first Dance with Dragons, fierce war between two Targaryens over the Iron Throne. It begins with the death of King Viserys I Targaryen. The chain of events that take place after his death sparks a war within the Targaryen families over who will sit on the throne.

This is a very heavy book to lift and hold but as they're short stories you can put it down for a break after each story. I have only read a few by favoured authors so far but have found a few others that look intriguing. The Princess and the Queen is noteworthy for being the only story in TSOFAI series without a body count. Really. Go read it if you doubt me.

The Raven's Shadow: The Wild Hunt #3

by Elspeth Cooper

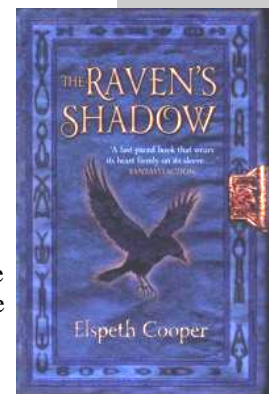
Published by Gollancz

Supplied by Hatchette New Zealand

Reviewed by Jan Butterworth

Trinity Rising ended with Gair rescuing the nuns from Gimrael and he now escorts them to safety and continues his quest to find the starseed before Savin, who will use it to rip the Veil, releasing the Wild Hunt. Gair finds the Warlord of the Emperor to warn him of the threat of the Wild Hunt. At the same time Masen and Sorchal are finding and repairing the tears in the Veil. Failing to convince the Ten the threat of the Wild Hunt is relevant to them, Tanith has left her people to warn the Empire. Accompanied by her former lover Ailric, who views humans with contempt, she reaches the Warlord of the Emperor to raise the alarm. Drwyn, manipulated by Ytha, has united the Nimrothi clans to invade the Empire and regain the lands. Ytha plans to use the Wild Hunt against the Empire and has received the gift of two of Maegern's Wild Hounds. Teia is leading her group of Nimrothi outcasts – the Lost Ones – through the snow to warn the Empire of the need for the Iron Men to fight the Wild Hunt being led by Ytha and the clans, as they are the only ones who can defeat it. With two of Maegern's hounds already free, Savin playing his evil games, and the Veil tearing, the danger is immense. With Gair's immense power corrupted by Savin, they must unite to defeat the threat to the world.

This is fast paced with a tightly wound plot and plenty of action. The threads intricately weave together tightly as events unfold, requiring a bit of concentration to remember the separate storylines. The characters are well developed and you feel you know them. The ending is a real cliff-hanger and I was disappointed it stopped there but pleased I had another book to look forward to. For epic fantasy fans this is a must read and I strongly recommend you read the preceding books in the series to get the back-story.



Conclave 2014

35th NZ National SF&F Convention

CONCLAVE 2 UPDATE

Where: Auckland
When : 24th to 27th April 2014
(ANZAC weekend—
middle weekend of school holidays)
Venue: The Surrey Hotel,
465 Great North Road, Grey Lynn

Guest of Honour: Dave Freer

Dave Freer is an ex-South African ichthyologist turned author because he'd heard the spelling requirements were simpler. They lied. He now lives on Flinders Island in the Bass Strait (between Tasmania and Australia) with his wife and chief proof reader, Barbara, two dogs and three cats. He blames his history of extraordinary spelling on an Old English Sheepdog nose, or on the cats on his lap. He has written some 15 novels for Baen Books, co-authoring some with Eric Flint and Mercedes Lackey, some of which ended up on best-seller lists. He's also written two YA novels for Pyr Books and published a slew of shorter fiction. He was also the artistic director for JBU. He can be found online at www.davefreer.com



Guest of Honour: Paul Scoones

Paul is a professional writer and a fan. He works on the BBC's *Doctor Who* DVDs, adding behind-the-scenes information for the special features. Paul has studied the early history of *Doctor Who* in comic strips, and has written a book on the subject, *The Comic Strip Companion: 1964-1979*. Paul lives in Auckland, New Zealand, with his wife Rochelle and their three cats. When he isn't writing he helps Rochelle run Retrospace, a SF collectibles store in Takapuna, Auckland. He can be found online at www.paulscoones.com.



Charity:

Auckland Rescue Helicopter Trust
rescuehelicopter.org.nz/



**AUCKLAND RESCUE
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Nova Zine Back Issues:

<http://stella-nova.sf.org.nz/wiki/index.php/StellaNova:Novazine-new>

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This Month:

BOOK Wednesday January 15th
(at Chez Smith)
SPACE Friday February 7th
(venue TBA)

Next Quarterly Meeting:

Wednesday 19th March 2014, 7:30 pm
Auckland Horticultural Centre,
990 Great North Road,
Western Springs



Upcoming Events:

February 14-26th 2014

Battlecry 2014

Convention of Games for Gamers
<http://www.battlecry.co.nz/>

April 24-27th 2014

Conclave 2

35th New Zealand National SF Convention
<http://conclave2.aucontraire.org.nz/>