

Transcendental B. S. and Enlightenment

Vol. 1 No. 19, June 2006

For ANZAPA issue No. 231 /232

Postal Address:

P.O. Box 2 Bexley North NSW 2207

Home phone (after 7 pm) 02 9718- 5827

Garry.Dalrymple@det.nsw.edu.au

Index or Newsletter Plan

Pages 1 & 2, Index, Editorial and notes on the auction of some of Kevin Dillon's effects.

Pages 3 to 6, Mailing comments to ANZAPA issues # 229 and 230

Page 6 & 7, Quark Strangeness and Charm in Sydney

Green Page – Some Weather?

Pages 7 to 9, Rainfall Nov 2004 to June 2006

Blue pages – Some Science?

Pages 9 to 11, Garry's tour of Sydney Observatory

Pages 11 & 12, The Sydney City Skywatchers annual dinner June 17, 2006.

Golden pages – Science Fictional

Pages 12 to 29, Notes on Sydney's SF meetings of May, June and July 2006

Pages 27 and 28, Books Read & Reviewed May to July, 2006

Pages 29 and 30, Basenji Tail piece

Editorial

No longer Sick as Two Dogs!

The dog is good! Mystique has just had a fourteenth birthday and her weight is stable at ~10 kg, i.e. although she has available to her all day all the (7% fat) dry dog food she can eat she has not put on any appreciable weight beyond her 'recovery' weight. Fourteen years of age is an 'impossible' age for some breeds of dog and a 'notable' age for a Basenji: but as she still has her hearing, eyesight and reasonable muscular condition, I'm thinking at

least three and possibly five more years, which I believe is record breaking country.

Explanation of Front and Back Covers

With the double-sided A4 format or the 'Keep it under ten pages' double sided A5 Format of this newsletter there will almost always be 'spare' pages. I fill these pages with whatever is to hand, NSW Basenji Journal one month, Dr Who Date or Astronomers Bulletin next month etc. The post-it note 'Not' is supposed to suggest that it is an end page rather than a front cover! Sorry for the confusion that this seems to have caused.

Garry's account of Graham Stone's News on the Auction of Kevin Dillon's Estate.

Graham attended each of the four advertised Monday morning auctions of Kevin Dillon's estate. The Auctions were described as 'Bric-a-brac' and Kevin's items were mixed in with many other lots. Mostly the lots were an unsorted 'box of books' (20 to 30 in each lot, SF or not?) these went for \$50 to \$100, although some lots were bundles of one SF magazine. On the day it was difficult to identify with any certainty which lots were from Kevin. Of the promised 1800 SF books, 4500 paperbacks, 1500 Magazines and Comics, it would seem that a large quantity of the Magazines and Comics were not present at the auction. **Attending were:** mostly the proprietors of Second hand bookshops and other book dealers. **Paddy McGuinness** (an old time fan according to Graham) was also seen to be attending. Graham bought only 3 or 4 lots, as he is currently reducing his collection at present. At the end of the four Mondays some lots still remained unsold, these were passed on to subsequent Monday actions. The Cornstalk bookshop was mentioned as a buyer of some of Kevin's books. **General comment** - according to police sources Kevin's effects filled **seven** garages. In Graham's opinion the items at these auctions would have been much less than a single garage's volume. The whole treatment of Kevin's effects reflects very poorly on the 'Duty of Care' of the Public Trustees Office and the Auction trade. The moral of this story is clear, if you collect stuff that you hope other people will also value, make sure that you make a clear will **Now!**

Oh here we go again, **Mailing comments**. When I get behind in these and come to have the time to read through these so many months after they have been written, printed, despatched, collated and re-mailed by Bruce it is an odd feeling to be reading them over and considering what to comment on. Like a lighthouse keeper reading a delayed and sea stained package of mail from home. What passing family travails should I offer commiserations on, knowing that by the time my mail arrives these travails should be long passed by?

One last editorial type thing, to save precious paper in this and future issues of TBS&E from now on

Rycwibnfcatt. = Read your contribution with interest but no further comments at this time.

Mailing comments on ANZAPA issues # 229

1- OBO 229 – Bruce Gillespie –

On the postal rates issue I maintain a dumb silence. **Rycwibnfcatt.**

2 - GNU Vol. 2 No. 1 – Derrick Ashby

Nice front cover image, not sure which breed of dog I would have to borrow to 'cheat' as you did. Mysti has at times such an air of feline grace about her. **Rycwibnfcatt.**

3 – Rhubarb, Another Fungus – John & Diane Fox - So many Cameras and so many Movies seen! **Rycwibnfcatt.**

4 – Intermittent Muse #12 – Michael F Green

Re yc on 'Down to Earth' strongly agree with the sentiment. Is intelligence a threat to the possibilities of relationships? Keep me posted on this, if you find a woman who is 'into' intelligence (and likes old dogs!) I might want to date her sisters! How much of your newsletter (and your life?) is concerned with your car! Don't have one myself, so life simplifying. **Rycwibnfcatt.**

5 – Intermittent Muse #13 – Michael F Green

Re your Blog Space – I have recently discovered an alarming personal milestone. The music they play in the supermarket now speaks to me! I must have at last reached the Supermarket chain's prime marketing age/income demographic. And so it goes.

Rycwibnfcatt.

6- Megatheriums for Breakfast 46 – David and Sue Grigg – To be read to the sounds of Skyhooks 'All my Friends are getting Married'. Re your Blogger comment, Pepys Diary by email – Why not a 'correspondent' from London 1940/45, or from the Darwin Defenders of 1941 onwards, as a way to make history more real and understandable to people today. **Rycwibnfcatt.**

7 – Necessity: Brothers in Arms 68 – Jack Herman – I defer to your opinion on the Cronulla Riots. As Globally covered riots go they were 'small beer' not a patch on the Lambing Flats efforts of yesteryear. **Rycwibnfcatt.**

8 - Palimpsest et palinoia – Kim Huett

Read with interest you account in depth of what seems to be the death of a business. It is a conceit of many that 'Small Business know how' is the antidote to all the failings of society and that is government services were run in a more 'Business-like' manner prosperity and a golden age for all would break out. On 'Movies from Books' I cannot understand why Edgar Rice Burrough's Barsoom hasn't been given a run yet. CGI in those monsters (Jar Jar Binks style!) against an Australian desert backdrop. **Rycwibnfcatt.**

9 - Kingdom of the Bland – Eric Lindsay

The Non-data stick accepting computer is running ancient software which is the reason for the incompatibility. An update in the future? Perhaps. **Rycwibnfcatt.**

10 – From the lair of the Lynx 34 – Lync

The Kirk's Alarm is about a doctrinal dispute among the Scottish Free Church. Dalrymple is a partisan of one side and holds views over the primacy of 'God the Father' over "God the Son", as the bible fails to mention what Jesus was doing while God (Father and Holy Spirit) were creating the world and dictating the Old Testament etc. Victoria is Victoria and NSW is Sydney oops I mean NSW. Selective and Agricultural High Schools are open to all to apply. Inequalities in reputation mean that (as with most big name Private schools in Sydney) children from all areas apply for some Selective and Agricultural High Schools so in some cases 'local' kids are out competed for positions at their closest Selective and

Agricultural High School by the best kid in the school from some distance away. For example my niece and only one other girl from her primary school were able to win a place at St George Girls, their closest Selective. With over 2,000 NSW public schools and 3,000 selective places, entry for Dux of school and a friend just isn't possible. The standard for entry is much higher than if there were still 'local catchment' areas for them and in practice these were routinely rorted, little Johnny's application giving Home, grandma's or dad's work address in order to be 'in zone' for the Selective. **Rycwibnfcatt.**

11 – Panopticon 33 – Dan McCarthy

'... not sure that you quite succeeded ...' Indeed, at the core of this story is the premise that the missionary **Had** got through, baptising the card giver, converting him into a Mormon Saint/God, so naturally his keyboard would have additional features. **Rycwibnfcatt.**

12 – Blithe Gravitas – Murray MacLachlan
Times long past, Football all I can say to this is **Rycwibnfcatt.**

13 – Land of 10,000 Loons – Jeanne Mealy

The thing with Bjo Trimble was very much long ago. In 1979 a group was formed in Sydney to promote the ideas behind the 'L5 Society'. We were seemingly offered the 'Sydney dealership' of an Australia wide L5 association, just before the guy that was the 'structure' of this network threw in the towel sent us a box of papers and in a short note said 'do what you see fit'. We decided that the best thing to do was to;

- A. Organize our Sydney L5 club first.
- B. Approach the US L5 Society to tell them that although their Australian had failed before our meeting could affiliate to it we were in agreement with their core principals and interested in working with them and the other National L5 Societies to form a credible multinational voice for 'L5', as soon as we had our house in order, with committees, constitutions and newsletters etc.
- C. While waiting for the US reply (and help!) we would include the people that had sent money to the 'Australian Chapter' in whatever we could put together.

Our view was, that given the demise of the US Society's (in name only) Australian branch it would be better to form an independent and substantial Australian L5 Society and then in conjunction with a much larger US Society be able to move to promote the idea of 'L5' as being an idea that could become the basis of a world movement, rather than it remaining just a 'Stars and Stripes in Space' kind of an idea. The American response was an incomprehensibly worded request to 'cease and desist'.

Bjo Trimble and Art Dula were two of their directors who we eventually met and discussed the matter with. Long after the dust had settled we heard back from the US that there was agreement that our proposal had had overwhelming merit. But the Directors of the US L5 Society felt it couldn't let down their Australian 'Chapter members' and the Australian 'Chapter members' felt they couldn't let down the US L5 Society by voting 'Yes' for an 'L5 Australia'. Things went nowhere after that, so another US L5 Society Chapter was formed / re-formed in Australia (with our resigned assistance) and it went on to make 'Space' boring and achieving no more than if they had operated 'Space Exploration' interest sections within existing large Australian Astronomy clubs. The 'National Space Society of Australia' (an 'International Chapter of the National Space Society) then went on to be 'mugged' by succeeding Space interest groups such like the Mars Society, for the role of the thinking person's Space interest group.

Essentially it all came down to a very bitter lesson in life. There were people who were more in love with the idea of being the (sole) local representative of the 'World's most important Space interest Group' (which lived in the US) than in taking part in a more modest 'Local' Space interest group that might seriously and credibly contribute to making those ideas part of national governmental policy. When I think about it now I become aware that it is essentially the same argument as for Creationism and against Evolution, i.e while Evolution may make sense and be a better explanation for stuff, it must be wrong coz if it is true then God didn't create me and I

really value my special personal relationship with God.

When a church burns down there will always be some parishioners who are so intoxicated with a sense of direct personal connection to their 'faith' that they will stone you if you make the sensible suggestion that instead of rebuilding the old structure all should join a congregation worshipping in a church down the road a piece. This is because in their eyes YOU are abandoning their God and placing yourself between them and their direct personal link to god, even if the move would mean more godly works and souls likely to be saved. For this 'evil' intent you are worse than the church's arsonist. **Rycwibnfcatt.**

14 – Ping! – John Newman **Rycwibnfcatt.**

15 - You Really Know You're Home When You Find a Wombat in Your Bed #103 – Cath Ortlieb Holy Hockey Sticks! **Rycwibnfcatt.** .

16 – OZ SF FAN #36 – Lucy Schmeidler
I hope I have explained the Front / Back Cover issue in the Editorial comments, as for the rest, just the product of 1 am collation on all available surfaces at home so that 32 copies can be in the mail at 2 am. A trip to the US well possibly some time soon, Japan (and China?) in 2007. I have enough holidays banked that I should/could do the Worldcons on an annual basis. Perhaps.

I can't claim that I react very well to poetry, but your newsletter has served to remind me that poetry can be SF, so I am inclined to include SF poetry in the SF writing competition I plan to hold with the 2006 Sydney Freecon.

17 – Ytterbium 77 – Alan Stewart
Quite a few respectable (if newish) SF books read. I should read more new SF, but who can resist those enchanted bright green eyes of second hand SF at opportunity shops and fetes for \$1 a book. Nice Tickets. Have they got quotes to fix Federation square yet, all those re-alignments to do! **Rycwibnfcatt.**

18 - Interstellar Ramjet Scoop – Bill Wright
Um Lighthouse inside a harbour or is that colossus getting ready to jump on a boat that is LEAVING the harbour? How much of what remains of Sydney's early SF life? Who can

say? Bruce and Elaine's place seems well set up for a comfortable and relaxed fannish life. I have to fight to my own fannish inclinations to shift more SF stuff into the Garages. The door issue was partly resolved at Eulabah Avenue just after the advent of Ben the first Basenji. The back screen door has a hole for cat flap! This does however move the wrong side/right side question to the lounge room door, consequently most doors are left 'basenji snout wide' open so Mysti can come and go on her mysterious rounds. **Rycwibnfcatt.**

19 – Les Chattes Parties 81 – Sally Yeoland
The Goblet of raging Hormones – Harry Potter Movie has made an impact on you. Haven't seen it yet, I fear Movie theatres play movies far too loud for my comfort. I usually wear muffs (20 Decibel rated) construction worker earmuffs. To do something about Kevin's Death I am going to try to hold an 'Old fans / New fans' Dinner after the November Freecon, and to try to make it an annual event. I feel it is better to renew old ties over a meal and a drink rather than at future funerals. To get another dog after Mysti will be difficult. With only the two of us at home and my mother 'getting on', another older basenji or pair would be what we prefer as I/we cannot make the fifteen-year commitment that getting a pair of pups would involve. Amongst other things, I will have to get a car and a Drivers license simply to get around to the places where the basenji breeders live, or to go on extended pound crawls to locate my next basenji. Basenji acquisition may require much legwork, or profit from other's misfortune (Basenji owner going into a nursing home, needing to re-home their dog/s). If only I had a basenji tolerant partner and a couple of kids to play with them, I could have a perfect life, just buy a pair of pups and raise my own set of basenjies.

Mailing comments on ANZAPA issues # 230

1- OBO 230 – Bruce Gillespie –
Any proposed regime that attempts to deliver quantifiable 'fairness' in re-setting ANZAPA membership rates to reflect mass contributed etc. threatens to get bogged down in complexities that can only further burden the

administrator charged with keeping score of who is over or under their permitted weight / number of mailings.

2- BRG 45 – Bruce Gillespie –

Comments to 14 & 15, Blair is now I believe a retired gentleman of leisure, As for continuing fannish contact, I fear he has turned to the dark side, more frequently seen at the Sydney Gaming Gaming Centre (Burwood) than crossing the threshold of a SF bookshop. I share you and Elaine's misgivings about Cosmos, I tend to support it more for the magazine it might become than for its current qualities.

Mike McGann's only SF&F manifestation these days is to go to the nearly monthly Dr Who days to sell his T-shirts etc.

Comments on 16 – The Electric mower is much more convenient to use, the trick is to lunge in and out with the cord at right angles to your mowing 'strike' and to hang the excess cord Toga-like about your neck and shoulders. Not hard as to do in practice as it is to describe. We made you an honorary Sydney Futurian in the hope that this will prevent you from ever coming to Sydney! Keep cranking out the magazines and articles please!

3 – Necessity: I'm a Believer Week 69 –

Jack Herman

Read your contribution with **Rycwibnfcatt**.

4 - Kingdom of the Bland – Eric Lindsay

I checked out the specialist hat shop in the Angel Arcade and found that its range was inferior to that of the hat section at Gowings. **Rycwibnfcatt**.

5 – From the lair of the Lynx 35 – LynC

- Previously I sold Astronomy posters. Realizing that I earned about \$100 a day five days a week and earning more than I was spending I eventually decided that my 'free time' was worth \$, more than the poster selling could return. I now read, write etc. and some times do stuff in the garage. My creative hours used to be after 4.30 to 7.30 pm some nights of the week at work, after working hours, now I can spend hours during Saturday and Sunday on fannish or non-fannish things. Things to do do tend to expand to fill the time available, but I feel I am achieving something, sometimes. Might consider doing TAFE courses sometime, but not a Uni Degree.

- I believe that a solvable SODUKO may be formed with just 17 numbers (out of 81!).

- Hope things work out well with the High School selection, see my comments elsewhere about NSW Selective and Agricultural High Schools. **Rycwibnfcatt**.

6 – Panopticon 35 – Dan McCarthy

Rycwibnfcatt.

7 – Give us a clue – Murray MacLaughlan

Good heavens, someone else writing about SF meetings! **Rycwibnfcatt**.

8 – Land of 10,000 Loons – Jeanne Mealy

Rycwibnfcatt.

9 – Ping! – John Newman

On becoming a 'Hat Person' wearing glasses after briefly experimenting with contact lenses (1985 to 1987?) I decided that rained on 'front panes' was something I was no longer prepared to put up with, also dog walking at night I soon discovered that blinding car headlight (and Streetlight) glare could be avoided by dipping your brim. Also, both my Rhead Grandfather and Father were frequently at the doctor's surgery to have suspicious patches burnt off so I decided that it was better to choose to routinely wear a hat than to have to routinely check every day for possible pre-cancerous spots. With my 'Scots-Irish' skin type, wearing a hat won't prevent skin cancer, but it will slow it down a lot. Must do something about the squadron of my father's planes (complete and partly built) that are hangared in the garages **Rycwibnfcatt**.

10 - You Really Know You're Home When You Find a Wombat in Your Bed #104 – Cath

Rycwibnfcatt.

11 – The Unfortunate Rhinos – Spike

Rycwibnfcatt.

12 – Siyalandra 10 – Nick Shears

Rycwibnfcatt.

13 – Anzapa 770 – Roger Sims

Mormon Baptism Practices – I suspect that the Mormon Church uses the 'out' of leaving it up to 'individual conscience'. As Sir Arthur Conan Doyle has Sherlock Holmes observe,

these Mormons are devious dissemblers on matters of faith and doctrine, if in doubt, better check your keyboard for a 'smite' button.

14 – Quod Vita Persevero – Gerald Smith

Dear Gerald, I cannot put myself in your place and understand the loss that you have suffered, I do however rejoice at your joy in finding someone new. I felt rather bad at not being able to attend the service for Karen as I had for Kevin Dillon's service. I was relieved that the Foxes were able to attend and give us a report at the Sydney Futurians meeting.

15 - Interstellar Ramjet Scoop – Bill Wright

Yes Nippon in 2007, splendid opportunities, especially if some connection can be made with the management of Kinokuniya. I intend to expend some effort to that effect but I foresee some 'cultural' difficulties in communication, with their local shop management, not the Tokyo end.
Rycwibnfcatt.

16 – Les Chattes Parties 82 – Sally Yeoland

Curious that you should experience transport difficulties during the Commonwealth Games. In Sydney for the Olympics the streets were almost deserted and other public transport ran without delays. At the time my morning commute was along the main public transport corridor and I experienced some of the fastest daylight home-to-work I had ever experienced, on the other hand, lesser Sydney events, like The Royal Easter Show and Football etc. at Homebush frequently cause delays commuter and discontent.

Reyc to Jeanne Mealy, the 'unstaffed Smoking ban' in practice leads to about half waiting area being reserved for the non smoking (85%) majority and the other half of the platform being used by that fraction of the smokers who insist on lighting up. If you want 'Smoke Free' you will have to chase the most windward smoker and stand just up wind of him / her, changing position as the wind direction changes. This 'sheep dogging' of smokers is about all you can do in the face of institutional apathy. The really pathetic thing is that railway police chase and fine fare evaders, some of whom are destitute, most of whom make an effort not to stand out by obnoxious or offensive behavior. In NSW the un-enforced smoking fine regime quotes

amounts that are actually double those charged for fare evasion, and as by definition, smokers have money to burn. Lets clear the air and turn those discarded fag butts into more new railway sleepers and train carriages I say! **Rycwibnfcatt.**

Quark Strangeness and Charm in Sydney? - Travel Notes

1. **Near Accident** - Arrived at Bankstown Station after work to see two slightly rough looking middle aged blokes struggling to get up from the railway tracks onto the platform, agitated commuters watching on with concern and a particularly agitated young man at the centre of a group of friends. Was this fare evasion by extreme and highly visible means? I.e. by bypassing the station's barriers? A few minutes later I saw a middle aged or seemingly frail and elderly woman being steadied / helped to walk along the tracks for the length of the platform by a Railway station staff member. A search for valuables dropped under a train?

Eventually I overheard one of the two men who had been helped to climb from the tracks to the platform explaining and re-assuring the young man that he was not to worry, no offence taken, as 'We had been drinking with her all day'. I.e. the woman had collided with the young man and ended up falling from the platform to the tracks.

2. **'Resourcefulness'** - Ahead of last month's Infinitas meeting I got off the train I hung back and followed a young woman off the platform. She was wearing all black and dragging a large musical instrument case (Cello?) with a wheel. I had in mind being on hand to offer her my help if she needed it to get up the steps or through the ticket barrier etc. She stopped at the top of the steps / escalator and went down on one knee apparently to re-tie a shoe-lace or something. What she was actually doing was receiving a train ticket passed to her by a boyfriend who was outside the railway station, through a small gap (four centimetres) between the waist high fencing of the stairway and the platform. This month there was a ten metre long section of temporary fencing outside this part of the station to prevent this sort of opportunity!

3. **Also seen at Parramatta Station**

I got a bit lost at Parramatta Station. What was once a few above ground platforms linked by staircases and underpasses has now become a vast concourse that is a commercial space that opens out into at major shopping complex and bus interchange. Couldn't see the sky so I got a bit disoriented. I chanced to meet a group of shoppers / travelers. Some A youngish bearded bloke in a wheel chair, several women with fold up baby strollers etc and a few small but walking children. They had stopped in the middle of the concourse to discuss where to go next. As children do, one small boy was bored so he started to play with his toys then and there. The family group were as they say, 'of Arabic appearance', with a bearded bloke in the wheel chair and several, head-scarfed and trench coated women. Not a big deal in Multicultural Sydney, but the little boy, rolling around on the tiled floor of the concourse was playing with a full sized plastic AK 47 or similar! That is playing sniper with a replica gun under the inevitable gaze of surveillance cameras at a major public transport interchange. The toy gun was about as long as the kid was tall. I think someone is in urgent need of a quiet talk about appropriate children's toys and appropriate behavior in public.

4. The most Polite five minutes in Sydney – Every morning at Campsie Station a few minutes of extreme politeness breaks out, it's 'after you, No, I insist, after you', outside the two ticket issuing machines and the human ticket seller lines. This phenomenon takes place from about 8.50 to just before 9 am. The reason for this is the 'Magic five Minutes'; at between 8.56 or 8.58 the ticket machines switch to 'after 9 am off peak rates'. I.e. my daily \$5.60 return ticket drops to \$3.40 and as trains leave Campsie for Bankstown at about or after 8.40 and 8.50 (to 9.05) and 8.55 (to 9.10) it is possible to in effect spend the differing \$2.20 for the privilege of waiting 20 plus minutes on the platform. Miss the 8.40 and you might as well wait near the ticket office / machines for the 8.57 ish 'discount' to kick in, you'll not get to work any sooner.

Rainfall recorded by Garry Dalrymple November 2004 to June 2006, at 1 Eulabah Avenue, Earlwood NSW 2206

02 November 1.55 mm
03 November 0.22 mm
08 November 2.74 mm
09 November 0.71 mm
10 November 2.61 mm
12 November 9.29 mm
24 November 0.35 mm

November Total 17.47 mm – Nov. Average 82 mm
Difference -65 mm, or 21.6 % of usual.

02 December 0.88 mm
03 December 0.80 mm
04 December 0.10 mm
09 December 0.22 mm
11 December 15.92 mm
12 December 0.1mm
13 December 13.54 mm
24 December 0.1mm
25 December 3.1mm
27 December 4.64 mm

December Total 39.18 mm – Dec. Average 78 mm
Difference -39 mm, or 50.2 % of usual.

2005

04 January 1.548 mm
17 January 3.98 mm
21 January 10.17 mm
23 January 2.787 mm
24 January 2.92 mm
25 January 8.935 mm
26 January 0.62 mm
28 January 0.1 mm
29 January 0.1 mm
30 January 0.1 mm
31 January 0.1 mm

January Total 31.36 mm – Jan. Average 104 mm
Difference -73 mm, or 30.2 % of usual.

02 February 13.71 mm
03 February 23.44 mm
10 February 0.354 mm
20 February 9.95 mm
21 February 26.54 mm

February Total 73.994 mm – Feb. Average 117 mm
Difference -42 mm, or 63.2 % of usual.

03 March 0.885 mm
04 March 2.48 mm
05 March 0.71 mm
17 March 2.04 mm

18 March 4.87 mm
 22 March 0.1 mm
 23 March 25.65 mm
 24 March 4.2 mm
 25 March 0.10 mm
 29 March 0.13 mm
 30 March 0.66 mm
 31 March 6.32 mm

March Total 48.14 mm – Mar. Average 135 mm
Difference -87 mm, or 35.7 % of usual.

04 April 1.86 mm
 12 April 1.55 mm
 13 April 1.86 mm
 21 April 1.77 mm

April Total 7.04 mm – Apr. Average 129 mm
Difference -122 mm, or 5.8 % of usual.

02 May 0.26 mm
 14 May 0.13 mm
 16 May 0.79 mm
 17 May 9.73 mm
 18 May 6.73 mm
 19 May 0.71 mm

May Total 17.56 mm – May Average 121 mm
Difference -103 mm, or 14.5 % of usual.

12 June 0.53 mm
 13 June 0.22 mm
 23 June 0.10 mm
 24 June 1.77 mm
 25 June 5.53 mm
 26 June 7.96 mm
 27 June 3.76 mm
 28 June 0.84 mm
 29 June 2.57 mm
 30 June 10.84 mm

June Total 34.12 mm – June Average 131 mm
Difference -97 mm, or 26% of usual

01 July 35.39 mm
 (104% of June's total rainfall and 93% of July's total!)

09 July 0.66 mm
 10 July 0.48 mm
 11 July 0.53 mm
 13 July 0.75 mm
 15 July 0.18 mm

July Total 37.99 mm – July Average 100 mm
Difference -62 mm, or 38% of usual

05 Aug. 0.35 mm
 20 Aug. 0.66 mm

August Total 1.01 mm – August Average 81 mm

Difference -80 mm, or 1% of usual

02 Sept 0.18 mm
 04 Sept 3.54 mm
 10 Sept 1.11 mm
 12 Sept 0.14 mm
 17 Sept 4.42 mm
 18 Sept 0.58 mm
 20 Sept 2.30 mm
 27 Sept 2.79 mm
 29 Sept 4.25 mm

September Total 15.06 mm – Sept. Average 69 mm
Difference -54 mm, or 22% of usual

08 Oct. 2.83 mm
 12 Oct. 0.22 mm
 13 Oct. 0.31 mm
 17 Oct. 4.87 mm
 18 Oct. 0.53 mm
 30 Oct. 0.58 mm
 31 Oct. 8.49 mm

October Total 17.83 mm – October Average 79 mm
Difference -61.2 mm, or 22.6% of usual

01 Nov. 3.36 mm
 02 Nov. 1.15 mm
 05 Nov. 0.58 mm
 08 Nov. 9.11 mm
 09 Nov. 0.22 mm
 11 Nov. 0.13 mm
 16 Nov. 1.77 mm
 17 Nov. 0.18 mm
 21 Nov. 0.93 mm
 22 Nov. 0.10 mm
 23 Nov. 2.70 mm
 24 Nov. 0.10 mm
 29 Nov. 11.28 mm
 30 Nov. 13.49 mm

November Total 45.1 mm – November Av. 82 mm
Difference -36.9 mm, or 55% of usual

01 Dec. 0.09 mm
 07 Dec. 2.08 mm

December Total 02.17 mm – December. Ave. 78 mm
Difference -75.83 mm, or 2.8% of usual.

2006

02 January 4.07 mm
 05 January 4.78 mm
 12 January 7.48 mm

14 January 0.44 mm
 16 January 2.34 mm
 17 January 8.18 mm
 18 January 3.58 mm
 19 January 2.48 mm
 20 January 1.37 mm
 25 January 0.20 mm
 31 January 0.44 mm

January Total 35.36 mm – Jan. Average 104 mm
 Difference –68.6 mm, or 34 % of usual.

14 February 0.75 mm
 17 February 4.07 mm
 20 February 0.10 mm
 27 February 24.46 mm
 28 February 0.88 mm

February Total 30.26 mm – Feb. Average 117 mm
 Difference –86.7 mm, or 25.9 % of usual.

03 March 0.18 mm
 09 March 0.10 mm
 16 March 1.19 mm
 17 March 0.53 mm
 18 March 0.09 mm
 21 March 0.36 mm
 22 March 0.75 mm
 23 March 0.84 mm
 30 March 2.03 mm
 31 March 1.02 mm

March Total 7.09 mm – Mar. Average 135 mm
 Difference –127.9 mm, or 5.25% of usual.

19 April 0.10 mm
 20 April 0.10 mm

April Total 0.2 mm – Apr. Average 129 mm
 Difference –128.8 mm, or 0.16 % of usual.

12 May 0.49 mm
 15 May 3.36 mm
 16 May 0.04 mm
 23 May 0.75 mm
 24 May 1.81 mm
 25 May 0.09 mm
 31 May 1.99 mm

May Total 8.53 mm – May Average 121 mm
 Difference –112.5 mm, or 7.05 % of usual.

Blue Pages Some Science

Garry's Peculiar Sydney Observatory tour notes – Monday June 5, 2006

Sydney Observatory has been part of my life since about 1980 when I joined the NSW Branch of the British Astronomical Association (formed in 1894 and currently continuing as the Sydney City Skywatchers). Sydney Observatory and the hill on which it stands have been part of Sydney's life for much longer, with use being determined by Geography and the needs of the time. It is worth thinking about Where and What Observatory Hill. It is a high piece of land close to and overlooking the narrowest part of Port Jackson (Sydney Harbour) and with clear lines of sight across the Harbour East and West (even unto the Blue Mountains!). Cannon fire from the top of this hill could cover most of the early settlement at Sydney Cove.

The first Observatory of the initial Settlement of Sydney was down the hill a bit, underneath where the Harbour bridge span shades at the moment. It was built by Lieutenant William Dawes, a Naval officer who had been specially trained by the master of the Royal Observatory Greenwich to be able to report on the Southern Skies. Dawes Astronomical work was frequently interrupted by his co-option to work as a surveyor and maker of maps for the colony. Measuring the new land was a very important role of colonial government and a major public application of Science.

Between the Observatory and this hill was the Gunpowder magazine and barracks, hence at the foot of Observatory hill you will still find the garrison church. This vicinity was very much the Military 'High ground' of the colony, so much so that if you care to walk around the site you will still see the traces of walls and ramparts of the Old Fort. The observatory was built within its walls.

The other great early colonial obsessions, Food and Punishment, also made their mark on the vicinity. In front of the Observatory there were several windmills, near enough to the port to conveniently grind imported grain straight off the docks into flour for the colony's daily bread. Behind the Observatory you will

find what was the early colony's Gallows hill, the ultimate sanction that backed up colonial authority in a penal colony that was early Sydney.

The construction of the Observatory itself took place during a period of economic optimism denominated by fortunate Geology. The years of economic prosperity fueled by the discovery of Gold in NSW and Victoria in the early 1850s and the resulting influx of people, skills and money to NSW.

What few people consider is that an Observatory on this site was also enabled by military technology and geopolitical developments half a world away, viz the Crimean War. During this war Russian expansionism and France was now an ally, so the old fort on Observatory hill was redundant for the defence of Sydney. Also, Military technology had delivered guns that could fire much greater distances so the defence of Port Jackson could be better achieved by new gun batteries placed at North and South Head.

The Observatory Building

The Observatory was built in an Italianate style, which was highly fashionable at the time for important buildings. Very similar architecture can be seen in the oldest part of Sydney University, Callan Park (insane Asylum at Rozelle) Sydney Grammar (Boys High School) and also in the oldest parts of the Australian Museum (just beside Sydney Grammar).

The Observatory consists of a two-story complex containing a residence for the Astronomer, a tower and two domes on the Western side. If you care to read the building you can determine the Observatory's main intended functions are by looking at the building itself. At the top of the tower is a time ball, visible to mariners tied up in the harbour below. It dropped at 1 pm each day and provided a time service, allowing mariners to re-set their chronometers, accurate time being essential for safe navigation in the Pre-GPS era. Next, between the residence/tower and the domes is the Transit instrument area. With windows view North and South this instrument was used for the repetitious

observation of stars passing overhead in order to more accurately determine the exact location of the Observatory. In the 'Garden' you will see a peculiar pyramidal gazebo like structure. This was used in surveying, the very accurately known position of this one site anchoring all the other trigonometric reference points established over NSW.

During the Early decades of its life the Observatory this positional Astronomy was vitally important to the State of NSW. The NSW rail system was being laid out and it would be embarrassing if railway lines started at different ports/towns failed to meet in the middle or if 'about a hundred miles to Newcastle turned out to be a few miles too short! The fact that there are two domes is a bit of an embarrassment. The South dome was planned, approved and constructed, without anybody realizing that it's view to the East was entirely blocked by the Tower! Evidence of a Northern Hemisphere mindset, administrators still thinking of England as home? The Second and more useful Northern was built only after the first Astronomer was in residence. Astronomy as we know it, the study of Planets Stars and Galaxies etc. were subordinate to the more economically important applications of Astronomy to Navigation and Time services.

The Observatory was operational during the early years of photographic Astronomy (and Light Pollution was not as great a problem as it is now). Sydney Observatory took part in the first full photographic Survey of the Sky, observing a sizeable part of the Southern Sky and determining accurate positions for thousands of Southern Stars. These positions to serve as guide positions for exploring interesting fainter celestial objects.

Some other points of interest around the Observatory and its grounds;

- The Dust lanes of the Harbour Bridge
- Lights of the Port and office buildings left on all night.
- Wild life, Bats, Birds, Cats, Possums and Rats can be seen nightly.
- UFOs seen frequently (birds lit from below)
- The Rocks 'Ghost Tours' can be found wandering near by at night.

- Green Flash observed at Sunset from the Astronomer's residences balcony
- The memorial tree planted to honour the memory of Frank Traynor a BAA NSW past President and Observatory Volunteer. He was on the BAA NSW committee when I first joined. He went for a bush walk one day and has never found. He was sorely missed by both club members and Observatory employees and volunteers.
- The Bunya Pine Tree in the grounds, the trunk looks a bit like that of the famous Wollemi (Dinosaur) Pine, but it drops football sized 'cones' each with dozens of space ship shaped seeds. Aboriginal ceremonies were based on this annual food source.
- The Observatory ran out of official function in 1970s, plans were for it to become a 'Museum of old Furniture'.
- 'Improvements', the replacement of the original grounds with a bitumen car park seriously stuffed the building. Ground water using the porous sandstone of the Observatory building as a 'wick', bringing vigorous blooms of mould in summer!
- During WW2 fuel shortages and War-time Black outs allowed the Observatory to get some serious observing done, winding back decades of Light pollution.
- The Observatory for some years had a field station up near Turramurra, Sydney's Northern Suburbs. It was close to the Dalrymple State Forrest.
- The Lands Department (Bridge Street) has a big Dome on its roof. It had a telescope to observe when the Sun was overhead.
- The Observatory is now an 'Astronomy Museum' and ironically it now has the best ever telescope in its history.
- Also on site are the bungalows, previously occupied by the NSW Meteorological service and a private residence for some years, now office accommodation.

The Sydney City Skywatchers Annual Dinner, Saturday June 17, 2006 at the Orient Hotel

This year the Annual Dinner was held at the Orient Hotel, a short walk from last year's venue. Attendance was down a bit from last

year possibly as this night was closer to the Winter Solstice and therefore expected to be cold and or wet.

I asked my mother to accompany me on this occasion as I felt that 'getting out' would be good for her.

Present were; Mary Ann Arnott, Elizabeth Budek, Michael Chapman, Elizabeth Cocking, Garry Dalrymple, L. Betty Dalrymple, Nick and Mrs Lomb, Monty and Rosa Leventhal and Nick Robinson.

Apologies were received from:

The Plummers, Shirley Rae & Harry Roberts
Among the many topics that were discussed around the dinner table were;

- The use of CCD cameras among amateur observers, once only accessible to academic Astronomers and made as a one off to specific observing projects, now inexpensive and available at most electrical goods suppliers.
- Monty received a bottle of Red in recognition of the excellence of his observing over the past year and its contribution to raising the profile and reputation of the club.
- By being unavailable for several successive committee meetings I seem to have missed out on experiencing an occasion of rare drama in the club's life. During the May members' projects night, two musical presentations were the catalyst for one SCS member being asked to leave and another cautioned to moderate her behavior. An instance of lost souls being attracted into the orbit of Space and Astronomy interest groups. Much stranger things happen in the workplace of course.
- The Restaurant seems to have used the same decorator as for the residence part of the Observatory.
- George Smith and large Sundials were discussed. Committee members having during their working life encountering people who had experience of the 'other side' of the affair of the 'Big Bermagui Coastal Sundial' project.
- The search to identify guest speakers for

our next session meetings.

- Instance of Snow, Frost and cold experienced in and around Sydney. Snow in Frenchs Forrest and Balmain on rare occasions as well as the easier to accept Blue Mountains and the top levels of Sydney CBD taller tower buildings.
- Mike Chapman was 'Presidentially' draped by a waitress in a massive Toga / nappy-like napkin before being given the vast seafood platter he had ordered.
- I discovered that Nick Lomb had grown up very close to where I live, even attending the same schools as I had, namely Clemton Park Public School (Primary) and Kingsgrove North High School.
- A large card featuring Sydney Observatory was sent around to gather the names and signatures of all present.

In order to let the Adults know when it was time to go home, the management had employed a loud 'rock' band. The noise of which could be heard through the floor under our feet.

We paid up and left at about 9.30, wending our separate ways home under clear moonless skies. Mother and I walked to Circular quay where we caught 9.50 423 bus. We were home well before 10.45 pm.

Mother had quite enjoyed the night out and the opportunity to speak to 'younger' people.

End note – The dinner bill for what mother and I had ordered came to \$68.50 (not counting \$7.50 for a small Strong bow Cider!).

Next day, for Sunday lunch, the whole family went to the local club to celebrate my mother's birthday and we paid very nearly the same for five adults and one child!

Yellow Pages Science Fiction

Notes on the Sydney SF&F

Meetings of May 2006

Notes from the Tuesday May 02, 2006, Sydney Fans at the pub meeting, Civic Hotel, Corner Pitt and Goulburn Streets Sydney CBD.

Present were; Chris Barnes, Garry Dalrymple, Mark Philips, Roland Sinn and Stephen Szabo.

Honourably Absent: Zara Baxter (just returned from overseas and snowed under with ASIM related commitments)

I arrived at closer to 7 pm than 6 pm as I had spent some time after work finalizing a 40 page issue of TBS&E. I was able to present an advance copy to all present. Much of importance presumably transpired in my absence? **Roland Sinn** is the 'Roland' referred to in TBS&E 18. Due to a Catholic school education Roland has heard all the permutations of 'Sin' jokes and puns. I'm sure I have met him in the past, but can't figure out when or where. **Stephen Szabo** is known to me, but is a new face at this meeting, I had worked alongside him for some years at the properties section of 'Met East', when Education services were regionally organised. Stephen has recently made his escape from the education department and found a job in 'Heritage' through a fannish interest in Heraldry and other similar to SCA interests. Stephen and I caught up on names from our common past. In a classic Sydney fannish manner, Stephen has gravitated towards a Mortgage, a Marriage and the Blue Mountains, surely home brewing and bookshelf building can't be far off?

News and Comments overheard

I cannot report on what transpired before I arrived, but a major news item I observed was release of a Second volume of 'The Year's Best Australian SF&F'. This book has the expected stories and also some quite useful appendixes at the back, including lists of the best of the rest. I expect that in future years

these books will be of considerable scholarly interest for their overview role.

The 'Call of the Mountains' turned conversation more than once to Blue Mountains issues. Viz the state of local paper journalism, the Che Guevara issue and the correct distinction between 'Upper' Blue Mountains and 'Plains dwellers'. It was Gratifying and appropriate that Dalrymple Street is near one of the significant landmarks quoted in this debate.

Ted Scribner brought some news of his efforts toward a Blue Mountains relaxacon in October and also made some comment on the C. S. Lewis seminars that were taking place this week in Sydney, three different venues and three different types of audience apparently.

The gathering wound up at around 8 pm, with people going their separate ways. I took advantage of the nearby World Square Supermarket to invest in some frozen food items and \$7.98 per kg green bananas.

On an evening of Science Fictional matters it was comforting to note that the residents of World Square and adjoining Tower blocks give the vicinity a 'Blade Runner-esque' population, but not so crowded or untidy.

Notes from the Infinitas SF&F Discussion meeting of Thursday May the Fourth! 2006 (AKA International Starwars day)

Meeting at the Infinitas / Blokey stuff shop Parramatta, Topic: Dr Who

Present were: Darryl Addams, David Bofinger, Jacqueline Cadwgan, Henry Chatroop, Garry Dalrymple, Kurt Frank, Gabriel, Wil Kenedy, Charmain Spears, Brian Walls and Tim

News

Darryl showed us on a laptop the famous 'The internet is for Porn' animation, which was sort of in theme for tonight's topic. Several (Simpsons / Futurama) references to the internet were recalled during the evening, mostly to the effect that the innovative distribution of Pornography is still the 'bleeding

edge' of application of internet technology.

- **Ben Afflick** is rumoured to be cast for the Star Trek 'Starfleet Academy Days' prequel.

- The recent episodes of Dr Who screened in the UK have been so popular that 'Torchwood' may be moved from it's 'Adults Only' screening time to a more mainstream / family viewing hour? A Battlestar Galactica

prequel is being considered, 'Caprica' will involve four families and the Genesis of the Cylons?

'Snakes on planes' are set to be a new cultural icon.

JC – There is a Serenity convention on in Sydney this weekend, featuring **Jewel Staitte** and other actors used in **Joss Weedon's** other hit TV series.

HC – The success of the Da Vinci Code is to blame for plans for a miniseries being made of **Eric Van Danikan's** 'The Chariots of the Gods?'

- There are claims of Ancient Bosnian Pyramids by an amateur Archeologist. This is thought to be unlikely as the site does not allow easy Mothership parking.

- Captain Scarlet is on ABC2 redone in CGI

- The people behind the world's biggest Cruise liners, currently at 160,000 tonnes are planning to buy and operate a new fleet of 220,000 tonne ones, called the Genesis project. A big fat boat full of rich Westerners? This may interest Mr Bin Laden et al.

- DARPA's Autonomous vehicle challenge has raised the bar once again, the next set of prizes will be for Robot controlled vehicles that can negotiate urban settings, including reading and obeying street signs.

GD – Firstly, ***May the Fourth be with you!***

- The MX newspaper has published a 'Billie Piper prefers Girls' story.

- Farscape (first series) is on TV at 2~3 am.

- A Second Anthology of the year's best Australian SF&F stories is now out, by **Congreve and Marquardt**, beyond just being a good read, it has at the back a listing of 'all the rest' which over successive years will make the series an important overview of Australian SF&F.

- My ANZAPA newsletter, TBS&E number 18 will be going out soon.

- Robot suits have been demonstrated in Japan, sit on walking legs for paraplegics and 'exoskeleton' type full body suits, only

demonstrated by able-bodied people so far.

- Scientist have made water run up hill.
- The orbital details of the distant 'planet' Sedna have suggested to one Astronomer that the Sun may have an unseen companion, which Sedna's orbit may be in resonance with.
- A Nanno ethics Think Tank has made calls for a Cosmic Cops police force, clearly have not seen the Anderson's '2040'

WK – A sequel to 'Star Quest' is to be made

CS – She likes her Dr Who Books!

BW - provided a review of the recent Natcon and enthusiastic promotion for the coming Conflux convention in Canberra (meet big name SF heroes live via satellite, before they die?) **Arthur C Clarke** and **Dan Abner** are two of the main attractions.

- The 'Dark Suspense' (a marketing friendly new name for Horror) series recently launched has failed. The four initially announced books will be released and that's it.

In the papers recently there were articles about Robot Snakes.

Much time was spent in distractions from the topic to discuss E-bay.

On the Topic

The Topic: The internet in Science Fiction

One refreshing feature of this evening's discussion was that talk turned to the nature of an 'Internet' and example of Internet like networks that have occurred before the present. I.e. the Steam age Telegraphist's internet, the British Semaphore based London to Naval fleet network and the Enigma machine.

True Names, & Fire upon the Deep by **Vernor Vinge**, adventures at the edge of a black hole and features an consideration of a 'The Spike' like technology singularity.

The integral engine, by **Gibson and Sterling** is a story ostensibly written by a self aware machine intelligence that formed out of a Victorian Era use of jacquard loom punched cards and steam powered mechanical telegraph.

Snow Crash and Idoru, by **William Gibson**, (and most other Gibson books?) much of the action takes place in Virtual Space.

In the Movie 'Tron' the network was the Internet. Voices in the light, by **Sean McMullen**, an Internet of Light Telegraphs connecting computers that use humans as components.

BW admitted to be being deeply affected, by the first Dr. Who movie.

Notes from the Friday May 05, 2006, Sydney Dr Who Tavern meeting at the Lansdown Hotel Broadway / Glebe

Present were: the fan who wishes to be known as 'Avon', Karen Carpenter (Ace), Garry Dalrymple, Brendan Jones and James Sellwood.

My Science Fictional evening started at around 6.45 pm. I arrived at Central and went in search of some DVD packs that I recalled seeing. No luck at the subway exit newsagent, so on the way to the UTS I stopped off at the Subway Discount bookshop and found two packs of five DVDs for my mother. Proceeded on to the UTS where I found the SF Board Gaming people, gave them a copy of TBS&E 18, the Dr. Who newsletter and an explanation of the Who event held this Sunday. Left the UTS and caught a bus down the rest of Broadway to the Lansdown Hotel a bit after 7 pm, buying a \$3.50 schooner of Guinness downstairs and going upstairs to find - No Whovian presence whatsoever.

I was not entirely surprised, as I had expected that the committee would be pre-occupied with organizing Sunday's event. Ordered and had my \$5 Steak delivered and ate it in solitary splendor. I was half way through it when Ace arrived. While eating I had also been enveloping and addressing a few 'additional's' to the ANZAPA commitment copies that I was mailing that night, mostly Futurians and Friends of Kevin Dillon. Brendan and James turned up after Ace, the Avon and Richard.

The Lansdown was slightly quieter than usual, so some cross table conversation was

possible. At one point a group of 'Goths' snubbed us. They went off to the 'Balcony' area and later on looked almost cheerful (had someone found their razor?).

Table conversation included:

- Scheduling and printing issues to do with the Data Extract (Dr Who club newsletter)
- Mobile telephone Blues and one-upmanship (several truly appalling images were collected for future publication?)
- Football
- A Giant Rabbit infestation is concerning staff at the State Emergency Service – Still More about Football, an Australia Vs NZ test match was playing that night.
- An issue of the night was 'Where is Paolo Rech?' This frequently seen about Sydney Fandom events fan hasn't been sighted for some time.
- Another issue was that the UK success of the Dr Who episodes featuring the return of 'Sarah Jane' has led to speculation of her character's appearance as a regular on 'Torchwood', revivals of 'K9 and company' or of more Dr Who appearances to come. –
- There was also some speculation of a 'Gallifreyan Challenge Cup' Rugby match, Dr Who and the Time Lords Vs the Dr Who villeins and monsters (Cyber men – good in a scrum, Daleks – moves well, difficult to tackle, but poor ball passing skills, the McGann brothers as the substitute bench etc.).

That's about it, a steak, a Guinness and a bit of a chat. Left the Lansdown at about 9.10 pm, home before 10 pm. And so it goes.

Notes from the Sunday May 07, 2006, Sydney Dr Who 'The New Tennant' day at the Drummoyne RSL Club.

It is a very lengthy trip by public transport to get to Drummoyne, I had to get to Campsie and then catch a 492 bus to its terminus. The

waiting time to make connections adding greatly to the duration of the trip, as some buses on a Sunday run once an hour. I left home at 10 am, arrived at the RSL club at close to 12 noon (leaving the venue at ~5.30 pm I was home in time to see the 7 pm news). I look forward to next month's venue, which is adjacent to Wynyard Station, a much more straight forward trip.

I took along a (New) copy of the latest Harry Potter book, a Dr Who Companions book and a packet of balloons (Dr Quote, 'Peri, What Sucks can be made to blow') to be added to the raffle prize pool as 'kiddie bait'.

Present were: Most of the Committee and over 70 other Dr Who fans. A record attendance for a current series Dr Who event!

Impressions of the meeting;

Certainly a better attended event than the February one (for the Christmas special), they had to add extra chairs to fit everyone in. The event was largely publicised by word of mouth and the club's internal newsletter.

The Audience was a bit more representative of the fannish population, more couples and groups of friends. One young ish person had even brought along a silvered cardboard 'K9', a modified box on office chair castors. Not as many small children were seen, possibly for the better as some of the Noo Hoo deals with some implied 'Adult Issues' and there was a fair bit of (off screen) violence, as in the ripping to bits of minor characters.

The program consisted of footage seen in the UK but not yet broadcast in Australia. Some of the material thanks to helpful hands on the internet had been broadcast as little as five hours before today's event. The walls indeed have ears (and eyes and internet connections!).

The days' program was;

The Christmas Invasion (the episode which introduces the new doctor)

New Earth (Medical malpractice and a return of 'Cassandra' in the year 5 million and twenty three AD)

Confidential: One year On (a number of 'The

making of ...' type interviews)

Tooth and Claw (Queen Victoria is menaced by Scottish accents, Monks and a very much non-timorous beastie)

The Miscellaneous Box (promotional clips, music videos and even a 'Dr Emu' from 1977!)

School re-union (The return of Sarah Jane Smith investigating journalist, K9, kids get to blow up a school and a meditation on the implications and consequences of the Dr Who and Companion relationship)

Blankety Blanks (an Entendre free spectacle, the Judges being far more entertaining than the competitors!)

The Girl in the Fireplace (An historical Dr Who adventure featuring a White horse, Clock work Androids, a justifiable reason to fear broken clocks, mirrors, and the King of France's girlfriend)

Confidential: Friends Reunited (Mostly to do with the return of Sarah Jane Smith, behind the scenes footage and the making of ... interviews etc). The hot rumour of the day was that SBS is going to take up an option on 'K9 and Company', following the end of their supply of 'Inspector Rex' (an Austrian police dog drama) episodes.

In conclusion:

The Tennant Dr Who is getting better, a deeper treatment of adventures than was possible in previous episodes when so much of the new generation Doctor's back story had to be re-established. Given this improvement it is hard to see Dr Who going off the air in the near future.

Notes Ahead of the Friday May 19, Sydney Futurians @ UTS SF&F discussion meeting

Topic: *Alternate and Counter Earth Stories in Science Fiction*

I attended and notes were taken but a full

report has been deferred until another issue.

Preservations and Changes?

Some thoughts on some of the types of Alternate and Counter Earth Stories frequently encountered in Science Fiction.

Beneath our Feet?

Subterranean Worlds, Tunnel dwelling Societies and 'Hollow Earth' stories.

In distant places?

Places that have been physically isolated for a very long time, allowing the survival in this pocket of Societies or Animals long since vanished off the face of the Earth.

Beyond the Sun?

A twin planet to Earth is discovered orbiting on the other side of the Sun, an exact physical duplicate but with a very different (frequently evil?) social order.

Or where a duplicate Earth (of another time?) is discovered orbiting under a different Star?

Alternate History Stories?

Minor or Major changes in history that make for a very different World. Consideration of some popular Points of Departure (PoDs). I.e. what if Hitler or Napoleon had won the war? The consequences of time travel SNAFU?

Looking Glass Worlds?

Worlds where our good is their Evil?

Recreations and Replications?

Stories where the Earth or parts thereof have been re-made long after history has turned that page.

Worlds of Magic or different Science

Same old Earth, but Magic rather than Science is what works etc.

**Meeting at the Thursday 01 June, 2006
Infinitas / Blokey stuff shop Parramatta
Discussion Topic: Worlds from SF&F that I would like to live in**

Present were: Darryl Addams, Brian and Jacqueline Cadwgan, Henry Chatroop, Garry Dalrymple, Kurt Frank, Jo Kay,

Wil Kenedy, Charmain Spears, Mick Ousley, Brian Walls and Tim

General Comment: This was the largest Infinitas SF&F discussion group meeting that I can recall. There were not enough chairs and at times the meeting broke off into two or three different conversations!

News

DA – The proposed ‘Academy days’ Star Trek prequel movie (Star Trek number eleven) has bitten the dust, consensus being that the idea did in fact suck bigtime.

- In the **Dr. Who** episode, ‘Idiot lantern’ the Doctor and Rose end up in 1953, in time for the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II

The **Battlestar Galactica** ‘Caprica’ - Genesis of the Cylons’ era pre-quel is still on the burner. This lead to a discussion of why all the planets in Galactica resemble those parts of the United States of Canadia favoured by **Stargate** and **Atlantis**, (and why isn’t this explained in The book of Mormon?)

- Yet more versions of the **Starwarz**™ are being released on DVD the latest ‘improved’ version together with the ‘lost’ original clunky version. Will this never end? Not until the last fanboy with money dies!

- The ABC will show the ‘seen in the UK’ new Dr Who in August.

- The passing and significance of **International Pirate Day** was remarked on (we are all blessed by His noodley appendages). Tim advised that the related Spaghetti Monster Bible was a sell-out and currently out of stock. (NB The son of a person at my work attended school in a Pirate outfit. It is good to see the young receiving sound religious instruction!)

HC – Paramount Studios is having a **Star Trek** Garage sale / clear out of props. The Sale is to be managed by Christies Auction house and the catalogue costs big bucks.

- ‘Sex on Legs’ is a six hour Sci-Fi thriller Audio book, i.e. no paper original read from. Said to be a ‘First’.

- **Bat Woman** is going to be re-born ‘butch’, look to see the Dykes on Bikes take on this during next Sydney Mardi Gras parade?

- In Japan they have announced that they have had ‘electric powered tentacles’ for some

time. Anime references and applications were discussed (but went right over my head), a Slash dot commentary is anticipated.

Jo Kay has returned from an exile in the outer darkness that is Queensland and is attempting to gently re-enter the light that is Sydney fannish circles. In conversation it developed that we have something in common. Someone who is not talking to Jo is not talking to me, evidently this is a growing subset of Sydney fandom!

JC – The New Zealand (?) movie version of **Philip Jose Farmer’s** (one of the other Mormon SF writers?) ‘River World’ is painful to watch as the central premise of the story is contradicted/discarded in the first few minutes (and replaced by a Gorean theme?).

- At a UK ‘**Serenity**’ convention **Jewel Staite** was asked one of those hypothetical questions, i.e. ‘if you had to, would you sleep with’ She nominated **Jessica Alba**.

GD – Mr Ecclestone, the bloke who played the last Dr Who is confirmed to play the character ‘number six’ in the re-make of ‘The Prisoner’.

- Local (well Wollongong) writer **Cat Sparks** has been published in the glossy popular Science Magazine Cosmos.

- The Giant Elephant and a ‘War of the Worlds’ like Mars-Capsule-Girl figures have progressed through London.

- I announced plans to hold a 2006 Sydney Freecon and to make this an annual event. My plans for this year include a 9am to 4 pm Freecon, and an Old and New fans Dinner afterwards.

- The next **Sydney Dr Who day** will be on Sunday June 11 and will be at a new venue, the Sporter’s bar just above Wynyard Station

- Currently the SF shows on free to air TV are **Enterprise** (after Midnight), **Farscape** (after 2 am or 2.30 am) and **Madigan’s Quest** (4 pm)

- UK police have targeted owners of unregistered Klingon **Batleths** during an illegal knife amnesty / hand in campaign (Fortean Times website).

- It is unclear if long time Sydney fan Graham Stone is now well, or has not recently been unwell, after postings to the Eidolist.

- The proponents of a Gorean lifestyle have been mentioned in a UK press article about ‘Sex Slave Cult’. The individuals concerned being a dissenting splinter from the Gorean ‘mainstream’ and they claim 350 UK followers!

CS – Charmaine and her partner now have ADSL at home and have discovered the wonders of '**Youtube**' a website that allows you to watch UK TV. They have been enjoying catching up on Dr Who episodes.

BW – The Movie 'Slither' has been reviewed in the Sydney Morning Herald (SMH).

- Splendid Astronomical images in the SMH include an 'Eye of God' and a 'Cosmic Finger'.

- The movie version of **Philip K Dick's** 'A Scanner Darkly' will be out next month.

- **The Sydney Writer's Festival** took place without the taint of Science Fiction to stain it's program book, although SF writers **Garth Nix**, **Jackie French** and **Neil Gaiman** appeared.

Discussion of the topic - uncharacteristically brief and to the point this evening.

The worlds of **Anne McCafferey's** Pern and **Aul's** Clan of the Cave Bear were mentioned, with a preference for living among the Homo Sapiens rather than the Neanderthals. From the writings of **Marion Zimmer Bradley**, life among the 'Sisterhood of the Sword' was considered. Being a companion of Doctor Who appealed to some (an Adric and Mel Free regeneration for me please!). The '**Gor**' world / society was definitely not considered by any one present as an ideal world to live in. Daryl expressed an interest in living in an **O'Neill** type habitat, although for peace of mind this would have to be in a **Gundan Warrior** free Universe.

I believe that the problem with this topic was that most Science Fiction and Fantasy readers have had an experience of a very large number of 'Worlds' and Societies, so armed with this experience you can spot the flaws, contradictions and improbabilities contained within any given utopia, hence, as much as a SF&F fan might like to read about alternatives to their mundane lives, you cannot really whole heartedly endorse choosing to live in any of them. The closest you can in any conscious say is that it would be 'great' to be the story's main character or it would be really interesting to see what happens next in that World / Society.

At one point during this meeting **Wil Kenedy** explained to me that his opportunities for an

'own name' Internet / email existence has been almost completely gazumped. 'Clever people' have taken to registering all manner of Kennedy with one 'N' variations, usually they are Kennedy's who believed that this obvious variation on their surname will ensure a degree of internet / email uniqueness in their web pages, blogs or Hotmail accounts. On doing a Google name search he was able to identify only one 'Wil Kenedy' reference on the whole of the Internet universe that did in fact refer to him. This turned out to be some version of one of my Infinitas SF&F discussion meeting accounts. Thus by the pen do we grant a measure of immortality?

Notes from the Tuesday June 06, 2006, Sydney Fans at the pub meeting, Civic Hotel, Corner Pitt and Goulburn Streets Sydney CBD.

Present were; Chris Barnes, Zara Baxter Garry Dalrymple, and Stephen Szabo.

Rain, winds and the coldest day of the year, a cheering birthday welcome for the son of the Beast? Entered the Civic to discover – Smoke, infernal noises and those foul instruments of Satan – Poker Machines!

Our meeting spot for cerebral discussions had been gazumped by crasser forms of commerce and proletarian entertainment. I found Chris, Stephen and Zara cowering next to a speaker box, like survivors of a shipwreck clinging to scraps of rigging as the storm thundered all around. Communication under such conditions was almost impossible. Another significant and alarming change was that a single lousy bottle of Strongbow Dry is now \$6! (to pay for the poker machines?). Reeling with shock I shortly discovered that the other end of the bar area was much quieter, so we migrated to a table for four (and so to the beer spilling incident that must never be revealed beyond we four pledged to silence). By our fannish appearance we then managing to scare off two women, which allowed us to claim a bench with window views.

Stephen Szabo had brought along some paper about a 1840s map depicting Australia's presumed inland sea and rivers system. Discussed **Sophie Masson's** story of an Alternate Australia that had been colonised by several European powers. As Conflux was nigh, discussion turned to 'con romances', the alleged phenomena of fans 'hooking up' for the duration of a convention.

I mentioned that the Islamic faith allows for 'Serrie' or 'Campaign' wives, temporary liaisons of any nominated duration. This idea could be a winner at a Worldcon?

Zara Baxter is shortly to go to the UK for a year or so, possibly to become a plotka affiliate? Or possibly to source material for a long promised ANZAPA newsletter. I outlined my plans for a Sydney Freecon in November of this year (and was not shouted down). I gave Stephen the sample of my home brew that I had brought along. As we were leaving we found that there is a perfectly quiet room off the main bar area. Went shopping afterwards, waited in the rain for a bus home, not much more to report.

Sydney Mechanics School of Arts Institute Science Fiction and Fantasy book group Saturday June 3, 2006, 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, Anne Devrell, Edwina Harvey, Ann Pritchard, Brian Walls and one other** (eight people, which is not a bad result for a cold, wet and windy Saturday). Left home just after 10 am and was just able to catch run and single the 412 opposite the school. The 412 takes slightly longer to get into town than the 423, but this avoided a potential 20 to 30 minute wait at a bus stop. Arrived in town to the sound of Townhall Church bells, i.e. just on 11 am.

On this occasion I took the bus a stop deeper

into town with the intention of visiting Kinokuniya for a look through and to see if I could get a contact for the SF&F manager. On the escalator up I noticed a display of large colourful canvases, an exhibition of the SF / Fantasy art by **Kenji Yoshida** (opening Party that evening at 5 pm!). They had turned an awkward irregularly shaped area between pillars and glass windows into an art gallery area. About a dozen large paintings by **Kenji Yoshida** (30 May to June 12, 2006) were hung in this area – nice bright stuff, mostly SF/Fantasy landscapes.

Kinokuniya's two Science Fiction and Fantasy book sections have now been merged into one (unfortunately) and in the display nook near the entrance the previous SF / Science book display has been replaced by one featuring 'Forbidden' Books. The Harry Potter books, **Aldous Huxley's** 'A Brave New World' and **Marsden's** 'The day the War Came', share space on this listing with the likes of **Salman Rushdie's** 'The Satanic Verses'. Some of these books had been banned from entry to Australian by the Customs Department and the rest were merely books that had been strongly objected to by various pressure groups at some time. I left Kinokunya with the shop's business card and a heap of **the Kenji Yoshida** exhibition postcards to give out at subsequent SF&F meetings. Arriving at the Mechanics library too early to go straight into the SF&F discussion meeting I had a look around the Library and sat down to organize myself before the meeting. I gave the Librarian several of the **Kenji Yoshida** exhibition postcards, collected a copy of 'Library Limelight' the Library newsletter. The content of this newsletter was to greatly influence the direction of today's meeting. I also had a look at the array of about a dozen types of 'Suggested Authors' bookmarks that covered a wide range of fiction genres. The Science Fiction one predictably had about half Fantasy Author's names, the rest fairly safe SF writers, none local. I'd give the bookmark a five out of ten, I appreciate the intention, but they could do much better on the content.

The Meeting

The Book Reader's group discussion meetings were on held on level three again, as some

sort of seminar course had the run of the level 2 rooms.

I gave everyone present a copy of the Kenji Yoshida exhibition postcard and I described what I had seen at Kinokuniya. The usual round of attendee's news offerings started, Brian Walls recounted much of the news that he delivered at the Infinitas group meeting on Thursday night. Brian's report on last week's Sydney Writer's Festival sparked some discussion, mostly about the Festival's inability to describe SF&F writers as SF&F writers and the under representation of this sort of fiction on the lists of Authors/invited speakers etc. **Neil Gaiman, Jackie French, Garth Nix** and 200 plus other 'Writers' were on the bill but they were described as writers of 'Fantasy', 'young people's fiction' or comics.

A suggestion was discussed for getting younger people to become involved in the Library. Comics / illustrated novels. They have been around long enough for there to be 'Classic' Comics about and the role of a Library is a logical place to store and build up an overview of the genre (instead of say such bookshop). It emerged in conversation (pointed out by BW) that Leichhardt Municipal Library has a significant holding of these (its specialist subject collection apparently).

The impact of incorrect genre attribution by Librarians and booksellers were mentioned. In some cases leading to 'invisible' books, a book shelved in a Library or bookshop where the people who are looking for it will never see it and the people who do notice it will read a page and decide 'it's not for me'.

Many cases and experiences were mentioned. The ill informed Sales Strategy, i.e. the publisher's decision to put out an Historical novel as 'Fantasy' coz it's got a knight in armor on the cover. Similarly, the Librarian / Bookseller's difficulty in relying on cover blurbs to correctly attribute 'genre' to a book. The complicating factor of intentionally Cross Genre novels, i.e. a High Fantasy written so as to start as a Football (soccer) Novel.

A thwarted Quest! Trying to find **JRR Tolkien's 'The Hobbit'** when it was 'lost' among the Science Fiction books. Cases where Ghastly and Gory Fantasy are miss-shelved in the 'Children's Fiction' section.

And so it goes.

The usual cycle of news items didn't quite make it round the table this meeting, as a digression to discuss the SF&F book choices in the Mechanics Library and this developed into the major discussion point of the meeting. Several dimensions were explored.

A part of this discussion was sparked by the May 2006 issue of the newsletter of the Mechanics Institute Library, 'Library Limelight'. Under 'New books for May', it lists 117 books and has 14 book reviews (four by **Belinda Coombes**). There is only one Science Fiction book listed and there are two SF books reviewed. There were no 'Fantasy' books listed at all! This has to be a significant under representation for SF&F even if you allow that some of the 33 books listed as 'Novels' might be undisclosed SF or Fantasy books.

Some Questions and Issues that emerged.

Are the SF&F books that are being acquired 'Good' or indifferent SF&F books?

Should attempts be made to review all SF&F books as they enter the Library (make the most of what is coming in) OR should we attempt to influence buying decisions on the new SF&F books that the Library might acquire?

The second idea was seen as a being more practical and productive. I.e. how can we help the librarians make better more informed book buying decisions, rather than trying to rate their decisions after the fact. Particularly as SF&F books in Australia are usually available at some delay to their UK and US releases. I.e. in Australia it would not be too difficult a task to gather reviews or word of mouth opinion generated by the initial US and UK release of SF&F books ahead of their release here. This information could be used to draw up a wish list of recommended future acquisitions of SF&F books before the Library is offered the books, or some sort of rating system? It would be a lot easier to do this than to try and read and review books in the time between when they are offered to and when they are bought by the library.

In exploring the question of how books make it from the publisher to the Library shelf we had

the advantage of receiving the views of Librarians (Academic and Municipal), Mechanics Committee members and Library / Bookshop users. Effective ways of approaching the Committee and or Decision makers of the Sydney Mechanics School of Arts were also discussed. There might be some sort of a brief 'Show and Tell' session on Book Review resources during the next (June 24, 2006) meeting.

Resources mentioned during this discussion, sources of reviews of SF&F books likely to be available to the Mechanics Library include:

Andromeda Spaceway's Inflight Magazine (ASIM), **Bruce Gillespie's** book reviews in *Cosmos* (The Popular Science magazine in the Mechanics Library), **Cheryl Morgan's Emerald City** (US & UK), Locus (US), Staff recommendations / reviews in the newsletters of the Galaxy and Infinitas Bookshops Newsletters and The Slow Glass Books mail order Catalogue (Melbourne).

Lots more clever stuff revealed and discussed but are now lost to the aether coz I'm not supposed to take any notes during the meeting, so apologies in advance for any omissions or miss attributions.

Clever Comment

A new Crossover Genre, Supernatural Romance. Love among the Young the beautiful and the Undead?

A Precise? ***Don't let the love of your life walk out on you! Kill the Bitch! Then raise her from the Dead!***

Buzzed around town for a bit, some shopping for Mum at Town Hall Woolworths (Chocolate and Fruitcake. Wandered across to the Galaxy bookshop and attempted to discover the identity of the Dymocks SF&F Dungeon section (Chris somebody, casually employed staff can be so ... casual about such things). Increasingly gusty cold winds and increasingly dark skies encouraged me to leave without further adventures (could have gone on to the re-cycling place or to Campsie's annual Festival of indigestion). Got home ~3.30 pm, had a snooze, wrote this up.

Notes from the Sunday June 11, 2006, Sydney Dr Who 'The New Tennant: House Guests', day at the (downstairs) Sporters Bar at the Menzies Hotel Wynyard, Sydney

The new venue

The new venue for this meeting made it very much easier for me to attend. I joined a 423 bus at 10.10 am and was at the meeting at 11 am. A single bus trip straight in and out of the city rather than a dog legged two-bus ride each way excursion. I cannot really say that this meeting was greatly better attended than those at the Drummoyne venue, but I would say that given the weather, (cold, windy and threatening to rain all day) the attendance at Drummoyne under the same circumstances would have been disappointing.

The venue will be a little tight if attendance numbers keep increasing and economy minded Dr Who fans will have to re-learn the art of foraging, after getting used to 'Club' prices for food and drink 'Hotel' prices seem a bit steep. The other drawback of using a Hotel venue has to do with layout. The Hotel and surroundings have been shaped to make it as inconvenient as possible to get out and buy non-hotel food, i.e. the hotel is directly over Wynyard Railway Station, which has several fast food places within its concourse. To get to them you have to walk out of the hotel, cross the road, go down steps / escalators and walk under and past the Menzies, and emerge a few streets away, like being made to walk to Wollongong via Melbourne!

The Program

We got to see several episodes of Dr Who as seen on UK Television, one broadcast only a few hours before the meeting. There was the Genesis of the Cybermen on an alternate Earth. A disembodied TV dwelling entity with plans to use the 1953 Royal Coronation to achieve physical form again and an expedition to a remote place in search of a power source (AKA Iraq?) that goes terribly

wrong, requiring the Doctor to 'deal with the devil'. Of these the middle one stands out. We are given a paper thin just barely two dimensional alien, very little back history is supplied at all, yet the drama works well. The Alien in question was using the hurried rollout of TV (to watch the televised Coronation) to suck the faces and 'souls' out of TV viewers. For fans of 'Margaret Attwood SF fandom' I have to point out that the expedition episodes do in fact involve fifty talking squid type aliens.

The extras to the day included footage of Dr Who winning at the BAFTA awards, a 'the making of' doco, early morning TV interviews with Who companions and examples of the BBC's 'Dr Who related' children's programs. All very interesting and engaging stuff. One VERY disturbing (and chilling?) item was a photo of a child standing next to their work of winter's morning

– A full sized **Snow Dalek!**

It will be interesting to see how things work out for the next meeting, Sunday July 09, 2006, as this will be the day after Dr Who returns to ABC TV (with the Christmas War, the episode that introduces Tennant's Dr Who). In the past, decades ago, when VCRs were less common, the frequent public events held by the Sydney Dr Who club were retrospective showings of episodes of Dr Who. Usually these occasions coincided with the availability of a past Dr Who, a significant Whovian anniversary or the availability of a significant companion who was passing through Sydney incidental to some other acting engagement. How long can they keep playing UK seen Dr Who episodes ahead of local transmission? Will the ABC eventually catch up with the BBC broadcasts?

Notes of the Friday June 16, Sydney Futurians @ UTS SF&F discussion meeting. Topic: Women's Roles, Good, Bad & Appalling in SF Stories

Present were: **Garry Dalrymple, Diane Fox, John Fox, Graham Stone and Brian Walls**

News for June 2006

GD - There **are** Other Futurians! There is a Punk Rock band in New Zealand (started in 1997!) that uses the name.

- The Civic Hotel meeting has changed it's venue (sort of) to a new part of the Civic following the invasion by Poker Machines and Smokers of the Uterine saloon lounge area.

- There is a **New Book SF&F meeting in Sydney**, According to **Christopher J. Levinson** the Sci-Fi Monthly group meets on the Second Sunday of the Month at Gloria Jean's coffee shop to discuss a set book and short story

- You can now buy a \$33 **supporting membership for the 2007 Natcon**, June weekend, Melbourne, and later convert the membership to attending at some discount.

- A **Nevil Shute** convention takes place during April 22 to 27, 2007 in 'A Town like Alice'

- Earth Currently has three 'Natural' moons, Luna and two temporarily co-orbiting minor Asteroids.

- **Dr Who** will start on ABC TV with the Christmas invasion on Saturday July 8, 2006.

– A **Sydney Dr Who event** will take place at the Menzies (Wynyard) Sporters Bar on Sunday July 9. These meetings are currently viewing the Tennant Dr Who episodes that have been seen on UK TV (hours previously!)

- **Billie Piper** is getting out of Dr Who shortly.

- **Conflux** took place over the June Long week end. **Brian Walls** was able to use my ticket to attend and represent us!

- TV SF this month has taken a dive / is in the penalty box, as **Farscape** has disappeared, making way for World Cup Soccer coverage?

- Plans proceed for a November **2006 Freecon** with a retrospective Ghosts of Honour' panel, Writers, a (cash Prizes) SF story Writing competition and much, much more. Work towards this objective will probably uncover additional news items (like the Shute con) as organisation proceeds.

DF – My brain aches!

- John and Diane have had their portraits done (usually \$55, but for you - \$45) by a Paddys Market place artist. The result is very 'Kremlinesque', a fluffy scowling Lenin?.

JF – **The Brook theatre** at Woodford (in the

Blue Mountains) recently staged 'Mort' a **Terry Pratchett** based play featuring Death's apprentice (short for Mortimer).

- We must get a poster out, UTS Staff and students remain unaware of our existence.

GS – Graham has not been unwell, consequently he has been unable to get better! Graham is alive and well and going about his business in the manner of his choosing. What happened was that someone visited Graham's home without phoning ahead to ensure that a visit at that time was convenient. The visitor appeared. Graham was out. From this, body-surfing on waves of decent concern, fears were widely expressed for Graham's health (even unto Conflux!).

Graham demonstrated his good health and well being by proof reading, detecting and correcting several errors in my hastily written notes

- The ABC recently showed the 1935 SF Movie 'The Tunnel', which is about the struggle to complete an undersea Atlantic crossing.

BW – Gave a detailed report about Conflux, the people he saw and spoke to, lots of them! Rumour has it that next year's Conflux GOH will be a 'Big' Techno-thriller writer with movie credits (not sure how this will go down in Tokyo/Yokohama and Beijing next year around the time of the Worldcon!). There were some muted concerns at the con that Conflux may have 'over reached' itself this year.

- Produced a copy of **Sci-Nut conventions newsletter**. (Sci-Fi and SF/Speculative Fiction), It lists four pages of Sci-Fi and SF/Speculative Fiction cons (but no Freecon or Shutecon?), Sci-Fi game / movie / TV previews and a piece of short fiction!

- **Canberra Killed H.G. Wells!** Arriving to GOH at the 1938 ANZAS conference he presumed that the night would be as mild as the day was hot, he left the windows of his room open all night and 'caught a chill', ruining his health - apparently.

- Observes that at the **Fisher Library** (Sydney Uni) they hold The New York Review of Science Fiction. This is more for the benefit of the Mechanics SF&F meeting on June 24. Graham agreed that this is a good and long standing source news on SF.

- **Stephen Hawking** (and his 31 year old

Daughter) are to write children's fiction, aimed at the 'Harry Potter Generation'.

Discussing the Topic: Women's Roles, Good, Bad & Appalling in SF Stories

The general assumption in SF is that the main character is male, consequently depictions of women may be sketchy unless a major effort has been made to specifically place a woman (or Girl) at the centre of the action. Consequently depictions of women and the role they play in most SF&F stories can be thoughtless or intentionally atypical depending on the writer's degree of focus on the main theme of the story. 'Moralization' is not something that real Science Fiction sets out to do, it is more frequently used by those who 'borrow' SF in order to present a 'parable', so Female role models usually emerge as a side effect of a really good (or painfully bad) SF&F story. I offer the following categories, noting that for many stories they belong in more than one of these categories.

Worlds of Women Stories

DG Compton's 'No Mans Land' where there has been a boy drought for nearly 40 years.

Lots of other ones where, Horror of Horrors, *Women* take over the world! This is to some degree balanced by some women writers of the 'Suffragette' era who wrote novels of the utopia which would inevitably follow a world free from the ills caused by masculine control.

In Active, Passive, Neutral by **James Shellen** men live in a state of artificially maintained Gayness (GM?) while women live elsewhere and have control of the Earth, a strategy in response to a previously over crowded earth. Much writing by **Joanna Russ** (Alyx for one) focuses on women or women within societies to the extent that they are almost 'Woman only' this is to my mind more of a reasonable different perspective / point of view within the broader SF canon rather than strictly speaking a Feminist rant.

Heroes who are Women

David Webber's Honor Harrington series is

about a woman naval officer's rise through the ranks and career difficulties. Honor's home world has a Queen and gender equality for the most part but she does encounter sexist swine from time to time and during her military career, worlds with decidedly different ideas on 'a woman's place'. Honor is so magnificent that I'd have her baby anytime!

Jirel of Joiry, (by Someone), Red Sonja by **Robert E Howard** and other pre Xenia Warrior Princess 'Chicks in Chainmail' Fantasy epics, where the girls take up the sword or the magic wand to fight on their own behalf. Any feminist message in these stories is usually 'emasculated' by having a 'hot chick' with phallic blade rampant in a steel chain mail bikini as cover art (ooh! Chain mail chafes unless you have leathery nether regions).

Diane Fox offered a story (or anthology I think) about a woman who was employed by an intergalactic agency. The thesis of the story was that you couldn't really know 'the other' unless you had shared experiences, including the maternal experience, so the story(s) were about this woman's career as being a physical bridge between alien races – through motherhood!

John Fox offered - Barbarella – the French 1960s comic series made into a movie. Which offered intergalactic understanding through shared pleasure? Also that in **John Wyndham's** 'The Chrysalids' there is a strong female character.

Graham Stone offered that 'Sheena Queen of the jungle', a female Tarzan, was very different to **H Rider Haggard's** 'She'. Also that a frequently cursed name, 'Ingne', is a recurring figure in **L Sprague De Camp's** stories and is based on a 'real' figure of Norse mythology.

Brian Walls offered that Parris Plessis was a world's first Brisbane Cyber Punk Heroine and that in **William Gibson's** Neuromancer Trilogy a common thread is the presence of a strong female cyborg character. Also, that characters in **Arthur C. Clarke's** 'Sparta' short story might be the source / inspiration for the 'Dark Angel' TV series.

Male SF writer's occasional explorations of Female-ness

Trash – **John Norman's** 'Gor' novels, where

on a counter earth women are degraded socially, sexually et al and 'loving it'. Probably this is a sizeable sub-genre of its own, not that I would know anything about this.

Tradition – For example in the later Dune Novels, 'Dune: Chapterhouse' the Herberts write explorations of women wielding power through 'Traditional Feminine' roles such as Priestess and Mother figure etc. Contrary to this, I recall a novel, possibly 'Memoirs of a Space Nurse?' by **Naomi Mitchison**, where a real clever talented woman who has struggled to qualify as a first 'Girl Astronaut' comes to realize that it would be better for her and the 'boys' if she gave up such ridiculous notions and studied to be a Space Nurse instead, very 1950s. In **Erle Cox's** 'Out of the Silence', a book which at times feels very much dated, the woman survivor of a past glorious age, Areana, emerges into the 'Devil Woman' stereotype, the biblical Lilith re-incarnate?

Transition – In **Robert Heinlien's** 'Podkyne of Mars' a really clued up teenage girl runs rings around grownups on a three Planet spanning adventure involving kidnap, escape and mystery solving, all without the help of grown ups. There are bound to be other 'emerging' SF stories featuring girls / women.

'Feminist SF'

What exactly is and is not 'Feminist SF' is a matter of conjecture. I think most of the ground is covered well enough by the other headings. There is of course 'Womyn for Womyn' literature that might be SF, but I wouldn't have read any of it now would I?

Women SF writers'

James Tiptree Jr and **EE Doc Smith** who usually wrote under men's names, I can't really recall if their depictions of women in their SF Stories were much out of the ordinary for (Space Opera) SF of that Time. **Octavia Butler** tends to get more into the mind of her characters, male and female. More talk less action is characteristic of **Nicola Griffith's** 'Slow River', in which everyone that matters is improbably a Lesbian. **JK Rowling** has Hermione in frequently heroic / resourceful roles in the Harry Potter books, me thinks that more could have been made of this character. Perhaps this is where the post Harry sequels

lie?

Incomplete Different-ness

Countless stories in SF where the Planet is different, the Society is different, the Technology is different, but women are pretty much the same everywhere, i.e. in **Edgar Rice Burrough's** 'Carter of Mars' and sequels, **Deja Thoris** and her intergalactic sisters are much the same as any historical novel Princess of Wild west sweetheart, at times resourceful, at times fairly passive prizes in the battle between good and Evil.

In **Robert Heinlien's** later (and thicker) books the same two female characters frequently recur. The (sexually insatiable) intelligent and socially sophisticated older woman and the physically well endowed (sexually insatiable) intelligent and scientifically qualified younger woman, possibly these are both idealizations of his second wife, older and younger?

'SF / Romance?'

An emerging SF sub genre that is now big enough and selling strongly enough to be fighting its way towards the book selling mainstream in the US. **Lois Mc Master Bujold** has been heading that way with successive outings of Miles Vor Kosigan and family in the Barrayar series of Books. Miles Mum, Cordelia was a perfectly good SF role model in her days as a Betan Survey ship Captain. **Anne McCaffrey** is light years ahead in this game with her 'Dragons on Pern' and 'The Ship who Sung' stories.

'The Woman SF Detective'

Another crossover-genre (that I'm more comfortable with) that is going somewhere. SF is frequently about discovering / solving a problem in an unusual environment, so is the 'detective novel'. Of late Women have been writing about women detectives, so why not women Science Fiction detectives?

Queensland SF writer **Marianne Du Plessis** (?) of the 'Parrishes Patch?' novels has been an Australian convention GOH of late.

An Aside – Ronald Reagan made several US military training films and followed these with four infrequently seen 'James Bond-ish' Sci-Fi movies, possibly an explanation for his

eagerness to accept the SF-ish 'Star Wars' missile defence program? These movies are said to be worse than 'bed time for Bonzo'.

Sydney Fans In The Pub (SFITpub), Civic Hotel meeting of Tuesday night July 04, 2006.

Present were - **Chris Barnes, Zara Baxter, David Bofinger, Garry Dalrymple, Eric Lindsay, Mark Philips, Ted Scribner, and Roland Sinn.**

The level of attendance at this meeting was a new high and during mid-winter!

Shifty Venue, meeting on the move?

As our previous gathering spot, the Saloon bar area, has been monopolised by Poker machines and Smokers it is no longer 'fit for fandom' so we have had to move the meeting out into the noisier main bar area. It works this way, most users of the Civic Hotel arrive in a group, usually from work, so they fill out the quieter and larger seating areas before the first fan arrives. SF fans arrive in one and twos (from 6 to 8 pm). This means that we have to move several times each meeting as new arrivals overcrowd the space available and as the other groups of Civic Hotel patrons move off.

What was discussed:

As fans do, there was an exchange of grandmother's given names (a 'Sydney' thing?). Shortly after starting to take some notes I discovered that the 'scrap' paper that I was writing on was in fact the back of the application form that I will need to book the room for the November Freecon, so I had to pause to re-organise.

Zara Baxter was the first there, so I was able to talk to her at some length about her travel and newsletter plans. Zara is going to the UK for a year, starting August and she is expecting to be based in Croydon, London England.

Zara is hoping to pick up an 'IT' position while she is there. While in England she may also

find the muse (under Plotka influences?) and start an ANZAPA newsletter, possibly jointly with **Geneva Melzack** or another UK fan.

Chris Barnes turned up fairly late, apparently having needed to go home and feed the cat before the meeting. It transpired that until this evening he had not really met **Eric Lindsay**.

David Bofinger is heading to the US for a few weeks, to see any bits that he might have missed during earlier (work related). He is considering starting a linguistics degree. His book length SF story is sort of completed, at a stage between second and third stage drafts. A discussion of portable computer technology and battery faults went on for a while but soon needed re-charging or a fresh supply of bar supplied electrolytes?

The drink prices at the Civic seem to have gone up again, I tried a schooner of something on tap and it was \$5.50 and my usual drink of second choice 'Strongbow Dry please' has gone from \$6 to \$6.50!.

Eric Lindsay is briefly back in Sydney while **Jean Webber** is adrift off the tropical North Coast on a Natural Science cruise. There is no I in team. There was a discussion of the horrors of the management dictated 'Team building' exercise. Eric related his experiences of such at the UTS which were usually 'Team destructive'.

Mark Phillips related his 'Team building' exercise experience (with the Federal Police). It involved a stay in the Hunter Valley and a 'Murder'. Mark was the only one of his group to correctly identify the 'murderer'. **David Bofinger's** recent experience of such 'courses' included a course about 'Frames' and the consequences of pre-conceptions in disabling logic. Mark also explained that he had attended some of the Sunday afternoon Bondi Junction Borders / Gloria Jean's SF book of the month discussion group meeting.

Ted Scribner's news of the moment was that he would be taking **Gillian Polack** to dinner shortly. Gillian is currently installed at Varuna in the Blue Mountains as a 'Writer in residence' for a few weeks. Ted was perplexed and amused by the bar staff's habit of offering change in a dish, i.e. to make it

easier for you after being served an overpriced drink to say 'keep the change'.

The '*Call of the Mountains*' was heard again at one point during the evening, in the form of a discussion of survival and commuting under the mountains brass monkey climatic conditions.

Roland didn't have much to say, but he is such a good listener.

Erisia and **Boskone** are two cities/cultures present in the books of E. E. Doc Smith. Not terrific books, but they have given rise to generations of Boston SF conventions!

Conclusion:

With eight people showing up and the bar prices charged at the Civic, it looks like a move is needed. As a monthly event, the Sydney Fans In The Pub meeting seems to be gathering momentum. In 'the good old days', i.e. when Sydney fandom met at the Galaxy Bookshop and at the Cafe round the corner, my impression was that 20 to 30 people would have shown up on most Thursday nights and much informal fannish business was possible. With the right venue I could foresee that this gathering has the potential to become 'The Sydney Meeting of SF fans', in a way that most of the other Sydney SF meetings cannot be. It all depends on finding a place to gather that is flexible enough for 'Five to Fifty' to be able to meet and converse.

As usual, went shopping after the meeting, as the Supermarket is on the way to the 412 bus stop, my ride home. I bought Kangaroo meat (mini roast rolls), Milk and Crumpets. No dried Peaches were seen and Green Bananas at \$11.98 per kg were not to my taste!

I managed to catch an 8.30 412 bus shortly thereafter, so I was at home a bit before 9.30, to be met by the enigmatic Mystique, who had spent all day out of the house on a winter's day on her own. Hopefully the heating I have organised for her sleeping crate is some comfort to her. As the bus had been nearing home I was able to notice that the air was been getting misty blurring the planets and extinguishing most stars.

Some Books Read: April, May and June 2006

April 30, Fortean Times #210 June 2006,
Theme – **The Genesis of the Cybermen**,
Edited by **David Sutton**, 80 Pages © 2006.

02 to 10 May, The Rebel Worlds
by **Poul Anderson** (an Ensign Flandry story)
141 pages © 1969

11 to 17 May, The Jericho Iteration,
By **Allen Steele**, 279 Pages © 1994.

Jan to 99 Feb, Traces, An Anthology of 23
stories by **Steven Baxter**, 359 Pages © 1998.

May 30, Fortean Times #211 July 2006,
Theme – **Flying Saucers from Hell?**, Edited
by **David Sutton**, 80 Pages © 2006.

6 to 20 June, Shadow Man,
By **Mellissa Scott**, 320 Pages © 1995.

June 25 to 28, Mining the Oort,
By **Frederick Pohl**, 264 Pages © 1992.

June 30, Fortean Times #212 August 2006,
Theme – **The Da Vinci Code Connection**,
Edited by **David Sutton**, 80 Pages © 2006.

CURRENTLY READING

Master and Commander by **Patrick O'Brian**,
403 pages, © 1970.

Short Book Reviews

The cover blurb for **Steven Baxter's** Traces describes him as 'the Best SF Author in Britain', he might be in book form, but I found most of the stories in this anthology a big letdown and several stories seemed to me to be entirely incomprehensible.

The cover blurb for **Mellissa Scott's** Shadow Man, makes comparison with UK Le Guin's 'The Dispossessed'. I find this point of view

very hard to sustain. In 'The Dispossessed' the genders issue was natural, unforced and incidental to the main story.

In **Scott's** Shadow Man you have a (single town / single Spaceport!) planet where a patriarchal society, isolated from the interplanetary mainstream is living in denial. Authority maintains that there is only legally Male and Female. 400 years before the story's present Mankind achieved Faster than light travel with the aid of a drug which resulted in the children of all subsequent generations being born male, female, hermaphrodite, boys with girl bits, boys with girl bits etc. Whatever your 'bits' are, or how you choose to use them, people are expected to accept 'Male' or 'Female' legal status (the entitlements and responsibilities of which are not explained within the story!) There are similar glaring improbabilities through the story. The major planetary export industry is the gathering of bulk quantities of 'Pharmaceuticals' i.e. Mind bending Drugs (Whatever happened to molecular synthesis technology?). The secondary major 'Export' is the provision of sexual services to resident non-locals, because apparently this planet is the only human settled world not to have HIV type germs! A borrowing from British adventures in Polynesia (?) is that on this planet all metal is so rare that steel is 'worth it's weight in gold' and yet there is a long distance Railway system.

The main story line is about the inter action between an off planet bloke working for a pharmaceuticals company and Warreven, a Hermaphrodite lawyer / political activist who is trying to get local law to recognize the multi-sex reality that is 'standard' through out the 'Concord' of human space. Reaction to this produces East Timor like social disorder.

A good enough read to keep you occupied at the time, but after you put the book down or if you stop and have a good think about it, the flaws and inconsistencies just grow and grow.

Mining the Oort, by **Frederick Pohl** started out like a fairly standard juvenile SF story, with an introduction to a 'troubled teen' trying to live a normal life in a novel environment, in this case, Mars. I had even planned to make notes and 'plot the plot' as an aid to some of

my own writing projects, or to pass the story on to my niece, as an acceptable example of Hard SF for young people.

And then it changed!

Sex reared it's head, as if the book was half written and then the Juvenile publishing deal fell through so it had to be 'Adulterated-up'. The story follows the main character from the age of 15 to mid twenties.

There is no expedition to the Oort Cloud, but some of the major characters Were Oort Cloud miners. The story resolves as a multi year plot to take over the staffing of the traffic control system for Comets sent into the inner Solar System to terraform Mars and dump one on Japan! An adequate story but I get the feeling that a different story emerged.

A feature of this book (of 44 chapters!) are occasional 'facts' chapters inserted between changes of scene etc. This book also features an idealized frontier society in the community ethos of the Martian settlers, as opposed to the effete, materialistic and exploitative 'Earthers'.

A good enough story but not entirely satisfactory.

A Preliminary review

Master and Commander by **Patrick O'Brian**, 403 pages, © 1970.

I have had this book sitting on the 'to be read – sometime' pile for many months. I was provoked to read it now as the Russell Crowe movie played on free-to-air television recently.

As I also read a lot of 'Space Opera' which is almost inevitably also Military SF these days I thought it might be instructive to read some 'Space Free' Military Fiction.

I'm only part way through the story and there have been some surprises. I was very surprised to clearly see the 'thuggish' aspect of the public image of Russell Crowe in the original story, much more so than in the movie. So much so that on watching the Movie my impression was 'What is Not Gay about this story'? On simple analysis the movie was more 'touchie-feelie' and about

relationships between men than 'Broken back Mountain' seemed to be.

The novel has a lot more going on than in the movie, for example the entire 'Irish Question' subtext is absent from the movie. The major impression however was of the massive amount of 'Authentic' detail disclosed in the telling of the story and even then much nautical knowledge is assumed or glossed over.

A glossary and a few maps would have helped a lot. The writers of Space Opera have it easy, everyone knows that a Warp Drive or FTL unit does, without having to name and spell out all the items of sails, masts and rigging etc. as described in this novel.

Garry's report to the June 24, 2006, 'Mechanics' SF&F readers group meeting on the Collected Fannish Wisdom on Sources of SF&F Reviews

Background and procedure

At the June 3, 2006 'Mechanics' SF&F book discussion group concern was expressed at the number and quality of SF&F books recently bought by the Sydney Mechanics School of Arts library. On June 5, 2006, I posted a request for suggestions of how to identify 'better' SF&F books to email groups including Eastcoast SF, the Eidolist and ABC SCIENCE Matters.

This topic was then discussed over several days. About ten emails were exchanged. Subsequent to this the matter was also discussed at the June 16, 2006, Sydney Futurians SF meeting and some additional suggestions / recommendations were added.

Web review sites:

<http://www.analogsf.com> section at left: "Reference Library"

<http://www.asimovs.com/> section: "On Books"

"Books To Look For" - a large file of reviews by Charles de Lint

<http://www.sfsite.com/fsf/dcharlesdelint.htm>

Emerald City (www.emcit.com)

Internet Review of Science Fiction
(www.irosf.com)

<http://www.locusmag.com/> reviews are
liberally sprinkled throughout

SFsite (www.sfsite)

Strange Horizons (www.strangehorizons.com)

Tangent Online (www.tangentonline.net)

Usenet:

rec.arts.sf.reviews

Word-of-mouth-keteers:

Rick Kleffel's Agony Column
(<http://trashotron.com/agony/index.htm>)

wrongquestions.blogspot.com Abigail
Nussbaum

Niall Harrison (coalescent.livejournal.com)

Print:

Andromeda Spaceways Inflight Magazine (has
reviews of Speculative Fiction in each issue)

Bruce Gillespie's book reviews in *Cosmos* (a
Popular Science magazine in the Mechanics
Library)

Vector, Matrix (BSFA publications)

Various Fanzines (ZooNation, for example)
Locus F&SF

Other:

Amazon.com (usually as a reality check, after
all else has failed)

Staff recommendations / reviews in the
newsletters of the **Galaxy** and **Infinitas**
Bookshops Newsletters (Sydney) and the
Slow Glass Books mail order Catalogue
(Melbourne).

At the Futurians meeting **Brian Walls** offered
that at the **Fisher Library** (Sydney Uni) they
hold copies of The New York Review of

Science Fiction. **Graham Stone** agreed
that this is a very good and long standing
source news on SF.

At the end of the email dialogue it was
observed that this topic deserved to be more
fully explored and it was suggested that a
panel to discuss the librarian's point of view in
selecting SF&F books for Libraries should be
part of the next Melbourne Science Fiction
convention.

We heard from: **Sue Ann Barber,**
Zara Baxter, Bruce Gillespie, Graham
Stone, 'Keith from Wycheproof' and
Brian Walls.

A Basenji Tail Piece

Gosh! Mystique Pukkanut's Fourteenth
birthday (born June 2, 1992) has been and
gone. That makes her in dog years ~98.
Clearly the 'times seven' rule for dog years is
not completely applicable to Basenjies, as
Mysti's immediate predecessor (Debbie) made
it to seventeen or eighteen, being blind and
deaf for the last few years, but still getting by,
with some signs of senile dementia at the end.
Given her current physical condition and
weight etc. I think Mysti may even make it to
eighteen or nineteen, provided that the winters
are kind.

And how does dog like Mysti celebrate her
birthday?

She pees in my bedroom!

You have to understand the subtlety of this
particular action to get some sense of what it
is that makes Basenjies so god dammed
fascinating to their owners, the 'Basenji
Slaves'. At the time she struck I was having
a shower before turning in for bed. I had just
changed over the week's bed linen, which was
lying in the doorway to my bedroom. I had
put Mysti into her cold night's jumpers and she
was on station, just outside the bathroom
door, waiting. Where she chose to pee was a
deliberate and exact decision. She did it in a
straight line on the carpet just inside my
bedroom, deliberately avoiding the pile of last

