

NOVACON ⁵²

PROGRESS REPORT 1



**Guest of
Honour
Jen Williams**

**10 – 12th
November 2023
Palace Hotel
Buxton**

COMMITTEE

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chair@novacon.uk

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STAFF

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A WORD FROM OUR CHAIR



So here we go again, another year and another **Novacon** is on its way. This year we have some changes on the committee with Helena Bowles stepping away as secretary, we are pleased to bring onboard Claire Cartwright as our new secretary. The rest of the committee has

remained unchanged.

Our venue remains the wonderful Palace Hotel in Buxton, where we are assured that we will receive the same great service that we have become accustomed to. As most of you know the Palace has a great location, good function space (all on the ground floor) and as it's a proper old hotel the rooms are big and airy with high ceilings. Very important!

So, what can you expect this year? Well, all the usual. The Scientific Talks, the panel discussions, the Big Sociable Thing on Saturday night, the art auction, some excuse for wine and nibbles on Friday, the beer tasting and guest banquet on Sunday night, and so on – but we can always do with new and interesting ideas from our members, so please contact us with any thoughts.

Novacon is a single-stream convention with a mix of serious and fannish items. We will have the art show and a dealers' room as usual.

Talking of the **Art Show** after the magnificent exhibition that John and Serena gave us last year, I'm really looking forward to seeing what they can achieve this year.

I am also very pleased that this year's **Guest of Honour** is the fabulous Jen Williams! Jen is a fantasy and crime author, and is also an illustrator based in London. She has two completed trilogies, *The Copper Cat* series, and *The Winnowing Flame* series. She has been nominated for and won Best Fantasy Novel at the British Fantasy Awards multiple times.

She also writes Thrillers, including *DOG ROSE DIRT* published in 2021, and was instrumental with fellow author Den Patrick in setting up

the popular monthly fan meet up in London, the Super Relaxed Fantasy Club.

Finally, the committee were heartbroken to hear of the passing of Eve Harvey. Eve was the Novacon Treasurer for many years and a friend to all of us and many of you. There will be more about Eve in the next PR. In the meantime, our thoughts are with John and family. *Steve Lawson*

HOTEL & CONVENTION INFORMATION



Palace Hotel Buxton
Palace Road
Buxton
SK17 6AG

For Novacon 52 we will be returning to the Palace Hotel in Buxton in the Peak District.

As before, all the convention rooms including Programme, Off-Piste, Art show and Dealers are all on the ground floor. The bars and toilets are also on the ground floor and there is plenty of seating.

The Room rates have, unfortunately, gone up this the year, but we feel we still have competitive prices. **Rates (given below) are per room per night.**

Convention room rates

Rooms with Breakfast are: £100 per night for a Standard Double or Twin room (ie £50 per person with two people sharing).

Rooms with Breakfast: £65 for a Single room.

We have also got a reduced **Room Only rate** (new option this year) for anyone who can't be bothered to get up for breakfast; again, rates are per room per night.

Room Only: £92.50 per night for a Standard Double or Twin room (ie £46.25 per person with two people sharing)

Room Only: £57.50 for a Single Room

There are also a limited number of family rooms (2 adults and 2 children) and a few accessible rooms. There is ramp access at the rear of the hotel for those with difficulty with steps. Please note if you have specific requirements, don't hesitate to contact the hotel directly at 01298 767015 .



Hotel Booking System – Please note this has changed from previous years.

We have decided to go with a different booking system this year; you will be able to **book direct** with the hotel's central booking office, the telephone number is:

0333 323 1574

Please use the Booking ref: NOVA101123

The whole hotel is light and airy with high ceilings and some impressive decor. And a conservatory. And the longest continuous wrought-iron bannister in Britain, or was it Europe? And possibly a ghost. There is a swimming and gym/spa facilities



Buxton itself is a thermal spa town, with lots of interesting buildings and places to visit for those who wish to venture outside the hotel. These include the Opera House, the Devonshire Dome (once the largest unsupported dome in the world), a restored Georgian crescent and the ornamental Pavilion Gardens. There are supermarkets nearby (Waitrose, Aldi & Sainsburys Local) and plenty of cafés and restaurants.

More information can be found at www.visitbuxton.co.uk.

GUEST OF HONOUR – JEN WILLIAMS



We are very pleased that Jen Williams has agreed to be our Guest of Honour for Novacon 52.

Jen is a writer of fantasy and crime thriller novels. She has also written a number of short stories, which have featured in various magazines and anthologies.

She lives in London with her partner and has been a fan of pirates and dark folklore from an early age. As well as writing, she works as a bookseller and copy editor. Her other interests outside of reading and writing include drawing and painting, playing video games and she has a particular interest in animation and history.

Her first published novel was *THE COPPER PROMISE* which is the first novel of the *Copper Cat* series. In the tradition of sword and sorcery classics such as Fritz Leiber, it has three somewhat disreputable misfits, magic, mischief and thrilling escapades but with modern sensitivities. This was nominated for the British Fantasy Award in 2015 as Best Newcomer. The sequels, *THE IRON GHOST* and *THE SILVER TIDE* were shortlisted for the British Fantasy Awards for Best Fantasy novel (the Robert Holdstock Award) in the following two years.

Her next series was *The Winnowing Flame* series. For eight cycles the mysterious Jure'lia have invaded and caused devastation, only to be beaten back by the long-lived Eborans and their warbeasts. But the Eborans are dying and there is no sign of their warbeasts, so how will the world cope with the next invasion, the Ninth Rain. The first in this series, *THE NINTH RAIN* (reviewed below) won the Best Fantasy Novel Award in 2018, as did the sequel *THE BITTER TWINS* in the following year (2019). The final volume in the trilogy, *THE POISON SONG* was published in 2019.

The author then wrote two crime/thriller novels; *DOG ROSE DIRT* (2021) – published as *A DARK AND SECRET PLACE* in the US. A grieving daughter, Heather returns to her childhood home, after her mother's suicide, only to find hundreds of letters between her mother and a convicted serial killer locked up in prison for decades. When a new body is found, only this killer can help, but he will speak only to Heather.

The second crime (and supernatural) novel, *GAMES FOR DEAD GIRLS* is due out in hardcover on March 30th 2023. When researching local Kent folklore, the protagonist finds something disturbing: a decades

long history of women going missing. Could the scary make-believe stories her friends whispered during her childhood be true?

And finally, later in 2023 (September at the moment) she returns to fantasy with the first book, TALONSISTER of a new duology. Set in a world with a magical past that refuses to be forgotten, mythical creatures and ruthless religion, it is being described as perfect for fans of John Gwynne.

Sources: Author website (www.sennydreadful.co.uk)

Internet Speculative Fiction Database (www.isfdb.org)

British Fantasy Society (<https://britishfantasysociety.org>)

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Fiction Series

- *The Copper Cat* (Headline)
 - THE COPPER PROMISE (2014)
 - THE IRON GHOST (2015)
 - THE SILVER TIDE (2016)
- *The Wincing Flame* (Headline)
 - THE NINTH RAIN (2017)
 - THE BITTER TWINS (2018)
 - THE POISON SONG (2019)
- *Talonsister* (Titan Books)
 - TALONSISTER (September 2023)

Stand-alone Novels

- DOG ROSE DIRT (Harper Collins, 2022)
- GAMES FOR DEAD GIRLS (HarperVoyager, March 2023)

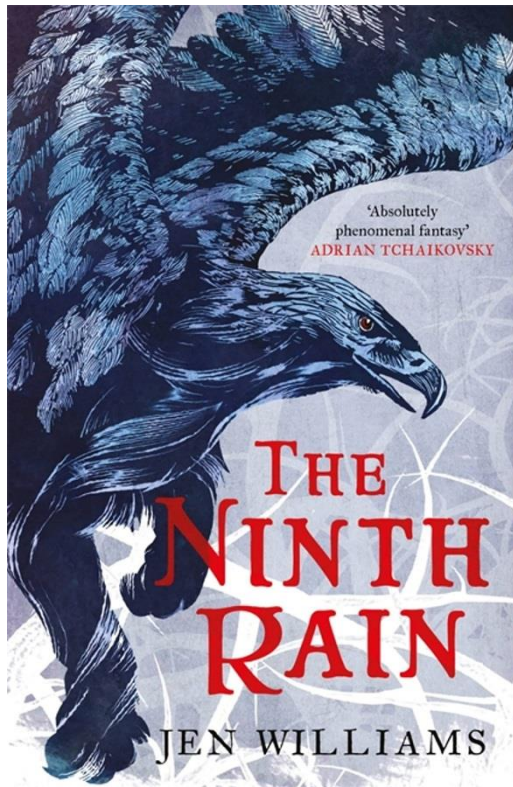
Short Story

SORROW'S ISLE – a *Copper Cat* story. Ebook only. (Headline, 2015)

DEALERS' TABLES

Dealers' tables (6 ft) are available at £20. Dealers normally have to be a member of the convention but we are happy to talk about this. Also, we are open to discussion if you wish to only come for one day. Contact Tony at the email address on Page 2

THE NINTH RAIN



Jen Williams

In my experience, there are still too many fantasy novels which lazily relay on the same tired old tropes. Refreshingly, in the *NINTH RAIN*, it is clear that here is an author who has avoided this and clearly put a lot of thought into constructing a unique world with engaging characters.

Eight times the Jure'lia have invaded the world. Nobody knows where they come from or what they want. Each time, the long-lived Eborans and their war-beasts have led the fight to defeat them. But after the last invasion was repelled, things changed. The giant tree which both nourishes the Eborans and births their war-beasts withered. The desperate Eborans then

harvested blood from their former allies for nourishment, only to discover this gave them a wasting disease. With the Eborans and their tree dying, there are few left to fight another invasion.

Against this background, the story centres around three main protagonists. Lady Vincenza 'Vintage' Grazon is a rich, older woman who after years tending her family's estate, is now free to indulge her curiosity about the scattered remains of the Jure'lia war machines, the Behemoths. These distort plant and animal life around them, and are also haunted by transparent and deadly "parasite spirits". Vintage has hired one of the now feared and despised Eborans, Tormalin as a bodyguard. Tormalin has left his home city rather than watch everyone slowly die from the plague that is now killing his race. They encounter a young fell-witch, Noon who is fleeing the sinister Winnowry. Any girl born with the "winnofire" ability is caught and locked away, where their power is harvested and used to produce highly coveted drugs. Vintage is also aware that winnowfire can be used to hurt the

parasite spirits, so agrees to shelter the witch from her pursuers in exchange for protection during archaeological excursions. Their activities and the actions of Tormalin's sister who is trying to revive the Eboran's giant tree, both hasten the return of the Jure'lia but also start to uncover the Jure'lia's secrets and possibly their vulnerabilities.

The characters are a major strength in this novel. Vintage in particular is a favourite - a mature woman who after years serving her family, decides to go her own way and do what interests her. She is academic and scholarly, independent and at times annoyingly single-minded. Tor and Noon are also fully rounded characters who have their own issues and character flaws and the three of them take time to adjust and build up trust.

I also liked that the biology and unknown origin of the invading Jure'lia was a feature. Their motivations and thus their behaviours are not human and part of the interest in the novel is trying to work out their purpose.

As well as the above, the plot is extremely well-written and well-paced. The various plot strands of the Eborans, the humans, the Jure'lia and the role of the fell-witches are intriguing and you start to see how they are connected whilst still leaving plenty to be uncovered in the subsequent books I would highly recommend this if you are a fantasy fan.

Carol Goodwin
THE NINTH RAIN is the first book of *The Winnowing Flame* series. It is published by *Headline*. An omnibus edition of the complete series is also available as an e-book.

ART SHOW

If you want to show your art it is free to convention members, but you will need to reserve space. So, contact us to discuss what you need and so that we can do a little planning. If you have any questions related to the art show, please contact Serena.

CODE OF CONDUCT

A Convention is a private event and, as such, the Committee has always had the right and the ability to remove any attendee for antisocial behaviour. Over recent years, it has become standard practice for such events to publish a Code of Conduct providing guidelines as to what that antisocial behaviour may include.

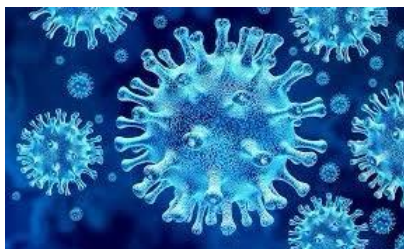
The Code of Conduct is a living document. It evolves, intending always to reflect current best practice. The version in use at each Novacon

is fixed in advance of the convention, and the version for Novacon 52 will be available on the website (www.novacon.uk/n52/) and will be printed in the convention Programme book. It should be noted that the Code of Conduct governs not only behaviour at Novacon, but also in certain spaces elsewhere, including but not limited to activity online, such as in messages or replies to Novacon accounts on social media, and posts in Novacon pages and groups. The Novacon Code of Conduct team receives complete information from preceding Novacon Code of Conduct teams, and passes complete information to future Novacon Code of Conduct teams. It also maintains an awareness of activity which has been of concern to other conventions. For most people, the simple principle of, “Behave like a decent human being,” is enough of a guideline. However, if in any doubt, please consult the Novacon website or contact the team at CodeOfConduct@novacon.uk

ADDENDUM

Sadly, after the convention had finished, the hotel came to us with a couple of complaints where a couple of our members had been less than polite. Please remember that the Code of Conduct applies to dealing with hotel staff as well as each other.

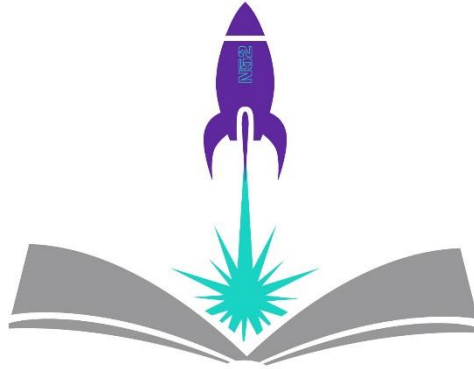
COVID POLICY AT NOVACON



Although we hope for the best, we cannot be clear at this stage what the Covid situation will be in November. The committee will continue to monitor things and will have similar restrictions to previous years if required. We will keep members up to date with any proposed restrictions.

CONVENTION TABLES

These are free to anyone who is running a convention. Contact Tony for reservations.



NOVACON 52

MEMBERSHIP LIST APRIL 2023

- | | |
|-----------------------|---------------------|
| 1 Jen Williams | 21 Peter Wareham |
| 2 Gareth Powell | 22 Gwen Funnell |
| 3 J Dianne Dotson | 23 Omega |
| 4 Steve Lawson | 24 Harry Payne |
| 5 Claire Cartwright | 25 Hal Payne |
| 6 Carol Goodwin | 26 Jodie Payne |
| 7 Helena McCallum | 27 Chris Bell |
| 8 Alex Storer | 28 ½r |
| 9 Tony Berry | 29 Tim Stannard |
| 10 Serena Culfeather | 30 Charlotte Bulmer |
| 11 John Wilson | 31 Pat Brown |
| 12 Alice Lawson | 32 Vernon Brown |
| 13 Noel Collyer | 33 William Goodall |
| 14 Martin Smart | 34 Steve Dunn |
| 15 Tim Kirk | 35 Giulia DeCesare |
| 16 Flick | 36 Steve Davies |
| 17 Michael Davidson | 37 Julie McMurray |
| 18 Christine Davidson | 38 Pat McMurray |
| 19 Alan Woodford | 39 Paul Dormer |
| 20 Anne Woodford | 41 Morag O'Neill |

42 Pauline Morgan
43 Chris Morgan
44 Hazel Ashworth West
45 Sue Jones
46 Melica Smith
47 Marcus Rowland
48 Ian Sorensen
49 Yvonne Rowse
50 Sally Rowse
51 Barbara Jane
52 Roger Robinson
53 Harpal Singh
54 Caroline Mullan
55 Brian Ameringen
56 Emjay Ameringen
57 Nick Mills
58 Bridget Wilkinson
59 Chris Stocks
60 Laura Wheatly
61 Niall Gordon
63 Tobes Valois
64 DC
65 Fran Dowd
66 John Dowd
67 Mike Scott
68 Simon Beresford
69 Alison Scott
70 Steven Cain
71 Jamie Scott
72 Jackie Burns
73 Peter Buck
74 Alison Buck
75 Claire Brialey
76 Mark Plummer
77 Adrian Snowdon
78 Pete Randall
79 Ian Maughan
80 Judith Mortimore
81 Penny Hill

82 David Cochrane
83 Claire Wardell
84 David Langford
85 John Bray
86 Peter Hicks
87 Dave Hicks
88 Cat Coast
89 Roger Perkins
90 TJ
91 Henrick Pålsson
92 Vanessa May