

# Garry Dalrymple's latter-day, revised version of; The Official Report of the First Australian Science Fiction Convention, Sydcon, 1952

*As originally Published by the Futurian Society of Sydney*

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## BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION

William D. Veney, Chairman

The First Australian Science Fiction Convention was the most ambitious venture of its kind ever attempted by Australian Fandom. From a humble beginning in 1951 and without the benefit of recognised channels of fan recruiting, the organised Sydney community successfully staged a gathering of several days duration that attracted a total of 58 interested science fiction readers. It must be admitted that the majority of those who attended were from Sydney or (the) near-Sydney area. However, the national flavour was maintained by visitors from **Melbourne**, **Newcastle** and **Forster**, and the general recognition given by fans from other States and New Zealand.

Many factors emerged from the Convention, but the most important one was that Sydney fans could work together as a team. The problems of our lonely and isolated existence has tended to make us self-reliant and anarchistic, but this was anything but a one-man show. The main duties were performed by the members of the committee. However, Sydney fandom as a whole and the members of the Sydney Futurian Society in particular gave vital and valuable assistance.

Praise is due to everyone concerned. **Graham Stone**, dynamic Secretary of the Convention, for devoting so much time to the needs of Fandom; **Nick Soltseff**, Treasurer, for his efficient handling of the finances, and the production of the official booklet; **Arthur Haddon**, for the manner in which he conducted the Auction, and for the printed circulars in the **British re-print ASF**; **Lex Banning**, for the courageous manner in which he arranged a scratch programme for the film section after having been let down on his original programme; **Vol Molesworth**, for his cooperation with all members of the committee far beyond the natural call of duty, and also for so much personal help to me; and **David Cohen**, **Ian Driscoll**, **Ken Martin**, **Bruce Purdy** and **Roy Williams**. Also, the **Futurian Society of Sydney**, as an organisation, for assuming collective responsibility for the success of this, our first Convention.

Many valuable lessons have been learned by the Sydney fan community. There were many bad points that the assembly graciously overlooked, but were noted by the organizers. There has been much analytical discussion over the form and style of the main day's activities. There has been much debate as to whether the most was extracted from the opportunities presenting themselves. All this is good and healthy. It is my belief that the best way to crush laurels is to sit on them.

In conclusion I wish to thank everybody that attended the Convention and trust that you enjoyed yourselves. I also wish to express the hope that we may all gather again at the Second Australian Convention in 1953.

William D. Veney, Chairman

## REPORT ON THE CONVENTION AUCTION By Arthur W. Haddon

Until the eleventh hour, the convention Auction looked like being a fiasco. Right up until a week before the big day material did not exceed a dozen magazines. However, due to the sterling activity of a few well-known fans at this late stage the Auction commenced with the following material:- 7 books, 7 pocket books, 5 paper covered books, 1 Finlay portfolio, and 134 magazines.

In addition, there were about a dozen fan publications.

Donations were made by **David Cohen, Roger Dard** (*from W.A.*), **Arthur Haddon, Vol Molesworth, Nick Soltseff, Graham Stone** and the **Australian Fantasy Foundation**; and commission sales were made on behalf of **David Cohen, J. Leggett, M. Lynch, Mick McGuinness, Jock Mckenna, Nick Soltseff, Graham Stone** and **Roy Williams**.

For this material, 31 fans paid more than 34 pounds, which resulted in the Auction being a 100% money-making concern and did much towards reimbursing the Futurian Society's financial outlay in sponsoring the Convention.

Grateful as I am to the contributors for their actions, I would like to point out that I had asked for all auction material to be with me by February 29 (1952). The late contributors, some of whom handed in material while the Auction was in progress, did much to disorganise the checking system and were mainly responsible for the delay in distribution when sales had been completed.

Prices were fantastic. It would appear that the new fans were dazzled by quantity and quality of, to them, hitherto unknown magazines. Imagination's sold averaged 10 shillings a copy, while Galaxy averaged 15 shillings. The September 1951 Galaxy containing part 1 of "The Puppet Masters" brought 1 pound -- from **Edward Butt** of Newcastle. I claim this to be a record. Astounding was well back in the prices, and this is perhaps an indication of just how much this magazine has fallen from public favour. NOW is the time to send in material for the Sydcon 1953!

Fan who opened their pocketbooks at the Auction were; McKenna, Crawford, Swannel, Cohen, Moriarty, Mathews, Stanborough, Ritchie, Hemming, Earls, Mellor, Dillon, Butt, Yates, Roth, Oswald, Nicholson, Bos, La Coste, McMillan, Guy, Dunk, Beard, Molesworth, Veney, Frederickson, Simmons, Russell, Brunen, King and Driscoll. (I have preserved this order in case it related to the sequence of purchases or some other aspect of the Auction)

*(As Re-organised in A to Z order by G. Dalrymple)*

Fans who opened their pocket-books at the Auction were (A to Z); **Beard, Bos, Brunen, Edward Butt, David Cohen, Crawford Kevin Dillon, Driscoll, Dunk, Earls, Frederickson, Guy, Hemming, King, La Coste, McKenna, McMillan, Swannel, Mathews, Mellor, Vol Molesworth, Moriarty, Nicholson, Oswald, Ritchie, Roth, Russell, Stanborough, Veney, and Yates.**

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“ WHAT IS SCIENCE FICTION ? “ An address given by VOL MOLESWORTH, Director of the Futurian Society of Sydney.

This is the kind of question which I think would make tropical heroes pale beneath their tan, because everybody here obviously knows what science fiction is. They wouldn't be here if they didn't. Well, what is science fiction? If you asked this question around the hall, you would get a rather peculiar variety of answers. The man on your left says that science fiction is essentially technical, that the whole idea is to get profound mathematical and physical concepts wrapped up in a sugar-coated form. The man on your right denies this and claims that science fiction is essentially escape literature, -- it tells of beautiful new worlds with gleaming skyscrapers and rocketships, free beer and lovely ladies. Fans are morons, and the whole reason for science fiction is that people who cannot face the present can get away to dreamland. We can take two objections so far. (1) Science fiction is not essentially technical; and (2) fans are not all misfits.

Another view is that science fiction fans are “ratbags” Just look at the covers on the magazines! Damsels in dainty underwear being attacked by giant octapoid monsters, and heroes in most improbable space suits rushing to their rescue. They even send you off into the *n*th dimension. A delegate from the **Australian Peace Conference** says in his thin nasal voice that science fiction is depraved capitalist propaganda. It epitomises the enslavement of man by machines. Instead of capitalists grinding in the faces of the poor, you have the exploitation of extraterrestrials. Others say that the nature of science fiction is to take an idea, play around with it, and see what happens. This can be put to the purposes of reform, and we have the notion of science fiction as propaganda. Here the fantastic element is not the main point. In the old days, the reformer took the reader off to some island and found a civilisation there, and drew invidious comparisons.

But science fiction is obviously not just reform literature. Some stories do take us to other planets, where we find different types of civilisation, but these are not postulated for the purposes of satire. The science fictional elements lie in how the hero gets there, and what he finds there.

**Hugo Gernsback** certainly treated science fiction as a means of getting young men interested in science, especially the electrical and radio field. But since his time science fiction has become a thing in and for itself. It is not the servant of anything else – not a means of education, not a vehicle for satire, not a means of escape. Science fiction began in 1926 with one magazine. Today there are about thirty, requiring between them about 300 stories (*per year*). The realm has spread. No longer is it necessary to tear off the covers and hide the magazine under your coat.

**Vol Molesworth**: continued from page 4

Science fiction has spread to respectable magazines like The Saturday Evening Post, and to Hollywood. You can even read it in The Sydney Morning Herald! There was a day of course, when science fiction fans were in a nasty dilemma. Good science fiction appeared only in the pulp magazines, the format of which tended to put newcomers off. But on the other hand, if you showed them a hard cover book, it had to be one by **Jules Verne** or **H.G. Wells**, which was not exactly what we meant by **stf**. Today science fiction has come of age. It now appears in handsome book editions and therefore starts on a par with other kinds of fiction.

“Science fiction” is two words. We should not emphasise the first, nor overlook the second. It is clear that science fiction is stimulating and speculative. The Science has to be accurate, but it is also true that the story has to be well thought out and well written. The characterisation has to be sound, and the dialogue convincing. If the people in the tale are wooden puppets, no amount of first-rate science will make it readable.

Take an analogy with ordinary fiction. It deals with things which are familiar, and the interest lies in what human beings do in this environment. The only difference between science fiction and ordinary fiction is that the environment is different.

You probably all disagree with me and have your own definition of science fiction. Some people say it's function is to try and solve problems. The contention is made that science fiction is read only by people with high I. Q.s. But people with high I. Q.s do not all read science fiction. Mine is necessarily a makeshift definition. You can pick holes in it, but it has always suited me. And my definition is science fiction is a way of life, an attitude of mind. It is a refusal to accept things as settled, as static. It is a forward-reaching mind, one willing to accept and examine a variety of new concepts. It challenges the Universe; it does not sit back and accept it. Science fiction fans do not stick in the mud – they go out and challenge the Universe.

This is an Olympian definition, and ultimately it will be rejected. But it is why I have always preferred the word “Futurian”, which implies being more than just a fan, just a chap who likes a yarn with a different twist to it.

In the long run, I suppose, we must confess that we read science fiction for the same reason as the New York bachelor, who was asked his views on sex.

‘Brother’, he said, “it’s just about the most goddam fascinating thing I ever discovered”

So is science fiction to us.

## WHAT IS FANDOM? By Graham Stone, Secretary of Australian Science Fiction Society

Originally I was scheduled to give an address on "What are science fiction fans?" But I think this can be summed up in one word – us. I think that this is the best definition one could give of – What is Fandom? Namely, us. One falls into the habit of loosely speaking of science fiction fandom as if it were an entity: but fandom is a state of mind, and anyone who reads science fiction actively is of the state of mind that makes a science fiction fan.

Actually the two questions are inseparable. What is science fiction and what is a science fiction fan. When we begin to probe into science fiction, into what makes it tick, we find ourselves asking what makes a science fiction reader tick? Actually we are talking about the science fiction mind. All that can be added to this in special consideration of fandom is the science fiction mind considered as part of a community of minds.

We have been given a view of the science fiction fan as he sits at home reading; but there is more to it than that. Science fiction requires an active interest. It cannot be pursued on a solo basis. Every fan has something to say of interest to others, something to contribute to science fiction.

It is certainly true that a lot of science fiction magazines are bought by people we would not recognise. The circulation of *Astounding Science Fiction* in NSW is 1200. I do not see 1200 people here. There were not many replies to our circular, -- about forty. Not much of a response.

A percentage of the magazines are bought out of sheer curiosity by the casual news stand reader. He has never seen the magazine before, or he has seen it before and forgotten it. Many are read by people who want to read something on the train. And I am forced to the conclusion that a percentage of science fiction magazines are bought by people who are simply anti-social. The percentage of just plain casual buying could not be so enormous.

But science fiction fans do get together, are on the whole gregarious. One of the things that showed science fiction's success was not the increase in sales of magazines, but the fact that people were interested. Every science fiction magazine editor is bombarded with letters. "Your Magazine is great". "Your magazine is terrible". Early in the life of *Amazing Stories*, **Hugo Gernsback** was impressed by this, because the ordinary magazine reader does not write to a magazine unless something touches him pretty violently. In those days (1926) it was not the usual custom for ordinary magazines to run a reader's section. *Amazing Stories* was unusual in starting one, and its success influenced a general movement among fiction magazines. At first letters in *Amazing* were entirely

**Graham Stone**: continued from page 6

Technical – from this beginning ultimately developed readers' sections such as that in Startling Stories today – very little to do with S.F. at all, and almost entirely non-technical.

But at any rate, it soon became an open forum of personalities. Writing in to the magazines was the way fans first got together. They wrote to each other, and soon groups began to form. Before 1930 in the U.S. they were in about the same condition as we are in now, except that we have taken short cuts to advanced organisation through knowledge of their experience.

With the growth of S. F. the growth of fandom kept pace, and more and more as we consider more recent times, we cannot draw a line. Fandom belongs to S.F.; it is not just a passenger, but an active participant in the movement.

A very large percentage of writers of science fiction today were originally fans, and most science fiction editors began as active science fiction fans. Half a dozen magazines would never have begun but for the urgency of certain fans.

During the War, science fiction became more popular, more widely known. Circulation spiralled up, and it came to about directly as a result of the urging of fans. In the case of books, the modern book production would not exist on a comparable scale but for the work of non-professional publishers from before the war.

Well I could go on talking all night. However, I am not going to do this, although I will probably be heard from again this afternoon. I did not prepare a speech, and I feel the best I can do is *(to)* leave it at that.

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## **DISPLAY STANDS AND EXHIBITIONS AT CONVENTION**

In the entrance of the building **Qantas** had rigged up a large black light display featuring a landing on the Moon. This had the effect of providing a science-fictional flavour even before the visiting fans got into the lift to go up to the convention hall.

Immediately inside the hall, **Australian Science Fiction Society** had arranged a long display of fan and professional magazines outlining the history of science fiction. This included old, rare, and foreign-language magazines.

**Vol and Laura Molesworth** had a stand exhibiting **Futurian Press** books. Next to them, **Arthur Haddon** had laid out items for the Auction, which fans kept pawing until the bell rang.

On the other side of the hall, **Ian Driscoll** had erected the **Australian Fantasy Foundation** stand, which included library books propped up between rocketship bookends.

## THE FORMAL BUSINESS SESSION

Chairman **William D. Veney**, Secretary **Arthur W. Hadden**, Minutes Secretary **Beryl Chipper**

### Delegates in arrival order

J.H. Leggett  
Chas. La Costa  
G. B. Stone  
Lex Benning  
F. Frederickson  
Ian Driscoll  
Race Matthews  
W. Russell  
J. Earls  
Vol Molesworth  
Roy Williams  
Bruce Purdy  
Kevin Dillon  
Laura Molesworth  
Michael McGuinness  
Ken Martin  
David Cohen  
T. King  
R. Guy  
D. Stanborough  
Rosemary Simmons  
Clive Mellor  
Norma K. Hemming  
Stan Yates  
G. R. Meyer  
Nick Solntseff  
Diana Wilkes  
M. A. Bos  
G. Beard  
Pauline Roth  
Len Roth  
S. Dunk  
David Ritchie  
G. McMillan  
Don Lawson  
David Croft  
Daphne Ireland  
Jock McKenna

RD Nicholson  
Edward Butt  
R. Oswald  
B. King  
G. Mastro  
N. Vaughan  
E. Vaughan  
K. Picklum  
Les Raethel  
Harry Brunen  
C. J. Fowler  
P. Glick  
J. Crawford  
C. Berckelman  
M. Lazar  
M. Moriarty  
M. Swanell

### Delegates in A to Z order (*added by GPD*)

G. Beard  
Lex Benning  
C. Berckelman  
M. A. Bos  
Harry Brunen  
Edward Butt  
Beryl Chipper  
David Cohen  
J. Crawford  
David Croft  
Kevin Dillon  
Ian Driscoll  
S. Dunk  
J. Earls  
C. J. Fowler  
F. Frederickson  
P. Glick  
R. Guy  
Arthur W. Haddon

Norma K. Hemming  
Daphne Ireland  
B. King  
T. King  
Chas. La Costa  
Don Lawson  
M. Lazar  
J.H. Leggett  
Michael McGuinness  
Jock McKenna  
G. McMillan  
Ken Martin  
G. Mastro  
Race Matthews  
Clive Mellor  
G. R. Meyer  
Laura Molesworth  
Vol Molesworth  
M. Moriarty  
R. D. Nicholson  
R. Oswald  
K. Picklum  
Bruce Purdy  
Les Raethel  
David Ritchie  
Len Roth  
Pauline Roth  
W. Russell  
Rosemary Simmons  
Nick Solntseff  
D. Stanborough  
Graham B. Stone  
M. Swanell  
E. Vaughan  
N. Vaughan  
William D. Veney  
Diana Wilkes  
Roy Williams  
Stan Yates

**Mr Chairman:** We now continue with the afternoon session of the first Australian Science Fiction convention, as per your minute paper. It states that there will be a general discussion on science-fiction and fan affairs. For your information, this present convention was first discussed and organised as a result of a conference known as the fourth (1951) Sydney Science Fiction Conference, held on July 7, 1951. At this conference, the then known active and interested Australian fans met to discuss what action would be taken in furthering Australian Fandom. At this Conference there were four main points upon which we decided to take action. Firstly, it was decided that we as Australians would take action to be represented at the 1951 American convention.

Secondly that we would take action to build an active club in Sydney.

Thirdly, that we would plan a convention in Australia for September, 1951, and Finally that we would develop the Australian Fantasy Foundation, then known as the F.S.S. Library Trust.

With regard to the first, action was taken in the form of a photograph and also a cable. We have as yet no acknowledgement from America. Secondly in relation to the club, we decided to re-organise the Futurian Society of Sydney, and that club is now working. Thirdly, September 1951, was found to be unsatisfactory, and it was decided to hold the First Australian Convention early in 1952. Finally, the library was given more attention and the name changed to Australian Fantasy Foundation, partly because it should be distinguished from the FSS, and partly because it ceased to be only a library.

In this formal session I have asked various leaders in the Australian fan community to present reports on their activities, and the first person I wish to call is Mr. Graham Stone, Secretary of Australian Science Fiction Society.

**Mr Stone:** The Australian Science Fiction Society is an organisation. Now, I don't like organisation, -- I don't even like the suggestion of it. But in my experience of fandom, I have come to believe that it is impossible to get very far without a certain degree of organisation. It is a necessary evil, -- like breathing. At this convention, those present could be divided into two halves, -- those who have and those who have not, been in touch at some stage or other with Sydney Fandom. One of those groups doesn't know how much of what has happened in science fiction until now. They have been able to get hold only of what has been normally available in Australia, and that is not very much. The other half have been able to get material through other channels, and this is a fair amount.

ASFS was formed about this time last year. The situation then was that for a number of years there had been a small group of people in Sydney known to each other as science fiction fans. Off and on there had been some club activity, but it had been on a very small scale. Outside Sydney were a few supporters for Australian fandom. That was all. I believe the only reason we had been marking time was that we had never gone about things the right way,-- had never seriously tried to publicise ourselves.

**Mr Stone:** continued from page 9

Early last year, in Sydney, a regular Thursday night meeting was organised. As far as it went, it was satisfactory: it was a definite place and time where any of us could go to and expect to meet fans. But I felt it was necessary to arrange some better organised point of contact for overseas, that there should be an organisation with an address to contact in Australia to remind overseas fans that we still existed. It is largely through the courtesy of overseas fans that we get science fiction.

As you well know, it has been impossible to import anything from America for twelve years now. The only material from that source is what is sent as gifts with the cooperation of American fandom. In recent years it has been possible to get material from England. There was no organisation about this; it was all done individually, and a few of us felt it was not satisfactory.

I decided to establish a very broad organisation, an organisation with no meetings, no constitution, no officials except for a voluntary secretary, -- in short, without the trappings of organisation. I volunteered for the position of Secretary. I circularised all the Australian fans then known, about 39 all told. It began in a small way but in a short time everyone known to us had joined up. I felt more publicity was needed. Some of the fans present today were contacted through publicity placed in overseas magazines. In the organisation of this Convention, publicity has been on a larger scale, and I feel we have hit on something we should have tried many years ago. Membership is now 78, which is still really not many.

*[by June 1952 it was 93 – part of original text, post convention, nota GPD addition]*

The function of the A.S.F.S. is simply to keep fans in touch, to remind them there are other fans living in Australia, and I feel that its progress over the past year has been fairly satisfactory.

**Mr Cohen:** Does Mr Stone intend to make a drive for new members?

**Mr Stone:** I would not exactly say a drive. I believe that everyone present who is really interested in science fiction will find it worthwhile to belong, but I'm not going around tracking down members. I don't feel justified in going about badgering people into joining. However, new members are welcome and the subscription is 5 Schillings.

**Mr Roth:** What benefits does a fan obtain by joining A.S.F.S.?

**Mr Stone:** I publish a small publication called Stopgap. It comes out every few weeks. I endeavour to pass on any news of what is happening and I think fans will want to know what is happening and I think fans will want to know. I publish member's names and addresses in an endeavour to bring them into touch with one another. Other than that I endeavour to write to everybody once in a while, and answer their queries.

**Mr Chairman:** I will now call on Mr **Vol Molesworth**, Director of the Futurian Society of Sydney. **Mr Molesworth:** It is my pleasure today to tell you a little about the Futurian Society of Sydney. It was formed on November 4, 1939, with only five members, of whom only two foundation members remain, -- **Mr Veney** and myself.

**Mr Molesworth:** Continued                      The Futurian Society grew rapidly until by the middle of 1940 it had 13 members.                      It held extremely active meetings which featured a great deal of discussion.                      Then, in June 1940, the American science fiction magazines were banned.                      This, combined with increasing war time problems, caused the club to close down, like many others.                      When the war was over, and fans came back to civilian life, the Futurian Society was re-organised, principally as a result of work done by **Graham Stone**.                      The Society has kept going since then.                      It is true that in 1950 we suffered a decline, but the Thursday night meetings, inspired by the Society, were maintained.                      When the Americans at their Convention donated to us one hundred and fifty dollars, to be spent on books for our library, we decided to get together and make two double sided records, and send these to their next Convention, as a way of expressing our appreciation.                      The records were quite a hit at the Convention; they found it fascinating to hear voices that had come right across the Pacific.                      It requires organisation to do that; it requires a small active kernel of fans to get together and do the work.                      That simply is the function of the Futurian Society.                      To get in and do the work whenever the need arises.                      It meets once a month, and it has seventeen members, each of whom has a job to do.

The first job the Society did, when it was given a new lease of life last year. Was organize and pay for representation at the last American Convention. The next thing it did was take over and carry through plans for this Australian Convention. Had it not been for the concentrated efforts of the Sydney Futurians, I doubt if this convention would have been held.                      In addition to planning on a large scale, the Society does jobs on a small scale, too.                      Before **Stirling Macoboy** sailed for America, the club organised a farewell dinner.                      When "The day the Earth Stood Still" was screened in Sydney, the club organised a theatre party of 83 to it.                      When the Thursday night gatherings outgrew coffee shop premises, the club found a new and better place to meet.                      But the club does not run the Thursday night group, -- it merely made the premises available.                      We feel that this is our function, to organise and arrange things for Australian fandom generally.                      If anyone wishes to join, I can promise him seat and tears

**Mr Chairman:** The next speaker will be **Mr Nick Solntseff**, Secretary of Australian Fantasy Foundation.                      **Mr Solntseff:** When the Futurian Society was reformed after the war, it decided to set up a lending library of science fiction, partly to accommodate the magazines that the Americans insisted on sending across.                      Gradually over the years we collected quite a few items.                      The Society in those days was subject to fluctuation in activity, - one month you would have people madly rushing around and doing things, the next nobody would be seen.                      It was during such a lull in activity that the Yanks did one of those things that they usually do, and sent us \$US150 worth of books.                      **Stirling Macoboy** put up the idea of forming a trust to handle the library while the Society was inactive.                      This was to be a permanent body administered by seven trustees, - **Stirling Macoboy, William Veney, Vol Molesworth, Graham Stone, (?GD) Larnach, Eric Russell** and myself.                      When the Futurian Society became active again, the Library was distinguished by having its name

**Mr Soltseff:** continued from page 11

changed to Australian Fantasy Foundation. The new title brings out the idea that it is run for and by Australians, that it is fantasy, and that it is a foundation, a permanent institution to preserve the library.

**Mr Martin:** What steps are being taken to enlist new borrowers, and to get them out of the clutches of unscrupulous bookstall proprietors?

**Mr Chairman:** Mr Driscoll will answer that in a moment.

**Mr Glick:** On behalf of fans outside Sydney, can they borrow items from the foundation by mail? (*Answered*) – Yes, we do send books to fans outside Sydney. They pay for the postage.

**Mr Nicholson:** Is any attempt being made to run the foundation at a profit? (*Answered*) – Well, it certainly is not run at a loss!

**Mr Mathews:** Would the Foundation be willing to set up branch libraries in other states?

**Mr Chairman:** At this stage that question has not been brought before the Trustees. I would strongly suggest somebody put it in writing and forward it to the Trustees and it would receive early consideration. That goes for Newcastle, too. I will now call on the Foundation Librarian, **Mr Driscoll**

**Mr Driscoll:** The foundation now has about 110 books and 250 odd magazines. There are 35 borrowers, three or four of whom reside outside Sydney. The Library gets its revenue from a joining fee of 2 schillings per year, plus six pence per book borrowed.

**Mr Cohen:** What moves are made to keep the Library up to date? (*Answered*) – I get what books are available in Sydney.

**Mr Ritchie:** In view of the fact that that apparently the publication of magazines and hard-cover books is increasing overseas, has the foundation contemplated any arrangements for financing itself, not only to maintain the Library in its present rather static form, but to expand itself?

**Mr Chairman:** That is a question for the Trustees to answer I think. At present we have not collected enough money to expand, but it is contemplated to do this later. If successful, we hope to have volumes, records and many other items in the Foundation.

**Mr Martin:** I feel there is a point which should be raised while we are all here. The Library is located at premises owned by Mr Molesworth. A large number of borrowers will be calling him at all hours, and it is not a fair thing for us to do anything like that until we have other premises. I suggest for the consideration of the Conference, that anyone knowing where a Library could be located, preferably in town, let us know. It would be a great help.

**Mr Chairman:** That is a splendid suggestion. I hope everyone present will act upon it

**Mr Purdy:** This is not a question, but a suggestion,-- that we impose a time limit on the books being out.

**Mr Chairman:** Administration is handled by the Trust and will be altered accordingly.

**Mr Molesworth:** I deplore the attitude that is becoming more and more obvious that the Foundation is not being discussed. While the Trustees will certainly make their own decisions, surely this Conference can forward recommendations?

**Mr Chairman:** Resolutions will be accepted.

**Mr Mathews:** I have one suggestion,-- that the Foundation might consider bestowing Life Membership in return for suitably large donations of items to the library.

**Mr Chairman:** We do not know how far the Foundation will develop. This might lead to an awkward situation later on.

**Mr Mathews:** This has happened with large profit-making organisations. A little service is of great importance in the early stage. I propose that the Trustees should consider giving life membership in return for suitable gifts, the Foundation reserving the right to judge the value of any gift or bequest. (Seconded, Nicholson).

**Mr Stanborough:** I am against the motion. Real fans would donate material and not expect any honour in return.

**Mr Nicholson:** I suggest the donation of sufficient material should exempt the borrower from further fees. It would be necessary to place a limit on the number of books etc. There is no reason why the Trust should not state the size of the bequest to be given for life membership. They can make it as high as they like.

**PUT TO THE VOTE: 15 for, 28 against. MOTION DECLARED LOST.**

**Mr Molesworth**, head of **Futurian Press**, and **Mr Arthur Haddon**, head of **Haddon Press**, then presented reports on their publishing activities, and answered questions regarding them. The Chairman then called for motions from the floor.

**Mr Brunen:** I suggest that the Convention Resolve, if not actually to boycott Thrills Inc, at least to express its disapproval of the way in which Thrills treated the Futurian Society when it sought Thrills' help in publicising this Convention. (Seconded, Graham Stone).

**Mr Roth:** We are not a strong enough body to show disapproval. It is best to get Thrills to improve the standard of the science fiction it publishes than to antagonise them by showing disapproval.

**Mr Haddon:** Thrills don't even have the decency to answer letters; they only fill their wastepaper baskets. They market

**Mr Haddon:** Continued from page 13

trash at 8 pence a copy in order to get money. They are not interested in what we write or think. It is just another publication to them. They have no interest in science fiction fandom. Thrills is just a source of revenue.

**Mr Molesworth:** That is not the point. We want fans to know that this, the first Australian Convention, went on record as expressing its disapproval of trash being marketed.

**Mr Dunk:** We should just stop buying Thrills.

**Mr Nicholson:** I would like to go on record that Thrills is doing a good job marketing juvenile science fiction. They are doing the same thing as Mr Molesworth did with his Stratosphere Patrol trilogy years ago. I am against antagonising Thrills. I think it would be good for science fiction in the future. What I do suggest is that we point out to them that they would be benefiting their own pockets by fitting in where possible with the views of science fiction fandom. But this should not be done in violent terms.

**Mr Lazar:** I move an amendment, -- that Thrills be encouraged to publish science fiction of a more mature and serious kind. (Seconded; Dunk)

PUT TO THE VOTE: 46 in Favour, 2 against. MOTION CARRIED

**Mr Glick:** I move that "We view with approval the increasing number of good quality science fiction stories and articles appearing in Australian publications which do not normally specifically publish science fiction". (Seconded; Stone)

PUT TO THE VOTE: 46 in Favour, 2 against. MOTION CARRIED

**Mr Cohen:** I move that we hold another Convention next year, and start preparing for it right away. (Seconded; Purdy)

PUT TO THE VOTE: 48 in Favour, 1 against. MOTION CARRIED

**Mr Lazar:** I move that a copy of the penultimate motion be sent to ADAM, A.M. and QUIZ. (Seconded; Martin)

**Mr Dunk:** I am against the motion. The three magazines in mentioned are magazines of the "girlie" cover we deplore.

**Mr Stanborough:** It is merely a motion of congratulation. It may have some bearing in increasing the number of magazines which may in future publish science fiction.

PUT TO THE VOTE: 36 in Favour, 3 against. MOTION CARRIED

**Mr Molesworth:** I would, like to move a motion of thanks to all those who helped organise this Convention. My mind goes back to the year 1941, when we planned a convention, made grandiose announcements about it, and then the whole idea had to be shelved.

**Mr Molesworth:** continued from page 14

Fans in other countries laughed like hell.

This time we were determined not to make a mess of it. We did not make extravagant claims for the success of the convention. In fact, the organisers did not expect more than forty to turn up. Today there are nearly sixty fans in this hall. There are sixty people who are prepared to give up some time to come along and listen and take part in activities. I think that speaks for itself.

The Committee with **Mr Veney** in the chair has for the last six months done some very hard work. I won't name each member of the committee individually, -- you know them all, -- because they worked as a team, and is as a team that I want our thanks to go to them. (Seconded; Stone)

THE MOTION WAS CARRIED BY ACCLAMATION

The Chairman said that four notices had been received from well known fans unable to attend the Convention. They were;

**Kevin Smith** from Ballina (NSW), **A. Bertram Chandler**, at sea; **Roger N. Dard** (W.A.), and **Sterling Macoboy**, in U.S.A.

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### **CONVENTION DINNER AND FILMS**

The Majority of the fans attending the convention dined together at the "**Mayfair**" in the city. This was a very pleasant social event, peppered with plenty of science fiction discussion.

In the evening, a programme was science fictional films, selected by **Lex Banning**, was screened by **Ian Driscoll**. Slight difficulty was encountered in the projection and running times, but apart from these the night was enjoyable.

### **"OPEN" MEETING OF F. S. S.**

On the Monday night following the convention, an "open" meeting was held of the Futurian Society of Sydney. Many of the fans who had remained in Sydney for the week-end came along and took part in the meeting.

Chairman Veney reported to the Futurian Society meeting that although final figures were not available, the Convention had not shown a financial loss. On the contrary, it looked like being a success, and he could see no reason why the Second Australian Science Fiction Convention could not be held in 1953 on an even larger scale.

## The Back cover of the Report (or page 16?)

Which bears approximately 36 signatures. Some have been repeated, suggesting that these were obtained by Kevin Dillon well after the Convention during two or more attempts?

The Signatures seem to be of;

Lyle Crane?

G. Stone

Illegible

Donald K Lawson

L. Fisher

K. Picklum

P. K. Chapman

Illegible

Illegible

J. Earl?

C. Mellor

Vol Molesworth

Illegible

Arthur W Haddon

Illegible

Illegible

Illegible

N. Solntseff

? Leggat?

E. Butt (Newcastle)

Rosemary Simmons

G. McMillan

Lex Banning

Harry Brunen

N. K. Hemming

N.V. Williams (mark II)

R. D. Nicholson

J. King

N. Solntseff

Leonard D. Roth

Arthur W. Haddon

L. Raethel

Michael C Illegible

Illegible

## Postword, a preface at the back, by Garry P Dalrymple

In writing this explanation of what and why this re-working of the 1952 Sydcon report I'm very conscious that in fifty plus years someone might do a similar job to 'improve' on my writings about Sydney Freecons and other Sydney SF&F events 1999 to 2009.

Why did I start this fairly labour intensive project to re-type and annotate the 1952 text?

Firstly, having organised a few Sydney Freecons, as re-start SF&F conventions a decade after the run of Syncons, I was curious about the origins of Sydney SF conventions. I was particularly interested in the Who and What, so having rediscovered having my copy of the 1952 report (found filed with 2000 Freecon papers?), a several generations on copy of **Kevin Dillon's** via **Bruce Gillespie**, and seeing it's grainy text I decided that re-typing it would be necessary to make it easier for me to read and refer to.

Secondly, midway through the project I came to the conclusion that the sort of people who might want to read about the 1952 Sydney convention would probably find the (ten point type face) difficult to read, so I have increased it to 14 point type. I invite you to compare this edition to the version up on the **Meteor Inc.** website. In this revised copy I have preserved the 16 page format as faithfully as I could and have strenuously resisted the natural urge to edit and re-shape it. I have at times re-organised some lists of names into an A to Z format. There are some interesting slight details in the text; Science Fiction is rendered as S.F., uncapitalized 'science fiction', 'stf' (once), not SF and 'Fantasy' has a different meaning, possibly suitable as an all inclusive title for what we would call the 'Speculative Fiction Genres' these days? There are probably other large and small insights or inferences that you could draw from the 1952 text.

Apart from a few minor necessary interpolations, schillings and pence for 5/- and 'd', I have restricted my additions to this Postword and the A to Z dramatis personae table starting at page 18. In this I have been greatly aided by being able to refer to **Graham Stone's** 'mmmmmm' to flesh out the full names and accomplishments of the names mentioned in the 1952 report. Having been intensively read and considered the thoughts expressed in the 1952 Report, I now think it is about the closest thing to a foundation document to Australian SF fandom that you are likely to find. **Jules Verne** made us readers of SF, the letters column of **Hugo Gernsback** of Amazing made us SF fans, but it was the 1952 Sydcon that made us members of an Australian SF Fandom, above and beyond being members of disparate SF fan clubs?

There is an insurmountable gulf between us and the members of the 1952 Sydcon. We cannot imagine an Australia where SF was so rare and prohibited as it was then, and yet I can see some similarities between then and now. Good Science Fiction is increasingly hard to find and speaks quietly among the thundering herds of Quest Fantasy (and Vampire?) novels to be found on the 'Science Fiction and Fantasy' shelves, and 'Book' SF fans are again apparently a distinct and easy to overlook minority among the masses of Sci-Fi TV and movie watchers, who consume but do not on the whole involve in fanac except for dressing up and acting out at the release of the next book/movie in the series.

In respect to the copyright I have probably transgressed in so closely reproducing the text of the 1952 report I make no claim to copyright over the original 1952 text over that of '**Futurian Press**' and presumably the heirs of **Laura** and **Vol Molesworth**. I do claim copyright over these additions and modifications. If any payment is due to the owners of the voices of 1952, then as recompense I offer you a seat of honour at every Freecon I organise.

As with the Ancient Egyptians, whose writing concerned the transfiguration of the words and deeds of men into the immortal spirit that released in death went to dwell with their Ghods, in re-typing the words of the 1952 Report for electronic dissemination, I repeat your names, I re-open your mouths to life and Lo your spirit and the words of your voices lives again, your science fictional Ka and Ba made immortal and set free to fly as virtual birds of text on the electronic winds. Go and live again, as long as the Sun rises to find readers and lovers of Science Fiction.

© Garry P Dalrymple August 2009

## A list of People, Publications and Groups mentioned in the 16 pages of the original 1952 Sydcon report

Name	Page No.	Role / activity mentioned in the report	DOB?	DOD? (as of 2009)
<b>Lex Banning</b>	2, 8, 15	Organiser of the Convention's Movie program, at business meeting	?	?
<b>G. Beard</b>	8, 3	Auction buyer, at business meeting		
<b>C. Berckelman</b>	8	At business meeting		
<b>M. A. Bos</b>	3, 8	Auction buyer, at business meeting		
<b>Harry Brunen</b>	3, 8	Auction buyer, at business meeting, Took part in Thrills Inc. debate / motions,		
<b>Edward Butt</b>	3, 8	A fan from Newcastle (NSW), Auction buyer (record price set!) and at business meeting		
<b>A. Bert Chandler</b>	15	Published SF Author, was <b>unable to attend</b> , being currently at sea		
<b>Beryl Chipper</b>	8	Minutes Secretary at business meeting		
<b>David Cohen</b>	2, 3, 8, 10	Unstated role, Donated to the Auction, Auction seller, auction buyer, at business meeting, question asked about the ASFS, asked a question about the AFF – on the up-to-dateness of the AFF collection, Proposed the motion that there be a convention next year - passed	?	?
<b>Lyle Crane?</b>	16	Presumed present, from p 16 signature		
<b>J. Crawford</b>	3, 8	Auction buyer, at business meeting		
<b>David Croft</b>	8	At business meeting		
<b>Roger Dard</b>	3, 15	<b>Unable to attend</b> , a West Australian fan (only known?), Donated to the Auction		
<b>Kevin Dillon</b>	3, 8	Auction buyer, at business meeting, A teenager at the time. Remembered at Freecons by an annual symposium.		Deceased Aged 73 2004?
<b>Ian Driscoll</b>	2, 3, 7, 8, 12, 15	Unstated role, auction buyer, set up (and manned) the Australian Fantasy Foundation stand, at business meeting, answered questions about the AFF about quantity of items and subscription costs, Screened the movies of the Convention	?	Living?
<b>S. Dunk</b>	3, 8, 14	Auction buyer, at business meeting, Took part in motions and seconding, Took part in Thrills Inc. debate / motions, Took part in the ADAM, A.M. and Quiz debate / motion,		
<b>J. Earls</b>	3, 8	Auction buyer, at business meeting		
<b>C. J. Fowler</b>	8	At business meeting		
<b>F. Frederickson</b>	3, 8	Auction buyer, at business meeting		
<b>Hugo Gernsback</b>	4, 6	Editor of Amazing Stories, pioneer US SF magazine, publication of reader's letters as the start of 'SF fandom'.		Deceased
<b>P. Glick</b>	8, 12	At business meeting, asked a question about the AFF – can non-Sydney people borrow?, Proposed motion to congratulate non-SF specialist publication of SF stories - passed		

<b>R. Guy</b>	3, 8	Auction buyer, at business meeting		
<b>Arthur W. Haddon</b>	2, 3, 7, 8, 13, 14	Con Auctioneer & Publicity, Auction items on display, Donated Auction items, Secretary of Business Session and at Business Meeting , Took part in Thrills Inc. debate / motions, reported on publishing activity of Haddon Press	?	living
<b>Norma Katherine Hemming</b>	3, 8	Auction buyer, at business meeting, A promising writer who died young. Remembered by N.K. Hemming award	1927	1960 Deceased
<b>Daphne Ireland</b>	8	At business meeting		
<b>B. King</b>	3, 8	Auction buyer, at business meeting,		
<b>T. King</b>	8	At business meeting		
<b>Charles La Costa</b>	3, 8	Auction buyer, at business meeting		
<b>Stanley L. Larnach</b>	11	A Trustee of the AFF, compiler of ' <u>Materials toward a Checklist of Australian Fantasy (to 1937)</u> ' published by The Futurian Press		
<b>Donald K. Lawson</b>	8, 16	At business meeting		Living
<b>M. Lazar</b>	8	At business meeting, Took part in Thrills Inc. debate / motions, Took part in the ADAM, A.M. and Quiz debate / motion,		
<b>J.H. Leggett</b>	8, 3	Sold items through the auction, at business meeting		
<b>M. Lynch</b>	3	Attended? Sold items through the auction,		
<b>Michael McGuinness</b>	3, 8	At business meeting, sold items through the auction. Currently Futurian President for Life?		Living
<b>Patrick P. (Paddy) McGuinness</b>		Seen in photographs of the convention, Journalist & curmudgeon, younger brother of M. McGuinness		Deceased
<b>Jock McKenna</b>	3, 8	Auction seller, auction buyer, at business meeting		
<b>G. McMillan</b>	3, 8	Auction buyer, at business meeting		
<b>Sterling Macoboy</b>	11,1 5	<b>unable to attend</b> in USA, farewell dinner organised by Futurians, A Trustee of the AFF		
<b>Ken Martin</b>	2, 12	Unstated role, at business meeting, asked a question about the AFF, asked two questions about the AFF – avoiding the clutches of unscrupulous bookstall proprietors and the need for a new AFF library location apart from the Molesworth residence?	?	?
<b>G. Mastro</b>	8	At business meeting		
<b>Race Matthews</b>	3, 8, 11, 12, 13,	Auction buyer, at business meeting, asked a question about the AFF – on it's willingness to set up non-Sydney Branches? – proposed life membership or waiver of borrowing fees for the donation of many books? A motion on this defeated! A Melbourne fan who flew up for con, published a record of the experience, later a Victorian ALP MP, his participation in 'motions' will not surprise those who know of his other life?		Living
<b>Clive Mellor</b>	3, 8	Auction buyer, at business meeting		
<b>G. R. Meyer</b>	8	At business meeting		
<b>Laura Molesworth</b>	7, 8	At business meeting, Wife of Vol, Futurian Press display,		Still living?
<b>Vol(taire) Molesworth</b>	2, 3, 4, 5,	Con Committee member & assist to Veney, Donated to the Auction, auction buyer, Futurian	1924	14/7/1964 Deceased

	7, 8, 10, 11, 14, 15, 16	Press display, at business meeting, spoke about the Futurian Society of Sydney, origins, activities & membership numbers, A Trustee of the AFF, asked a question about the AFF – objection to Foundation not being discussed, transparency? Took part in Thrills Inc. debate / motions, Moved the vote of thanks to the organisers, commented the 1941 and 1951 attempts to organise a Sydney SF convention, see British Futurian War Digest for detail of the 1941 'fuss.		
<b>M. Moriarty</b>	3, 8	Auction buyer, at business meeting		
<b>R. D. Nicholson</b>	3, 8, 12, 13	Auction buyer, at business meeting, asked a question about the AFF, amendment to AFF 'Life Membership' by donation motion, Took part in Thrills Inc. debate / motions,		
<b>R. Oswald</b>	3, 8	Auction buyer, at business meeting		
<b>K. Picklum</b>	8	At business meeting		
<b>Bruce Purdy</b>	2, 8, 13	Unstated role, at business meeting, made a suggestion about the AFF – time limit on books borrowed,	?	?
<b>Les Raethel</b>	8	At business meeting		
<b>David Ritchie</b>	3, 8	Auction buyer, At business meeting, asked a question about the AFF – on expansion plans		Living?
<b>Len Roth</b>	3, 8, 10, 14	Auction buyer, At business meeting, question asked about the ASFS, Took part in Thrills Inc. debate / motions,		
<b>Pauline Roth</b>	8	At business meeting,		
<b>Eric Russell</b>	11	Absent? A Trustee of the AFF		
<b>W. Russell</b>	3, 8	Auction buyer, At business meeting		
<b>Rosemary Simmons</b>	8	At business meeting		
<b>Kevin Smith</b>	15	Resident of Ballina (NSW) <b>unable to attend</b>		
<b>Nick Solntseff</b>	2, 3, 8, 11	Con Treasurer, Donated to the Auction, sold items through the auction, at business meeting, Trustee of the AFF spoke about its origins and role, Involved in the Futurian Press	?	?
<b>D. Stanborough</b>	3, 8, 13, 14	auction buyer, at business meeting, objection to AFF 'Life Membership' by donation motion, Took part in the ADAM, A.M. and Quiz debate / motion,		
<b>Graham B. Stone</b>	2, 3, 8, 9, 10, 11	Con Secretary, Donated to the Auction, sold items through the auction, at business meeting, detail of the origins and current role of the ASFS, A Trustee of the AFF	?	Living
<b>M. Swanell</b>	3, 8	auction buyer, at business meeting		
<b>E. Vaughan</b>	8	at business meeting		
<b>N. Vaughan</b>	8	at business meeting		
<b>William D. Veney</b>	2, 3, 8 to 13	Con Chairman, auction buyer, at business meeting, A Trustee of the AFF, final pronouncement at the open FSS meeting, the Con didn't make a loss.	?	?
<b>Jules Verne</b>	5	An early French SF writer mentioned		
<b>H. G. Wells</b>	5	An early British SF writer mentioned		
<b>Diana Wilkes</b>	8	at business meeting		

<b>Roy Williams</b>	2, 3, 8	Unstated role, sold items through the auction, at business meeting	?	?
<b>Stan Yates</b>	3, 8	Auction buyer, at business meeting		
<b>Organisations</b>				
<b>A. M. (magazine)</b>	14	Local magazine, occasional publisher of SF&F content, derided for allegedly lurid 'Girlie' covers. A motion of congratulation from the Convention to encourage better SF was passed, <b>Dunk, Lazar</b> and <b>Stanborough</b> spoke		
<b>ADAM (magazine)</b>	14	Local magazine, occasional publisher of SF&F content, derided for allegedly lurid 'Girlie' covers. A motion of congratulation from the Convention to encourage better SF was passed, <b>Dunk, Lazar</b> and <b>Stanborough</b> spoke		
<b>Amazing Stories US</b>	6	Mentioned in conjunction with <b>Hugo Gernsback</b>		
<b>AFF – the Australian Fantasy Foundation</b>	3, 7, 8, 11, 12,1 3	Display of Library books as set up by Ian Driscoll, Donated to the Auction, N. Solntseff speaks on origins, Names of Trustees and current role. Much interest, motions and questions from the floor.		
<b>The Australian Peace Conference</b>	4	Attributed source of a curious view on the role of SF in society and SF content.		
<b>ASFS - The Australian Science Fiction Society</b>	7, 9, 10,	Display of old, rare and foreign language SF at the Convention, Graham Stone explains its origins and current role,		
<b>British reprint of Astounding Science Fiction</b>	2, 6	Local version of the US SF&F Magazine discussed as a means of publicity, NSW circulation figures quoted as definition of local SF readership		
<b>Futurian Press</b>	7, 13	Display of new SF books at the Convention - Laura & Vol Molesworth, Report on publishing activities		
<b>Haddon Press</b>	13	Report on publishing activities		
<b>QANTAS</b>	7	Coincidental? Moon landing display in lobby seen by convention goers!		
<b>Quiz (magazine)</b>	14	Local magazine, occasional publisher of SF&F content, derided for allegedly lurid 'Girlie' covers. A motion of congratulation from the Convention to encourage better SF was passed, <b>Dunk, Lazar</b> and <b>Stanborough</b> spoke		
<b>The Saturday Evening Post</b>	5	A 'respectable' Source of occasional SF, an influential US journal		
<b>SFS – The Sydney Futurian Society</b>	2,10, 11	Unstated role, membership of 5 in 1939, 13 by mid 1941, (1952) now 17 but capable of organising larger numbers on occasion.	?	?
<b>The Sydney Morning Herald</b>	5	A 'respectable' Source of occasional SF, major broadsheet Sydney newspaper		
<b>Thrills Inc.</b>	13 and 14	A Tawdry local magazine with SF, with motions to censure / boycott this publication actively discussed, <b>Brunen, Dunk, Haddon, Lazar, Molesworth, Nicholson</b> and <b>Roth</b> spoke		