



# Picocon 35

## Harmony

### Wyrmtongue

# The Queen's Speech

Greetings all, and welcome to the 35th Annual Picocon!

My team of minions have organised a fantastic event for you all, with talks by some awesome guests, some smashing of the dodgiest merch around (although anyone seen harming adorable little porgs will have to face my wrath), and a chance to appreciate some of the worst works of the genre for charity. There's also definitely not a fish duel, and we're actually definitely not erecting a statue in Anurag's honour.

It has been a great year for the society so far, with many fun and new events, such as the introduction of Themed Fridays and a recent collab with AstroSoc. We encountered a few technical difficulties with converting the library into Atlantis (books + water = bad), which provoked a super sing-a-long ICSF Tour round the various Union Meeting Rooms. We even have T-Shirts to prove it! Apologies if the library isn't in its usual pristine condition - debates over the most efficient sorting algorithm for reshelving the books have yet to be solved. We have plenty of fun events planned for the rest of the term, which are detailed somewhere in this Wyrms. I hope to see you there!

So now it just remains for me to wish you a merry Picocon and a happy smashing things dipped in liquid nitrogen!

Amelia Owens – ICSF Chair

# The Sofa's Ramblings

This time last year, a crack team of well-read and highly intelligent fans was hand-picked from Imperial College London's Science Fiction and Fantasy society's secret basement lair, to ensure that Picocon 35 would be planned and executed down to the last second - for the glory of the society. However, none of them could make it, so you're stuck with a pair of people named Ed with questionable taste in fiction and wildly varying senses of humour. Ah well, can't be helped!

Thankfully, our guests are much more interesting than we are, and we've inherited the knowledge of past conventions to make sure that fish duels definitely don't take place, and that liquid nitrogen is available to rid the world of its never-ending stream of dodgy merchandise.

Up first are the creative partnership of Paul Stewart and Chris Riddell, who will be speaking to you together for an hour, followed by half hour each about their writing and illustration respectively. At this point, we'll break for lunch in the h-bar. The aforementioned destruction of dodgy merchandise will occur about halfway through with help from Stuart Ashen, hopefully allowing enough time for everybody to recoup their energy.

After lunch, we have the fantastic Emma Newman, who will talk to us about her work with audiobook narration. This is followed by our author panel, where you'll have the opportunity to put questions to all of our guests. Also joining us for the panel is Ben Aaronovitch, whose work includes two Doctor Who serials, several spin-off novels, and his best-selling series, Rivers of London. After the panel, there will be a chance to get books signed by all of the panellists.

This year's convention has been an interesting one to organise, and on a personal level, I have to extend my thanks to everyone who's volunteered their time to make sure that paperwork has been done, tables have been carried, and ideas have been floated. And to you, dear guests - some of you have been visiting this convention since before I was born, and I hope that Picocon continues to evolve and entertain.

Welcome to all of you,

Edward Da Fonseca – Picocon Sofa

## A Word from the Beanbag

I was informed it is traditional for the Beanbag to write a witty introduction in advance of each Picocon. Informed being the key word, as I somehow seem to have stumbled into this position due to my singular ability to stand up in an EGM and defeat Miranda, our charming Dalek overperson, in a conversation. Alas, Miranda is a quiet soul, and I (narrowly) won my way to this position.

All is not lost however, for at least we now have two Eds! And as they say (who say? Is it the dastardly moon people again?); two Eds are better than one! I would like to thank my superior head, our Sofa, for being the driving force behind this year. He has worked tirelessly, sleeplessly, and coffeelessly to bring about what is sure to be an amazing event this year. I would also like to thank our volunteers for being amazing and not staying inside on this cold winter's morn.

I feel in this brief introduction I can leak some word from the library - we have had new leaks! Two of the watery variety, and more of the edible variety. Our mascot collections grows - especially now that the shelf run-off water has been harnessed in a farm! Truly are we in Harmony with nature!

My ability to write terrible jokes falters however. So let me extend a warm welcome to all of you, be you from nearby Beit, distant Woodward, or even further afield! Have an incredible day!

Edward Pickup – Picocon Beanbag

# What's On

To those who have not attended Picocon before, and to those who have – welcome! We have many fun events in store for you today. As well as talks by several Guests of Honour, there will be an Authors' Panel, with an opportunity for the audience to ask all the authors questions. Silly Games is exactly what it sounds like, with an assortment of bizarre quizzes, games and general hilarity. Several charity events will take place in collaboration with RAG, notably Turkey Readings and Viewings, in which we'll assault your senses with terrible books and films, and you can either pay for them to continue, or to end.

We also have Destruction of Dodgy Merchandise (DoDM), in which you can bid to rescue lovingly selected abominations of merchandise, or to dunk them in liquid nitrogen and ruthlessly destroy them, sending them back to whatever pit of hell from which they crawled. Again, all proceeds go to charity. This year, like last year, Stuart Ashen of Youtube fame will chair the auctioning of the merchandise.

Later in the day will be an event known simply (and not at all sinisterly) as 'Harmless Fun'.

Finally, Imperial's Gaming Society will be in Blackett 1004 from 4.30pm with a number of entertaining diversions, and the Tabletop Gaming Society will be joining them in the evening. On the second floor of the Blackett foyer, you will also be able to find a variety of booksellers, clothing vendors, and our own stand selling Picocon 35 T-shirts with this year's logo.

## Harmony

Harmony is an interesting concept, perhaps best expressed as a unity of purpose between well differentiated actors. Whether it's musical notes combining into a chord, or different creative media reinforcing one another, harmony is both about togetherness and celebrating difference. In the natural world, harmony is often a product of chaos rather than order – a balance between elements, as illustrated in Diba's fabulous artwork for this year's convention.

In fiction, often an avenue to explore what we dare not in life, differences between groups are frequently exaggerated, with stubborn dwarves and warlike orcs, or ridge-headed space warriors and large-lobed free-marketeers. Whilst plenty of stories revolve around the conflicting natures of these groups, often influenced by the outlook of those who craft them, there are also stories with a brighter outlook. Time and time again, alliances crop up of humans and pointy-eared creatures, whether they be elves or Vulcans, in which the weaknesses of one are covered by the strengths of the other.

And stepping back from the works themselves, the act of creating rarely occurs in a vacuum. Whether long-standing relationships between illustrations and text, the spoken and the written word, or simply different works inhabiting the same shared universe, the combination of different aspects of creativity come together in broadly harmonious ways. To mix one's proverbs: When standing on the shoulders of giants, no man is an island.

Edward Da Fonseca – Picocon Sofa

# Coming Up

The fun doesn't stop with Picocon! We have plenty of other events planned for the rest of the term, from movie marathons to laser battles. Whether you're a fully-fledged member of the society or you're here for the first time, we'd love to have you join us.

## Themed Friday: Horror

Join us on the evening of Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> February, as we rediscover the 'Gothic Horror' part of the society's title.

## Laser Quest

Because as much fun as it is to watch an epic sci-fi war on the big screen, it just can't compare to grabbing some laser guns and doing it ourselves! Join ICSF and Gaming for the battle of a lifetime.

## Book Club

The long-awaited first meeting of ICSF's book club, at 6pm on 1<sup>st</sup> March, will be a great opportunity to discuss some of the best science fiction and fantasy novels, and maybe get to know some new favourites. The first book will be 'Left Hand of Darkness'.

## Firefly Marathon

As tragic as it is that Firefly was cut so short, at least it means we can marathon the whole thing over one weekend! Come along on 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> March for good television, good company, and perhaps even some good snacks.

## Unofficial Black Panther Trip

Planning on seeing Black Panther? Who better to go with than a bunch of other nerds from ICSF!

More details of events will be circulated on the `icsf-list` mailing list, so please do sign up to the mailing list or join our Facebook group if you're interested.

# Gaming

The Imperial College Gaming Club and Science Fiction society, while not strictly affiliated with each other, have shared a good few members over the past few years, and Gaming have kindly agreed to provide another set of distractions at Picocon by running a session today. Their consoles will be set up in Blackett 1004 from 4.30pm into the evening, running some of their most popular games. Whether you're a hardcore gamer or just fancy something a bit different to do, drop in to see them and you'll have a lot of fun!

For any Imperial students who realise how much they've been missing gaming from their lives, the Gaming Club meets every week. Their sessions run from 2pm every Wednesday, with details distributed on their mailing list.

## Tabletop Gaming

For those of you who prefer your games physical to the touch, we're delighted that Imperial College's Tabletop Gaming society will be joining the Gaming Club in Blackett 1004 this evening. They will be bringing plenty of games from their vast collection to try out, both long and short. There'll be something for everyone, from the seasoned pro to the complete novice, so do go along and see what they have to offer.

Tabletop Gaming run regular boardgame, RPG and Magic: The Gathering sessions every week, on Monday, Wednesday and Thursday evenings respectively, so they have events to appeal to all different tastes. More details are available on their Facebook group and their mailing list.

# Schedule

- 10:00 Front Desk/Registration Opens<sup>\*</sup>
- 10:30 Author's Talk - Paul Stewart and Chris Riddell<sup>†</sup>
- 11:30 Author's Talk - Paul Stewart<sup>†</sup>
- 12:00 Author's Talk - Chris Riddell<sup>†</sup>
- 12:30 Lunch<sup>‡</sup>
- 13:00 Destruction of Dodgy Merchandise<sup>§</sup>
- 14:00 Author's Talk - Emma Newman<sup>†</sup>
- 15:00 Authors' Panel<sup>†</sup>
- 16:00 Turkey Readings and Silly Games<sup>†</sup>
- 16:30 Silly Games<sup>†</sup>, Gaming begins<sup>¶</sup>
- 17:30 Harmless Fun (*definitely not a fish duel*)<sup>§</sup>
- 18:00 Pub Quiz<sup>‡</sup>

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<sup>\*</sup> Blackett Building

<sup>†</sup> Blackett LT1

<sup>‡</sup> h-bar

<sup>§</sup> Queen's Lawn

<sup>¶</sup> Blackett 1004, running until late evening

# Guests of Honour

## Paul Stewart

Paul Stewart has written everything - from picture books for young readers to football stories, travel writing, fantasy and horror. A graduate of Lancaster University and of the University of East Anglia's creative writing course, Paul, a keen traveller, lived and worked in Germany and Sri Lanka teaching English as a foreign language, before returning to England and becoming a full-time writer.



## Chris Riddell

Chris Riddell is an author, illustrator and the political cartoonist for the Observer. He was appointed the UK's Waterstones Children's Laureate in 2015. Alongside his collaborative work with Paul, Neil Gaiman and others, Chris also writes and illustrates the Ottoline series and the Costa Award winning Goth Girl series. Chris has won many awards for his work, including the Nestlé Gold Award, the UNESCO Award for Something Else and two Kate Greenaway Medals.



## Emma Newman

Emma Newman writes dark short stories, and science fiction and urban fantasy novels. 'Between Two Thorns', the first book in Emma's Split Worlds urban fantasy series, was shortlisted for the BFS Best Novel and Best New-comer awards. The fifth and final novel in the series 'All Good Things' will be published in 2017. The Split Worlds series is published by Diversion Books. Emma's first science fiction novel, Planetfall, was published by Roc in November 2015. A second standalone novel set in the same universe, called 'After Atlas', is available now.



## Ben Aaronovitch

Ben Aaronovitch is best-known for his best-selling Rivers of London series, a series of urban fantasy police procedural novels. He also wrote two Doctor Who serials, 'Remembrance of the Daleks' in 1988 and 'Battlefield' in 1989, and various spin-off novels, as well as co-writing a Doctor Who audio drama. He was a regular writer on the science fiction series, Jupiter Moon.





## Stuart Ashen

Stuart Ashen, or Ashens, is an enigma. He has single handedly compiled over 50 thousand shades of the colour gray. He has produced over 520 videos. Today, he will harness the power of liquid nitrogen to destroy an assortment of terrifyingly ill designed merchandise. Truly, anything is possible for Stuart Ashen. We are honoured, if slightly scared, to welcome him again today.



# Vendors

Our vendors are located on the second floor of the Blackett foyer, and and would love to introduce themselves to you.

## Paul Couper

A reader/collector of SF/Fantasy, selling at Picocon to clear duplicates built up whilst collecting and upgrading. My collection is now over 12,000 paperbacks, but still has many gaps. Most wanted at present? Probably E Pluribus Unicorn, Theodore Sturgeon, Timescape paperback (i.e. 4th Pocket printing) to complete my timescape collection. So if anyone has a copy of that (or other collectables) for sale, wants to buy, or indeed just wants a chat, stop by during the day.

## Clockwork Firebird Designs - Alex Locke

Welcome to Clockwork Firebird Designs! I am a self-taught, ever-evolving tailor, leather worker and costume maker with a penchant for creating monsters. I attend Live Action Role-Play (LARP) events and Anime/Comic conventions as both a trader and attendee on a regular basis. I've been doing leather work since 2008, and selling since 2011. I recall learning to sew when I was 6 years old and I've not really stopped since. Within the shop you may find armour, masks, trinkets, painted artworks, soft toys... anything I bring to mind or feel like turning my hand to! I am still finding my feet, and I am always learning new techniques.

## Blackwell Books

This year, giving you an even greater selection of books to browse from, we will also be welcoming Blackwell's for the first time. For Picocon, they will primarily be stocking books by our Guests of Honour, so it will be a great chance for you to grab a copy of the books you've heard all about today!

# Quest Objectives

On your way in, you should have been assigned to one of three teams - the Omnicos, the Collective, or the Jesters - and given a sticky badge to wear with newfound pride. If somehow you slipped through the net, or misplaced your badge, then go and *politely* berate the receptionists until they give you one.

You will find a list of dangerous, potentially impossible items below. Find any of these items, bring the evidence back to the front desk, and win fabulous prizes... in the form of points for your team. Whichever team ends up with the most points will be declared the finest, the greatest, and most importantly the winners!

Now go *for great justice*.

This year's teams are:



The Omnicos - be one  
with the universe



The Collective - items  
will be assimilated



The Jesters - a hunt,  
but with jazz hands!

These items can be submitted to the Front Desk for Fun Points (after 11am). Pictures are not (generally) admissible; objective involving people *must* only be undertaken with the other person's permission. The front desk reserves the right to keep the submitted items. Each faction may claim an item on the only once, unless otherwise noted.

FD Front Desk Person's Discretion\*

E This item may be claimed multiple times per faction ("each")

M For each faction, the highest of their scores will be used

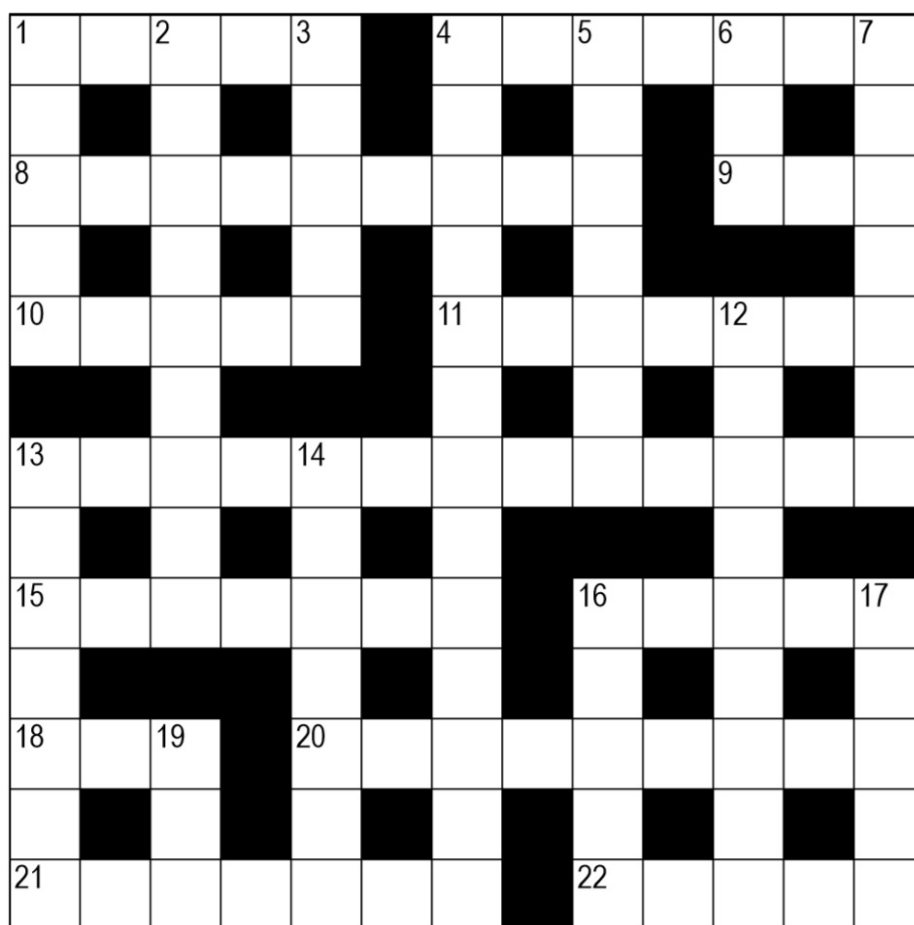
1	Little Green Pygmy Solders (E)	5	The blood of a Picocon first-timer
1	Hugs (per person)	20	The Mabbott set
30	Picocon	8	A phylactery
20	A non-ICSF fresher at Picocon	80	Dave Clements' phylactery
Age +5	Ex-ICSF Chair (M)	100	The Picocon Sofa, calm
Age +5	Ex-ICSF Librarian (M)	50	The Picocon Beanbag, frantic
Age +5	T-shirts from Picocons past (M)	15	Tea, earl grey, hot
10	Previous Guest of Honour (E)	25	A good drink (FD, E)
10	Half of one (1) Dave	10	A less good drink (FD)

\* This actually applies to everything; where it is noted, it indicates that you're unlikely to change anyone's mind with your cunning arguments.

-5	Unsatisfactory drink (FD)	n(n-1)	n Interlocking cogs (functional after being poked) (M)
5	Delicious blood (FD)		
15	Spirits from beyond	10	Out of place kerning
1000	£100 (E)	20	An unaired TV pilot
7	The contents of my pocketsets	20	An untelevised air pilot
5	Good news (FD, E)	30	A control crystal (with demonstration)
-5	Bad news (FD, E)		
1	A funny joke (FD, E)	40	Three quarters of a planck length
-1	A bad pun (FD, E)	20	A demonstration of Xeno's paradox
10	A charge of EIE/EEE students	10	An aesthetically pleasing key (FD)
25	A competent barbershop quartet (FD)	14	A clowder of one cat
5	Any song sung in the style of William Shatner	5	The man they call Jayne (or his hat)
50	A barbershop quartet in the style of William Shatner	-50	The source of the mysterious ticking noise
50	Any door to London Below	400	The World Turtle
3	Newly acquired merchandise	800	With orbiting bodies
5	A teleological proof of the existence of a higher power	10	A surviving member of the Imperial Steampunk Society
1	The solution to the next item on the list (E)	50	A book ICSF lacks (and wants)
-1	The solution to the previous item on the list (E)	1	The light at the end of the tunnel
10	Donations of a themed plastic abomination	5	A crowning moment of awesome
5	A demon bear (bonus points if fluffy)	17	Proof humanity's reach extends beyond its imagination
5	A member of the Family of Blood	70	A lost Doctor Who episode
5	A little fall of rain	3	Famous last words (subject to checking)
5	Origami	-1	Anything irrelevant (E)
20	Dinosaur origami	-5	Anything irrelephant (E)
8	A Non-Euclidean triangle	4	An Ed (picked up)
5	A snake eating its own snake tail, or snail.	3	Galaxy
5	Tribble	2	A practical application for General Relativity
60	Tribble (functional)	4	Transcendent understanding
5	A nanosecond	10	A point in the complex plane
10	An accretion disk	5	A working AI (demonstrated)
30	A terrifying technological terror	10	A working AI (safely demonstrated)
3	A good hat	1000	Time machine (points were awarded 16th Feb 6pm, ICSF Library, password is "arpeggio")
5	A correctly fitted top hat	25	A swordfish
5	Convincing closet cosplay	35	A fishsword
10	Convincing actual cosplay	10	A Swan
10	Pretty trinkets (FD)	4	Nerf Guns
3	The start of something beautiful	3	NERV guns
30	The phone from a castle	10	Lab stuff
20	The phone from a police box	-50	per fatality
50	Happiness, $\geq 0.1M$ concentration	10	The Staff of Ra
		3	Positronic brain
		3	Observable Brownian Motion



# Crossword



## ACROSS:

- 1 – Tiny yellow mouse (5)
- 4 – Real world Babel fish (7)
- 8 – 2D D12 (9)
- 9 – The one after Eccleston (3)
- 10 – Self-imposed by Ben Kenobi (5)
- 11 – Orpheus’ journey (2,5)
- 13 – Godzilla vs \_\_\_\_\_ (13)
- 15 – Nathan Fillion TV show (plural) (7)
- 16 – Morally dubious Federation captain (5)
- 18 – Post-apocalypse Denzel Washington (3)
- 20 – Quantum physicist (5,4)
- 21 – Jim Carrey, Cory Michael Smith, Frank Gorshin, Conan O’Brien (7)
- 22 – When the One enters the Source (5)

## DOWN:

- 1 – Dota 2 abomination (5)
- 2 – Totally necessary fantasy dress piece (9)
- 3 – Vernon Dursley (5)
- 4 – Virtue of paladins (13)
- 5 – Rick \_\_\_\_\_ (7)
- 6 – What we destroy at DoDM (3)
- 7 – Common ‘All My Circuits’ affliction (7)
- 12 – What Scarecrow makes you (9)
- 13 – The arguably correct viewing order (7)
- 14 – Legitimate plagiarism (7)
- 16 – Traditional weapon (5)
- 17 – The most powerful of Jinn (5)
- 19 – The Disney of ‘Ready Player One’ (3)

*Crossword and nonogram created by Henry Wild, with some hindrance provided by the Editor.*

Map

