

A New TBS&E?

Call it issue Number 30,

December 2008

(The product of a mad scramble to get something to Bruce to avoid Minac status and all sorts of embarrassment)

Editorial

Dodged the bullet again! At a certain level I approach the organisation of each Freecon with trepidation on many fronts, mainly along the lines of a Fear that events will conspire to make the current Freecon some sort of catastrophic disaster that that sets things back a decade or two rather than advancing 'Sydney Book SF Fandom' incrementally. People keep telling me at and After each Freecon that I'm doing a great job, but from the Convenor's chair I have an excellent view of all the bits of a Freecon that failed to get started or came 'this close' to eventuating. I suppose like the Magician in 'OZ' I get to see where the curtain is threadbare, patched or held together with masking tape etc., while everyone else just sees the amazing stuff going on on stage, apparently conjured out of thin air.

In the Rest of this thin issue there is coverage of changes on the livestock front , the return of some original Fiction, a Sydney Futurians Annual report of sorts and the usual optimistic plans for a greater fannish future in Sydney etc.

Something of a Report on the 2008 Sydney Freecon

(Being part of an email sent to a Sydney Futurian contacts and 2008 Sydney members, with the November meeting notice)

Dear All

Garry's Report on the Freecon

This year's Freecon was a success. About 70 people attending, 50 plus on Saturday, most panels had 40 plus audience, 30 plus on Sunday, most panels had a 20 plus audience. There were (depending on how you count them) about ten writer presentations. Saturday had a real Buzz about it, Sunday less so, but even so the Sunday was as good as the best Saturday only Bankstown Freecons.

Most of the people both days were 'new faces', so instead of just bringing 'old-fans' out of Gafiation, the Freecon seems to be creating new ones? Depending on if we can get the room under the same conditions as this year, Next year the Freecon might be a week or so later (to avoid HSC and Uni Exams), and there might be the possibility of a Friday night Set up / Futurian discussion Meeting / Meet the Writers opportunity ahead of the Freecon?

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Other results include some money raised for Meteor Inc. and Siera Unite, 60 to 70 books collected to be sent to Sierra Leone!

(Being part of an email sent to a Sydney Writer following the email above)

Dear P

So much to say, so many feelings about the weekend that do not really translate that well into words.

There was a definite 'something' about the Saturday of the Freecon this year that made me feel on Monday that if I did no more Freecons at all I could be proud of the accomplishment of getting so many people, mostly strangers, to get on so well together.

It confirmed my feeling that single track conventions should not to be lightly discarded in the quest for a 'bigger is better' convention with more people and more program tracks.

I do not know if you have ever experienced this, but at times I have attended well organised multi-track spec. fiction cons with hundreds of other people and while switching from room to room have found myself to be alone in the midst of an ever changing crowd.

I would like to think that this does not happen at the Freecons I run?

If I was forced by rising numbers to consider a 'two rooms' solution for Freecons I think I would prefer to try something like what was the defacto situation at the (first?) Conflux, where there was a 'Fantasy' room, a 'SF' room and another room. The Freecon congregation could possibly support separate Fantasy and SF 'home' rooms, but for the moment I much prefer for everybody at the Freecon, despite the range of their interests to have a common experience.

I have asked for the Norman Selfe room again, for November 2009, possibly for a week or two later than this year's Freecon, which might free-up the availability of some more University or HSC age people to attend.

I haven't heard back from the SMSA yet, but I feel that success is likely. A flood of new members to the SMSA might help this.

At the moment my thoughts are still flowing about tidying up all the loose ends after the 2008 Freecon and jotting down thoughts for the 2009 version.

If you are having any thoughts on how bits of the Freecon can be done better, or a list of 'must ask' writers, let me know.

(Being an email sent to the President of the Sydney Mechanics School of Arts and his staff)

Dear Dr Roger Morris and SMSA staff

I would like to thank you and the SMSA staff for your help and sponsorship of this year's Freecon.

The SMSA's sponsorship of the Freecon this year allowed us to offer two 9 am to 6 pm days, which meant that we had a wonderful time and were able to enjoy a rare sense of building a SF&F community over the both days of the Freecon. I'm told that much the same sense of community was enjoyed at the 1952 Sydney SF convention and at the initial 1939 Sydney Futurian Society meetings which preceded it.

In appreciation I believe I owe you and your staff a report on the event so you can more correctly assess any future requests for Freecons or related SF&F events to be held at the SMSA.

The experience of a Freecon is that we work through a program of presentations where we discuss aspects of SF&F with a degree of rigour and informed interest approaching what you would expect of a University common room discussion, or if you prefer, like a series of the monthly guest speaker talks at Bronte, Jane Austen, Kipling or Dickens Society meetings, only all on the one day. We also had about ten published SF&F Writers appearing at the Freecon, which is considerably more than the whole Sydney Writer's Festival was able to muster!

We really do 'work' at enjoying our books and Authors, it can be both exhilarating and exhausting but it is definitely great fun!

At the Freecon this year I observed several people who are known to me to be SMSA members; myself, Ann Devrell, Ann Rankins, Paulo Rech (unable to attend, in Victoria on family business) and Brian Walls. I believe that several other SMSA members would have attended and that some Freecon people will join the SMSA as a result of having been to this year's Freecon.

In all I estimate that just over 70 people took part in this year's Freecon. Over 60 adults and about 6 children, or 50 plus people on all or part of Saturday and nearly 40 people on all or part of Sunday. This compares to the 34 people we had at Bankstown Library last year.

The attendees this year were very much more representative of the 'average' Sydney SF (book) fan, as most present were aged 30s to 40s, although this year we had several members who were in their 70s and who had been active in Sydney SF fan activities in the 1950s! There were also representatives of some of Sydney's SF interest (book) meetings, the Dr Who Tavern meeting, The Sydney Futurians, the Infinitas SF&F Book Review meeting and Sci-Fi discussion meeting. As far as Age, Education and breadth of general interests, the people at this year's Freecon looked a lot like people I've seen at other SMSA events.

The fact that I knew only about a third of the attendees before the Freecon, suggests to me that there are many more people in Sydney who could attend a Freecon if it were able to be repeated next year under the same terms.

Although the Sunday was by total attendance a 'lesser' day, it was still very important to the success of the event. About half the people who attended on Sunday had been unable to attend on Saturday. Clearly we were bringing in a lot of 'ordinary people' who are free to follow their interest in SF&F only after meeting their work or family commitments. Saturdays they may not be able to do, but Sundays they can etc.

Another result of the Freecon this year was that about 70 books were collected and will be going to Kamba in Sierra Leon. About \$60 was raised and will be sent on to the Freecon's charities.

I would greatly like to be able to organise Two Day Freecons in 2009 and 2010 under the same terms as in 2008. I feel that the Freecon can reach and bring into the SMSA new people and interests that are in accordance with the SMSA's traditional aims and I feel that with better 'in-house' promotion between now and then more of the SMSA members / library's users readers could come to participate in a Freecon, as attending members of the Freecon or as entrants in the Freecon's Short SF Story writing competition.

For a 2009 Freecon I would like to make a particular feature of NSW 's SF writers Past and Present as well as continuing the attempt to reach more of Sydney's older SF (book) fans of the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s and 1990s.

In the first week of September 2010 there will be an Australian World Science Fiction Convention (with up to 2000 international visitors?) at Melbourne. As this will be a fourth (1975, 1985, 1999 and 2010) Worldcon for Melbourne many Worldcon visitors may like to see something of Australia other than Melbourne, consequently I would like to hold a Freecon on the weekend immediately before the Melbourne Worldcon as a Sydney 'end' of this event, as an opportunity for Sydney SF fans (and SMSA members) to meet some of the International SF writing talent that is likely to pass through Sydney on the way to Melbourne for this once in a generation event.

If I can promise them an audience they may well come, Writer guests that would otherwise be available only for a \$A10,000 plus Airfare and Accommodation package? It could all be rather impressive, if I can start work on it early next year!

Wishing you well in all things and hoping to hear from you.

Garry P Dalrymple
Convenor Sydney Freecon 2008

Garry's Original Fiction

(From the Short Story Competition at 2008 Sydney Freecon)

Yragg 'The Much Married' and the Umbra

Yragg woke at the first roll of thunder very worried. Looking around his hut his three eyes could see that it was morning but the air did not smell wet and his copper mirror had not started to grow its wet season patina. The start of the wet season was still some weeks away, this year it coincided with the marriage season, which, occurring after the passage of a fixed number of cycles of Serrie' Kamba's major Moon and his many lesser his wife moons, could occur at any time of the year on Planet Kamba and its five seasons. Yragg had gone to sleep with this very problem on his mind last night and in the light of morning the problem still remained.

Yragg was a small fur covered Yamban and was considered among his kind to be a beautiful male in his village of fifty or so bachelor and family huts. His two front eyes were a bright blue and uncommonly his back eye was also of a matching blue, but, Yragg's glory was his hair. It was longer and lighter in colour than was common among his rival males, and during the approaching marriage season few females could resist its soft straight silkyness that indicated that he was a prime husband. Admiring his own body hair in his copper mirror as he combed it straight with his long handled comb this morning, (straight back hair Does matter) it only served to remind him of the problem. He could sing – well enough, he could dance – passably, but his real hope in winning females to marriage was his beautiful hair. During the Wet season, if it got wet it could look bedraggled, lizard tailed and slick. Not a winning look during the marriage season!

The thunder had been brief and the rain had not come. It was now that Yragg remembered something that could explain the 'thunder–without-rain' that had disturbed his troubled sleep.

The Trader! The Trader had said that he would come over the mountains from DutyFreetown (as the aliens called their settlement on the coast in their own speech) to trade before the wet season arrived. Last year, after the Trader's promise had arrived at the village the village had been abuzz with talk of nothing else for weeks. Some foolish villagers had doubted how the Trader could carry all his goods across the mountains and others endlessly debated whether the Trader's moving hut was more like a cloud, a cooking pot or a tree, as this was all they knew to compare it with.

But Yragg knew better. As the son of a chief he had been of the party sent by the district to cross

the mountains and go down to the coast to see Dutyfreetown and its Aliens. He had even brought back several of the shiny metal that the Aliens used for trading with the people of Kamba, made of metal that was harder than baked pottery did not lose its shine and need re-polishing each moon like his Copper mirror. In Dutyfreetown the huts of the aliens, Pink, Yellow, Brown and Green all had doorways but some would and some would not let you in, as all doorways would in the Village, they were 'Locked Doors', said the pink Alien that Yrrag had worked for, for the metal pieces, not that Yrrag could see any difference between a locked door and one that opened freely. Such strange things these Aliens had.

The Trader would be visiting the district and set up in the District's trading clearing a morning's walk away. Yrrag was confident that some solution to his problem could be found among the Trader's offerings. With his carry bag over one shoulder he paused at the door of his hut for a moment to break off two large leaves from the Triangle leaf tree that grew just outside his door. Holding the long stems of the triangle leaves over his head they shaded his fur from the harsh sunlight. One would shrivel and brown on the trip to the Trader, the other if held underneath the first would still be fresh enough for shade on the return trip.

In the clearing the Trader Alien's 'Ship' was Like a giant forest tree, and not at all like a river canoe as Yrrag had thought, all smooth cloud coloured metal, but as it rose it tapered away to a point instead of branching out to a crown of metal leaves and branches. Most of the other Kambans were clustered round the base of the 'Ship', talking about the ship and running their hands over the ship. They probably had no metal pieces or trade goods that the Trader would accept. From his experience in Dutyfreetown, Yrrag knew to go towards the small open fronted hut that had been set up some distance beyond the circle of burnt grass surrounding the ship, for this is where he would find the trader and his marvellous goods. As he walked Yrrag, was thinking that he could not see how this 'Ship' could float even in the widest gentlest flowing river, but 'Ship' it was that the Aliens called it and it had crossed from Dutyfreetown to this clearing that was burnt each dry season to be an open meeting place for people from different villages.

Inside the Trader's hut were many wonderful things, many had little notices, like a single square leaf with writing on them. The top one was a number, there was a longer one of many symbols in the middle and at the bottom was a single symbol, in the yellow alien's script Yrrag had been told. What Yrrag was looking for he soon spotted. There were several of them, different sizes and colours. At the bottom of the leaf/sign for each was the same symbol, which stood for a sound a lot like the colour 'Umbra' in some language of the aliens.

The Trader in charge of the hut had no hair at all. He was in truth a lizard man, with bare green skin. Yrrag was revolted by the hairlessness of the Alien, but as the son of a chief he mastered his dignity to ask politely, 'Master Trader Green', how much for the' He indicated the item he wanted. The lizard replied with a price that was acceptable, as it left Yrrag with a few more of the metal pieces.

Yrrag left the shop with his new purchase with his mind full of anticipations of his inevitable successes during the marriage season to come. He had not gone more than a few paces away from the hut when a view of the rain clouds over the distant mountains stopped him in his tracks. He looked at the Umbra in his hand and immediately returned to the hut.

Quite recklessly (for his dignity as the son of a chief) he blurted out, 'But Master Lizard you have not unlocked the Umbra'.

Even though the Trader was dealing with another customer (for Yrrag Was the son of a Chief) the Lizard man took back the purchase and did some small alien trick to it, for it immediately it blossomed out into a huge colourful canopy that amazed all the other customers in the hut.

And so returning to the village Yrrag's 'Umbra' remained locked open, for ever more.

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Some times, over the years, it was patched with new cloth bought from different traders, and when old Yrrag 'The Much Married', finally died, the dispute over which of Yrrag's sons from which of his six wives would inherit the Umbra nearly split the village!

About this story Garry says – I was thinking about what I could do to encourage a few more entries into the short story competition, as at the time they were slow in coming in. I was thinking about something to send to all the people who had entered last year's competition but hadn't yet sent in their entry for 2008, possibly to shame them into sending in a story.

What you see here occurred to me in fragments as I was on the bus coming home from work one evening after staying back to work on some aspect of the Freecon. When I got home I spent the next hour or two writing down by hand the separate scenes and the dialogue elements on loose paper I had to hand and then had something to eat. No TV for me that night!

The next day, after work I typed the parts of the story and joined them up much as you see them now. I read it back and thought – 'Well Why Not?' – so I put it into the competition as an entry instead of using it as agit prop to directly encourage others. Total time involved, about four hours I guess.

As a story it is rather 'cheesy', so I guess by being in this booklet it does serve it's originally intended purpose. If you think you can do better – then enter the next Freecon's short Story competition.
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Garry's Science Fictional 2009 'Party Plans'

The **2008 Sydney Futurian Worldcon Room Party / Dinner** was such a success that I have the confidence to want to do it all again. What I have in mind is to hold several 'bring a plate' style dinners at my place during 2009. There are (dates only very approximate);

January / February? – A local Democrats, Members and Alumni Social Dinner

March / April / May? – a Literary Dinner / launch of the 2009 Freecon Short SF&F Story writing competition, All Plan for 2009

August / September? – Garry's Futurian, Pasturian and Invitees Worldcon Room

November? – A 70th Anniversary of the Futurians Dinner or a Post Freecon Dinner? Pre or Post Freecon? Probably best not at my place due to the numbers likely to be involved.

Some Latter day Developments at the SMSA that might affect plans for Sydney Freecons during 2009 and 2010

The Staff and committee of the SMSA changes from year to year, as does the layout of the SMSA building. The Norman Selfe room, that we used for the Freecon this year will be on level 5 next year and the library where we met! Similarly the people who make up the SMSA's Staff / Committee for 2009 will be different and this may affect the terms under which the Freecon is able to operate. For example next year there may be a 'No Sunday' bookings policy, or we may have to pay more for the venue.

If a Two day weekend Freecon is impossible then my first option would be for a 6 to 9 pm Friday night and a 9 am to 6 pm Saturday, or possibly a Thursday night, Friday Night and Saturday? It would then be a Futurian and Freecon event?

We will just have to see, but I do intend to encourage more Freecon attendees to join the SMSA, more SFnal SMSA members can only strengthen our hand? Even without the inducement of an annual Freecon, annual SMSA membership dues are compelling value!

A brief Report on the Sydney Futurians of 2008

The Sydney Futurians are not what they used to be. Everything was better in the good old days. And so it goes. To live in the present without an appreciation of how different the past was is surely Nihilism? The Sydney Futurians of 2008 are a rather different mob from when I first started attending in 1994 (?) The year following each name is my recollection of when they started attending meeting of the current incarnation of the Sydney Futurians, Monthly discussion meetings at the foyer of the University of Technology Sydney.

This year we were;

Stephen Bingle 2007
Garry P Dalrymple pre 1999
Diane Fox pre 1999
John Fox pre 1999
Jason Lang 2008
Kevin McKern 2006

Ann Rankins 2006
Paolo Rech 2006
Susan Smith 2006
(‘Jules’) **Guilian Sterrantino** 2008
Graham Stone pre 1999
And **Brian Walls** pre 1999

In addition to this I should like to add

L.B. Dalrymple (my mother)
David Bofinger pre 1999
Ron Clarke pre 1999

John Maizels 2008
Lorraine Tacouni 2008
And **Kathleen Tanswell** 2006

The above, while not attending any of the monthly Futurian meetings did manage to make it to my place for a ‘Futurians and Friends’ Worldcon Dinner / Room party (in addition to many of the Futurians listed above) during August this year and so sort of qualify as being ‘Sydney Futurians de jour’ of another sort, as they each contributed something to atmosphere of the evening.

Conclusion – The Times and the Futurians are a changing. Our numbers are not great, but this year, post Freecon we did grow a bit with a few new faces. It is only a small trend, but it does stand out from the generally static membership of the Infinitas groups, the Futurians only current ‘rival’ SF&F discussion groups who seem to be mostly ‘old fans’ who attended Pre Freecon Sydney SF conventions. I’m no longer as anxious about making the effort to encourage back the people who were Futurians when I joined.

Basenjjs Tail Pieces

The end of one chapter

I finally bit the bullet and took Mystique on that final one way trip to the vet. The hoped for Rose Bengal treatment just didn’t happen. The message from all this being that new cures do not happen just because you need one greatly, you have to wait until a ‘study’ and then just hope that the study does turn out to be a cure. Mystique’s last day, November 10, 2008 happened this way. On the Monday morning immediately after the Freecon, on the bus into town, to bring back home the last of the Freecon related stuff, I felt really good. By all indications the Freecon had been a success and it was a pretty good day. On the way Home I still felt pretty good but it occurred to me that now that the Freecon was over there were a lot of things I really would need to deal with, things I had been able to put off until ‘after’. That it was a particularly good day reminded me that after one day off

work I would have to get my head down and there may not be that many reliably good days between now and the Xmas break probably. A thing that clinched it for me was the visible wastage of Mysti's musculature. At her hips she was now only skin and bone, so narrow that by using thumb and index finger a small child could easily grip both sides of her hips and push her over if need be. Getting off the bus I was very aware that it would be so much harder to make some hard decisions on a day that was less good, so after a short talk with Mum I went with Mysti to the vet and returned with lead and collar, embodying the last thing that Mysti could give, Hope, the hope that in the future there may be other Basenjjs to fill that collar and lead. The collar and lead are now on a shelf in the garage, until needed. With her illness and visible infirmity lasting for a year I have had a long time to think about what to say about losing her. I've not been as upset as when the other ones have gone. Having Mysti put down was a lot more like saying goodbye to a familiar work colleague than dealing with a death in the family. The shame of it was that she had such a pretty little face, and at times, in spite of her disfigurement from the tumour, from a side and at an angle you could still see an aspect of it, so Vale Mystique Pukkanut, not the best or most easily loved Basenjjs I've owned, but memorable in her own profoundly curious way.

Amber post Mystique?

Not much sentimentality between dogs, even Basenjjs. If Amber was upset at events it was probably only at missing out on a 'walk' herself. Having the two dogs, and trying to be 'fair' to both A and M we were unaware that we were delaying Amber's full attachment to us, or more correctly to Mum. Amber is now very attached to Mum and even whinges a bit when Mum goes out during the day and leaves her behind. Amber seems a bit more relaxed, without the 'challenge' of Mysti's presence in the same room or house. ***A very surprising recent 'non-Amber' dog development*** is that my Niece Janene and her Mother Ruth have accepted a dog into their lives! Quite a journey to Rome / Road to Damascus turning given attitudes expressed in the past. Janene's Aunt Cheryl deserves full credit for raising the issue and finding a suitable dog. His name is Tim and he is one of those fluffy little crossbreed dogs you see in pet shop windows, all fur and enthusiasm. Not much of a dog by Basenjjs standards, but a pretty good pick as a teenage girl's 'first ever dog'. He was a pound rescue dog and is surprisingly yap free. Gratifyingly, in short order Ruth and Janene both seem to be attached to the mutt. Holiday time boarding of Tim with us at Eulabah is a possibility.

Was having Amber and Mystique at the same time such a good idea?

With all the vision of hindsight, it probably wasn't such a good idea. Boy and Girl, Siblings, Parent and Child, etc. are always going to be much more viable pairings than Grand Mother / Grand Daughter. I couldn't contemplate it at the time, but terminating Mystique then getting Amber or even Amber and a friend and bringing them into a new 'empty' house might have been a better idea. The plan with Amber and Mysti was that the company and interaction with the younger one would rejuvenate the older one, but that just didn't happen, Mysti was too far gone or just disinclined to seek canine company. They never really got on as well as other pairs of Basenjjs, sleeping / sitting together and at times you had to avoid forcing them into too close proximity. There was some advantage in having two at one time, an up close and an across the room dog but this was not that great an advantage. Really the only advantage was the decision not to make a decision on Mysti's future in the expectation that 'things could get better'.

In Conclusion

We now have Forever Amber Pukkanut as a solo dog and for the next five to ten years that will probably have to be enough. I think a lot of the trouble between Amber and Mysti was a result of them both being 'run' dogs (i.e. they both spent their pre-Eulabah Avenue lives mostly at a breeder's stud in runs rather than being house dogs, consequently they had less than convenient 'pack' attitudes. If one had been a house dog, better attitudes might have in time been learnt? If I'm offered a boy dog to match with Amber, a house dog needing a new home, I would be more inclined

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to try that than to try accepting another 'run' dog for pairing with Amber. The other post Amber possibility is to do what normal people do, just buy a pup and bring it up to suit your own house rules.

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