

Transcendental B. S. and Enlightenment

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For ANZAPA issue No. 231

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Editorial

News from the Home Front

Due to the ever accumulating backlog of meeting reports this issue goes out without any pretence of an attempt at mailing comments. The major developments at home are 1. My first lot of Home Brew is currently 'maturing' in the garage. It was made up from a supermarket available Coopers Stout kit / tin. Taste testing rights may be available on request for Sydney ANZAPANs. 2. I have ordered in (at share holder prices) four Dozen bottles of Tandou and Wontonella wines, a representative spread of the Red and White wines manufactured by Tandou a Broken Hill based Agricultural company. Mystique is alive and well, having had a recent brush with fame.

More on Kevin Dillon – A letter from Michael Duggan dated December 29, 2005

Dear Garry

Thanks very much for the last two issues of your fanzine. I enjoyed reading them especially the material that dealt with my old friend Kevin Dillon. I hadn't seen Kevin for about six years, since I moved from Sydney to Newcastle. We did correspond, up to a point, in the interval (Christmas Cards, the odd letter etc.) and from time to time I would get the odd phone call from Graham Stone and generally part of the conversation would be about how Kevin was getting on.

Kevin had been living with me at my rented unit at Summer Hill up to the point where the Department of Housing notified me that my turn had finally come up and a Unit was available in Newcastle (which I had applied for).

I had been warning Kevin for months prior to that that it was going to happen soon and kept suggesting that he look around for something cheap to move to: but Kevin kept procrastinating and making excuses, so in the end, when I was about to vacate, I reluctantly drove Kevin to one of his garages with a mattress, pillow, sheets and a blanket which I gave him and left him there. I suspect that he intended to sleep in the garage (at least temporarily). Kevin originally moved in with me a couple of years prior to that when he was forced to vacate the house he had been renting at Petersham and rather than see him with nowhere to live I invited him to move in with me [the idea being on a temporary basis while he looked for somewhere else] however, he never managed to find another place until my departure from Summer Hill.

He was aware that he wasn't to fill my place up with stuff (*and*) so he kept that part of the bargain alright – he took everything straight to his garages (sometimes with the assistance of my car). The owner of the house that he had to vacate in Petersham couldn't believe his eyes, so much so that he was taking photos in every room – and the junk that went to the tip filled five large skip bins!

Kevin's collecting bug seems to have grown worse over the years. I first met Kevin back in 1954 when I started to attend the Thursday night meetings of Sydney's SF fans at the Sydney Bridge Club premises at George Street, near Wynyard Station. That's also where I met Graham Stone – and others like Vol Molesworth, Dave Cohen etc. I'm assuming that it was Graham who gave you my details for the magazine mailings. Back then, I was mightily impressed, when going out to Kevin's family house at Campsie to see his room full of books [not books around the walls as you might expect, but literally full of boxes of books with a narrow passageway down the middle to facilitate adding more books to the top piles].

John (*Masters*) Brown was slightly incorrect when he said that Kevin once worked in the Second hand Book Department of Angus and Robertson in Castlereagh Street. I was the one working in the Second hand Book Department (for 15 years) and I was instrumental in getting Kevin a job in the main Fiction and General Department upstairs. All went well for several months until Kevin decided to take a sickie one day in order to see a movie at the St. James Theatre (which was) diagonally opposite Angus and Robertsons. Naturally the store manager saw him standing in a queue waiting to buy a ticket and that was that.

It goes without saying that I was shocked and saddened when I received the phone call from Constable Keiser at Marrickville Police in early September to advise of Kevin's death. When you have known someone for fifty odd years, it is a shock.

You were asking whether I need future mailings of the newsletter. I don't actually read much fiction these days (SF or otherwise) concentrating mainly on books on Science, Cosmology, Metaphysics etc. however I have not lost interest in the subject itself; so, on the basis of that, if you would like to send me the occasional newsletter, I will most certainly read it. I have read the first two cover to cover so to speak. Being on the age pension these days I get a lot of time for reading!

All the best,

Mike Duggan

Notes from the February 06, 2006

**Public meeting of the Sydney City Skywatchers. Speaker: Quentin Parker from Macquarie University
Topic: Mashing dead stars with Hydrogen Light**

Please note that the following notes should not be confused with the official minutes of the meeting, they are only recollection of some of the concerns raised and discussed at the meeting and have no official standing other than representing the opinions of Garry Dalrymple

Present were: About twenty members and guests

Topic: Mashing dead stars with Hydrogen Light

What it is all about – Nova are 'New' stars, stars that appear briefly brighter as they explode. Most leave behind planetary Nebula, the ghost remanent of the Nova explosion. As seen from earth, Planetary Nebula were seen as round and Greenish and so were frequently miss-reported as 'new planets'. The problem for dealing with Novae is that as until now Novae were randomly discovered and as it was only the brightest and the closest that were being noticed, there was no certainty about how many, how often. So this procedure was conceived to seek out evidence of Novae caused by Low Mass stars

Dr Parker explained that the 'Mashing' is an acronym to that describes the original participants and the observing methods employed. His team conducted a southern sky survey in search of Planetary Nebula, the ghost shells of Novae and Supernovae past. The survey used specially sensitized Techpan Photographic film and a modest sized instrument to produce Hubble type resolution, i.e. 'old' methods were used well to produce up to date results! These results were scanned in Edinburgh and are now available to all on the web, an innovation over copying glass plates and shipping them off to observatories and university reference libraries.

Their observational method was to systematically photograph the Southern sky in H Alpha light and in a comparison broadband Red spectrum. (The World's largest H Alpha filter ever made, at \$40,000 for a 300 mm square filter!) Reversal and photographic subtraction allowed the identification of very faint structures around stars, i.e. Planetary Nebulae. This resulted in the identification of 900 Planetary Nebula, 70% of the observed to date total. This method, of three hour long exposures, also picked up some faint and slow moving Asteroids!

Notes from the March 06, 2006 Public meeting of the Sydney City Skywatchers. Speaker: George Hobbs from the Australia Telescope National Facility, Topic: Pulsars Black Holes and Gravity

Please note that these notes of Sydney City Skywatcher public meetings are intended to keep absent members acquainted with what took place at their club while they were away from meetings. Much much more took place on the night and these notes are no substitute to climbing up Observatory Hill each month and being there. Opinions expressed are purely my own, details are abbreviated, facts are omitted etc. Garry P Dalrymple

Present were: As there were about twenty members and guests present, all seats in the Observatory's down stairs room were filled!

Members Observations

There was a fairly extensive presentation of members' observations this month, providing a good showing of the range and high proficiency of our members who observe.

Monty Leventhal displayed his observations, drawings and photographs depicting the very low level of solar activity to be expected during a Solar Minimum.

Harry Roberts observations were another take on the low level of Solar activity, that have allowed the persistence of very large scale Magnetic features on the face of the Sun, stretching from the Sun's polar to equatorial regions. Usually torn up by a more active Sun, these features, areas of opposing magnetic polarity facing each other across the

boundary of visible (dark) solar filament structures. These magnetic features have persisted for several 25 day solar rotations and they are visibly distorting coz the polar regions take 30 days to rotate.

Alan Plummer discussed his variable stars work illustrating it with several graphs, magnitude plots and observer's guide sheets. His talk could have been 'how errors lead to discoveries' through the questioning of 'known' facts. Discussing observations by email with a Brazilian Co-observer has lead to re-rating of some of his observations leading to more compatible star light curves (and yes there are 'Brazillions' of variable Stars to be observed!). Alan walked us through the results of several months of his observations including one of a star that has been observed to expand from thirty to nearly 100 Solar diameter's over only three years!

Shirley Rae spoke on the continued operation of the two Mars Rovers, **Opportunity** and **Discovery** and their contribution to an understanding of Mars' Geology. Both rovers have just completed a full Mars year of operation and they are now being prepared to survive the intense cold of a Martian Winter by being moved to a Sun catching spot. Originally designed for a 90 day life, the rovers continue to function, although **Opportunity** was worn out it's rock grinding teeth and **Discovery** has 'Arthritis' in that it's wheels don't work like they used to. Summarizing their 600 days, Shirley said that the most recent significant discovery was that the Martian sediments were laid down in acidic water, making the existence of 'life as we know it' in the ancient Martian seas less likely. Shirley is one of our older members, currently living in retirement in the Blue Mountains but she finds the time to continue to follow developments in Astronomy.

Nick Lomb spoke mostly of Observatory news and anniversaries and events of current and coming months, on March 10 the Mars Orbiter, March 13 is the anniversary of the Discovery of Uranus (from a Bath!) in 1781, 16 March is the anniversary of the first liquid fueled Rocket in 1926. Then followed several Moon phenomena dates, on March 23 the Moon will be highest (nearly overhead) since 1988 and there will be a lunar standstill at 7 am with a breakfast event at the

Observatory. On April 4, 2006 the Moon will be at it's lowest. On April 8, 2006 Ray Norris will give a talk at the Macquarie University Open Night titled: 'When the Moon stands still: Indigenous Astronomy'

Garry Dalrymple introduced the Internet's Astronomical news of the moment – Jupiter now has a new 'Red Spot' as a feature monitored since the 1990s has increased in size and turned red. Since last meeting I have been able to take steps toward organizing my collection of meeting reports (such as this) with a view to them being placed on the club's website (Virtual Sydney City Skywatchers next!).

The Topic: Pulsars Black Holes and Gravity

This night proved to be another of those nights where we not only saw some of the 'what' that makes up aspects of Modern Astronomy in Australia. We got a fair slice of the 'Why', in the form of an explanation of the how the discovery and documentation of Pulsars can further our understanding of the Universe.

Pulsars are rapidly rotating Neutron Stars. Their signals are regular and predictable, stars post

- During George's Phd work at Manchester University and Jodral Bank the number of Pulsars detected was doubled.
- Pulsars can be used as a clock to study other stuff i.e. we can use Pulsars to test Newton and Einsteinian relativities
- No one has ever observed gravitational waves but they might be observable by indirect effects i.e. as the Gravity wave distorts Space Time, they may vary the intervals between pulses as observed on Earth. By observing this effect on several Pulsars at the same time this could show the Gravity wave's point of origin and strength.
- Pulsar radio signals are beats and clicks heard against the white noise background hiss.
- Are, 'the sound of one star clapping' and were confused with 'Little Green Men'
- Parkes is the smallest but most successful instrument for detecting Pulsars, half of the 2,000 found to date were found at Parkes a tribute to it's southerly view of the night sky and the quality of its instrumentation

- Pulsars are weak signals but are widely distributed through our Galaxy, certainly in other Galaxies but too weak to be heard, except possibly for the Magellanic clouds.
- The dental drill effect of the fastest known Pulsar, 640 rotations per second, 'sound' is from 20 ish to 20,000 hz
- Fast moving Pulsars observed to have a bow wave effect, displacing gas in front of them, also gravitational lensing?
- Rotating Neutron Stars are very slowly slowing down, at rates that are predictable and indicated by magnetic field strength.
- The surface of faster Pulsars (20 km Diameter) are moving at close to the speed of light
- Being the 'Dead White Males' of Gravity, large masses rotating at high velocities (particularly when two Pulsars orbit each other and the decay of their orbits can be measured zillions of times more so than say Earth and Mercury) they allow the laws and predictions of Cosmology to be tested
- Might be 100,000 Pulsars. The true number of pulsars is unknowable as we can only detect those whose narrow lighthouse like beacon of radio and light is pointed at Earth, bound to be others pointing in all directions.
- Their signals are more regular than Earth based Atomic clocks, accurate to 15 decimals compared to Atomic clock's 10 decimals (refer this point to State Rail?).
- Cosmological implications Leverrier asked how does the gravitational effect carry at a distance, instantaneous (and how) or at some speed?
- Mercury's precession (38 seconds of arc in 100 years) defies Newtonian physics, predicted by Einsteinian Space Time curvature by gravity. Some Pulsars exhibit precession of 4 degrees of arc per year, i.e. 40,000 times as much effect.
- Colliding Galaxies can lead to the super massive Black holes at the centre of each orbiting each other and emitting heaps of Galaxy Waves which will affect the Pulsar signals that we observe from Earth.
- Effect on pairs of Pulsars will allow estimates of source and strength of Galaxy Waves.
- Observed relativistic effects can be used to weigh the two masses involved, also

decrease in orbits observed can place an upper limit on estimates of the energy of Gravity Waves being emitted from Pulsar source.

- The detection and observation of Gravity Waves may allow us to look back further in time towards the Big Bang than microwave background (COBE Satellite) images.
- The Picnic Ant plot of areas that they are insensitive to.
- Have lately done simulations of Gravity Wave effects on Pulsar signals. These effects are still too faint to be observed, but being able to predict what you should be able to see helps, you can disprove some theories or lines of enquiry ahead of having the ability to find Gravity Waves.

Measuring Gravity waves;

1. Watch for huge metal bars to distort by fractions of atomic diameters.
2. Shoot Lasers between ground based stations to see if 'Earth stretching' by passing Gravity Waves is detectable.
3. Space based detectors, shoot Lasers between orbiting (Earth or Solar Orbit) satellite based stations to see if 'Space stretching' by passing Gravity Waves is detectable.
4. Observe the interference, acceleration / delay of predicted 'beats' from reliable Pulsars

All methods require multiple stations to isolate local non-Gravity Wave effects.

Notes from the April 03 06, 2006 Public meeting of the Sydney City Skywatchers. Speaker: Dr. Joss Bland-Hawthorn Director of Instrumentation, at the Anglo Australian Observatory Epping

Topic: Dark Matter & progress towards 'Dark' infrared skies

Present were: About 20 people

Members Observations:

Monty Leventhal – Unfortunately I arrived too late to see Monty's observations, but they were of the usual excellent standard, drawings and photographs depicting recent solar activity.

Harry Roberts – presented some very impressive drawings of a rare 'surge' event, where matter, mostly in the form of electron stripped Hydrogen atoms are briefly ejected off the Sun's surface in a spike and then return down that spike shortly afterwards. The Surge took place in the vicinity of a region the Sun's surface that had a strong polarity contrast. As this surge was observed to have a strong main body and two very much thinner lesser streams an audience observation was to ask if these might be Deuterium and Tritium particles, Hydrogen atoms with the same electrical charge but slightly different mass. There is currently one fairly active region for Sunspots, although generally Solar activity is at a minimum.

Nick Lomb – The Moon will shortly be at its highest and 'stationary'. An effect linked to Stonehenge's the over and under the lintel theory. The observatory's recent remote Total Solar Eclipse viewing (from a site in Turkey) was a success. Nick presented a Moon photograph that he had taken, which resulted in an off the cuff lunar 'walking tour' from Harry Roberts.

Garry Dalrymple with no eyepiece observations to report, but I was able to distribute draft copies of an Astronomy bookmark, a listing of useful club and general Astronomy information designed to go on the otherwise blank back of existing A5 meeting flyers. Hopefully the information content in a book mark form will encourage those who encounter them to hold onto them for a bit longer than the ephemeral monthly meeting flyers. This Monday afternoon effort was warmly received by members and guests.

On the Topic:

The problem with observing in infra red is that the atmosphere itself strongly radiates in the infra red, all those molecules of atmosphere between the telescope and the object you want to observe. The Infra red sky is about 300 times brighter than the night sky you see in ordinary light and consequently the contrast between celestial objects of interest and the background sky at these wavelengths is correspondingly poor. Usually to observe usefully in Infra red frequencies you have to go to altitude, i.e. observe from very high mountains, aircraft or spacecraft. However

at the Anglo Australian Observatory they are working on a solution. Dr Bland-Hawthorn was unable to speak fully on this as last minute technical difficulties were delaying the perfection of the equipment concerned and consequently data is not yet ready for public discussion. He was able to say that the new process developed at the AAO is a system where starlight will be directed down an array of thousands of fibre optic cables and filters to allow the filtering out over 400 frequencies, allowing 'Dark Sky' observation including spectrographic work. He was able to explain that the purpose of the equipment was to enable the filtration of the sky to eliminate back ground infra red light, to allow for clearer observation of deep space objects of interest. This is no small achievement as this will allow observation of 'Space Telescope' type clarity to much cheaper existing ground based telescopes, million dollar observatories rather than Billion dollar in-orbit ones. This is particularly significant as the in discussions about the launch of NASA's James Webb Space Telescope (launch pushed back!) it is likely that the AAO's device will allow ground based observations that will be superior to spaces based ones, before the James Webb is launched!

Dr Bland-Hawthorn also showed two short films that were related to the AAO's other recent work.

Dark Matter

The Universe now known to be mostly Dark Energy (over 70%) Dark Matter (over 20%) and visible matter (under 10%). A projection of where the Dark Matter is concentrated (based on inferences from Gravitational interaction) shows that visible matter only occurs at the centre of much larger concentrations of Dark Matter. The amount and distribution of this Dark Matter is astonishing, it gives an impression of a 'nearly full up' Universe rather than the 'few stars scattered through the void' image from visible objects alone. The projection showed voids and bubbles of Dark Matter dominating the Universe, some close to touching. After about 2008 when a new more powerful European linear accelerator (atom smasher) comes on line, it may be possible to come up

with a better idea of what Dark Matter is and this must affect our understanding of the Universe.

Stellar Positions

For a few minutes we enjoyed a space flight through an accurately plotted universe. I could hardly restrain myself from humming the encore music to Star Trek series as the Stars, Nebulae and Galaxies rolled past. The animation was based on serious work, including that of accurately determining the positions of 'nearly dark matter', the faint Stars and the extended gas envelopes of Galaxies that go far beyond our usual ideas of what makes up the Universe. I.e. gas envelopes of most Galaxies have been observed to extend several times beyond the visible diameter of most Galaxies. We asked for and received an encore of this animation.

Some other points discussed

- The Sun will shine for at least another three Million years. This is known with certainty as Neutrinos cross the Earth-Sun gap at light speed (8 minutes) while photons for Sunlight generated at the same time require another three Million years to reach the Sun's surface! The IAU is taking submissions on whether Pluto should or should not be considered to be a Planet, in light of recent discoveries of large (cold) outer Solar system objects. Dr Bland-Hawthorn's research has determined that the Dust lanes observed across many Galaxies (i.e. the Centaurus A Galaxy) are not as broad as they appear. They are in fact very thin but corrugated, so as to give falsely broad profile.

Personally I think there should be a new class of Astronomical Objects, the 'Disney' class of objects, room for Pluto, Mickey, Goofy etc. Naming Astronomical Objects after Gods etc. is just so second Millenium, time to give Animated Americans their rightful place in the (admittedly attenuated) Sun!

Anzac Day 2006, Tuesday April 25

As I was not attending a Science Fiction convention during this year's Anzac Day long

Weekend, for the first time since my father's death, I had an opportunity to consider what could be done. What seemed possible was to turn up at my father's unit (Fourteenth Company A. A. S. C.), present his apologies, buy everyone who knew my dad a round of drinks and listen to what they had to say about him. As a plan B I intended to take in some bottles of wine (grown under the same Sun and watered by the same water as my father) in case there would be a post Anzac Day social even. It turned out that this Anzac Day was special for two reasons, Firstly they decided to encourage family members of veteran's to march, and Secondly, this was to be the last organized march/re-union of my father's unit, as they were down to their last dozen or so veterans. I contacted a Director of the local RSL Club, Max Finemore, as he was also the organizer for fourteenth Company AASC re-union for times and locations. My plan was to visit them after they had finished marching and buy a round of drinks for everyone there who knew my father before they sat down to a dinner. At that time I had no plans to take down notes. I had some hope that my father's comrades might share with me some stories about their time with my father. However, as you will read, the event affected me so much I ended up jotting down some notes, under the Sydney Monorail's track on the inside of a ripped open European Space Agency envelope while using an Otto bin as a desk!

I arrived at Wynyard Station (the buses would have been diverted during the march) at about 11 am, well ahead of time. As the March was already under way, the people on the train in were mainly intent on getting to the Anzac Day Football match and most of them were young girls.

On the way to the Combined Services club, the Re-union/Dinner venue I stopped at Wynyard lane in time to watch the WW2 Airforce march past (Units march by order of the War in which they served) This location was near where the units pause before marching down George Street. It stirred strong emotions, the Agincourt / St Crispian's speech came to mind, but this speech fails to mention how on that future St. Crispian's day

there will be so few left that have shared the experience.

I went to the Combined services club and buzzed around looking for 14th Coy AASC people. There was a basement bar, a ground floor bar and a dining room. My only clue in identifying them was to try to look for medal sets that were similar to my father's, but this search was without success even though I spent 40 minutes looking and asking!

I even saw the fourteenth Company banner come in, but the person carrying it could not direct me to where the 14th Coy were. At 12.10, 20 minutes ahead of the time set for the start of their dinner, I went up stairs again, and with the Maitre'd's help located the fourteenth Company's tables and left my two bottles of Broken Earth Cabernet Sauvignon there. On each bottle I placed the large name labels I had been carrying and identified each bottle as a gift to the men of 14th Coy AASC from John Dalrymple's son.

Leaving the combined Services Club and walking to Town Hall, intending to catch a Train home I ended up near the corner of Market and George Streets, under the Monorail track and I observed a very strange thing. At this time the Vietnam Vets were marching past, and many were reaching into their suits jackets and drawing out bits of paper to wave. The bits of paper all said 'Thank you Dick and Pip'. Some whole units even stopped, did an 'Eyes Right' and saluted, while many individuals broke ranks to run over to applaud or shake hands with someone standing in the front row of the spectators. While this happened a German lady nearby was explaining the march in German and some Japanese tourists were looking on.

I soon figured it out. I was standing behind Dick Smith and his wife. Among his other acts of public philanthropy Dick was responsible for the saving and preserving of the Long Tan Cross, a memorial to an action in Vietnam that was everything that the Gallipoli campaign was not, a successful action where everything worked, bravery, tactics and combined services cooperation etc. More than anything else this sequence of events persuaded me to take down the notes for this

report. Having no paper to hand I had to tear open a large European Space Agency envelope (collected that morning from my post office box) and I used the top of a wheely bin as a desk to record these notes. I was tempted to lean through the crowd and ask 'Dick' if I could borrow his pocket-knife.

Impressions

Many Vietnam Units marched in identical caps, newly acquired for the occasion. Some better disciplined Units marched in uniform Blue coats, while post Vietnam service men tended to a uniform of Black suits and wrap around sunglasses. The WW2 veterans tended to march in whatever was comfortable, or their Sunday best suit. Some members of the Vietnam era units were still fooling around, encouraged by cheer squads among the spectators, they were acting the goat to show that 'Age had not wearied them' yet.

The number of Non-Anglo Saxon units present and marching was an eye opener, proud gentlemen from the Pacific Isles, Korea, The Philippines, South Vietnam, European countries (Red Army decorations!). It made a point that in wars past it has never been a strictly 'Us' Vs 'Them' conflict, War has always been and always will be a 'Multicultural' event. There were Vets being pushed in wheelchairs, family groups with babies in strollers and even Bikies marching in their club regalia, a day for everyone.

One important feature of the March that is worth explaining is that the march features lots of bands in addition to the marching veterans. There are a few military bands present, but mostly they are High Schools (Public and Private) or from community groups like local council bands. There was even one US style High School marching band from the Philippines! Some of these kids from public school bands were fairly bursting with pride at being allowed to march and being in the public eye, an important piece of cross generational community building I think.

Walking about Sydney I managed to cross the line of the march by using the subway at Townhall Station and I made my way to the end of the march, where it turns to face Hyde Park and the War Memorial. The last

marchers were The Turks, followed by the descendents of WW1 servicemen, then the March Marshals and finally an Ambulance Service bus. The Turkish marching on Anzac Day has always been a very political thing. They marched as Korean War Allies, but with **Kemal Attaturk** portraits and banners. The Current 'mild' Islamist government in Turkey would prefer Gallipoli and all that to be considered to be a 'Victory given by Allah against the Crusaders' (while ignoring the defeat of the rest of the war?). Secular Nationalists would prefer to claim Gallipoli as Attaturk's victory and the harbinger of his modernist and secular reforming regime. Both of these sides of course prefer not to talk about the Nationalist AND Islamist inspired 1915 Genocide of the Armenians or the massacres/expulsions of the Turkish Greeks during the 1920s.

After the March, as the units faded away to pub and service club rendezvous I went to the **Civic Hotel** to see what was happening there, as on the first Tuesday of the month a small band of Sydney SF fans meet there in the back or Saloon bar. This Tuesday however, the Saloon bar was hosting the ladies of the gentlemen of the Vietnam era Royal Australian Armoured Corps and the Second Cavalry.

An Anzac Day Footnote

In going through the family collection of medals I noticed a set that had belonged to Private 1480 H. Thompson, of the 57th Regiment of Foot. This was probably my Father's Grandfather. The group consists of four medals; two Crimean War medals (young Queen Victoria portrait), one for 'Long Service and Good Conduct' and the more puzzling one has 'New Zealand Virtutis Honor' on one side and features a mid-reign portrait of Queen Victoria on the other. I.e. Private Thompson took part in the Crimean War then served in some New Zealand conflict? Would be nice to know what this was about.

Garry's in-service afternoon, held on February 08, 2006

I work for a Bankstown office of the NSW Department of Education and Training, the Educational Measurement and School Accountability Directorate (EMSAD).

Collectively we 'do' measuring of School and Student academic performance, to State wide, Australian and international levels of scholastic achievement. As the Directorate consists of several discrete units there are from time to time in service days so that each unit can report back to the their progress and achievements. For me these meetings provoke mixed feelings. As I am a clerical support person and not an 'teacher'. Although I have enough intelligence to be able to understand and be interested in most of what they are on about, there is a degree and a dip Ed. Between me and any chance to formally participate in these deliberations. This leaves me as something of an 'interested member of the public' at these events, informed, but slightly alienated.

Dave Wasson – Director

Dave was very upbeat about progress so far this year. He welcomed and introduced a number of new staff, who had started at EMSAD since the last in-service and stressed that we were all working with uniquely qualified people.

The threat from the Federal Government's National Testing Agenda seems to have receded. The threat is that as it covers some of the areas that EMSAD already covers, its implementation would be the demise of many of our positions, especially our test creation people's jobs. The problem with the National Testing Agenda is that it doesn't give as detailed feedback to schools and as yet the 'Hows' of running a testing procedure that will be three times as large as the Directorate's NSW testing have yet to be explained. Our Directorate might tender for a part of the scheme, or end up running some decentralized part of the scheme. In light of this, the National Testing Agenda may be implemented in 2007 or 2008.

Dave listed a number of individual unit achievements and progress. Some of which have resulted in grief from the NSW Teacher's Federation. These issues are frequently a result of Federal Government imposed conditions on their \$3.9 Billion funding to NSW public education.

Code of Conduct issues

- Reminders about Gifts and Benefits received by officers of the Directorate, outside

employment and Directorate in Confidence data etc.

We are financially stressed at the moment, so save, re-use where possible. – Save for Dave!

Dagmar Arthur – ESSA Trial Marking

The ESSA (Science Skills) Trial testing is completed. Instead of herds of teachers marking paper test answer sheets in a barn they are now able to access and mark tests via computer screen in air-conditioned comfort. Marking was found by all involved to be faster and more convenient than 'traditional' paper test paper methods. Future developments may include doing marking online at remote centres or even at teacher's homes!

Neville Keeley and Pshemek Gawronski – Selective High Schools & Opportunity Class Database (SHS&OC)

Until now there have been different Data bases for the Selective High Schools (13,000 entrants, 30 plus 'schools') and the Opportunity Class (10,500, 60-ish schools) admission procedures. Each system grew on an ad hoc basis and required two (PC and Mac) separate networks. Also for each you couldn't fully 'see' entrants until the all the forms were received and punched, i.e you could tell a school that twelve applications had been received but until weeks before the test you couldn't identify which twelve students you had application forms from. This lead to stressful situations. The new joint SHS and OC applications system, currently being added to by Pshemek, allows for an initial 'short punch' of student identity, school, special test provisions, address and choices, in time for Test centre allocation and school/parent feedback. A later 'long punch' adds all additional information, in time for selection committee requirements.

Geoffrey Barnes - Like School Groups

How well is a school performing? Compared to who exactly? It is uncontroversial that there are factors that affect average Academic progress. School Community Socio-Economic Status and Isolation account for towards 48% of educational disadvantage. These are factors that Public schools cannot

change, so eliminating them from the equation allows schools to better focus on what they may be able to change. NB, within this 41 to 48% are Aboriginality and Non-English speaking background.

I.e. it is possible for the School Principal of a remote rural school to see how his/her Maths students compare to the Maths students of all other remote rural schools, rather than just having 'State Averages' to compare with.

Where this can significantly add to the value of public education is that principals can see where their students are under performing to fairer comparison groups. It really strikes Gold when you can identify a school with outstanding achievement in some subject, a school that has transcended its locational disadvantages. You can investigate and find out what it is that school is doing right with their students.

Leave issues

It emerged that a major funding issue is that head office budgets to pay each officer for only 48 weeks a year, assuming a full take up during the year of the annual four weeks leave. I.e. take no holidays during the year and the Directorate has to pay the four weeks out of non-payroll allocations!

Yellow Pages Science Fiction

A January to April 2006 listing of Sydney SF Meeting notes

January 2006 SF&F Meeting Notes

**Notes from the Tuesday January 03,
2006, Sydney SF Fans at the pub
meeting, Civic Hotel, Corner Pitt and
Goulburn Sts. Sydney CBD. The First**

Sydney SF meeting for the new year!

Present were: **Chris Barnes, Zara Baxter,
Garry Dalrymple and Ted Scribner**

As the final appointment of my 'big day out' I arrived at around 6.15, having walked down the hill from the Sydney Mechanics School or Arts Library, which has a chuck out time of a couple of minutes to 6 pm on weekdays. No one was there at that time, so I wandered off around the corner, to look for the 423 bus stop that I knew to be behind the Civic Hotel's block. On the way I found that the hideously Ugly Masonic Centre has now morphed into the 'Civic Tower', with a wrap around vestibule at ground level and a tower above. On site I observed one innovative response to homelessness. In one of the blind bare concrete recesses left by this re-development, a heap of cartons placed across a lighting grill formed a homeless person's bedroom. Warm in winter but such glare at night and a high risk of death by Bogong attack in Winter! By the smell, another recess just around the corner served as a homeless person's public toilet.

Returning to the Civic, I met Ted Scribner outside and we went in. While waiting for B and B to turn up Ted explained that of late he had been spending more time at Blackheath, the call of the cooler mountains winning out over Cronulla at this (hot) time of year. We discovered the Civic Hotel's 'multi-tasking' ground floor disabled toilet. It was unsigned and just behind where we were talking, it also serves as a store room for fold up tables, piles of boxes and Poker Machines! Quaint! Zara explained her perpetually delayed entry to ANZAPA, she is currently being pressured to be the third UK correspondent.

Hyde Park North is being currently invaded by aliens, as part of some Arts festival or other. Images are going to be projected onto trees and fountains. The story is supposedly a bunch of Aliens have been travelling for so far and for so long that they no longer recall why they started. This is much the same experience as experienced during many package tours – big deal. Some discussion of the nature of this year's Magic Casements, apparently it will be more 'Writerly' in line with the sponsoring organization's membership

base, but according to Ted and Chris they will try to maintain 'fannish' influences. The British Science Fiction Association's listings of 'Best Ever' categorized SF&F stories provoked lengthy.

The Fix is in! As Zara is a member of the judging panel of this year's (to be announced on Friday 24 March 2006 in Brisbane) Aurealis awards for SF&F, she knows who has won (but didn't share it with us!). Zara described it as an interesting experience to have to read through the whole volume of the eligible works.

While we were drinking beer, curiously talk turned to Wines and Whiskey (with or without an 'e'). Australia currently has a Wine glut, Wines of varying quality are turning up as 'clean-skin' or unlabelled / attributed bargains, While the dour Scottish Whisky industry is in dour uproar at the Volume of production being at the expense of quality. The Spirit is gone they say. On this I have no opinion.

Notes from the Saturday January 21, 2006 Sydney Mechanics School of Arts Institute Science Fiction and Fantasy book group meeting 11.30am - 1.00 pm

Topic: No single topic, more of a general discussion SF&F in general and which books those present have read and enjoyed recently

Present were

Winsome Allen, David Bofinger, Belinda Coombes, Garry Dalrymple, Ann Devrell, Edwina Harvey, Paolo Rech and a woman whose name I did not catch

The plan for the day was fairly simple. Up early and out. Visit Office works to order three 1.8 metre fold up tables. Proceed to the SF discussion meeting, then to Addison road Marrickville for some rummaging through recycled stuff for something useful, then home.

The tables are required for organizing space to enable a winter offensive on the ANZAPA / Freecons / Astronomy / Futurians archived midden front as Gravity and Entropy and Neglect have not been kind custodians to my records. A missed bus connection and I was

in a parallel universe oops, no I just caught a different bus and things happened differently. A 423 bus got me to Victoria Park. I hiked across to Bay Street Glebe. On the way I passed the Victoria Park swimming pool which had women sunbathing topless. The local attitude seemed to be 'If it offends you don't look', rather different from what I see during the week in and around Bankstown. Within the Bay Street shopping mall there was an island of tables with books, many of them on interesting subjects but priced without care. I eventually figured out that these were the books excess to the Lobotomization of the Collins on Broadway into a standard Dymocks Bookstore. I bought two books, **Cat Spark's 'Agog! Smashing Stories'**, and **Sue-Anne Post's 'The Confessions of an Unrepentant Lesbian Ex-Mormon'** (Met her, had dinner with her, so why not buy the book?). I strongly considered buying three copies of **Richard Harland's 'The Black Crusade'**, also priced at \$5 each.

This diversion was to fill in time until two of Glebe's Op shops opened. Searched their book shelves, saw a number of nice things but nothing appealed to me. With an hour to the start of the meeting I was on the right street but uncertain as to how far it was to Office Works, so instead of catching a bus I legged it. It would have been 800 metres or so, on an intensely hot and humid day.

At office works, the special offer was over, so I bought a \$20 data stick and headed out into the heat for a bus to the meeting, arriving at Town Hall with time for a look through Woolworths, a \$2 store and a look at the new books in the Library. Got to the meeting just on time.

I would like to tell you what happened at this meeting but I was specifically asked not to document this meeting in any great detail. My reaction to this request is that this is rather like being invited to go to church but then being sworn to secrecy about who gave the sermon, what it was about, if any hymns were sung and whether the choir could hold a tune!

There were reasons and issues for this, which I may go into in another issue of this

newsletter.

What I believe I can record, without attribution and without disclosing the length of time spent discussing each. I participated in each so what is here is what I said and what I was asked.

1. Those present were invited to describe their end of year break reading.
2. Harry Turtledove's Military and Byzantium era alternate history books were discussed.
3. The Narnia cycle and The Lord of the Rings phenomena were compared
4. That when Main Character Heroes are killed off in sequential adventures interest in the series fades as the writer failed to provide minor characters that could grow to replace the deceased Main Character.
5. I mentioned a corollary, the 'Bad things happen to good guys'. I.e. Miles Vorkosigan and Honor Harrington keep having really bad things done to them by stupid and/or evil villains as their career / series of books progress.
6. I handed out leftovers from last night's Futurian meeting, a 2006 list of Futurian meeting dates and my Advance notes on that meetings topic, 'Stories about the planet Mercury'.

I do not believe that David Bofinger (short stories published in UK Interzone magazine and one or more local Small Press Speculative fiction Anthologies?) will be offended if I reveal that he intends to submit his novel length SF story to for peer review / critique and / or 'polishing'.

Put down on paper the January 21 meeting sounds nowhere near as interesting or inviting as the November and December meetings? Does it makes you more or less inclined to turn up and catch a meeting or return to the fold if you have missed a few months?

I find it philosophically disturbing Not to record what is said at a Science Fiction meeting. There remains a presence of the influence of the 'Scientific method' in all the SF meetings I have ever attended. That is, progress towards a better understanding through the

sharing of knowledge.

There is stuff casually discussed at Sydney SF meetings that would take you a week of library research to uncover otherwise. Some of the stuff that Graham Stone or Kevin Dillon used to talk about at meetings *Real fans* are prepared to share, so why not write down the wealth of other people's experiences.

End of year Reading thoughts, the urgency ranking of magazines frequently received.

1. During the year I receive and read multiple issues of a number of publications. Some I buy at Newsagents but must be received as part of a subscription or membership. To give another 'window into my soul' I thought I would list them in order of urgency to read, i.e. which I usually read as soon as it comes in, to the ones that linger longer at the bottom of the

February 2006 Sydney SF Meeting notes

Notes from the Infinitas / Blokey stuff shop (Parramatta) SF&F discussion meeting of Thursday February 02, 2006

Topic: The best and worst of 2005

Present were: Henry Chatroop, Garry Dalrymple, Kurt Frank, Wil Kenedy, Charmain Spears, Brian Walls and Tim

News

Her Majesty the Queen of Australia is a Dr Who fan, greatly enjoyed recent Dr. Who episodes.

DA – There is a 'Go' for season three of Battlestar Galactica. 'Sky' or the Sci-Fi Chanel will show in of Battlestar Galactica episodes 10 onwards during January.

HC – Alias has been cancelled after 5 not 7 seasons. I.e. swimsuit girl is now 5 or 7

instead of 7 of 9.

'Blade', the Vampire extermination Movie is to be made into a TV series, in spite of there being no more Vampires left (all killed in the movie)!

Much said about the costs of the Superman Movie rising, is actually three back to back Movies, additional scenes being needed to be shot as more recent movie releases 'do' parts of the yet to be released Superman movie Special effects. I.e. instead of 'most expensive movie ever', divide by three for a fairer average.

- Much Defamation of the Fan Boy species.
- The Daryl Summers CD is selling Big Time.

WK – Millionaire Japanese Cosmonaut / Tourist wants to wear his 'Red Comet' Gundan Warrior suit while in orbit!

- 'Captain Coma' is an entirely disabled Super Hero, who is 'enabled' by a super intelligent life support AI wheelchair.
- The Sony Corporation has been caught putting spy ware on downloads (from its sites?) and is being prosecuted by the 'Hang-em High' US State of Texas

CS – No News

BW – Vast quantities of SF, Science and Movies clippings from the SMH mentioned and passed around. Saw the Movie 'Doom' (based on computer game).

- Has received an invite to the pre-view of 'Mirror Mask'.
- Part 2 of the Night Watch trilogy of movies is being filmed now.
- SF and Sci-Fi movies for the New year are relatively few and include 'Underworld Evolution' and 'Aeon Flux', 'King Kong' and 'Narnia'.

An assessment of the relative importance that TV execs place on sources of appeals to 'Save Our TV Show' or campaigns to 'Bring Back' a character or TV program.

- 1 well organized Street Protest = 10,000 viewers
- 1 letter = 1,000 viewers
- 1 postcard = 200 viewers
- 1 email = 100 viewers
- 1 Fan boy Email posting = Sweet FA or less than 1/1000 of an email

On the Topic

As usual conversation frequently swerved to avoid the topic, How ever;

- Favourite Doctors were discussed
- BW admitted to be being deeply affected, by the first Dr. Who movie.
- The Relative 'Gayness' of various Sci-Fi fandoms were discussed, Star Trek, Star Wars, Dr. Who etc. Some present were unaware of this phenomena and were of the view that there were no gays in some Sci-Fi fandoms (Not that there is anything wrong with that).
- The relative lack of Techno-babble in Dr Who was mentioned.
- The hand of Douglas Addams is said to be seen in 'City of Death' which DA did not write, but was called on to fix up, self referential humour noted?
- With the 'Sexy' or sexually ambiguous side of things being transferred to 'Torchwood' with Captain Jack, speculation is that next episodes of Dr Who may return to 'Fit for Children's TV' themes?
- The Sonic Screw Driver was reportedly used only once as a screw driver. This lead to boundless distasteful speculation of the range of attachments that could be used with this iconic vibrating device. I.e. do Lady Time Lords have Sonic Screw Drivers with longer handles? This conversation was terminated by the image of unsatisfied companions riding the central console while the Tardis is in flight.

Notes from the 'Cold Christmas Turkey with All The Trimmings', a Sydney Dr Who event held on Sunday February 26, 2006, 11.30am - 5.00 pm, at the Drummoyne RSL Club

Background

With the return of Dr Who to local TV the Sydney Dr Who club has evolved a format of holding occasional meetings where you get to see items not yet shown or not shown locally, such as BBC promos, Dr Who or Dr Who actor related interviews, other appearances and comedic parodies of the Dr Who series.

It is very different from the earlier 'Dr Who Parties' of my youth (pre-VCR), which usually

occurred whenever a Doctor or major companion was passing through Sydney on the way to other theatrical work. What you got then was a whiff of celebrity, question and answer sessions, autograph opportunities and a replay of some Dr Who episodes that featured that Doctor or companion. They also had table after table for people to sell you books and for clubs to sell you their newsletters. I sold my first Astronomy and Space Posters at a Dr Who Party and it was a much appreciated boost to my self esteem at the time to have this first confirmation of my ability to make money by my own efforts.

Impressions of Drummoyne

Drummoyne is one of those Sydney suburbs that is a victim of its location. From the 492 bus that I travelled on you can see Balmain/Rozelle and Sydney Harbour. The houses are 'Federation', i.e. built later and larger than highly priced Balmain just across the water. The only thing that is slowing down the inevitable gentrification of Drummoyne is that its main street is a major North South traffic Artery to the City, constant heavy traffic even on a Sunday morning or afternoon. Notable about the local streetscape was that in a short stretch to either side of the venue there were several 'cake' shops, each selling quiche, none selling meat pies. Another harbinger of gentrification was the number of Thai and North African restaurants. Do these restaurants raise the real estate values, or are they just fleeing outward from the city in a wave ahead of a tide of future shopfront rental increases? There were also several other specialized goods shops, of the sort that sell the sort of lifestyle items that appeal to Balmainites but whose mark-up/value of goods per square metre of floor space would not permit them to operate profitably if they had to pay Balmain/Rozelle real estate costs. One shop sold replica Helmets! Gladiator, Alexander the Great, WW1 German Spiked helmets etc. With the Yuppies moving in and Diggers moving out to Rookwood, I do not see how the Drummoyne RSL club can long be sustained.

Impressions of the Event

It was a very enjoyable day. I arrived near

enough to being on time to be sold entry ticket (and raffle ticket) number 10. I estimate that sixty to seventy people attended all or part of the day, a significant improvement on the attendance of similar events last year. These are significant numbers for a single show Sci-Fi group. I believe that the 'Friends of Science Fiction', a much broader coverage Sci-Fi group, struggles to get 100 people at their Monthly video screening meetings.

There would have been about a dozen 'twenty something' or University aged people present, about half a dozen small children and a number of 'young person with parent' pairs, in addition to the usual suspects, the familiar faces of the Friday night Dr Who Tavern meeting. This represents a much better mix than I have seen at recent Sydney Sci-Fi events that I have attended for some time and represents for Dr Who fandom some hope for renewal and regeneration.

The Program included a repeat of the three most popular episodes of the series recently screened locally, some BBC Promos, Dr Who or Dr Who actor related interviews and comedic parodies featuring Dr Who characters. The 'Star' of the event was the showing of the 'Christmas Invasion' episode, which features the new Doctor's regeneration. At lunch time, as a 'room clearer' they played episodes of 'K9 and Company', a series of Dr Who inspired adventures with much to be modest about.

At times there was a lot of chat in the dealer's room, the 'kitchen' of Dr Who parties in the past. Present and selling stuff were Mike McGann (T shirts & Badges mostly) and the club's offerings of Dr Who Books, DVDs, CDs and Videos.

I had lunch (a plate of Fish and Chips for \$9 and Sheaf Stout) with Mike McGann and his 'driver' (also called mike!). Mike was still full of excitement at his adventures on Cronulla Beach on Australia Day and his (very) brief appearance on National TV. Mike is still a bit of a three note player piano, converse with him briefly and very shortly you will hear all about his past feuds with Jack Herman, FSF and his recent political/patriot activities.

The program was very well received, at times the dozen 'twenty somethings' were roaring

with laughter at video clips that were originally screened when they were probably still in nappies, confirming the 'classic-ness' of some Whovian moments?

At one point I found a Balloon with a string outside the auditorium, a leftover from a previous day's function. I had intended tying a loop in the string and adding it to the Christmas tree, but a small child stopped me and asked for it, so I handed it over. Very shortly afterward she was back with, 'Can I have one for my brother?' I mumbled something about not having a second one, but shortly afterwards I did find another balloon, so I was able to give her a second one for her brother.

It is amazing to see how much fun a small kid can have running around with a Balloon on a string.

Getting home was less of a problem than I had anticipated. The return trip was a twenty-minute wait for the 492 bus, a thirty five-minute ride and then a twenty minute walk to home from the closest bus stop.

I am seriously thinking about trying to take a light load of my Glebe Market stuff (currently abandoned and gathering dust in the shed) to the next Dr Who day. I do not expect to make any real money, but if towards 70 people attend, this suggests that I could expect to clear some items and convert into cash some things that aren't going anywhere else anytime soon.

For me though the day did not stop at 6.30 pm, as having won a Dr Who DVD as a door prize it was Baked beans on toast in front of the TV again, as I watched Dr Who take on and defeat the Daleks in a re-created 1963.

March 2006 SF&F Meeting Notes

As happens in Sydney, a large and geographically spread out city with several small SF / Sci-Fi discussion groups that meet about once a month, you occasionally get a real week of SF, nearly consecutive meetings. During March 2006 there over seven days there are four of the six regularly scheduled Sydney SF / Sci-Fi discussion group meetings, and for me there are also two 'Blue pages'

Science opportunities. In some ways this can be arduous, but it also encourages me to economize and buy an all stations / all modes train pass rather than having to buy individual trip tickets there and back in addition to my home to work travel.

Notes from the Infinitas Bookshop Discussion group meeting, Thursday March 02, 2006 at the Infinitas / Blokey Stuff shop (Parramatta)

This meeting on a humid and occasionally rainy night started with a topic as during the general exodus from the previous meeting, the next month's topic (like Henry's hat!) was misplaced. It is probably worth mentioning here that this meeting is frequently the largest monthly Book SF&F discussion in Sydney. A good meeting conducted on a (rain) quiet Thursday night late shopping night, a meeting conducted in the absence of a table.

Before the meeting evolved into sentience there was observed a ritual exchange of CDs, DVDs and one (Beta!) Videotape. Also discussed critically was the beer add which featured a giant (recoil-less!) roof top Trebuchet. Faults were found and also the fair city of Melbourne derided.

Present were:

Daryl Addams, Henry Chatroop, Garry Dalrymple, Kurt Frank, Wil Kenedy, Charmain Spears, Mick Ousley, Brian Walls and Tim

News:

Unattributed - Writer **Octavia Butler** is dead
Wisdom from behind the shop counter –
 - American readers of **John Birmingham's** 'Weapons of Choice – World War 2.1', just cannot comprehend that Americans are seen as depicted in the book, Australian readers without exception pretty much agree that it is a realistic depiction, then and now.

DA – Writer **Peter (Jaws) Benchley** is dead. 'Ghost in the Machine' is going to a second anime series, it's fourth avatar after two

movies, the original Manga and the first series (currently showing on SBS).

- Much increased level of suing of the individual down loaders of internet stored TV episodes by the MPA.

HC – Now that **Peter Benchley** is dead the US Navy is getting into Bionic and enhanced spy sharks (the ultimate in computer 'wetware'). Has no-one in the Pentagon ever rented 'The Deep Blue Sea', just ask Harold Holt or the guys on the Independence, smarter sharks is just not a good idea!

- A second movie based on 'Dark Crystal' is currently being made and will feature puppets for main characters and CGI for scenery.

- Still on Smarter Sharks, **David Drake**, before 'Hammer's Slammers' wrote 'Demon 4' a story about making smarter sharks and Whales etc. the story did not have a happy ending either (John West 180 gram tins of finest Japanese on special at two for three dollars).

- There is a Free Tropfest 2006 DVD with Saturday's Sydney Morning Herald, including the eight winners of this year's (rain affected) short film competition.

GD – Attended the Sunday 26 Feb Dr Who event, and it was very good.

- Handed out **Magic Casements IV** programs and my 2006 pocket sized 'Where's the Science Fiction in Sydney'.

- The 2006 Sydney Futurian book giveaway has 120 plus SF&F books to giveaway!

- Con Syder, the proposed big-ish Sydney SF&F / Speculative Fiction convention is very likely to take place during 2007 rather than 2006, will be at much the same time of year, September /October.

WK – They are bringing out a fifth Highlander movie (whatever happened to 'There can only be one'), which lead to a general bitch session about the failings of people who make these sequels, and the type of fans who pay to attend and sustain this cycle of unnecessary sequels!

MO – Saw a TV program on people who own life like manikin dolls, weirder even than 'sexbots'. The actor who played **Carl Kolchak**, The Night Stalker, is dead (or newly undead?), as is **Andeas Kotsulas** (G'Kar from Babylon 5 and the human chimney).

BW – Much news from the papers, including that the next big SF / Sci-Fi movie due out locally is V for Vendetta on March 30th.

-The Favourite movie of the year in both SBS and ABC Movie shows was 'Serenity', the result of slightly 'quaint' voting.

- At Mu Meson recently they played the Turkish versions of both Star Trek and Starwarz, each features a cast of look-alike actors!

- **The Royal Shakespeare Company** is experimenting with productions featuring Japanese ninja figurines (from vending machines!) instead of actors.

Some time was spent discussing carry over items from last month's topic, 'The Best and worst of the year'. The Movie 'Supernova', was reviewed with awe, with South African accents, extras, cars and location standing in for California and Australia plus attention getting 'Hollywood' bad Science and Socio-pathology.

Before this, in an unexpected outbreak of good sense, we agreed to pick two topics in advance. This will allow advance notice of discussion topics to be published in the next Infinitas newsletter.

The Topic for Thursday **April 06**, 2006 will be;
Politics in Science Fiction

The Topic for Thursday **May 04**, 2006 will be;
The internet in Science Fiction

The meeting concluded / moved off to the café at about 8.15 pm. I managed to get home in time to start the VCR for both 'Ghost in the Machine' and 'West Wing'

Notes from the Dr Who Tavern meeting, Friday March 03, 2006 at the Lansdown Hotel City road (near Glebe/Broadway)

Present were: **Garry Dalrymple**, **Christian Kent** and his partner **Gabrielle** and **Roger Reynolds**

On this occasion, anticipating the usual unannounced 15 minute wait in a train outside Central Station and the 20 minute peak hour bus crawl down George Street to the Lansdown / City Road, I decided to try and walk in from Redfern Station. It turned out to be a twenty-minute walk and an opportunity to pass through and re-acquaint with our nation's urban Aboriginal reality.

- At the Lansdown there were lots of tables and lots of noise, only a decided shortage of Whovians.

- There was some discussion of the excellence of last Sunday's day long Dr Who event.

- I spent most of the time talking to Roger who apparently works among the creative classes condemned to toil amid the dark satanic imagination mills of North Sydney (Addland?). He is striving for personal redemption through the writing of a script, something of a combination of 'The Peter Principle' and 'The Office'. Should Roger succeed with this, he will have to face a constant stream of questioners asking, 'Which parts of your Film/TV series are Autobiographical Mr Reynolds?' Roger was taken in by Dr Who when it first appeared in his native UK.

- Roger related a topical story, apparently at his place of work a pancake day was organized by some women, as each was pregnant, they made a point of doing the pancake making without shoes, so that they could boast of being 'Barefoot and Pregnant in the Kitchen'.

- There was some attempt at discerning the Astronomical / Theological basis of 'Pancake day' but no-one seemed to be able to communicate much over the noise.

- Roger left the table to spend a long time in the queue to order a meal and admitted that as an ex-pom he found the experience quite relaxing. I on the other hand timed things almost to perfection, joining the end of the queue just behind Roger as he approached the cash register and almost having a walk through to order my Steak and Chips.

- As foreshadowed on the email group, there was some discussion of the opportunities presented by the University of Technology Sydney and its facilities at Broadway for conducting Dr Who video nights and other sorts of events. No firm conclusions reached.

- Christian Kent claims to have lost count of his appearances in the Sydney Morning Herald letters to the Editor column (I have appeared twice and I remember every one!) he batter aside suggestions of notches / scratches carved in the bed head.

- He attributes some of his success to a dumbing down of the Column 8 section, making representation there easier to achieve (than in my day young fellows).

Being a bit loud for conversation, after the last person had finished eating we made our separate ways out into the night.

Notes from the Saturday March 04, 2006 Sydney Mechanics School of Arts Institute Science Fiction and Fantasy book group meeting 11.30am - 1.00 pm

Topic: No single topic, more of a general discussion SF&F in general and which books those present have read and enjoyed recently

Present were: Winsome Allen, Belinda Coombes, Garry Dalrymple, Ann Pritchard, Ann Devrell and Brian Walls

The following account was compiled from memory, no notes being permitted during the meeting. In case this ever is of historical interest, attributions of who said what may (or may not) exist in the unpublished versions of these notes.

- Several tables (one slightly wonky and visibly off the perpendicular) and a quiet meeting space with lots of Tea, Coffee and cakes etc. The only interruption was an intermittent high-pitched whine (electronic interference or did it coming from the Bronte-ites?).

- On the way into town (423 Bus) I noticed some signs of traffic restrictions and later I saw some parade Marshalls already in place for the night's Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras parade.

- As I arrived at the meeting venue **the Bronte Society** was holding a well attended meeting (at \$4 a head). This popularity surprised me, as it's not as popular a beach as Bondi or some other Eastern suburbs beaches. I

wonder if Maroubra and Tamarama beaches also have their own Societies? I was reminded later that it was 'Bronte House' where **Lord Nelson** stayed when he was in the Mediterranean (and possibly entertained **Lady Dalrymple-Hamilton?**). The only larger Literary society meeting in Sydney is the Jane Austen society.

- I think the 'Mills and Boon Reading Group' (I think they read and discuss other Romance Fiction as well) is taking a rest, as I noticed no meeting this Saturday.

- The attendance at the Mystery and Crime reading group seemed down on previous weeks, roughly proportionate to the SF&F discussion group's thinness this Saturday.

- **David Bofinger's** book length story has hit a writer's block inducing problem. David has reached a point partway through the story where he has killed off his main character. Oh dear! And so it goes.

- **Brian Walls** was encouraged, induced and at length eventually persuaded to join the library, a pre-requisite for attending these meetings on a regular basis. Uncomfortable moments for Brian that only ended when someone present lent him the required \$10 to become 'financial'. This put Brian out of his misery and at the same time denied him his final excuse not to sign up. The guys at the Infinitas meeting would probably have paid \$10 each just to watch this!

- In an avuncular mode I exhibited three recent purchases, intended eventually for my niece. The 'Helix' the **CSIRO** science magazine that featured a several page 'SCI-FI to Science Fact' and two books.

'Alien Games' by **Jackie French**, 167 pages, 8 stories © 1995 (a Moonstone book) ISBN 0-7322-5134-6 and

'Tales from the Wasteland, stories from the 13th floor' edited by **Paul Collins**, 218 pages, 15 stories © 2000 (A Hodder Children's book) ISBN 0-7336-1097-8.

Both books seem to be good-ish 'Young Adult' SF of Speculative Fiction.

- I Distributed Infinitas newsletters, Magic Casements IV (March 25, 2006) programs and my 2006 pocket edition of 'Where's the SF in Sydney'.

- Mentioned the Sydney Futurian's 2006, 100 SF&F book giveaway initiative.

- I have provided the library with an extract consisting of an Indexed and A to Z copy of all my TBS&E published book reviews, some may appear later in the Library's monthly newsletter

- The recently published 'Rosetta Codex' by **Rosso-Brown?** was favourably spoken of (reviewed recently in the Sydney Morning Herald I think). Sort of a detective Da Vinci code space opera story. The author has a **Philip K Dick award** to his name so it is probably 'sound' SF. A 'Mormon alert' on this book is probably unnecessary, but the blurb on the back does mention the main character's discovery of 'Ancient writings on metal plates ... an unknown language...'. Are Detective style SF books the next to go mainstream, following the example of Alternate History books?

- The other Saturday SF discussion meeting, the Southern SF and Fantasy Group is 'giving it a rest' for a while. If there is interest expressed, it might revive.

- **The Sydney Passengers** are in a high state of anticipation, as a stage production of **Conan Doyle's** 'The Hound of the Baskervilles' is shortly to open in Sydney

- A quiet Saturday, not just at the meeting, there seemed to be fewer people about town than in previous years.

- This meeting less affected than last night's Dr Who Tavern meeting, I guess the Whovians are more into celebrating ten years of John Howard.

- Discussions at a previous meeting resulted in a visit to the new incarnation of the city of Sydney Library, now to be found in the old customs House, an ornate and historical building on Circular Quay, as it was too difficult to fill with commercial tenants. This new library, almost uniquely to corporate dominated Sydney and located among some of Sydney's 'Traditional' business houses long suspected of applying a 'Glass ceiling' to staff advancement, possesses a Glass floor, permitting vertigo resistant library users to 'Space Walk', for much less than the Centrepoint tower experience!

- Library Security, technology, faults and methods of evasion were discussed.

- A discussion of the book buying opportunities of annual charity book fairs (the Stanmore Village second hand bookshop used to run a

full listing of annual charity book fairs on it's website) lead to discussion of the dynamics of the supply and turnover of books to charity shops. Over time there are trends, St Vinnies second hand books sections have gone up-market. The books recently promoted and sold through the news paper's are turning up as donations in multiple copies. The now prevailing attitude of 're-cycle everything' has lead to hard decisions when it comes to 'past it' book titles sold. My comment was that at every charity bookshop in Sydney (except for two in Bankstown) you will find multiple copies of **Michael Crichton's 'Prey'** and **Kotzwinkle's 'E.T.'**

- My suggestion for book protection was well regarded; to slip your travel reading paperback into a plastic or cardboard VHS cassette slip or box. Stops all manner of harm to books, keeps your bookmark in place.

The Civic Hotel (CBD) Fans at the pub gathering, Tuesday March 07, 2006, Corner of Pitt and Goulburn Streets (opposite World Square

For this meeting I arrived much later than usual, close to 7 pm rather than 6 pm. At this time the party was largely over, talked out, the conversational equivalent of the fag butts in cold coffee stage of a late night party.

When I arrived the topic of conversation had turned to Polygamy and Polyandry (good for stares from the other mainly female drinkers in rest of the saloon) in the modern world. There are 'legally recognised' but not fully legal Australian polygamists, namely some Muslim men who have married overseas and some traditional Australian Aboriginal men. For Polyandry though you have to go to the far, high and distant places, such as near the Indo-Chinese border area, or other borderline or unnaturally stressed societies i.e. the bounty mutineers on Pitcairn Island, the pre-statehood (1890) Utah Mormons and the Nazis late in WW2. Concern was expressed at Female infanticide and it's implications for men and women living in China and parts of India. The day to day Implications of living in

such a society for most men were raised (nope you still ain't gonna get lucky in a society that by definition leaves many blokes maritally 'on the shelf') were discussed but this argument faltered when the idea of applying Polygamy and Polyandry to the gender imbalanced SF fannish society was raised. Consider as a con event at your next SF con of Sci-Fi event, the drawing up of your own short list of potential plural spouses from the visible and available talent!).

I choose not to disclose **Zara Baxter's** response to this suggestion. It occurs to me that Polygamy and Polyandry would be a suitable topic for a future Futurian of Freecon discussion, dealing as it does with often stressed alternate societies.

The Tiptree awards and some other 'name' SF&F awards were discussed. The recent death of **Octavia Butler** suggests a name suitable for an award, but there is already a 'Black or SF writer of Colour' award named after someone whose accomplishments no one at the table was able to recall. The Tiptree Award seems quite generous in scope in that it is an award for SF&F that 'Goes Boldly' rather than just an award restricted to the best writer that could be found that fits the minority. Are the Tiptrees as useful as the **Philip K. Dick** or **L. Ron Hubbard** Writers of the future awards in highlighting good reading of a particular sort of Science Fiction?

Ted Scribner thought that there should be an Australian name award named after **Cordwainer Smith** (I believe there already is one in the US). Do we need more SF awards in the name of Australian writers than the existing ones, the **Atheling**, **Bert Chandler**, **Turner** and **McNamara** etc. awards? Personally I would like to see a **Kevin Dillon** award, for egregious fannish collection or similar. **Chris Barnes** handed me some copies of the NSW Writers Centre journal that is to coincide with Magic Casements IV. Very impressive to read through, get a copy even if you cannot get to MC IV on the day. This edition has got to be worth a Ditmar nomination!

Ted mentioned **Victor Kay**, who lives close to Ted. Victor has attended most Sydney Freecons. I gave out copies of my Pocket size 2006 Sydney Science guide, Infinitas

newsletters and other items. The meeting closed at about 8 pm with a scattering in search of Noodles or for grocery shopping.

The Sydney Futurians @ UTS meeting of Friday March 17, 2006 (St. Patrick's Day)

Topic 'Venus in Science Fiction'

Present were: **Garry Dalrymple, Diane Fox, John Fox and Ann Rankins**

News:

GD The movie version of Aeon Flux starring **Charlize Theron** has been previewed, pretty to watch, but it isn't remotely true to the original series of 10 minute long anime adventures, more 'linear' and Hollywood-ized. Creator is not pleased.

- It was revealed that the CIA had bought the movie rights to Animal Farm shortly after **George Orwell's** death. This is the reason why story's endings in the book and movie forms differ. The movie having an altered 'happy' ending, while the book concludes with more equivocal 'a pox on both your houses' (Capitalism & Socialism) final scene.

-The 2006 **Magic Casements** Festival of Speculative Fiction takes place next weekend (all present planning to attend!).

- My 2006 Sydney SF Guide is out.

- I've had to cancel my plans to attend this year's SF Conventions in Brisbane and Canberra.

- With Stripperella moving from commercial to SBS and West Wing moving to Channel 2, is this the beginning of a trend?

- The only SF on evening TV week seems to be 'Ghost in the Machine' on SBS (10 pm Thursday nights).

DF offered that the Blue Mountains (the graveyard of Sydney SF fandom?) was currently suffering an unprecedented Flea Plague (are works by **Albert Camus** just walking off the shelves of Blue Mountains Libraries and bookstores?) This revelation lead to a discussion of the merits of Daddy Long legs Vs Huntsmen spiders as Cockroach

control vectors, which inevitably lead to some Arachnophobia and an offer to view the stigmata left by Garry's Red Back Spider bite.

JF – We've missed out on having a table at UTS Clubs day, but we have the option of setting up a stand at other times.

- **George Lucas** is going to do a TV series instead of the three yet un-filmed movies of his original plan. Those present are comfortable with the view that **Starwarz** while being an enjoyable enough movie series, mining traditional themes, it ain't SF'.

- The WORDS club at UTS, a group for writers and Poets etc. will be holding book club like meetings. The first of these meetings will discuss **Kurt Vonnegut's Slaughterhouse Five**.

- Some activity on the Futurian website, Brian Walls has contributed some links, all 2006 Meeting Dates and Topics are now up as is the list of the 100 or so give-away books for 2006.

AR – Ann offered that ABC TV's afternoon offering of **Skycastle** was pretty good SF.

- She had also done some Non-Fiction reading about the Planet Venus to prepare for this meeting.

- Anne's book reading of late has included:

Jupiter by **Ben Bova**, one of a series of nine books with an adventure set on each Planet. Ann is reading these as she finds them at public libraries. In the Jupiter book there is discussion of a 'Space Elevator', made of 'Bucky-Ball' carbon fibres. Verdict: a decent read, hard-ish SF with credible Science but so-so on characterizations and people etc.

Black Swan by **Mercedes Lackey** is a retelling of the story of the Ballet 'Swan Lake', except this version has a happy ending! That is, happy for all concerned except for the Wizard, who apparently had it coming! Verdict: Ann is still reading the book but she has found it a very enjoyable experience.

The General buzz

- This meeting was as usual preceded by encounters at the Basement books discount bookshop, the place you pass on your way from the trains to Broadway and the UTS. Should we formalize this by promulgating an

announcement to 'meet at 6 to 6.30 in the Bookshop'? It might give a time and place for fannish rendezvous and an opportunity to say 'Hi!' and stay in touch, for SF fans unable to commit to a full 7 to 9 pm meeting (or a meeting in a pub or through a subscription library).

- We all seem to have been watching 'Bomber Crew' on the ABC.
- Following the news session, a scalping incident took place.
- Random discussion confirmed that experience of 'Home Brewing' was revealed to be fannish common denominator ('a golden thread of shared experience and a pale foaming head o'er the top of the glass' – Rhidian Rhead).

Discussing the Topic: Venus in SF

'Wikipedia' was a useful source of information about Venus in SF for this meeting. I decided try it this way, as the sources that gave us 11 'Mercury' references for January's meeting delivered over 100 'Venus' books (thousands for Mars?), far too many to work into any sort of meaningful account.

Like Mercury, the nature of SF&F set on Venus conforms to the prevailing state of knowledge about that Planet. A linear progression of stories about Venus might read something like this;

Pre Classical, fables set on Venus as another Earth, like the Moon and the other planets for the moral purpose of the fable, Venusian Society would be organized differently to Earth society

Early Scientific or Telescopic Era, Venus as the Clouded twin Planet of Earth invites speculation as to why it's surface is so hidden. An assumption arises that it is consequently a swampy wet world, a more primeval state than Earth, enter 'Dinosaur Planet Venus' a view that persisted in some SF forms into the 1950s. Before post WW2 technology closed it, there was a generation long window of opportunity opened for Burroughs like adventures set on Venus.

Mid Twentieth Century, 'Hell Planet Venus' as revealed by space probes and radio telescopes reveal the hot, dry and corrosive reality of Venus. Themes of survival against

harsh environments yielded to naïve thoughts of Terra forming the planet 'so close to our own'.

Post Modern, with enough time and technology can overcome all difficulties. In stories set in the indeterminate future it doesn't matter whether Venus has been Terra formed or whether it's inhabitant population shelters in domed cities. Venus is just another planet, a cog in the machine of the Solar or Galactic economy, a place some distance away from 'home'.

Instances Mentioned at our meeting:

In an **A. E. Van Vogt** book consumer protection standards on Venus are a bit more lax than on Earth, hence an unsuspecting visiting Earthman becomes addicted to 'Moke Coke', which spurs him and fellow addicts to stage a revolution, against mind controlling persuasive advertising?

Edgar Rice Burroughs Venus series 1934 to 1946, featured Carter of Mars like adventures set on Venus. Apparently according to Wikipedia he was not the first to do so.

Perelandra (1946) by **C. S. Lewis** sets up Venus as physical and spiritual paradise (but not a Garden of Eden?)

In **Roger Zelazny's** Anthology Lamps of his face, Doors of his mouth, there is a fishing story, you need an aircraft carrier sized boat and a TV antennae tower for a 'rod' to catch the biggest big game fish/monster in the Universe. In the famous Soviet made SF movie (of the 1960s?) A voyage to Venus, a Soviet Crew plus one annoying American and his Robot, make man's first landing on Venus. They explore a planet with oceans, volcanoes and predatory vegetation with an air car. They take blood samples from a very big and very slow dinosaur and then leave the planet to the accompaniment of a Theramin orchestra while a wispy clad fey Venusian looks on.

In the Movie/TV series reviewed in the previous issue of TBS&E the Earth explorers discover that amid a Hiroshima like ruined planet that the Venusians were preparing to wipe out Earth, but their own weapons destroyed them first.

There is a great deal more detail on Venus in SF, for the full Wikipedia treatment, go to http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Venus_in_Fiction

Future Action Plans?

Having missed out on the UTS Clubs day (already being affected by the VSU?) we still have an opportunity to hold on a day of our choosing, a Futurians@UTS Stall day. At a more convenient date / time of the Academic term when the UTS students are settled down and not fixated on enrollment or exams. We could even pick a date to precede a major ACT or interstate SF&F convention.

This event could feature some of the following;

- Show some Science Fictional or fannish films at the UTS theatre.
- The involvement of CSFG, ASIM or Conflux people
- The involvement of the 'local SF community' Friends of Science Fiction, Sydney Dr Who people, (**Mike McGann?**), WORDS or other 'SF like' UTS students groups

The Website

Ideas were discussed for the better use of the website and its forum feature.

It was suggested that in addition to the Friday night monthly meeting (all present agreed that it was the best night of the week for us) we might start a website discussion topic of the month.

This could be a method of road testing topics for level of interest, i.e. if the online level of interest in discussing 'Frogs in Space' is high then in November this year when we decide the 2007 Friday night topics, it could be prioritized for a Jan to June date.

The six Topics suggested at this meeting are:

1. **Explosives in SF**, Bombs (and Duds) in SF and SF in Bombs
2. **Time Travel effects and consequences**, Physics or Fantasy?
3. **Detective SF**, the wave of the future, the next SF sub-genre to go 'mainstream' or just the crime of the times.
4. **Multiculturalism in SF**, like on the bridge of the Starship Enterprise or Conformity?
5. **Oceans in SF**, terrestrial and Alien

6. Stairways to Heaven? Non Spaceflight means to orbit and beyond.

Garry is still interested in holding an all day Saturday (at the UTS) Futurians meeting during July or August to re-play some of the topics discussed at the 2005 and 2006 Friday night Futurian meetings.

I'm also thinking about holding a Saturday Freecon (9 to 4 pm, and a Movie after?) at Bankstown during November this year.

Convention report, Magic Casements 4, Saturday March 25, 2006 at the NSW Writer's Centre, Callan Park Rozelle.

**Forgiveness please if these notes seem fragmentary and at times confusing for Alas, for much of this and last week I have spent the night in the arms of mistress pain.*

When she comes to stay she is a jealous lover who tolerates no rivals for my attention, filling my hours fully with her company to the exclusion of considerations of much else. GD

Brief version, impressions

I attended this year's Magic Casements events with a greater than usual degree of curiosity. With the introduction of a booking procedure and an entry fee, was the party over? The charges were fairly modest, \$15 for NSWWC members, \$10 for concession holding NSWWC members and \$20 for non-NSWWC members. Modest enough for a day out, but might still prove to be an impediment to the participation of Sydney's element of 'cheese sandwich' SF Fandom and for those who have not experienced a \$50 a day book SF convention in Sydney for nearly a generation. To put it into some perspective, it cost me about \$12 for public transport to attend on the day as compared to \$20 for a ticket.

As I met a good proportion of the Non-Melbourne Eastcoast SF fans that you usually meet at interstate cons its probably safe to say that Magic Casements is firmly on calendar of

Australian SF&F conventions and for several old Sydney fans this event is probably their only annual fannish day out. Having given out around 60 or 70 of my 'Magic Casements and 2006 Futurian Meetings' Bookmarks (which seemed on the whole to be appreciated and well received) I'm guessing that attendance on the day was in the vicinity of 80 people. I think that attendance this year was down slightly on previous years, but not greatly, as both rooms were comfortably filled during each of the morning sessions. I had feared a greater drop in attendance, but this number plus the gate revenue raises the expectation that there will continue to be annual Magic Casements.

In my longer report I will cover the three out eight sessions I managed to attend and who I met and all that, before I succumbed to the arms of mistress pain and had to leave. My overall impression from the program was that this year the program continues to move closer to being more of a writers and would-be-writers event than in previous years, rather less opportunity for audience participation.

For example, several of the sessions I attended could easily be repeated annually, as updates. They were of great interest to the stream of would-be-writers who each year will be at the stage of 'just getting into' Speculative Fiction writing, while SF fans (readers) might be more interested in program items like 'Show me a new Writer' or an entertaining overview of ideas in SF. I.e. you could present a 'Dogs in SF' panel discussion to SF fans, but for would-be-writers you would have to schedule a 'How to sell Dog stories this year' presentation.

This impression might be unrepresentative, a result of my avoiding the 'Special Guest' featuring panels, yet another demonstration of my Non-Fantasy / Non-Non Science Fiction biases I guess.

This drift in program emphasis if real does not seem unreasonable or surprising given the host/sponsor of the day. If anything it reassures me that there is indeed a niche and need for the Freecon style event I propose to hold later this year.

A further impression was that people were arriving earlier and staying longer to extract better value for their \$20 day. There was a bit less breezing in and out to visit the markets and see a few Magic Casements items.

Who did I meet, to speak to or just to nod to in passing in the corridor?

Chris Barnes – Organiser
 Zara Baxter – Writer Guest
 Leigh Blackmore and Partner
 Various members of the Clarion South tribe and their emotional support crew
 David B Coe – Writer Guest
 Bill Congreve – Writer Guest
 Terry Dowling – Writer Guest
 Grace Duggan – Writer Guest
 Irina Dunne – Organiser
 Diane Fox – Sydney Futurian
 John Fox – Sydney Futurian
 Donna-Marie Hanson – Writer Guest
 Richard Harland – Writer Guest
 Lea Henderson – Old Sydney Fan
 Robert Hoge – Writer Guest
 Rob Hood – Writer Guest
 Infinitas (Tim and Danielle)
 Ian Irvine – Writer Guest
 Margo Lanagan – Writer Guest
 Maxine McArthur – Writer Guest
 Rod McLeod – Old Sydney Fan
 Sean McMullen – Writer Guest
 Catherine McMullen – Writer Guest
 Nicole Murphy - CSFG
 Sarah Murray-White – Old Sydney Fan
 Mark Philips – a Past-urian
 Gillian Polack – Writer Guest
 Ted Scribner – Organiser & Sydney Futurian
 Stephanie Smith - Voyager
 Cat Sparks – Writer Guest
 Alinta Thornton – Writer Guest
 Ian Triffit – Old Sydney Fan
 Brian Walls – Sydney Futurian
 Danielle Williams – Organiser

And the countless nameless others, whose lives are whole and real, but who pass our eyes and leave our sight unremarked and unrecognised as if they were but the drawing room wallpaper as we pass by self absorbed in our own schemes and adventures.

I know that this list is incomplete as I handed out about twice as many Magic Casements / Futurians bookmarks.

On the Road with Madness?

On checking the bus timetables on the Saturday morning at 8.30 I discovered that the next 412 went – About now! – so dropping everything (including plans to make and take my own lunch) and I undignified haste I raced to the bus stop, just catching it and avoiding an hour's delay waiting for the next. At the Earlwood shops the mumbler got on. A local identity of Arabic or North African appearance whose distinguishing feature is that he talks / argues with himself (Schizophrenia?), presumably in Arabic or similar. He was very vocal and argumentative with himself this morning. He very soon had the back half of the bus to himself, with Greek Church going pensioners and Asian Australians and I sitting up the front. The bus driver (bearded and probably Arabic speaking himself) gave him a few long hard looks. I would have been interested to know if his ravings made any more sense in the mumbler's own native language.

Got off the 412 above Petersham railway station (have met Rod McLeod and Brian walls at this stop in previous years) intending to cross the street and catch the 445 bus the rest of the way. At this bus stop I was met by a 'Garage Sale' sigh, so I stopped to shop. No books to speak of, almost bought a 33/45 record player turntable, but in the end I picked up a handy 60 cm baseball club (you never know with Sydney SF fandom?) for \$2, before crossing the street for a twenty minute wait for the next 445 bus. Ian Triffit and several other Magic casements going folk got on later fairly inconsequential discussion as we tried to remember the right Callan Park stop to get off at. Missed by one, but still managed to arrive at close to 10 am.

What did I see

Sean McMullen – Started writing at the 1999 Worldcon and his first book published 12 years later. Sales in the US followed being picked up by an Agent who had seen his work

in small press publications. Success aided by having a hero who was a librarian, certainly didn't hurt to when Librarians decide which books to stock library shelves with! His recreational interest in the medieval lead to Fantasy stories with medieval settings. Wrote SF then Fantasy, not particularly guided by trying to match the market by writing 'what is selling now'. What is success after the initial success of selling a first book? Success is often the good fortune to be properly promoted, some 'successful' books are not so good, (Sara Douglas?) just well promoted. His book Circle of Light was the first to be promoted properly.

Margo Lanagan – Doesn't see herself as 'Successful' yet, her self-image is that of being at a 'breakout' stage at present. Successes occurred only after she took her eye off the ball, competitions and prizes etc. Her award winning Black Juice was written as escapism from the mundane while on long daily commutes to and from work.

Ian Irvine – Spent a lot of time writing in airport lounges, started writing in 1987, did world creating for ten years before this, took seven years of rejections before his first book was published. Likes to entertain rather than to achieve Capital L Literary. Was part of a boom (Post Aussiecon 2?) for Australian writer success. The appearance of successful writers is age wearied (length of time from 'break out' to 'success'?)

Terry Dowling – Quality will out! Write what you like/know coz lots of other people can write what other people write and imitation leaves you behind the trend. Is a 'brother' to **Harlan Ellison** and gave him **Margo Lanagan's** Black Juice. He is shortly to receive a Phd. On creative writing, supervised by **Van Ikin!** It is all right to appropriate and adapt 'old' stories. Last year according to the US National Endowment for the Arts 15 million Americans gave up reading books for their story telling fix. Write to your peers, for the Egoboo of positive feedback because you cannot count on making a vast living from your writing. We are living in the age of the triumph of the 'B List' authors who are willing to write derivative books and to join trends.

Questions (mostly Terry Dowling)

- Plot hunger? Plotless stories and unsympathetic characters lead to stories failing.
- Live in fear of the Suits, The Publishing Industry's pursuit of repeatable guaranteed success. Their mastery of fear is their only talent.
- How to writers fit it in to their lives? Successful writers use their time well, all the time, writing is an exercise in mental body building, use repetitive creativity stress to build ability to write. Consider using the unconscious mind to solve problems. I.e. sleep on it and a solution may occur. Think all day, and plan to write to a schedule. Lotus land isolation, waiting until it is all perfect in your mind before starting to write it down is wrong.

Ian Irvine says that he needs to sit down and write full time, full days and weeks at a stretch because taking breaks disrupts his concentration. Recommends turning off the censor and writing down what comes and reviewing/editing it later.

What is the SF Cannon?

Terry Dowling – Started on an A to Z of Authors rather than listing 'Great' books, because stories of the moment can date but not good Authors. Lamented the death of the back list due to the imperatives of financial accounting, books don't hang around as long as they used to. Terry is concerned at the loss of a sense of deep history, i.e.

Cordwainer Smith's books? Believes that it is important to have a sense of perspective, and tributes from other writers is important

Ted Scribner – Agrees with the idea of a listing of great Authors, suggests reference to the lists of Nebula and Hugo winners, mentioned that some stories can be dated by the development of Science between now and when they were written.

Stephanie Smith – Suggests the books that Authors cite as influences and some books that she has enjoyed, and came up with a list of books that 'Spoke to me'

Margo Lanagan – Suggested the 'Mad Cow Theory', better to graze widely over books in an undisciplined way and try everything, no exhaustive overview is possible. 'Gunna' pick up a recommended reading list one day. Doesn't feel it is that necessary to be that widely read, especially for writers, immersion (in what you like?) can lead to an awareness of constraints to writing Fiction, limiting your 'voice'.

Terry Dowling – being well read allows you to rip off more effectively, is very important for publishers these days to avoid plagiarism. Good works will surface from the body of what writers write and it is always better to write to for your peers, for the Ego boo as you cannot count to make a vast living. We are seeing the triumph of the B Listers, all the derivative joiners to 'must sell' publishing trends.

The US National Endowment for the Arts is the source of the claim that last year 15 Million Americans gave up on reading for entertainment.

Rob Hogge – suggested internet listings, find it second hand if you want, Vs browsing. The Cannon is limited because it is not encyclopedic of all sub-genres.

One definition for Cannon Vs Classics, is that which will be read future ward. Our lists of what is important now are not Classics, just what is currently popular.

Cross Genre stories? Just write it and leave it to the Publishers and Librarians to classify you later.

Magazines and Small Press Panel**Why Small Press?**

Cat Sparks – Started AGOG! Coz all the local markets seemed to be drying up (same reasoning as the ASIM collective!). AGOG! Is successful in senses other than the Financial, it is done for love not Money.

Rob - In it for the stories, passionate about connecting Writers to Stories to Readers.

Zara Baxter – For the short Fiction. ASIM has a light hearted niche that no-one else seems to be filling.

D M – the Canberra Speculative Fiction Guild is a group of writers turned into publishers.

Finance

Cat Sparks – Publishing AGOG! Means a life with fewer luxuries as each title means \$5,000 spent and only a slow eventual return on this investment (by going to cons). Currently has a deal with 'Prime', makes up an AGOG! Sends it off to them and then buys back copies for local sale, rather than having to finance and store the whole print run. This occurred through their noticing that her work was getting international exposure, stories cited in 'best of the year' anthologies etc.

Rob – Aurealis stays afloat coz of goodwill and luck, the dedication of Dirk Strasser as Publisher. Has had some Australia Council money which can be a boon or a curse in that the money has to be spent within twelve months.

Zara – ASIM is a cooperative, membership \$100. Sales and Advertising cover the cost of 6 issues per year.

Cat – Many Readers are writers whose support means that the media can continue.

Rob – Short Stories are an end in themselves

Zara – Novels can represent years of your life from conception to publishing / rejection, while short stories have a turn around time of months.

Unattributed comments and answers to questions

- **Science Fiction and Fantasy** is an Australian Friendly US SF&F magazine, most are not.

- Check out '**Strange Horizons**' for story themes NOT to write (coz the have seen too many already!)

- Threats were made to Club Cat Sparks for taking the panel over, I offered the use of a 60 cm hard wood 'Literary Club' that I had with me.

- Specific-ness makes characters and places stand out

- 4,500 to 7,500 word stories are considered ideal, check out AGOG!'s preflight list before submitting (please!).

- 12 point Courier Double Spaced seems to be the Industry standard for all submissions.

- To understand what is already 'old hat' or already well enough covered, read the 1940s to 1960s Nebula award winning stories.

- The Locus recommended reading lists and the Locus awards are also worth referring to.

- Try 'Cricket' Speculative fiction for young people.

- Enter the Writers of the Future contests. They are held quarterly, the first quarter is less contested and anything but an Aussie is likely to be better than 80% of the stuff that they see!

April 2006 SF&F Meeting Notes

The Civic Hotel (CBD) Fans at the pub gathering, Tuesday April 04, 2006, Corner of Pitt and Goulburn Streets (opposite World Square

NB as I did not attend this meeting * for this very short report I rely on advice received from **Ted Scribner**

Present were: **Chris Barnes, Zara Baxter, Deborah Biancotti, David Cake** (from WA), **Mark Philips, Ted Scribner** and a 'Roland'.

Ted says that conversation was arguably FTL. Last month's Magic Casement would have been discussed (Ted and Chris were involved in organising it and most of the seven present attended it) and there was also some talk of a 'Rhododendron' a Sydney SF&F (or Speculative Fiction?) con due for the October long weekend.

I believe that seven people attending is a record and a considerable improvement on last year!

The Infinitas Bookshop SF&F Discussion group meeting, Thursday April 06, 2006 at the Infinitas / Blokey Stuff shop George Street Parramatta

Topic: Politics in SF

Present were:

Daryl Addams, Henry Chatroop, Garry Dalrymple, Kurt Frank, Wil Kenedy, Charmain Spears, 'Greg' (Charmain's partner) **Mick Ousley, Brian Walls and Tim**

News

General discussion of the movie **Serenity** topping several open to the public 'Best Movie of the Year' polls.

DA – Claudia Black (Farscape) will feature in season ten of **Stargate**.

- There will be 'teaser' nuggets of Dr Who released ahead of season two episodes.
- Several old Dr Who characters will return in season three in an 'alternate reality' story.
- Season three of **Battle Star Galactica** will contain a new story arc or plot fixation.

HC – Last month bionic sharks, this month the Pentagon wants to electronically implant insects (Bug Bomb, Bug Bomb!) fusing biology to technology .

- There is an on line slide show of the 10 metre 'walking' Elephant from Nantes that was the centre of some sort of street festival (of celebrating appeasement?)

GD – On Tuesday night just passed, there were seven people attending the Civic Hotel 'Fans In The Pub' meeting.

- There will be a three day **CS Lewis event** in Sydney 4 to 6 May this year, A Narnia conference and a Christian message?
- There are plans/discussions toward an October long weekend SF&F convention, **Rhodhroncon?**
- Review/discussion of **Magic Casements**, implications of entry fee this year, there will probably be more Magic Casements for the foreseeable future.

WK - The second season of **Battle Star Galactica** will start on local TV around August / September this year.

MO – Successful 'grow your own' spare parts, a girl/woman now has a functional second bladder grown from own cells.

BW – Lots of newspaper news, mostly about recent or soon to be released movies.

- Brian freely admitted that **Eon Flux** was too low brow for him to enjoy or recommend.
- **V for Vengeance** is Brian's movie of the year, he expects viewers will either love it or hate it due to its subject matter.

- Brian Introduced a flyer for the **Mu Meson Archive**. It contained a listing of their April events, mostly movie and video showings.

Tim - Magic Casements attendance and book sales were down a bit from last year but Irina Dunn, the NSW Writers Centre director is reportedly pleased with this year's outcome.

Discussion of the topic

Politics is what you make a decision to act politically about. Opinions of those present diverged on this topic, can you have 'Politics' in story about life under an unchallenged regime, with only one political voice heard, or do you need several interacting political parties or persuasions to make for a 'political' SF story?

Another point that was raised was that generally American SF writers can only write 'political' SF that involves military action, whereas 'British' and European SF seem to be able to involve politics within a SF story without military force. This thought was refined and adjusted a bit further to be that 'minority', dispossessed and/or alienated SF writers were able to write political SF.

The SFnal US reliance on military force as politics is coz the US is deluded by the belief that it has no empire, therefore prepared to crush, kill and destroy by military force. European powers with the baggage of experience of Empire realize that crush, kill and destroy by military force within your own empire is too wasteful, and beyond your Empire's own borders, just leaves a heap of discontent survivors who will move across the border to camp discontentedly in your back yard!

Comment was made on Military SF, most Space Opera SF these days are re-writes of past History, i.e. Honor Harrington's Universe is based on Napoleonic Europe. With these stories you get the anachronistic transfer of political organisation of the past into the distant future, 'because it is' rather than coz the political system actually matches the technology.

A criticism made of Fantasy novels is their nearly universal setting in a Feudal social set up with zero prospect of social progress over time in the 'Kingdom'. Ignores even late medieval history, as Republics constantly and spontaneously emerge from time to time from under the most despotic feudal Dukes and Princes.

Beyond Military SF, it was commented on that US SF writers seem to have a near monopoly on Race War as a cause of political conflict.

Some books that were mentioned include;

Starship Troopers by Robert Heinlien (US)

Citizen ship through Military service, the self evident civic virtue.

Dune (and its sequels) by **Frank Herbert** (US) interminable 'House' based politics.

The Forever War by **Joe Haldeman** (US) an alienated serviceman's view of a long running War's consequences, separation and political dislocation of those who fight from those who stayed at home.

Fahrenheit 451 by **Ray Bradbury** (US) control of thought through the prohibition and suppression of the written word (for society's own good of course).

1984 and Animal Farm by George Orwell

Commentary on the Russian 'revolution' and a future world caught between post-WW2 political power blocks.

A Brave New World by **Aldous Huxley**, takes elitism and unrestrained industrial technology to a foreseeable future conclusion. (UK)

The Lord of The Rings by **JRR Tolkien**, motivated by his experiences of WW1 and concern about the consequences of industrialization on the English countryside and it's traditional way of life. (UK)

The **Foundation** Series by **Isaac Asimov**, based on Byzantium but with better long term planning, biblical time scale and no Turks?

Starigger(?) by **Ken McLeod**, Trade Unionism in Space? Not sure about this but definitely politics in there. (Scottish!)

Ian M Banks - Wholly political Space Opera with two competing political outlooks. (UK)

Babylon 5 – As we are told in the opening sequence of each Babylon 5 episode, it was set up to avoid conflict. It has Narns Vs Centari, Vorlons Vs Shadows, political systems and races in conflict, more frequently attempting to resolve their problems by 'political' rather than military means.

Mad Max III – the internal politics of Barter town make up most of the story.

The Dispossessed by **UK Le Guinn** – two societies, Capitalist and Collectivist share a planet and inhabited moon system and interact (Canadian?)

A lot of stuff by **Orson Scott Card** was mentioned, one story standing out, where a megalomaniac tries out his 'Master Plan' for world dominance by taking over the virtual world as a trial run for the 'real thing' (US Mormon)

A lot of stuff by **Sherri S. Tepper**, mostly stories involving Gender politics?

The Topic for Next Month's will be:

SF and the Internet

The Sydney Futurians @ UTS meeting of Friday April 21, 2006 Topic 'Science Fictional Sciences at the UTS'

Present were: **Garry Dalrymple, Diane Fox, John Fox, Ross Mitchell, Ann Rankins and Trish Wilkins** (a first timer)

Apologies received from: **Ian Woolf, Ted Scribner and Brian Walls**

Contributing Virtual Futurians: Kevin from Wycheproof, Ray Stephens and Evil Lord Zog

News:

GD – apologies from **Ted Scribner** who is proceeding to organise a '**Rhododendrocon**' for the October 2006 long weekend. It will be an inexpensive Relaxacon and take place in the Blue Mountains. This news emerged from the **Civic hotel meeting** which had a record breaking seven attendees, would have been eight, if I had been able to attend!

- I have a copy of the Official Guide to the Sydney Writer's Festival May 22 to 28, 2006.

Over 200 Writers it says, so how many are 'people we know'? Only One is stated as writing any SF&F – **Garth Nix**, Fantasy writer. Sydney writer **Jackie French** is also taking part, and as I have just read a YA SF anthology, she must be a SF&F writer. Surely SF&F accounts for more than 1% of books read, what are we, Australian Democrats of the literary universe?

- Tomorrow is the Mechanics SF&F discussion meeting, please be my or Brian's guest. SF&F chat plus morning tea!

- Some recent enquiries / interest received from UTS students. Our flyer is out on display on level 3 and is being seen. One enquiry asked what our gender balance was, tonight we were perfectly balanced! Six people present, three of each!

- Noticed at the Basement bookstore SF&F section were; A five book boxed set of 'Hitchhikers' books for \$20. Some (unsigned) Margaret Atwood titles, also a slightly hurt copy of William Gibson's latest novel.

- Saw an ad on the side of a bus. It featured underwear name tagged as Luke, Leia and Darth's hanging on a clothes line. Luke and Leia's underwear (no bra evident?) were white with skidmarks, Darth Vader had black underwear. No idea what the point of this ad was, or what was being promoted, Mothers day? Or, May the Fourth (be with you, and with you)?

- Have to hand copies of '**Sain**' a glossy promotional magazine for DVDs and CDs, has coverage of Sci-Fi movies.

- The Current (May 2006) **Fortean times** has as its front page feature an extended article on the origins, life and times of Dr Who villains, the Cybermen.

- The First week of May features SF&F meetings on Tuesday, Thursday and Friday evenings.

From the internet three SF worthy stories;

1. A 'game' to turn pet hamsters into people eaters! This consists of a pet monitoring internet hook up, a maze and moveable hamster bait (food?). The 'game' is to move the bait around to avoid the hamster, until the hamster catches and eats (kills) it.

2. A heavy Metal fan walking along train tracks, playing his music LOUD, was struck by a Freight train. He had not heard the train approaching, the screech of its brakes or its horn. He attributed his survival to the protective intervention of 'The Gods of Heavy Metal Music'!

3. Two blokes ate some Fish and suffered LSD like Hallucinations! This phenomena previously available in some Pacific Ocean fish has now turned up in Mediterranean fish. Global warming and no-name fish fingers anyone?

Ted Scribner gets a Ditmar for a website.

AR – Saw the Movies Aeon Flux, V for Vendetta and Zathura. Liked Aeon Flux, V for Vendetta was nothing much, No great depth to the film and Zathura substitutes SF effects for Jumanji's Animal effects. She plans to see the Mars Rover Imax movie shortly.

- Scram-Jet experiments 'promise' a three hour trip from Sydney to London (great for Worldcons, not so good for jetlag?).

TW – Reads more Science than SF, this lead to a digression to discuss SF's predictive value. The meeting vote 5 to 0 (with one abstention) that 'Red Dwarf IS Science Fiction.

RM – Has read volume two, 'Designated Targets', of John Birmingham's Alternate History World War 2.1 series. Instalment three has been written and is due out soon.

- Also reading and enjoying Greg Egan's Short Stories.

- Tesla's record for wireless power transmission has been recently exceeded.

JF – The current book that the UTS WORDS writing group is reading is Kurt Vonnegut's Slaughter House Five. They are studying it as a good changing point of view novel.

DF – has discovered in a book recently bought that there is a Indian Aphrodisiac growing wild in Bjelke Petersen country Queensland. It is

a (mimosa?) sensitive leaf plant that reacts by folding up its leaves when you touch it.

- Oh and by the way, the world ends on May 25, something about a meteor strike, all revealed by interpreting recent crop circles.

Contributions on the topic from This meeting's Virtual Futurians

I'm reading one at the moment, as it happens. Not bad, and it involves a bit of a crime story as well. - "Iron Sunrise", by **Charles Stross**

ISBN 1 84149 336 8, an AI called the Eschaton achieves self awareness and has simultaneously dispersed 90% of Earth's population across the galaxy. Worlds Centuries later have developed all sorts of technology and the description of a world lost to neutrino overload from a nova is impressive Sci-Fi / Pseudo Sci. A good read, even if it isn't big in photonics or nanotechnology....

Ray Stephens.

Dunno if it's strictly photonics...but Bob Shaw's Slow Glass stories make interesting use of refractive indices...

Kevin from Wycheproof.

What are we talking about?

Garry's view

The Science Fictional Sciences that come to mind at the University of Technology Sydney include; **Nano Technology**, **Photonics** and **Robotics**. They also do Computing Science and at times use SF to teach engineers etc how to write.

As each of these Sciences are presently in their infancy compared to the vision presented in most SF, the difficulty is to select relevant books from the mass of Nano Technology, Photonics and Robotics SF that is out there.

The **Nano Technology** done at UTS involves practical small devices, gene shears, microscopic microchip mounted bioassay units and micro machines (as computer parts?).

The **Photonics** done at UTS involves mucking around with light as an alternative to electrons in computing devices, optic fibres and filters and such. Light powered computers may be

faster and smaller than electron inhabited ones.

The **Robotics** done at UTS involves programming and 'intelligence' simulation, i.e. programming to making robots more able to do stuff that even dumb animals do routinely, like not walking into or off things. UTS fields Robotic soccer teams and has represented Australia in this at international competitions!

They also do fairly detailed brain activity scanning at the UTS, but thankfully not of students during mid term breaks.

The routine SF treatment of **Nano Technology** usually serves up 'Grey Goo' plague scenarios which are arguably just updated re-telling of the Magician's apprentice story? Many of these stories frequently cross the technology / biology dividing line, nano tech escape or Andromeda Plague disease outbreak, what's the difference? An early on theme story is of course **Isaac Asimov's Fantastic Voyage**, a blood corpuscle scale adventure through in a submarine through a human body.

A routine SF treatment of **Photonics** is harder to pin down, it is too new and undeveloped a Science to have inspired much SF. It does crop up as a special effect from time to time when someone wants to take the observer on a trip through the 'data universe' this would have to be Photonics of some sort, i.e. the Matrix series of movies etc. One on theme story is arguably the movie Zardoz, where the computer that maintains the civilised part of the world of the future is a photonic computer, that lives inside a many faceted Diamond. Similarly the stories in the 'Slow Glass' Anthology by **Brian Aldiss** fairly exhaustively covers what might be done with photonics. Slow Glass being an invention that allows light received to be slowed and stored. These stories also include a fair serving of Nano technology.

The routine SF treatment of **Robotics** (after the early 'Giant Killer Robots from Space' phase of pulp SF) used to be investigations of philosophy and sociology, what it is to be 'human'. The threat to us of a socially inferior but physically superior underclass, free will,

programmed behaviour and freedom to respond. Of late this line of thought may have moved on to substitute 'replicants' biologically manufactured 'robots' for the mechanical men of yore. I expect it is a lot harder to make a meaningful story out of a string of computer language and a box of toy parts. Can't think of any 'Robotics as it is now' books or stories

John's view

UTS **Nano Technology** includes manipulating Proteins with light and Ethical considerations of the issue, Immunity and infection control?

Photonics, from Wikipedia, much to do with varying the speed of light to metres per second to allow manipulation, ahead of computing applications?

The University of NSW offers degrees in Photonics, (as opposed to Optics?).

- In **Robert Forward's** series of 'Roche Limit Books use is made of a 'Photo-optic Trippler'.

- In a story by **Greg Egan** surveillance dust motes are used. Comment made that East Germany was using radioactive particles (by definition fairly 'Nanno') to track dissidents, who and how frequently the met being readable by Geiger counter!

- Stem Cell therapy is 'nanno' technology, introducing transplanted Bone Marrow or genetically modified (corrected) cells to replace a patient's defective ones.

- The swallowable 'Video camera in a pill' for hard to reach (gastric) regions was discussed, a real life 'Fantastic Voyage'?

- **Bob Shaw's** Night Walk was mentioned, the gimmick of the story being 'glasses' that can listen in on other people (or animals?) eyes, effectively jumper leads on other's optic nerves, to allow a blind POW to make his escape with important Strategic information through an enemy world.

- Forms of Virtual Reality were discussed; this seems to be a Science Fictional Science that is most likely to put in an early appearance in all our lives as it is eminently commercializable

Ross Mitchell

Took a narrower view on Photonics as opposed to Optics than others present

The Topic for next month's meeting is:

Friday May 19, 2006

The Planet Mars in Science Fiction

Notes from the Saturday April 22, 2006 Sydney Mechanics School of Arts Institute Science Fiction and Fantasy book group meeting (11.30am - 1.00 pm)

Topic: No single topic, more of a general discussion SF&F in general and which books those present have read and enjoyed recently

Present were: Winsome Allen, David Bofinger, Belinda Coombes, Garry Dalrymple, Ann Devrell, Ann Pritchard, and Brian Walls

I had been unable to attend the previous meeting due to attending the Magic Casements Festival of Speculative Fiction.

A 423 bus into town took the best part of an hour to get from Clemton Park to George Street, so I arrived in town with about 40 minutes to fill in until the meeting. ? The city seemed fairly empty. On the way into town the bus had filled up with mostly Greek pensioners, emptying at Marrickville Station so perhaps there were big things happening for Orthodox Easter?

The meeting did not take place at it's usual venue, A 9 am to 4 pm day (all vegetarian food) symposium on (the Theosophy and Philosophy of) **Krishna Murty** was taking place, using all of the level 1 facilities. Instead our meeting was re-located to level 3, to an area used for Alcoholics Anonymous meetings (is some one expressing an opinion of some sort on SF fans?). Afterwards I began to wonder why they had not use the Theosophist's meeting rooms above the Adyar bookshop? Were there doctrinal differences or just a need for a larger venue? I will certainly keep this event in mind as a precedent for the next time I hear of discussions about a venue for a Sydney SF&F paycon!

- On arriving at level 1 at 11.30 to be met by crowds of ... well, Theosophists I guess, I attempted to locate the meeting. I was told 'to go and seek a higher level'. On hearing this I was of two minds, was this intended as gratuitous philosophical advice? Or was it intended as a helpful re-direction to the meeting's new venue. Nice enough people Theosophists, but after a couple of cycles of re-incarnation these people can get on your wick a bit.
- The '**Mills and Boone**' Romance book discussion group has folded, for lack of numbers.
- I distributed; Easter Eggs, Magic Casements Bookmarks, the April Program for the **Mu Meson Archive** and 'Notes in advance' for last night's April Sydney Futurian Meeting.
- Casualties were sustained opening one Easter Egg!
- **Brian Walls** gave a lengthy report on his impressions of **Con Jure**, the National SF convention held at Brisbane over Easter. Apparently it was a very good convention to attend.
- The **Con Jure** program book was passed around and found to be very well done.
- **Ted Scribner** (Sydney Futurian & Civic meetings) and **Edwina Harvey** have won a Ditmar for the Aust SF Bullsheets website.
- Also the current edition of ASIM was Edited by Ms Harvey, her issue of ASIM being advanced one, as the issue that was to precede hers ran into some difficulties.
- Some meeting participants are making the effort to read through all the books by **C. H. Cherryh** and **Robert Heinlien** that are held in the Mechanics Institute library, the intention being to gain a deeper understanding of those writers.
- How do you launch an Electronic book? Several opinions and discussion turned to **Margaret Attwood's** recent unsuccessful attempt to hold an 'electronic book signing, with Author and books separated by an ocean and signed by a mechanical 'waldo' connected to the author's pen over the internet!
- Several attendees had been reviewing books for the Library's newsletter. The Philosophy and purpose of doing these reviews were discussed.
- Opinion was expressed that for both **Robert Heinlien** and **Frank Herbert** there is point

where you should break off reading their sequential books, as freshness of ideas / quality of writing diminishes or repetition of characters and themes setting in.

- At recent Mechanics Institute elections several 'book loving' candidates (people that we know) were elected to important committees.
- At some point I would have introduced the rest of the news items discussed at last night's Sydney Futurian meeting.
- Programs for the **Sydney Writers Festival** were available. The (under) representation of Science Fiction and Fantasy writers at this event, two out of 'over two hundred', was discussed with tones of disappointment. The only SF&F writers we could see were **Garth Nix** 'Fantasy' and **Jackie French** (genre undisclosed).
- **David Bofinger's** need to leave early for the Infinitas Writers meeting (Parramatta) resulted in a brief discussion of all the Sfnal events that take place at the Infinitas Bookshop; A Writers Group, a Book Review meeting (one SF and one Fantasy), the SF&F discussion meeting and occasional SF&F published in the newsletter.
- An assertion that **Charles Manson** was inspired by **Robert Heinlien's** books (and Al Quaida by **Isaac Asimov's** Foundation Series?) lead to a discussion of the Predictive Value of SF (and Literature in general) or the role in inspiring / predicting seriously bad things. Techno thriller writers **Mathew Reilly** (and **Robert Ludlum**?) were mentioned.
- The May issue of The Fortian Times, the Cybermen issue was passed around.

The next Mechanics SF&F book group discussion meeting takes place on May 13 then two in June!

After the meeting I went down to level 1 (did this make me a 'Descended Enlightened Master'), with the intention of seeing if I could recognize any of the people there as having been met at Gladys' (the 99 year old Theosophist neighbour) funeral. I had hoped to see David Ritchie, one of two remaining survivors of the original 1952 Sydney SF convention.

After leaving the building I did some shopping, for Toothpaste, Batteries, dog biscuits, Chocolate and Anzac Biscuits, and was able to catch a 1.35 pm bus home, so no trip to the Reverse Garbage Truck this month for interesting re-usables.

Books Read:

Garry's Reading February, March and April 2006

29 Jan to 10 Feb, Mercedes Nights,
By Michael D. Weaver, 240 Pages © 1987.
Feb 04 & 05, The Education of Frederick Douglass,
By Frederick Douglass, 55 Pages © 1860?

08 and 09 Feb, Meta No. 2, Edited by Geneva Melzack, 36 Pages © 2005.

11 to 15 Feb, Heroin Annie & other Stories,
By Peter Corris, 266 Pages © 1984.

16 to 19 Feb, The Parafaith War,
By M. E. Modestitt, 471 Pages © 1996.

20 to 25 Feb, The Short Victorious War – Honor Harrington 3,
By David Webber, 376 Pages © 1994.

26 Feb to 06 Mar, The CEO of the Sofa,
By P. J. O'Rourke, 265 Pages © 2001

06 to 99 Mar, Alien Games,
By Jackie French, 167 Pages © 1995
ISBN 0 7322 5134 6

29 Jan to 10 Feb, Melbourne, (A Biography of William Lamb) By Philip Ziegler, 412 Pages © 1976, ISBN 0-00-217957-1,
Dewey Decimal reference 941.07'4'0924.

Mar 14 to 99, The Skeptic Autumn 2006, Vol. 26, No 1, Edited By Barry Williams, 70 Pages © 2006, ISBN 0726-9897.

Mar 99 to Mar 99b, The Fortean Times FT 208 April 2006, Edited by Michael D. Weaver, 80 Pages © 2006.

99 to 26 April, Cloud atlas, By David Mitchell, 529 Pages © 2004 ISBN 0-340-88278-3.

April 26 to 28, The Fortean Times FT 209 May 2006, Edited by Paul Sieveking 80 Pages © 2006.

29 April to 01 May, Eucalyptus,
By Ashley Hayl, 275 Pages © 2002.
ISBN 1-876631-26-0.

29 April to 01 May, (Dr Who) Data Extract Issue 184/April 2006 Edited by Brendan Jones et al. , 16 pages, ISBN 1445-159X.

Short Book Reviews

Mercedes Night, By Michael D. Weaver, 240 Pages © 1987. Second Bite review

Mercedes Night turned out to be a fairly good book, a bit of a mind warper, of the Delany mode rather than full on Philip K Dick. If I hadn't seen the © date I would have assumed that this was a story written during the late sixties or early seventies. There is a pointless war between the US and the USSR taking place in distant Europe.

Mercedes Night is a 'Vidstar', and an 'everything that a man might want' in a girlfriend' sort of a woman (think of some sort of fusion of Kylie Minogue and Nicole Kidman?). She is dating a US Presidential contender. The politics of the day are as corrupt as Mayor Daley's 1960's Chicago. A colonization fleet of hyperspace capable space ships is being prepared by the Bill Gates of the era. Mercedes' school friend's boyfriend has just created a first ever real live self conscious AI which is based on it's creator's mind pattern. Mercedes Night clones are created in great number and have their minds filled with Mercedes personality and memories. The Police force acting under government leader's instructions have commissioned the cloning as part of a scheme to destroy Mercedes boyfriend. Much destruction ensues, Clones and innocent bystander's massacred.

In the end the 'original' Mercedes joins the space ship and the surviving clone re-appears in public weeks after 'her' live to air public execution to spill the beans on and tip over a few apple carts. Fun adventures and some AI and Cloning issues explored.

Meta #2, Editor (for this issue only?) Geneva Melzack, © 2005, 36 pages, A newsletter issued for Interaction, the Glasgow Worldcon August 2005

This newsletter came to me through Zara Baxter, who is in some senses a UK fan trapped in an Australian's body (no single entendres intended, so don't think THOSE sort of nasty thoughts). I received it in exchange

for a copy of my ANZAPA newsletter – Transcendental Basenji Sermons and Enlightenment #17.

I read and enjoyed this newsletter over an evening after an afternoon of digging and soil sifting and shifting and while eating Kangaroo sandwiches for tea. It's quite good and I'd be interested in seeing more of them. Meta carries some serious comment / review type stuff, some Fan history stuff and has space for Letters of Comment. For me the major items were a reprint of a David Langford piece 'Getting Educated' and a reply / companion piece by Niall Harrison – 'Dreaming Spires', about their formative student life / SF fan experiences at Oxford University. Engaging but so very alien to the current Sydney Futurian experience, where we are trying to break into University life from the outside. I might get round to writing a reply to 'Getting Educated' and 'Dreaming Spires' at some point.

Heroin Annie and other Stories is an anthology of Cliff Hardy Private Eye adventures. With Cliff Hardy adventures you ride the battered Ford Falcon and watch over his shoulder as (usually) Sydney places an personalities act out the Drama, seldom a 'who dunnit' in the classic mould. I expect that I have by now read most of the Cliff Hardy stories. I buy them when I notice them at the second hand bookshops (Salvos & St. Vinneys) but would not consider myself to be a Crime or Cliff Hardy fan. I'm not sure whether I buy them to read as a 'Slice of inner city Sydney Life' and vicarious exposure to aspects of the Sydney Scene that I am unlikely ever to experience in real life, or whether my motivation is similar to that of reading SF, enjoyment of reading inversions of the plain and familiar.

My initial reaction to The Parafaitth War, was that it was taking the 'homage' to the Joe Haldeman's The Forever War a bit too far. The book has three identifiable sections, the first was about being the commander of a strong point that was periodically under siege by waves of an implacable and fanatical enemy. Boredom punctuated by terror. Then the next was an excursion to Pilot

training, then a repeat of the Boredom punctuated by terror scenario with space battles rather than dirt battles. The third section was preparing to go undercover as a secret agent / assassin. In retrospect I feel I should be grateful, longwinded and repetitious as the three sections were at times, I can see now that they could easily have been transformed into a trilogy, about the main character's life. Just like in Piers Anthony's 'Bio of a Space Pirate' series (Refugee to Statesman).

I got the point fairly early on that this was a meaningless and pointless war that was warping the societies at war and that the book was a search for a main character who could bring this War to an end by non-military means. This started to appear in about the final third of the book. The two cultures at War are broadly drawn from current American Culture. The low ecological footprint / sustainable development 'Para-Shinto' coalition (think California Eco freaks but without the beardy weirdy New Age stuff) and the 'Revenants of the Prophet' (think Mormon social structure combined with American Evangelical Fundamentalism). This allows an 'All in English' conflict and resolution. Rather long winded but an engaging enough story. I was even slightly disappointed to see used up and discard an intriguing Universe setup in just one book. There was a lot of potential for short stories to explore aspects of this Universe and the interactions of its separate cultures.

20 to 99 Feb, The Short Victorious War – Honor Harrington 3 is a rather dependable Military SF / Space opera. It's a given that Honor will triumph over adversities, no matter how deeply it is piled on. This must have been the Honor Harrington title that I had missed out on reading over the years, as this is the story where the People's Republic of Haven escalates past hostilities by openly declaring war. Honor also finds a boyfriend. When I read these books I my mental picture of Honor Harrington is of a younger Gina Davis. One telling aside comes from a minor but recurring character who explains that there are only two sorts of men in Honor's life. Those who are dumbstruck with awe at her

pro prowess and general goodness and those who are bitter and twisted Honor haters, who are convinced that her advancement is an affront to their 'rightful' entitlements. Adding to this shallowness, although about half of honor's crew and Universe are women, David Webber doesn't seem to pay much attention to their views of this Goddess of War. An enjoyable read and essential to filling in the reader of later adventures on the origins of the Manticore / Havenite conflict

The CEO of the Sofa, by **P. J. O'Rourke** is what passes for intelligent rightwing US political satire. I assume that P. J. O'Rourke is sort of a balancing figure to Hunter S. Thompson, although 'balance' in a non US sense is difficult to apply to what we see of the American political landscape. Their books can be a challenging genre for Non-US readers, as you can never be entirely clear in your head whether this stuff is being written by that rarest of things, an American political commentator who understands the concept of irony. To read it I constantly have to ask myself 'is he serious, or is he just being ironic, so I have to hold two opposing interpretations in my head at all times when considering what he has written. I found it a bit wearing to read, there is streak of cynicism in it a kilometre wide at times. The book itself is made up from numerous magazine articles, so it lacks co-hearence as you get a dozen unconnected bits of cynicism, commissioned for several different magazine's readerships. At times I found it difficult to justify ploughing through and reading this book from beginning to end. If I had encountered these stories say once a week in scattered journals I may have found it easier to get through. I found his other books such as 'American Republican Reptile' etc a more enjoyable and easier to read as they were focussed on a single issue or event.

My intention in buying and reading Alien Games was to ensure that there was no 'unsuitable' material in this book. On starting to read it however my concern became trying to assess the reading age that these stories are intended for. Pippi and the Apocalypse turns out to be about a girl and a horse, post apocalypse pony love! Always, was about a

boy who will develop time travelling in the future but is too thick to recognize that the strange boy who turns up on his doorstep is in fact his future son, a fact that his more intuitive mother grasps in an instant (Ya! Mum powers!). The Day the reader came, is a post-apocalypse story about the re-discovery of writing. The Stranger on the Beach, is set on an extra solar colony that has been out of touch with Earth for a very long time. A cryptic visitor arrives, he is an agent of Earth but his mission is quiet research rather than first contact. I found it the most thoughtful, as it explained why Earth would want to take re-contacting the space colonies very slowly. The Tale of the Genius, a very simple short short story, it is about how cats managed to enslave Mankind, pure fiction of course as readers of this journal will realize that historically Basenjis beat them to it by thousands of years. In Aileyn's Dragon, the 'rightful princess' heir to an estate in a medieval world (or is it a pocket universe?) finds a way through a cave and time/space rift portal type thingie and by bringing back a motorcycle and rider (a Dragon) secures her status, reputation and future inheritance. In A whisper from Earth, there is another cut off colony, viewers at a 20 light-year (and message pause) distance from earth and it's battle with 'The Cold Ones'. Eventually a bright kid (actually a galactic agent) uncovers who the Alien agent is that is at large within their small community. Finally Alien Games is about the children of two Space Survey parties encountering an intelligent rock species (that their parents are initially unable to detect / recognize) that is child like and playful.

Having read this book I'm not sure of the intended readership / reading age of it's intended market. My niece is going on twelve and I would assess most of the stories as being written to a 'ten and under' level. I might offer this to Janene with a request for her to read and review it, so as to bring her into the fannish family business.

The **Biography of Lord Melbourne** was at times a disconcerting read, firstly by the way the Ziegler constructs his narrative, an historical progression from the child William Lamb's family origins through to political career and death, but with lengthy and

frequent digressions up and down the time track, and secondly, because at nearly every page you encounter well known Sydney Streets, suburbs and pubs that were named after the members of the British ruling classes that make up the characters of this book.

Why read this book? Well as I got into it I discovered that it covered some pretty interesting times, from the instability of the Regency into the certainties of the long Victorian era. Melbourne's political significance starts as the Napoleonic wars end and Britain begins to industrialize from what was previously a mostly agricultural economy. During Melbourne's initial Prime Minister ship the first Trade unions form, Catholic Emancipation occurs, The 'Irish Question' rises, parliamentary reform starts to sweep away the feudal aspects of 'Rotten Burroughs' that were owned by landed potentates, the first political parties form and the primacy of the elected house of commons over the house of lords starts. A series of 'Dynamic' political changes occur, lead by very reluctant and most tentative reformers. The Australian colonies get barely a mention in this book.

The Potter's Field, by **Ellis Peters**, a Cadfael mystery. An unidentifiable woman's body is discovered in a field that has passed from one monastic institution to another, it might be one of two missing women, several possible but unlikely murderers might be responsible, a deceased Lord, Monks, travelling Fair traders etc. After much to-ing and fro-ing, a lengthy exploration of fourteenth century mores and contemporary history, the corpse is identified and it turns out not to have been murder after all. An enjoyable weekend long read but not something to get compulsive about.

Cloud atlas, by **David Mitchell** was short listed for the 2004 'Man Booker Prize' and the author has several ostensibly important awards to his name. The inside cover is chocka with blurbs from respectable sounding newspapers/magazines, but no SF reviewers even though the back cover allows 'it knits together Science Fiction'. Why? I very nearly chucked the book part way through the first sequence out of frustration due to a blatant piece of misdirection. Just

say 'The Chatham Islands' to any well read individual SF reader or Non-SF reader and the light goes on – The Maori colonization and genocide of the resident Moriori of the Chatham Islands, Maori learning and applying the 'lessons' of their British colonisers in less than a generation, the consummate example of confrontation and rebuttal of the nineteenth century European assumption that 'We can do it to them because our God and our civilisation make us superior to all the 'Lesser Races''. I spent twenty pages trying to locate a fictitious Island that had 'Indians', 'Cannibals' and Peat fired cooking and a Pacific Ocean frontage, before belated admissions of the natives being 'Maori' and 'Moriori' gave the game away.

Beyond that it was a very puzzling book to read and to me it was a very great surprise to see that it was nominated to win any sort of major award. Is the 'Helen Demidenko' effect (the irrational herd mentality high praise of not very original ideas) that common in the 'Real' literary world. I will however give the effort points for the ingenious idea of assembling six otherwise unsaleable novella length stories and by a slice and dice, forming them into a single 529 page book. The references between the six strands are fairly minimal and incidental, mostly to do with a character in each sequence having a 'Comet shaped Birthmark' on their shoulder/back. If this format is 'hot new stuff' then what is to come? Will Literary agents and Publishing houses in the future be able to raid their slush piles for a half dozen unsellable short-ish novels by different writers and with a minimal re-edit and splice (to add the superficial cross references) come up with a "Brilliant' new Author Frankensteined out of half a dozen 'nobodies'. The blend for this book is one part Anti-Nuke Techno thriller, one part 'Brave New World' esque SF, one part quirky nineteenth century boat adventure (like Darwin's Shooter), one part some 'SMS speak' about Ghod nose what and two parts of publishing / music industry farce. I hope that enterprising publishers will see this as a way of surreptitiously feeding their stocks of SF stories into 'Mainstream' books by stealth, publishing fat books with first one sixth SF, then a third and then eventually getting mundane readers to mainline on the intoxication of pure ideas SF?

I doubt it though. Stories broken into multiple tangentially referenced point of view narratives are not new to SF&F. Michael Moorcock was doing this with his Jerry Cornealius stories in the 1970s. What Progress then? For SF readers who encounter this book I would commend to you to read in isolation the SF strand, and ignore the rest of the book. An Orison of Sonmi ~451 borrows heavily from the British SF Classics 1984, A Brave New World and from the US (Make Room, Make Room!) Soylent Green and even heaven help us, from Logan's Run! Its novelty though is a post apocalypse society (dying amid the spreading post war wastelands) that is sort of a blend of North Korea and Fast Food corporation Franchises. It's borrowing of a large number of well known SF themes beats Attwood's attempts hands down. In fact even if you are not a big SF reader you would probably be better off reading all the parts of each individual story in sequence, and ignoring the order they are presented in the book, rather than taking the effort and concentration of working your way through the scattered parts of all six stories. Life is too Short!

Random Fannish Encounters

Encounter 1. On Sunday April 2, 2006 I went to the 'ABC Science Matters 'Natterers' picnic at Observatory Hill. The procedure for these events is to assemble at the band stand / rotunda in Observatory Hill at lunch time, settle in for a picnic and then hope that you haven't been gazumped by a Korean or Japanese wedding party. I arrived about one-ish after having detoured on the way in to check out what was new at the 'Reverse Garbage Truck' trade waste recycling and re-use centre. I bought and carried with me into town an Australian Museum banner, a 30 Litre container with lid and handles (for home brewing?) and three pairs of thongs all for \$15. I had hoped to get one of the Dinosaur ones, to hang up as a 'Natterers' attractor or to function as a Science-ish picnic blanket if we were gazumped. I handed out flyers for the next day's Astronomy meeting and tried unsuccessfully to observe Venus in daylight

(with the wind the sky was too white and fuzzy). One fairly well known Melbourne SF fan had flown up for the picnic and with other Natterers I was able to have a conversation about Science Fiction. Apparently for more than the cost of a US paperback and less than a hardcover you can order uncorrected proofs of soon to be published SF novels. Not cheap, but the convenience is not having to wait for the books to be printed and shipped etc. I was shown that you can fit about eighty of these books on a single 'Meg' card or hard drive. We also discussed Military SF, **Webber, Drake, Stirling, Feintuch** etc. and how these stories were so frequently dependent on past military history that they were close to being a form of 'Alternate History' as old battles were re-fought with new locations and technologies.

I received some offers of help with my homework for a Young Adult SF story I hope to write (featuring Bionic time travelling Killer Basenjjs, but in a nice way). Other 'show and tell' stuff I noticed was some interesting aerial views of the Brisbane Water (holiday) coastal region.

Encounter 2. Arriving at Central (from Bankstown) with the best part of an hour to fill before the Futurians @ UTS meeting I decided to settle in for a browse at the Basement bookshop. After chatting to one of the staff about how frequently Sydney SF fans visit this shop in wandered **Gary Armstrong** and **Peter Lupinski**, long time Sydney fans and impressive model/costume makers.

Peter is now living in Cessnock (better than living in infamy but only by degrees) Gary is still out at St Marys. Both visit Sydney only infrequently these days. We discussed old friends and acquaintances and recent encounters with other long time Sydney fans; **Edwina Harvey, Mike McGann** and **Ace Martin**. Gave them spares of stuff that I had prepared for tonight's meeting and we went our separate ways.

Encounter 3. After meeting the Foxes (John and Diane) in the UTS lobby area we went up to our meeting room and discovered that the room next door was occupied, by of all things,

SF Gamers! Had a pleasant chat about SF and gaming. All present seemed to be current UTS students. In talking to the bloke who seemed to be in charge, he said that he did not read a great deal of Science Fiction. He claimed that for him, after gaming since the age of nine or so, reading SF was arduous, as in trying to read SF books he finds himself automatically formatting characters and situations in the story so as to be able to be fitted into a game context. He also explained what he considered 'Classic SF', naming **Phillip K. Dick** which I found to be an interesting (and very valid!) opinion, coming from someone who stated that he doesn't read much SF. I gave out Easter Eggs to their half dozen or so blokes.

It seems they are just starting up a club at the UTS for 'board game' gamers (there is already a fairly well established electronic/computer gaming group operating at the UTS), we remarked on the coincidence of the two SF ish meetings coinciding for meeting date and venue. They seemed to be very short of equipment, The Foxes and I departed after exchanging offers of mutual help and assistance. Later that evening they were found to be playing some Dr Who ('Rose') episodes on an in-room projection set up.

They claimed to be unaware of the existence of the Sydney Dr Who group and its broad range of Whovian resources and contacts! Clearly this is a point for someone to follow up on, UTS SF fan boys, Dr Who and projection facilities at the UTS!

Encounter 4. Saturday April 29, 2006, the University of NSW Book Fair. This book fair occurs every second year, and is a big deal for book lovers and unfortunately book dealers. People donate their books, they are categorised, priced and displayed for sale over a long weekend usually near Anzac Day. For me it is a 'must attend', a more certain opportunity to see good (and bad) second hand books SF and other books at reasonable prices. This year I spent \$12 for 9 books and 2 records (\$2 each for an LP by Canadian group 'Heart' and Irish group 'Clannad').

The nine books were:

The Shape of further things, by **Brian Aldiss**, 206 pages © 1970

Galactic Empires 2, a 12 story Anthology Edited by **Brian Aldiss**, 296 pages © 1976

The Rebel Worlds by **Poul Anderson** (an Ensign Flandry story) 141 pages © 1969

The Rings of Saturn by **Isaac Asimov** (the fifth Lucky Starr adventure) 144 pages © 1958

Bug-Eyed Monsters, a 10 story Anthology Edited by **Anthony Cheetham**, 255 pages individual stories© from 1940 to 1968

Interzone The 1st Anthology, a 13 story Anthology Edited by **Clute, Greenland & Pringle**, 206 pages © 1985

Sudanna, Sudanna, by **Brian Herbert**, 251 pages © 1985

Andra, by **Louise Lawrence**, 191 pages © 1971 And

a TOR Double Header, In Another Country by **Robert Silverberg**, 120 pages © 1989 and Vintage Season by **C.L. Moore** 78 pages © 1946. The Silverberg Story was commissioned to compliment the C.L. Moore story.

Overall Impressions of the Book Fair

The 'Science Fiction' books and the Romance books were on adjoining tables, next to the 'Crime' books, just like the Mechanics Book readers meetings? From the books present on the table 'Science Fiction' was taken to include Fantasy and Horror books, so it might have better been described as 'Speculative Fiction' on this occasion?

I was surprised that well over half the books were SF, and the Horror books by far the greater part of the rest and greatly outnumbering the few and far between Fantasy ones. I found it puzzling why there were so few Fantasy books and apart from a few Donaldson and Julian May books there were practically no 'Trilogy' type Fantasy books at all!

I wonder if this is some reflection on the reading habits of the type of people who donate their books to a University, or if donors 'censor' which books they donate?

I amused myself by sorting books, trying to place together all the books by an Author. I also gave out about a dozen Magic Casements / Sydney Futurian bookmarks.

Going to the tally desk, my selection was scrutinized by the tally people and seeing that I had SF books there was soon a small scrum.

I gave out the last of my bookmarks to three of the Tally folk were 'into' SF, one was a retired Astronomer and his wife had even done part of her thesis on the representation of Animals in SF, at the University of Technology.

Basenji Tail Piece

So how much does a Basenji Eat?

During Mystique's recovery from Pancreatitis she was fed some imported, fat free and very bland tinned chicken preparation. After this the vet suggested that she be fed on a dry dog food made by Science Diet that had a 9% fat level.

Mystique would not willingly eat this except as a very last resort, i.e. she expressed her innate conservatism and distrust of the new by treating it as 'wrong food'. For her the 'Right Food' is Supercoat Light and Mature, the brand that her breeder fed. This comes in the form of smartie sized tablets or pellets and contains around 8% Fat, lower than the vet's Science Diet stuff.

Of late we have changed the way that we feed Mystique, from the 'dog' pattern of a single defined meal opportunity a day to a more 'cat' like feeding regime, where she has available to her in the sunroom a bowl of dry dog food and a bowl of water all day. Close to this we store additional Supercoat, up to 1500 grams of her food in a capped three Litre plastic milk bottle, and as her dish is seen to be empty it is re-filled from this bottle.

Some Preliminary figures for Mystique's consumption of Supercoat Lite and Mature March to May 2006 (a ~10 kg 14yo Basenji)

Date	Amount	No. days	Average
27 March	1467 g	18	81.5 g
14 April	1520 5	15.5	98.1 g
01 May	1500 g	TBA	TBA

Mystique also gets each day roughly 63g per day of treats/biscuits. The occasional bone or bread crust must also be included, although these are provided more as a distraction than

for their food value. A trend is shown in the above figures. I believe that it reflects her seasonal nutritional needs, i.e. the growth of a winter coat and a need to keep warm as the weather gets colder.

Previously she was fed in her sleeping crate each morning, but as Starlings were routinely coming into her cage to eat her food we became concerned at the health and infection issues of Mystique being in contact with bird lice, droppings and avian infections. In spite of the unlimited availability of food, Mystique has not appreciably fattened up and by noting the date and weight of periodic refills of the food bottle I hope to be able to more definitively monitor Mystique's future health.

Please adjust your reality filters back to 'mundane' settings, as you are now about to leave

Transcendental BS & Enlightenment No. 18.

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