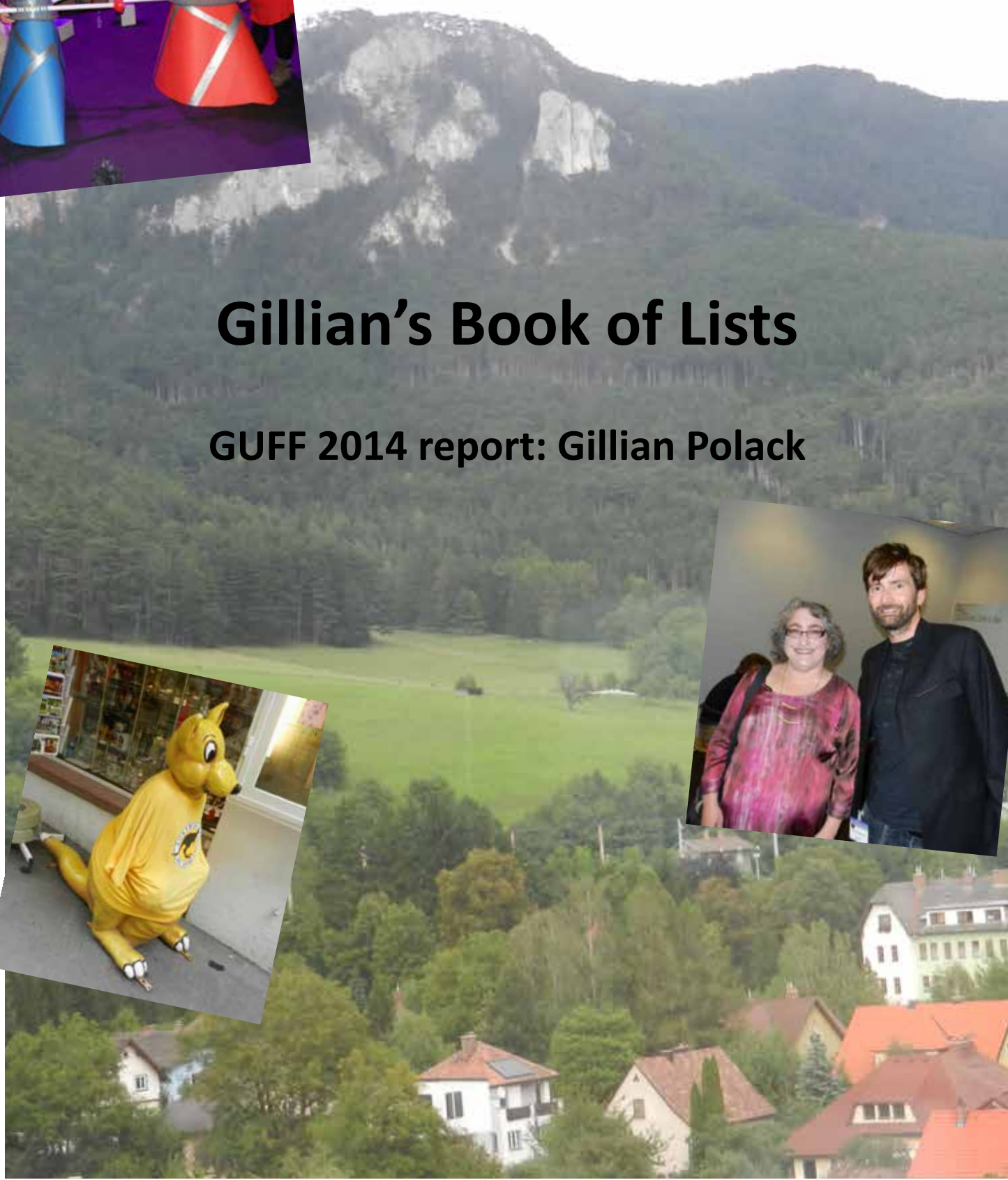




Gillian's Book of Lists

GUFF 2014 report: Gillian Polack



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The essential early stuff

I ran for GUFF at the last minute, following a worrying conversation. FFANZ apparently didn't have anyone running this year. In the end FFANZ sent Dan Rabarts to Australia and Dan was a wonderful delegate, but he only found out about FFANZ late. My reading of all this is that the funds in Australia and NZ needed an increased amount of fannish attention. The deadline for GUFF was twenty-four hours away and word was going around that there was no-one standing for it, either. Popular rumour was quite wrong, but I didn't know this. I didn't have much time to think and I was worried.

Ross Temple and I chatted online and I agreed that if we could find nominators in time, I would stand. If other people stood then we would have a race and all would be well and the funds would be seen and we'd still be better off than if I hadn't run.

I had to commit to Loncon regardless at that point (with no finances!), for programme decisions were being made for the academic stream and other programming decisions would follow and if I said "Maybe I'm coming, maybe I'm not," I would be a high nuisance to many people. I've been too long involved on con committees and seen enough nuisances to leave that sort of thing contingent.

This means I made two decisions in that twenty-four hours: to go to Loncon, and to run for GUFF. My decision was that if I won, I would be truly GUFFish and do everything but if I lost (which was my presumed outcome) I would still get to Loncon but I would completely drain my emergency money in the going and I would need to do something severe about income on my return. The size of the trip would be quite different. Fan needs would shape the voyage if I won GUFF and if I didn't (which was my default assumption) the whole voyage would consist of Loncon plus 2 days.

I committed to the Loncon academic programme immediately and the wider programme a bit later and I joined the admin team and I did my GUFF stuff and lo, I won and the world shifted on its axis and here I am at James Shields' kitchen table, in Ireland, typing. I'm going to write the rest of this report mostly-chronologically and I've included some of this lead-up in the body of my report (through blog entries, mainly) so anyone not interested may want to skip to early August.

What I did next was haul my internal dusty administrator out of its hole, for organising a five week trip such as this (where I am going for other people, not just to please my whim) in such a short time was going to need my internal dusty administrator. I joke about having been a public servant, but very few people see that side of me. Claire Brialey was surprised (but pleased, I hope) when I made her a special spreadsheet.¹

I juggled bus times and ferry times and fan needs and planes and trains and automobiles. Ben Roimola and Claire stepped in to help for the bits I couldn't do from the far end of the planet and we were all sorted with time to spare.

When I arrived in London, someone looked at my itinerary at First Thursday and noted how very, very detailed the first page was. I get absent-minded when I'm tired, or thinking, or even dreaming and I had to be places at specified times, so I wrote everything in. Everything. I may have added a few comments to entertain myself, but mostly it was a prop and a safety blanket.

And so I was all ready and packed and everyone knew everything they had to (I hoped) the day before I left. So I turned admin brain off and you hopefully will never see it again. I scare other people

(not small children – small children find me more huggable than scary) but my admin brain scares *me*. It once scared a consultant, too, but that's another story. Admin brain got me through everything that needed to be done, from whooping cough immunisations² to getting my academic articles out of the way in the nick of time.



What jetlag looks like

Some handy background

While journeying I attended four conventions. It might make my narrative easier to follow if I list them:

1. Loncon 3 – 2014 Worldcon, London, 14-18 August
2. Shamrokon – 2014 Eurocon, Dublin, 21-23 August
3. Liburnicon – Croatian con, held at and near Opatija, 28-31 August
4. FantasyCon – British Fantasy Society 2014, York, 5-7 September

² I felt so silly getting these. Then whooping cough appeared at Loncon and I decided that my left elbow is prescient. A part of me is prescient, it appears and my left elbow is as good a part as any. Mostly I got the vaccine updates because I saw how many anti-vax people were round and realised that something as big as Loncon was a risk.

¹ Update from 18 September – I need to fix that spreadsheet and sort out the last of the finances! I so love my little spreadsheet. It's going to make that last bit of niggling moneystuff far less crazy-making.

How this report works

Some of it is straight reporting, other bits are blogposts I wrote at the time and still other bits are notes I made when I was in transit and sans computer access. My blogposts have been lightly edited to get rid of matters that are entirely not-relevant and to decrease the presence of daft typos.

I've also added my itinerary with a few more notes, just to make sure things didn't get left out. I still think I've left things out, I'm afraid. I did so much stuff over such a short period of time that this was inevitable. But I've done my best. If you think of something you want to hear about and if it's not in here, buy me a drink when you next see me and I'll regale you with anecdotes.

Blogpost: 13th June, 2014. 10:02 pm. [GUFF](#)

I haven't yet started on my academic stuff today because GUFF intervened. I totally wasn't expecting to win, and so I hadn't allowed any time for the processing that follows winning. But it's so very cool, and I'm so very happy. And so very surprised.³

This means my Continuum report must wait.

And I have much to write and it's all been delayed. It's been delayed for the very best of reasons, but even the most patient of editors ought not be kept waiting beyond a certain point.

My mind keeps forgetting work and thinking "One day, soon, I get to write a "How to avoid Gillian at Loncon" blogpost. This is so very cool. So very, very cool.



A fan fund collective at the First Thursday, Melton Mowbray

³ I was surprised until about three weeks ago. It took that long for me to believe it.

15 June

Hello, victims/readers/friends (delete any that don't feel right to you, personally – if you delete all three, please get rid of the comma and space, too, because punctuation matters). This is Day 2 of my Loncon journey. Yesterday I decided I'd write a journal for fellow-fans, and this is it. I'm still getting used to the idea that I'm the GUFF delegate, but I didn't want to spend the first two pages squeezing in astonishment. I was going to start writing on the plane to London, in fact. But the journey really starts this week, so you get pre-London entries when the mood takes me.⁴

Right now, my inbox is yelling at me and saying "Your programme items will arrive soon" so I'm pretending to watch TV and I'm sorting out a long-standing email problem, but it's all just an excuse to lurk at my computer and find out if panels and I have a future together. I'd say "Probably not" but I was the one who thought Alison Barton would win GUFF, so my predictive self is wonderfully unreliable⁵.

If an email doesn't come soon I might have dinner and genuinely watch TV for an hour, for I've found out what was wrong with my email and have the cure almost ready. Dinner will be roast chicken stuffed with garlic and on a bed of sliced baked onion, with lemon juice on the chicken's skin to crisp it. Plus salad, but the salad doesn't need cooking and isn't scenting my apartment. After that hour, it's back to work, alas, for my life is full of work. I like the work, but I'd rather watch my inbox for exciting emails. It's better than waiting for that chicken to cook, because that chicken doesn't want to cook. It's a very petulant chook.

Some hours later: I'm on great panels, but am full of trepidation, for I am on great panels with Joe Haldeman and Ian McDonald and others of grand eminence. I was chatting online with Sharyn Lilley when the email came through and I found myself saying "It's just as well I have two doctorates, they'll get me through." They won't. They have nothing to do with the case. And being nervous isn't going to help.

So what am I going to do? I'm going to read my way out of it. If that doesn't work, then at least I will be well read. I've already asked the library for works by three of the panellists. I've also asked for every spec fic YA novel they have that has London as a theme. And then I sat down (sat down further, for I was already sitting? sat down metaphorically?) and realised that I need to read these volumes at the rate of three a day for the books for the Aurealis awards will shortly start finding their way to me and this year I am a judge in a category where the books overtake peoples' lives and bury them in paper-avalanches. All this and my regular teaching and writing. I'm such a practical, down-to-earth person. I never take on anything more than I can actually do. I also never lie for the sake of comic effect. Ever.

Now I've made myself nervous again. I need to duck back into the library website and get some Haldeman, for all my Haldeman is currently in boxes. Knowing me, I will say this in the panel. "I put several of you into a box recently. I'm terribly sorry."

⁴ And all my early blogposts to boot, for I am both generous and loquacious.

⁵ Except, as we have seen, in regard to whooping cough.

Blogpost: 16th June, 2014. 11:23 am.

I keep underestimating the amount of time Loncon will take. This means I didn't do a great deal of useful things last night, but I have a dozen books to pick up from the library tomorrow. This is because I received my draft programme last night (I'll post here when the final programme is out, given my recent change in circumstance). Any reading for panels must be done before Aurealis reading begins - and I'm on a lot more panels than I expected and I'm on panels with people whose work I haven't read at all or whose work I haven't read recently and it's a respect thing, to read sometime by them if I can, plus there's a YA panel and I always love an excuse to read more YA books.

The downside is that I have so many choices of cool things to do, that I don't know where to start. Where I actually began this morning was in setting up files for a cookbook. A fan cookbook, to raise money for GUFF. Now all I have to do is ask for recipes as I see people (and if any of you have favourite recipes you'd like to share, I'd love to receive them) and spend a moment or two formatting as I put them in. It won't write itself, but the bulk of the work will be done in dribs and drabs alongside other things, which is one of the reasons I wanted this cookbook. The main reason was I'm Gillian and I'm meeting all sorts of heroes and it would be very cool to own recipes by them. If I think this, then maybe others will, and we can raise money for someone else to go to a World Convention or a Eurocon.

I've already been asked if I'm doing a trip report, and yes, I am. I set that up last night and did the first entry, for I'm doing a journal, and thought I'd chronicle the cool and funny stuff before as well as Loncon and Eurocon and the rest of the trip. Like the cookbook, then, I'll work on it in dribs and drabs and it won't interfere with Life, but it will be substantial at the end and hopefully a lot of fun. There will be bad jokes in it. There are already bad jokes in it. And if I write it up as I go, it can be available as soon as I've persuaded someone to do final formatting and etc.

This is my day for quietly working at home, and I've got too much to trip over to get a lot done, so my first aim is to arrange to have less to trip over. This means getting rid of egregious and simple issues (like paper) and it means doing housework, and it means finishing things for tomorrow's library visit, so that I don't have any outstanding loans when I get the new batch. That will



The fan zone at Loncon, before we all went there
clear the decks enough so that at least some of tonight will be spent in the Middle Ages. The exciting part of the day, therefore, begins in the evening.

Blogpost: 16th June, 2014. 2:29 pm.

I've started again on my academic paper for Loncon.

I never really stopped, in a way, for Ambelin Kwaymullina and I had a long chat about it at Continuum. I've been thinking about what she said, and what I already knew, and how I'm going to let people know that I am merely a bridge. I realised that I can actually carry all the introductory papers, especially ones by Terri Janke, for they are freely available and cover so much of the basic ground that one cannot cover in a scholarly paper, but which everyone there will need access to, for this stuff is not very widely known - alas- even within Australia, as I discovered the other week at a CSFG meeting. What this will mean is that anyone who needs to start at the very beginning (and wishes to, after listening to me) can simply copy that folder and have the protocols and background at their fingertips. These papers are all by ATSI experts in ATSI cultural matters, so it will reinforce the argument I'm making⁶.

I've downloaded all the most important publicly-available papers, and just have to give them their own folder, and that bit is done. No doubt I will add to the folder, because Ambelin is about to put out a new paper that refers to more recent work, but

⁶ I didn't need this, in the end. It was reassuring to have it with me, however. I planned on giving the original to a writer (a particular writer) with a real interest, so that is what happened.

if I can't do anything more, at least this folder is ready.

Anything that isn't publicly freely available (eg academic studies), will go in a bibliography, which I will also put in the folder.

I've also sorted a bunch of papers (the ones I meant to do last night) and extracted Old Bailey records for my 17th century novel, so that I can know exactly what was happening in the crime scene

in London at the time. I don't know if I'm going to use it yet, but if I don't have it, I can't use it, and I saw something in there that possibly may be rather cool. In passing, I saw two possible ancestral-relatives of mine having lace stolen. One of the thieves was hanged, but the other wasn't convicted. The shop-owners (it was a milliner's) had the right kind of names in the right part of London at the right period. I need to check them out sometime.

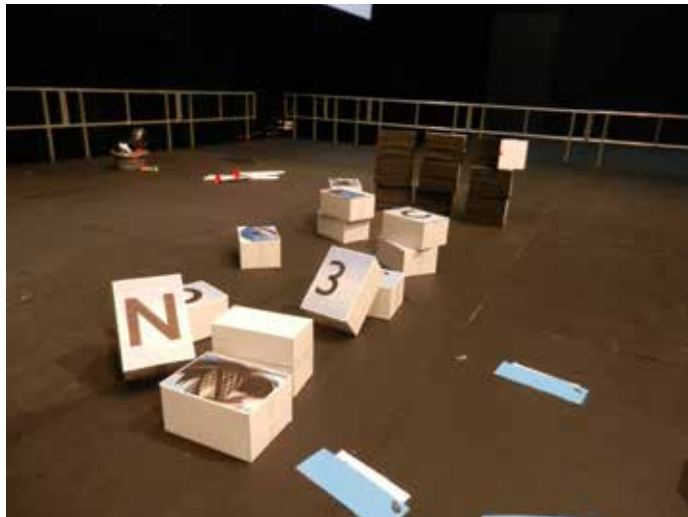
And that is my work of the early afternoon finished, along with some bonus recreational reading. I need to make coffee and sit down and read a bunch of articles about the Middle Ages, next. Total mindset change. This is what stops me from getting bored, after all.

For those wondering, my Continuum notes have still not appeared: I haven't forgotten them.

Blogpost: 17th June, 2014. 4:38 pm.

Today I'm taking half-off. I went out just after lunch, to see a movie (Elizabeth Fitzgerald gave me a gift voucher for movies for my birthday, which I am using solely to see superhero movies with her - it's a lot of fun, and means I get to see her) and I have about a half hour before I visit some friends.

I needed this. When I'm at home, I do things. There are always things that must be done, and it's going to get more so. So much to read, so much to write, so many emails to answer, so many people to tell about this or that in order to have things happen.



The empty stage before the opening Ceremony, Loncon - we didn't create more mess, truly, Prof Sorensen!

I've already taken committee-Gillian out of storage and dusted her off. This will be a committee of one (with occasional ring-ins) but I need to process-manage if I'm to enjoy the next three months. When so much is happening already and then it all explodes into glorious technicolour, then winging it is not going to work.

Also, I'm Gillian, so extra things are going to be added to the trip and to the workload, for that is

what happens in Gillian's life. The extra thing this morning was an email to someone about ancestral stuff. The extra things last night were working out that Mary Victoria and I will get to the Globe to see King Lear (they ran out of tickets last time I was in London, and I had so wanted to see Dr Faustus and go to the Globe) and half-setting up and interview (rest is all done and interview and etc will take place on Thursday, which will, as a happy by-product, give me the new picture of myself Loncon needs, and the photographer is happy to let it be used for that, with due acknowledgement, so that's LOTS of things done). And...

This is beginning to sound confusing. This is why, tomorrow afternoon, I take down the thinking for my 17th century novel (either that, or move it to another door, for doors are my chief planning-assistants) and start building one for Loncon.

In the interstices of movies and friends and emails, I plan to read. I went to the library to pick things up, and discovered 20 books waiting for me. I've finished one and 2 halves already. One half is short stories by Karin Tidbeck and the other is Meg Rosoff - I don't need to read the Rosoff and I don't have time to read it, but there's a book by her I haven't read and it automatically displaces other reading. I intend to return four books (in my dream world, five) tomorrow, for it's a bit greedy to have twenty books out from the library, and some of them are purely recreational (Rosoff!) and today is a mostly-recreational day. Also, I won't have that long to read the rest, for any day now, the first books for Aurealis will magically appear. I suspect I'll finish the books by tomorrow week. We'll see.

My useful-thought-of-the-moment is that anyone who puts "International Bestseller" on the cover of a novel, in big letters, is not doing the novel any favours. And now, I need a big cup of tea and the end of a Rosoff.

Blogpost: 24th June, 2014. 11:34 am.

My computer had a little meltdown because Microsoft decided to upgrade my system (to a whole new version) without warning or anything. A friend mostly sorted it, but I now have all the teething problems of a new system when really, I'd rather get on with the much-work I was in the middle of.

Only two more modules and my last three reflections and I'm finished this certificate. I'm really pleased I decided to do it. So many changes to how one approaches teaching since my Grad Dip, and this course has been quite specifically targeted at teaching undergrads, so my scatty knowledge is now more corporate and useful in form. When I get bored in class (which is seldom, for it's interesting material) I redesign my little project on teaching worldbuilding for writers. I think I have it all sorted now, and I know why my test wasn't working. My next step with it is to work out the relationship between it and story space, so that I can fit theory into the course without overwhelming it.

I've also spent much time on GUFF matters and they are underway. Mostly I'm waiting for replies and suggestions from various people and cannot progress. Mostly. For the rest of it, I push ahead, slowly. I'm confirmed for Loncon (which you already knew), Shamrokon and British Fantasy and almost confirmed for a Croatian convention. I'll see everyone else in between, en route, where I can, except for those Finnish fans who supported me so very wonderfully in the lead up to the vote count - they get a special visit. Pity the Finns! When my itinerary is firm, I'll put it up here.

When I've sorted out which SIM to get for the whole trip and how to actually buy it ahead of time, I shall have a phone number. And now my brain is spilling over with the things that must be done. And I only have a few minutes before class. Let me see what I can accomplish in those few minutes.

25 June

Such a busy ten days! Part of this was my normal things-happening (for instance, I finished updating my higher education teaching certification) but a lot has been pulling together an itinerary, making bookings, finding out what's happening. There are still some problem areas, but, bit by bit, they're being sorted out.

One of the more amusing problems is that I do searches for cheap airfares and come up with way expensive ones, but someone in Europe does the same search and lo, they find a reasonable fare. Then I can't book it and Claire Brialey has to sort it for me. We did a test run when Ben Roimola found me some cheap fares (which is when I realised we had a problem) and gave me the URLs and then Claire booked one of them successfully. This means I have a flight from Helsinki to London that arrives in plenty of time for me to take a flight home, and, if anyone wants dinner with me near Gatwick that night, all they have to do is find me.

Croatia and Finland are mysteries to me, but Mihaela Perković and Ben Roimola are on the ground and their homelands are not mysteries to *them* and so I'm learning not to plan quite as rigorously. I still have to get to both countries. I've half-sorted Finland, but Croatia is casting forth minor problems at every turn. I don't understand why there are not twenty direct flights a day from Dublin to Zagreb, but apparently there are not. Mind you, I also don't understand why York doesn't have an international airport and I have to go via other cities to get to Finland. When these things are solved, I shall be more sanguine. Until then, I worry.

I have only until the weekend to rediscover sanguinity, for my work deadlines are piling up. Papers to write, papers to rewrite, research to do for a novel and a whole book to pull together. People keep saying "You can do a lot of it on all those journeys." I already have a squillion books to read on all those journeys, should I have time and should I not be distracted by looking out of windows. When I put in a proposal for a Loncon paper (when I thought "I won't get GUFF but I have to make up my mind whether I'm going anyway") the first thing I did was to agonise over approaches for two days. The second thing I did was to spend another two days communing closely with online repositories of books, downloading



Doug Spencer turning into Mr Hoo for the Opening

enough reading for the journey. It's mostly publications from the

seventeenth century, for a novel. I want fun reading! And I want focused reading! And so, no, I will not be writing academic papers during the trip unless I must.

Now I'm in danger of becoming boring. (Only in danger? I must try harder!) Mostly this update is because I'm still trying to warm up. Three days running I've walked in the cold. Not the brisk cold, but the chill wet cold with snow falling with the rain. My computer is right next to the heater. For readers inclined to analysis, you may be able to track cold days and fatigue by lining up the less-exciting entries.

On the reading front, I will return fourteen books to the library on Friday. I've found a bunch of new authors to enjoy, and one that I told my work experience student⁷ "Read!" That one is by Tom Pollock. In fact, there were two books I said she should read, but I'm not on a panel with the author of the second. She got even by pulling four books out of her backpack and letting me know she wants them back next week. We're busy educating each other.

One of the results of finishing the first ten books in my pile was that I started making a list of different spec fic themes that deal with London. It's not complete. It's not even serious. Some overlap. Some books are entirely missing. I put it on my blog and Jason Franks and Cathy Butler suggested additions. I thought I should include it here.

As I'm pasting it now, it matches my blog, but don't trust that, for I think I shall emend it as I go, because I can, and because it would be a lot more fun if I had more examples and more categories.

1. Wallpaper London - a pretty backdrop with St Paul's or London Bridge but no other identifying details at all. No matter what the characters do or where the plot winds, the city stays the same. Except that maybe, if you're lucky, it rains.
2. London from the US view, which is often (but not always) different to ...
3. London from the other colonies (sorry US friends, but some of the US was once a set of English colonies, so I use the word 'other' and offend everyone, in the spirit of egalitarian rudeness), both of which are different to ...
4. Steampunk London, which ranges from the Griffin London (make sure you have the right Griffin) to the type of London you see in novels by Michael Pryor and Richard Harland.



Photographing myself, Opening Ceremony, Loncon

⁷ Who is really an honorary niece.

5. The London of a particular character, so sharp that it cuts and so real that you can taste the air they breathe and draw their favourite haunts on a map. Paul McAuley's London, for instance, is always thus.
6. London of the tunnels and waterways (Freer used tunnels and waterways quite recently).
7. Gothic London, where everything has a Jack the Ripper echo, or belongs in The Fourth Doctor's Talons of Weng-Chiang.
8. "I need an anodyne setting, so I shall call this city London because everyone knows London."
9. Magic London, definitely including Mike Shevdon and Neil Gaiman. A sub-section of Magic London is Elizabethan Magic London (am I thinking of Sarah Hoyt?).
10. Historical London. Dan Abnett's *Triumff* is a sparkling example of this, but so is Pratchett's *Ankh Morpork*. Mostly nineteenth century (but not steampunk) or late eighteenth century (for the clothes, obviously) or Elizabethan. There is a point being made about place and time.
11. False Dickensian London, like some of the steampunk Londons but with added misery. The focus is on the misery, not the place and time. I cannot think of an example solely because I do not want to.
12. False Heyer London, which people seem to be calling 'Regency.' Would Carriger's work fit in this? It's not in the right period (it's Victorian) but it certainly has the right atmosphere.
13. Boarding school London. The variety most likely to include both romance and vampires. But not always. Sometimes it's about orphans and isolation and magical coming-of-age. If you're really lucky, it has orphans, isolation, magical-coming-of-age, a boarding school and romance and vampires. Except I can't think of examples. This is because my brain is fried and has nothing to do with vampires and boarding schools and orphans. Not Sarah Rees Brennan - her London is 5 or 9 or both.
14. Time travel London, which is all about the portal, so I should really call it 'portal London'. There were bunches of these round some decades ago, and too many of them featured curiosity shops in narrow streets and the shops and sometimes the streets came and went entirely unreasonably. I wanted to write about a shop exactly like that, once, but I somehow avoided it.
15. Suspense London, where, if the writer isn't careful, everything comes out feeling like James Bond but with magic or futuretech. When this is done well, it's breathtaking. When it's done badly it's also breathtaking, but for entirely the wrong reasons.
16. London Noir
17. London with added Gherkins and Shards - futuristic SF. This can overlap heavily with 15.
18. London at the moment of the apocalypse. Possibly with added triffids. The cocktail on the cusp of disaster.

19. London after the apocalypse. Lots of rubble. Possibly with daleks⁸. The alternate to this is a form of magic or specific London that includes the Blitz - this is seldom the Blitz and is more often Averting the End of Everything Post Apocalypse - this is where I admit that my views on all of this are idiosyncratic and relate to my mood today, which is vagrant and listing.
20. London created entirely from vague recollections of novels set in London. All summed up for me in the final episodes of 'ROD - the TV'



Curt Phillips onstage, Opening Ceremony, Loncon

21. Medieval London, which may or may not be Medieval and may or may not be London. Merlin will generally make an appearance and dragons there be, on occasion.
22. Dystopian London. George Orwell and Geoff Ryman. This was suggested by Jason Franks, in the shadows, below (really, the comments to the original blog entry, but dystopias don't have comments, they have shadows and one lurks).
23. Post-everything London. This and its Ozymandian implications were suggested by Cathy Butler and includes Diana Wynne Jones' *A Tale of Time City*. It also includes moments in most of the whizzing back-and-forward time travel books - if you go far enough forward, you hit green fields. Mind you, if you go far enough back... This makes me think (I started thinking this in the comments) that there is a really odd fictional London timeline that starts and ends with green fields. The historical London timeline, of course, begins and ends with marshes and tides.

[Blogpost: 27th June, 2014. 11:41 am. On invisibility and cellophane \(again - I'll keep raising this issue til it goes away\)](#)

I was reading [this](#) uncheerful (because true) piece by Judith Tarr, which referred to [this](#) equally uncheerful and also true piece by [la marquise de](#). I wrote Ms Cellophane/Life through Cellophane because I thought of this phenomenon as 'cellophane.' It travels across our society and hurts so very many people. I have friends who have lost jobs because of it and friends who never had careers because the males around them got all the developmental work. I was one of those people. Once one has been made invisible, the fear of being invisible becomes a ghostly presence in one's life.

Fandom is a hive of bias. We see that on a depressingly regular basis. I'm not going to send you to one post here, for there are many. I'm going to suggest you google the work of Foz Meadows because I like the way Foz explains it. She gets properly angry - and is never, ever resigned. She talks about bias, about invisibility, about how fandom and publishing treat various groups, including women.

Every now and again something happens that reminds us that this invisibility is not inevitable, that fighting it (by the turning-invisible themselves, but also by their friends and colleagues) can work. I'll get to that.

There are so many reasons why I should be invisible. I've been cellophaned so many times in my life. I was rendered invisible by a lecturer during my teaching module on Monday in fact. A splendorous prize-winning teacher corrected specialist knowledge by female students (one of whom was me) but acknowledged and built on the same from male students. Let me make this clear - all the students had PhDs or were completing them - he should not have been correcting our specialist knowledge at all unless it was in the same field as his (it wasn't).

The bottom line is that I have so many invisibility factors working against me that Monday's experience ought to be my norm. I ought to be completely invisible at this moment and for the rest of my life.

But things are changing. It doesn't take a whole community to effect change, it turns out. It just takes a bunch of individuals deciding not to sit on their laurels. It takes enough people (us, here) to lead the way, putting our money where our mouth is.

⁸ I first encountered this London at an impressionable age. Rubbled London needs William Hartnell or Peter Cushing, always, and I lay the blame firmly at the door on 1960s television.

I was voted as GUFF delegate ahead of three excellent candidates who were all younger, more dynamic and had less potential for invisibility on their side. Thanks to them, despite the reality of a difficult and misogynist society, I get to play on the larger stage for a few weeks.

All we have to do is repeat this set of actions wherever we are, whatever we're doing. It wasn't me who became visible: it was the fans who voted in GUFF who made me visible. How do we do what they did? We should talk. We should see who says what, and confirm that what they think and who they are is important. We should notice our patterns of book buying and recognition and we should adjust them. The Judith Tarrs, the Glenda Larkes, the Kari Sperrings of this world should be interviewed, should be talked about, should be invited to conventions. If we don't see that book on the shelf, we should blog "Why isn't there a book by this author?" The market won't self-correct, but we're not neutral players. If we're passive and accepting then what we passively accept is a status quo that we don't actually like.

We should not wait for someone else to do the talking: we should do what those wonderful GUFF voters did, and take one small step ourselves. Each of us. On a regular basis. One easy step every single week.

We all count. It's far easier to effect change if we (as individuals) refuse to be silenced, if we make demands of who we want to read and who we want to see. We should not sit back and say "I'm not political, let someone else do it" or "I'm shy, let someone else do it."

Let's move beyond the numbers game (counting them, being saddened by them, crying shame) and take our own small steps. Those small steps will mean more books by so many of our favourite authors at the least, and at the most, it will mean that the next generation of potential invisibles won't ever have to face this garbage.

How does one eat an elephant? One bite at a time.

Blogpost: 28th June, 2014. 12:21 pm.

My brain needs a rest from schedules and meetings and the minutiae of making one thing align with another, so I looked at my list of tasks. This is a new list - all the work I have to do by the third week of July if I want my life to hold together

through August and September (this being a strange year). And I found on this list just one task for my novel. Guess what I'm doing right now? It's the least urgent and the most fun. And all the things on the list have to be finished, regardless.



Daleks on stage at the Opening Ceremony, Loncon

I'd done all the research for the novel I had to do, so what has changed? The GUFF win changed things. I had two days to wander through Devon and see Bideford. When I checked train and bus timetables, two days would have left me a half day (or less) of actually seeing the place, and it would have involved an inordinate amount of shifting heavy baggage. Bideford would have been a wonderful setting for many reasons, but, logically, it was better to spend two more days re-doing basic research in time-plentiful Australia than to only spend three hours checking out locations for a novel.

What I did was take my available time and work backwards from where I would be. I found that St Ives would meet all but three of the reasons I wanted Bideford, and had some distinct advantages of its own. Unlike Bideford, it had exactly the right educational profile in the seventeenth century, for example, which was something I'd failed to take into account initially but which is becoming increasingly important. I can have a day and a half in St Ives itself and several days in the region. I've been to the region before, what's more (well, I've been to Cambridge, many years ago) so I know the general lay of the land. And there are some parts of local governance that are dead easy for St Ives - it answers to Lincoln Cathedral, for instance, and I know the pre-reform set-up there in general terms. Knowing the medieval base of anything makes the early modern situation much faster to discover. Also, it's such a literate region that some things almost discovered themselves. St Ives market day was on

Mondays during my period. And the town was burned during the Civil War. This knowledge will make visually interpreting the town a lot easier. Moreover, it has a market cross. I love market crosses! I would put market crosses in all my fiction if I dared.

All I'm doing today is identifying ebooks (old editions) that I can take with me, but just checking them out is giving me a ton more data than doing the same did for Bideford. It's an ill wind (and this is the week of me being proverbial).

If anyone has an urge to discover seventeenth century Huntingdonshire with me (although St Ives is now in Cambridgeshire) email me and I'll tell you the days I'll be there. It's between Zagreb and British Fantasy.

My itinerary is nearly sorted, BTW, so if you want to avoid me and think I might be coming to your part of Europe, ask me when I'll be where.

I'm hoping to have a draft schedule up here next week, but would be very happy to be emailed before then. There are many places I really wanted to visit that just don't look possible, so my apologies ahead of time.

2 St Ives

3-5 Cambridge

5-8 York and FantasyCon

8 York to Helsinki (via Manchester)

9-14 Finland

14 Helsinki to London with an overnight at exotic Gatwick - I would be very happy to have a final dinner with friends, if friends can reach exotic Gatwick

I have managed to fit four SF cons into this period. I'm a bit in awe of this. Conflux covers Day of Atonement this year, so the most time I can spend there is (transport permitting) a day and a half, so I'll miss my local friends but will get a lovely amount of time with friends from more exotic places (like Gatwick).

The details of Croatia and Finland and my one day in Austria are still being finalised. I'm free to meet people in Dublin prior to Shamrokon and to be a tourist. I want to see Barley Hall again when I'm in York, and FantasyCon is close to the station and central York, so I can see other people do other things (it doesn't have to all be

Blogpost: 3rd July, 2014. 4:43 pm. How to Avoid Gillian in Europe

This is where I'll be and when. You're welcome to let others know (they need to run, too!). More details will be forthcoming as I get them, but there are a few of you who might want to know that I'll be near them. I do believe, for instance, that I have a Barley Hall promise that may be able to finally be kept!

AUGUST

7 London

14 -18 Loncon

19 train and ferry ride to Dublin - company very welcome

19-21 Dublin and environs (Newgrange!)

22 -24 Shamrokon

25 Dublin to Vienna

26 Vienna to Zagreb

26-31 Croatia (including Liburnicon)

SEPTEMBER

1 Zagreb to St Ives



The Boulevard, Loncon

about the con, for, at this moment, I appear to have no GUFFish duties).

Blogpost: 4th July, 2014. 11:31 am.

Last night I was working on my Loncon paper and realised (yet again) what a profound difference it makes to understanding something if one can shift one's point of view as a reader. It's possible to see 1984

as a tragedy, as parable, as a dark comedy: that's a series of easy shifts because 1984 is often taught that way. It's part of our educational baggage if we encounter the right teachers or essays. This is because George Orwell has cultural credit on his side. Dead White British Male Credit as well as credit as a fine writer. The experts engage with him on a number of fronts and this means non-experts are introduced to him in that way, too.

None of the writers I'll be looking at for my Loncon paper are dead, white, British or male. This changes so much.

I can only touch on it lightly in my paper for it's only one aspect of my paper, but it's given me a lot to think on. The concept of different standpoints for reading is something I haven't fully integrated into my work, for I've been looking at writers from their viewpoint for the last decade rather than writing from the reader's view.

When I'm looking at narrative structures, though, this element is crucial. If a reader says "This story is for children" (two of my students encountering Joan Aiken for the first time) they bring into play quite a different set of expectations to a reader (me, in this case) who says "Gentle and literary writer of speculative fiction." The same story, two different approaches. Easy. We talk about it from this angle all the time.

Add in world view, though, and the picture changes again. Reading a novel where the author has a magic system they believe in but that we as reader doesn't means we call it a 'magic system' (as I just did) rather than the physical and spiritual reality of the universe. In theory we hold our assumptions back in reading spec fic and we judge by the skill of the writer and the credibility of the world and its people. We judge, in theory, according to internals. But to reach those internals, we're already judging. Whether we believe in ghosts or not profoundly affects our emotions when we enter a ghost story or first encounter ghosts in a story.

The more of an outsider the writer is in cultural terms (which may or may not boil down to the less DWBM or DWAM they are), the less the reading of the story is shared with the reader. We think a simple description of someone's reality is exotic, or perverse, or magic. We think something magic and exotic is everyday.

This is why we need critical interpretation by informed minds (and why I started talking literary criticism many years ago) - we can share more of our reading with the writer.

We'll always own our own potential readings, but by informing ourselves we get to engage in a more interesting story.

(This is me simplifying something very complex for the sake of a blogpost. Check back with me in 2 years, when I might actually know something of the subject.)



A table of Aussies at Loncon - Kyla Ward and KJ Bishop prepare to do battle

9 July

I've been too busy to report in. This is just as well, because a day by day listing of how I sorted that I was going to St Ives and not Bideford for my day off and how that day off suddenly became infused with friends (some of whom are fans) is not the stuff of excitement. Well, it is, but the way these things happen has to be transformed into story and I don't want to transform it – I just want to enjoy it.

Since I last wrote, however, exciting (genuinely exciting, not just quietly and pleasantly wonderful) things have happened. Let me make a list, lest I forget (I'll forget anyhow, but at least the list will look impressive – I now want to call my travelogue *The Book of Lists*):

1. I'm a Guest of Honour at Liburnicon, which is being held at/near Opatija in Croatia.
2. I'm presenting a Hugo. I also get two tickets to the party before.
3. I'm now staying in Bloomsbury (the other side of Bloomsbury from where I spent my London life in 1986) which means that much travel time has been transformed into doing-time. This time is filling up with friends and museums. Most of the friends are fannish, too, which is good.
4. All the accommodation I or Claire can handle is booked. All the travel I or Claire can handle is booked. All that remains are the Finnish and Croatian components, and they depend on other people.

And that's as much excitement as I can handle at this second.

Mostly, right now, I want to sleep. I'm chronically short of sleep. I said I wouldn't do this to myself, but I didn't allow for the amount of work. How could I? I have a novel coming out and an academic book to finish and sell; I have jobs to apply for; I have an article and a chapter to revise; I have the *Vast and Giant Fan Journey* to prepare for. And then I have my everyday. So much wonder and excitement. So little time. (I now suspect that Tolkien had just come back from a journey such as this, with much everything all at once, and that he decided "Wouldn't it be nice if someone came and said "We have to go now! We have a quest! You're our thief so there's no time to prepare.")

Blogpost: 14th July, 2014. 12:47 am.

I haven't quite finished the work I intended to do. What I have instead done is gain maps of London in 1666 (after the fire, showing the extent of destruction) and 1675 and 1680 and 1682. I've printed small versions of the same region from three of them, the one that will cover the walking tour I intend to do (with friends if possible, alone if not). I can take pictures to match the maps where buildings and streets give me useful indications of what things were like in 1682 and I will have a whole bunch of fabulous data for my mind to crunch for the novel. Also for my Medieval London class later in the year (for it was postponed), since the walk and the photos will show me some streetshapes.*



German fans (from the Ancient Arts stall) full of clotted cream and homemade jam

The unintended break from pure fannish behaviour is because I realised that I will be most jetlagged on the anniversary of my father's death. I can't guarantee the company of friends (though I would be very happy to share my walking tour) but I can guarantee that if I keep my mind occupied with useful work then I won't feel it as badly.

For anyone tempted to join me, I will be at the Museum of London in the morning and be roaming the streets from the Barbican to Bank via the Old Bailey, St Paul's, Cheapside and old Jewry. Detours are perfectly possible, especially if they involve coffee. It will be very, very slow (for the combination of jetlag and my usual slowness makes this inevitable) but a lot of fun.

**I'm considering printing the 1682 map along with the relevant pictures and a couple of panoramic views from the same year and creating a Londonscape on my mirrorwall. This would mainly be to stir visitors, as the walk will already have given me most of the insights I need for that element of the novel. Stirring visitors is a worthy aim, though, so I might do it. Then I could take a picture of the pictures and email it to anyone who walked with me that day.*

PS Email me if you want to join me. Feel free to share the offer with other Loncon visitors, but get them to email me, too. That way the friends who would join me if they could won't have as much to complain about.

PPS I once did an equivalent walk for Sydney, for about 30 Indonesian visitors. I liked it when we walked above the Tank Stream and I said "This is a stream" – they were certain their English was at fault. Then when we reached Mrs Macquarie's Chair and I pointed to Garden Island and all they saw were naval vessels they decided I was unreliable and started teasing me.

Less than a month to go and I found a blog post I forgot to post. I was waiting to hear what was happening with GUFF and wrote something and then left it sitting and moved onto other things (I do this from time to time).

I'm embedded in the minutiae of planning right now. I'm collecting material for fan auctions (Kaaron Warren's just agreed to provide me with some delightfully personal material, which should please her fans immensely) and small thank-you gifts (for I think there will be many people who need thanking) and pulling together everything that needs pulling together (I hope) and sorting out how to get multitudes of things from multitudes of people to London and Dublin for the fan auction (Mihaela doesn't know this yet, but she's going to be roped in to get the Croatian bits that last leg), so, rather than annoying you with lists of things I've done or must do, I thought you'd like to know what I was thinking when I assumed this wasn't going to happen. Why would I enter a highly competitive race when I thought I didn't have a chance? Retrospectively, I have no idea. But I talked about it, in the week after it was happening and before we knew the results:

"I did something unexpected and a bit unusual for me these last two days. Quietly, in between the manifold difficulties. I emailed some friends and asked some questions. I am now a GUFF* candidate for LonCon. I want to go to LonCon, and took out membership to force me to achieve this particular dream, but it was looking more and more difficult financially. I want to volunteer and be on panels and meet other fans and do all the wonderful things that one does at a World SF Convention. I want to visit friends on the Continent and get to know other people with my interests. A couple of my friends said "You should give GUFF a go." And they reassured me about the really scary bit for me, which was fundraising. I'd rather donate to other peoples' fundraising than fundraise for myself, but that's a fear that's been built up by years of people saying rude things about Jews and money and it's about time I got over it. So I shall.

One rather remarkable thing that I noticed during these chats: I could very easily have got twice the number of nominators and they would have all been male. Despite some of the daftness that goes on in some conventions and in some circles, fandom tends to be about people, not about gender stereotyping. Well, it is in my circles, anyhow. I'm middle-aged and over-educated and short and round and not particularly blessed with beauty. My friends aren't supporting me for my looks or sexy figure or my youth or worrying about gender at all – they're supporting me because they like me and think I will make a good candidate.

I'll post about GUFF from time to time, and answer questions, and dream aloud. I'll tell you more about my European dreams during voting. Ignore all this if you're a friend who is not a fan, unless you find it amusing, in which case, keep reading. The postings won't be terribly regular – I don't think that I should be dinning things into people, just answering questions as they arise and reminding potential voters that I'm a nice person and would be an interesting candidate.

For the record, Medievalists can read fanzines in Swedish⁹. They can't read them well unless they're specialists in Scandinavia (which I'm not) but they can make general



Me on a surprisingly comfortable Iron Throne

sense of them. I didn't know I read any Swedish at all*, so this makes me rather pleased. Not nearly as pleased as the fact that fandom can be so quietly thoughtful. It's been that way for me before and no doubt it will be that way again. Still, every time, it makes me feel good inside. That the idiots who get all the airplay are the minority. Fannish friendship gently crosses all kinds of apparent boundaries.

*Though it shouldn't surprise me, as a Danish colleague gave me a copy of one of her publications and I was fine with that, too. I suspect I should get dictionaries for these languages and learn a bit of grammar and actually be able to read them, though, not work out generally what they're about and that they are items I really, really want to read but can't quite, which is the current case."

And now I must return to counting down the days until life becomes miraculous and strange for five weeks. For someone who spends most of their life alone, it's a very odd turn of events.

At least you know now why it took me so long to come to terms with the fact that I actually won.

9 When I reached Finland, we sorted out some language issues by people translating Finnish words into Swedish, which I then tried to work out

from my knowledge of dead (but similar) languages. Oddly, it worked about 50% of the time. This was mainly for fun: Finnish fans speak English.

17 July

So much to do and, and this stage, I'm all out of energy. Mihaela has the first set of material she needs from me for Liburnicon and I've offered to do a slide show with my talk. This offer is based on me having pictures and them being of Australia and of Australian fans and writers and artists, rather than me actually having the time to choose the right ones and pull them together.

I'm still reading for the Hugos. Did I say I wanted to read everything this year? Well, I won't. I'm almost out of time. I will, however, have read most things, and tomorrow I'm seeing my second-last film and Sunday my last film. What I haven't read by Sunday night, I may not have time to read, but I've made a valiant attempt. I will be able to look most nominees in the eye on the day. This was not the reason I was trying to read everything (I'm a natural completist) but it's certainly a factor when one is faced by a couple of dozen nervous nominees at the pre-ceremony reception.

My coincidence of the week was that I was looking for something Geoff Ryman said at Flycon (I was one of the chairs of Flycon and so I have the archives) and I spent a significant part of last night reading the Flycon transcripts, for Geoff was erudite and entertaining and delightful. So was Chaz Brenchley. When they were online together, things got interesting. I only discovered how interesting a half hour later, for my computer use was confounded by rolling thunderstorms. It was announced today that Geoff is one of the Hugo hosts. My past is returning to haunt others...

My agony-of-the-moment is how far behind I'm getting with my work, for GUFFishness is running interference. I'm going to take a half hour now and edit several pages of annotations into various documents, just so that those annotated pages cease to regard me accusingly. Then I shall ponder the possibility of sleep. I don't think sleep is going to be an option for some parts of my trip, so I need to not forget it now. I'm warming my doona, though, for it's going to reach zero before morning. Cold enough to want the chill taken from the bed. Evidence I'm turning into a sybarite, I suspect. I will have to do sybaritic things at the various conventions in Europe to assist in making this transformation permanent.



The Green Room at work, Loncon (Sue Edwards in the middle)

22 July

Every day I think "I will have done everything and can catch up on my normal work" and every day there are more things to do. They're exciting things: changes to my programme, people to see, new information about a place. So I deal with them and smile a little smile of contentment and think how lucky I am to be doing this. Then I open my email and discover that non-GUFF stuff (I still like typing "GUFF stuff" – it amuses my inner child) that was so far on the backburner I nearly gave up on it has shouted my name. This means I'm checking proofs and working on book covers and getting agreement from a publisher about novels. All this is on top of the work I have to finish before I go and on top of my teaching.

I shall finish everything, but I may miss sleep in the process.

Blogpost: 24th July, 2014. 10:55 pm. [How to Avoid Gillian at Loncon](#)

It's easier to avoid me at Loncon than at any other SF convention I've ever been to. Loncon is so big that you can find other things to do, easily. Awesome other things. The programme is totally amazing and is here: <http://guide.loncon3.org/>

Now for the nitty-gritty of avoidance. First up, you might have to skip the Opening Ceremony and the Hugos. I'm only a miniscule part of both, but I am a miniscule part. Bring your mobile along, maybe, and carefully tweet about other things to blot me out? For the rest of it, this is my programme. I'm sorry that you'll have to skip hearing some of my favourite writers, but it's the only way to avoid me. Also to avoid the usual stuff I bring, like books and toffees. Speaking of books, there will be a very limited number of advance copies of Langu[e]doc 1305 at the Ticonderoga stall in the dealer's room, and I don't even have to be bribed to sign them! I do have to be bribed if you want me to sign them legibly. I have to be bribed enormously if you want me to sing you a Medieval song while I sign. None of this qualifies as Gillian-avoidance, however.*

As for the rest of it, this is me, I am here:

Thursday, August 14 7pm

YA Books Set in London Capital Suite 8

Tom Pollock, Edward James, Ian McDonald, Gillian Polack, Liesel Schwarz

Dark alleys, cocky cockneys, a stewpot of cultures from every corner of the globe and layer upon layer of history... London is the perfect setting for adventures of every sort. What are the best YA books that London has inspired? Have any of them added to the city's mystique? What can the viewpoint

of a YA protagonist bring to the reader's perception of this magnificent city that an adult viewpoint couldn't?

Friday, August 15 11am

Feeding the Imagination: Food in SF/F
Capital Suite 3

Shana Worthen, Aliette de Bodard, Gillian Polack, Jo Walton, Fran Wilde

The food in George R.R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* series is described in such detail that cookbooks have been published in response. What other genre works have focused heavily on food to develop the world and characters? What does food say about an invented society? Are stories that lack an exploration of the diet of their characters lacking something?

Friday, August 15 1:30pm

Fantasy and Medievalism Capital Suite 7+12

Kathryn (Kate) Laity, Robin Hobb, Marieke Nijkamp, Lynda Rucker, Gillian Polack

High fantasy is almost invariably set in invented worlds inspired by medieval Europe. Can we put this down to the legacy of Tolkien and to genre works being in close conversation with each other? Or is there something about the place that medieval Europe occupies in our imagination that makes it a perfect companion for tales of epic striving and larger-than-life Good versus Evil? Either way, does this help or hinder the genre?

Saturday, August 16 12pm

Representing Indigenous Cultures in Speculative Fiction Capital Suite 6

Ronald Meyers, Christopher Kastensmidt, Maureen Kincaid Speller, Gillian Polack

Three academics each give a presentation followed by a jointly held 30 minute discussion and Q&A with the audience.

Christopher Kastensmidt, "Simone Saueressig and the Indigenous Epic"

Maureen Kincaid Speller, "The Silence of the Indian: Representations of Indigenous North Americans in Science Fiction and Fantasy"

Gillian Polack, "Old cultures, new fictions: introducing three Indigenous Australian writers of speculative fiction"

Saturday, August 16 8pm



Fan fund casino Caroline Mullan

Free Trips To Foreign Parts Capital Suite 2

Curt Phillips, Gillian Polack, Rob Hansen, James Shields, Kylie Ding

The Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund was the first of the fan funds and was created in 1953 for the purpose of providing funds to bring well-known and popular [science fiction] fans familiar to those on both sides of the ocean across the Atlantic. How can you get fans to pay for you to jet off to exotic foreign locations? Come along to meet our knowledgeable panelists to find out how to compete for and win a fan fund.

Saturday, August 16

Fan Funds Casino Fan Activity Tent, 10pm - 2am

Jim Mowatt, Justin Ackroyd, Kylie Ding, Janice Gelb, Jerry A. Kaufman, Patrick McMurray, G. Patrick Molloy, Carrie Mowatt, Maree Pavletich, Mihaela Marija Perkovic, Curt Phillips, Alan Stewart, Gillian Polack

There'll be spinning roulette wheels, Blackjack and gambling galore in the Fan Funds Casino. It'll all be just for fun but there will be plenty of opportunities for you to contribute to the various fan funds who raise money to send fans on cultural

exchange trips to far flung corners of the world. The croupiers are nearly all fan fund winners and this gathering is almost certainly the largest collection of fan fund winners ever gathered in one place. Come join in our own Vegas style fun and be there at this historic occasion.

Sunday, August 17 12pm

Fan Funds Auction Capital Suite 9

Jim Mowatt, Justin Ackroyd, Carrie Mowatt, Curt Phillips, Gillian Polack

Fans from around the world have sent in all manner of delightful items for your bidding pleasure. There'll be rare books. There'll be weird and wonderful action figures. There will almost certainly be Tim Tams. Come bid on these items and marvel at our wild cavorting auctioneers who strut and fret their hour upon the stage. Come buy these marvellous goodies and in so doing support some of the fan funds such as TAFF that raises money for the cultural transfer between Europe and North America and GUFF which raises money for the exchange between Australia and Europe.

Monday, August 18 11am

How To Read Safely in a Science Fictional Universe: Coping With Time Travel Narratives Capital Suite 4

Geoffrey Landis, Joe Haldeman, Gillian Polack, Suzanne Palmer, Ian Watson

In their introduction to *The Time Traveller's Almanac*, Ann and Jeff VanderMeer note that "time travel stories are devious narratives." Part of this deviousness lies in their variety: they can be mazes or messages, experiments or adventures. What are the challenges for the writer in composing such deviousness - and for the reader in unravelling it? What are the literary effects of building a story around

(semi)-credible science versus entirely invented fantasy?

ETA (for I didn't have any footnotes!!¹⁰)

*The song you are most likely to be forced to endure if you bribe me sufficiently is from the first Robin Hood musical. I can sing it in several dialects, if I'm drunk enough.

Blogpost: 27th July, 2014. 11:12 am. Happy dancing

My news is of a totally botched delivery of the pre-release copies of *Lingue[dot]doc 1305*, saved by a friend who spent a chunk of her day chasing the copies until she got them. It's a very exciting story, and I'm very grateful to her for it really should have been a straightforward matter of being home at the right time and accepting delivery. She has an account of the book's voyages here: <http://owlfish.livejournal.com/1265566.html>

This novel is much voyaged, for a story that I thought I'd never write. One day I'll present it as one of those Medieval Irish saints' voyages, but today I'm thinking about the first step and about today's delivery.

The first step is a little embarrassing. I told everyone "I do not write hard science into my novels, though I might play with it for a short story" and yet *Lingue[dot]doc 1305* was checked by CSIRO and had advice from an astronomer and a time travel expert and others. I also said that I would always keep a firm barrier between history-for-fiction and history-for-history and lo, this I have not done here either. What I might do, in fact, when the book comes closer to actual launch date, is talk about a couple of the techniques I used to bring the history side of me and the fiction side of me closer together. An essay, maybe. And, to make it worse, I said "I'm not going to write a time travel novel that takes modern people into the 14th century. Never. Ever." Van Ikin somehow persuaded me to do otherwise.

So much egg on face! And in such a good cause!

In a few minutes I am catching up with Kaaron Warren. She's giving me an annotated copy of *Slights* for auction at Loncon, and some rather interesting "Where do you get



Hugo Reception - this looks posed, but it really wasn't.

10 And for those who do not know, I have a possible footnote addiction. It's under control. Really and truly.

your ideas from?" packs for writers, also for auction. I'm hoping we have a cuppa, and with any luck I'll get all my messages done. That will free up the desk for work. I do not know why I celebrate novels with work, but I do. I get a rush of energy and want to finish my next project. Today, that's easy. I have just two hours' work to do on one article. Today I am an adrenaline junkie... an adrenaline junkie with a novel that is only one step away from its first meeting with its public.

Blogpost: 29th July, 2014. 12:21 am.

Tonight is full of logistics. Loncon is full of people who are very good at logistics. Also who are very kind. This means that my next week will be less fraught and I can keep on knocking down tasks one at a time. What this means (for everything is sequenced here right now) is that I have diminished the vile piles of paper massively and only have three to tackle by the end of this week. They're three important and big things, but they're only three. Only three big things and about fifty small ones (not represented by piles of paper). Plus meetings. This is the week of the great Catch-Up.

Blogpost: 29th July, 2014. 12:25 pm.

It's delightfully warm today, and I'm delightfully achy. This is because the delightful warmth (it was nearly 16 degrees outside when I went to run my day's worth of messages) is due to an even more delightful weather system.

So my messages are all done and my appointments all finished and all that remains in my day is work and housework and housework and work. And coffee. And pain relievers. And more coffee. And possibly more pain relievers.

Despite my current aches, I'm boppy. A webpage explains it: <http://www.poslovni.hr/after5/liburnicon-upisao-opatiju-na-kartu-destinacija-za-ljubitelje-sf-a-i-fantasyja-276344> I'm not translating it, for I have no Croatian. I know what it's about, though, and why my name is on the webpage. It's the icing on the cake for my trip, to be able to talk about things I love with people who share that love and to be given a guest of honour status for so doing. I've already prepared a slide show that includes everything from writers attacking each other to kangaroos trying to stare me

down. I'm honoured and excited and totally chuffed, all at once. I will have various celebrations (for being a con guest deserves celebration), some online - watch this space.

And now I need to finish getting my work done before I go!

Blogpost: 30th July, 2014. 8:40 am.

I'm so very happy about being a guest for Liburnicon. I will probably say this again, but it gives me a chance to introduce Australian spec fic to new readers. It's another of those places - usually so rare - where I get to be all the different parts of myself at once.

I have a reading at FantasyCon, too, which is wonderful. I've decided to share a bit of the cursed novel. No-one was ever hit by a hurricane after a reading from it, after all. And my new publisher doesn't live in Hurricane Alley. And I'm just so very, very happy that people will finally get to meet Fay. This is a portal novel, and a quest novel (only inside out) and it's about power and friendship and romance and loneliness and living in entirely the wrong place. None of these things is why it contains dead morris dancers.

And now it's time to teach. Pity my students, for they may well encounter Evil Gillian. We have a list of skills and knowledge they wanted to learn in the next two weeks and Evil Gillian creates learning in her wake. I have no idea why this is so, but it's a steady pattern with this group.



Hugo reception - Geoff Ryman and Ann VanderMeer temporarily turned into Press

1 August

Close, so close and still so much to do. As most of my friends would say (but I'm too mealy-mouthed) "This shit is getting real."

I've seen the script for the opening ceremony and I get to play on stage! This is going to be good for the I'm-not-allowed-to-do-this-stuff-because-I'm too-repressed side of myself. Ian Sorensen has been kind to my lack of experience and not given me many lines, although one caused me to write to him about needing to learn how to pronounce a word – it's a very US or UK word and not at all one I've ever had a chance to use before in public. Especially not in front of so MUCH public. I need to learn how to pronounce 'ass' as an insult. As part of an insult. As something almost anyone would say but a mealy-mouthed middle aged Melbournian like me.

To be honest, I've used the word. My first publisher taught me how to say "opening a can of whoop-ass" on my tour for *Illuminations*. This was mostly because she'd say it to me at various times. Like when I insisted on singing along (in English) to a tape of HMS Pinafore (in Yiddish). She'd also say "Bless your heart." Often. I was very good for her. So I can say it, but with an Arkansas/Chicago accent.

I shall ask both Ian and Curt Phillips (Curt is my US counterpart), I think, and decide between a British and a Virginian accent on the day. All the rest of my lines will be pure Canberra. Or maybe Melbourne, if I revert to my childhood, surrounded by all that England. (Melbourne, for those who don't know, has an accent at the British end of things and I have the most Melbourne of Melbourne accents when I revert to childhood – in Canberra, though, I speak less posh. By this you understand that my accent is an unreliable narrator of my past.)

I was worried I wouldn't have much to do except be GUFFish and I wasn't certain what Loncon would want in terms of GUFFishness or even what being GUFFish meant, but I'm on heaps of programme items and so should deal. Some of them are wonderful. Some are rather scary. I have the Opening ceremony and the Hugos, which are the scariest of scary, but good for me (especially my vocabulary). I have some Medievalism, which wonderfully makes up for me not giving a Medievalist paper and I have my actual paper, where I get to say the word 'Yankunytjatjara' several times, with feeling. I have a young adult panel, moderated by someone with the near-perfect surname of 'Pollock'. I have a foodie panel! (I am now one of the SF foodies – and Conflux has kindly donated the cookbook that proves it, for the fan auction.) Best of all, I have a time travel panel. Also, there's a bunch of pure fannishness: an auction, a casino and a fan funds panel. So many different parts of me in the one place – I'll never be able to hide in the shadows again.

I get to meet Ian McDonald and Joe Haldeman and Ian Watson. I get to catch up with Shana Worthen and Alette de Bodard and Edward James and Robin Hobb (who may not remember me). Or rather, they can't avoid me.

Hmm. I may have to keep Evil Gillian in check. Except not on the foodie panel, for I want to challenge northern hemisphere assumptions about what food is by introducing Aussie native ingredients. And I have toffees that may need throwing. Not very evil. Just a little. And there's a panel on which I'm Medi-evil... and I'm going round in circles due to lack of sleep.

Things are happening elsewhere, too. I'm still the guest of honour (one of three) at the coming Liburnicon. This is very good for me, but it's also very good for the fan funds. Since one of the main reasons I stood was to have an excuse to work on the international community side and to bring more people in and to do unto others what people have done unto me in terms of giving the unusual a place where they are at home, this is marvellous.



I meet the Doctor

I had two breakthroughs yesterday. The first I've already described: I learned I had to learn how to pronounce 'ass' effectively and in public. (And that the opening ceremony is going to rock.) The second was in my lists. They're down to three.

A few days ago my lists were spawning lists of lists of lists and I was listing slowly into a recumbent position from which I doubted I would emerge before February.

I've given up on finishing the book before I go (but the end is more in sight than it was, so I can do it in a great hurry when I come back, if needs must – I rather hope needs must, to be honest, for I want that book to see daylight, which is not related to this journal AT ALL but would give me much peace of mind, and this parenthetical comment is another sign of lack of sleep) and I've only got one of my scholarly endeavours to complete and send to the editor. It's supposed to be there today, but a migraine intervened and it's going to be there over their weekend. A day late. Possibly two. Not good, but also not the end of the known universe. (Not doing it, *that* would be the end of the known universe.)

My actual travel list is down to the achievable, especially if I blitz things today. Today is full of meetings and, if I'm really very lucky, maybe a haircut. In between meetings I shall do things like collect British banknotes and return library books and... wait, I have a list... oh, it's mainly paperwork. Friday 1 August is therefore mostly Terribly Dutiful and even more Terribly Dull. Except it won't be, because of those meetings. A staff morning tea where I turn into a mentor for other staff (I hope there's a magic wand involved), and catching up with writer-friend Monica Carroll, and delivering someone the face-to-face bit of their manuscript assessment. There's another meeting, but I've lost it. I hope I find it again in time!

I want to say that my life is not this exotic normally (because it isn't – most days it's me working very hard in my PJs and pretending I'm fine and can meet all my deadlines, really, truly, or it's me teaching) but 1 August is starting three months of awesome. This is my normal life the way Loncon is an everyday SF convention.



Jukka meets the Doctor

4 August

Just when I run out of time to report is when I'll have most to say. Right now I'm in that in-between moment. If I can get one last paper (two last drafts, one last paper, due in a few hours) done and one last class taught, then my work will be finished. Nothing to take with me except the research for my next novel. I keep putting off that last paper, for it looms. When I finish it the world changes.

Why does it loom so big? It's the final major boundary between my ordinary life and my temporary GUFF existence.

I'm an introvert. And I'm an extravert. People who test me using Myers-Briggs do not love me at all, for I either get no E/I score at all (for the two cancel each other out – this is my entirely unproven theory) or I appear as either I or E at a very high level and they can't make sense of it given my propensities to spend large times alone and also to enjoy being fannish. For the next five weeks (starting in two days and three hours) I will be my outgoing self, not the person who can spend a whole week not seeing anyone and not understanding that she's missing anything. I haven't done a stretch this long since I was a teenager. It's a long, long time since I was a teenager.

How I'm dealing with it is by being very organised. I've done Claire a GUFF spreadsheet and all kinds of problems have been troubleshooted. My problem is that I'm running out of things to troubleshoot.

Tomorrow I sort out Tim Tams for Irish fans (for Loncon was scoring all the Tim Tams and I could feel an aura of despair rising from Dublin... or it might be that Brian Nesbit mentioned it in an email). I didn't have space, but two parcels of books that I was supposed to carry didn't eventuate, and so now I do have space. I'm giving the parcels until tomorrow lunchtime, just to be safe (for I am a cautious tyke) and then the Eurocon fan auction will have its own Tim Tams. It's the closest I can do to reassuring Virginia that there is a Santa Claus.

Actually, it's not the closest. That's why no-one asks me about Santa any more. It's not because I'm Jewish, but because I'm a Medievalist and very literal. When someone says "He's not real?" I correct them, quite promptly, "He was quite real, but he's dead." If they're exceptionally lucky, I tell them the pickled children story. This is why people would rather gently remind me of the importance of Tim Tams to international fandom than ask me about Santa Claus. And this is the sort of answer people will get to perfectly innocent inquiries when I've not had enough quiet time. When the

extravert (who is popularly known as "Evil Gillian" in Canberra) takes over and the introvert whimpers in a corner somewhere.

This is the moment, too, when I lose things. My letterbox key disappeared the moment I missed the postie who had a last minute parcel from my mother. My mother was in a panic that I'd wander around fandom not wearing any clothes, so she's sending me two tops. She called them "very bright" which means, I suspect, she's also afraid of me getting lost. I'm more likely to get lost than to wander around wearing no clothes. It took me an hour today to find one of my three emergency letterbox keys, for instance (the others knew I was coming and went into hiding) and I have retrieved the notice from the delivery person and I shall collect the package tomorrow and make a tactical decision on the clothes. It's reassuring that mothers still worry about their children wandering around naked even when those children are in their fifties.

Later: I still can't find my letterbox key, but I've given up for the moment. My latest theory is that I was sleepwalking last night (when it was -6 and the only heater was the small one in my bedroom and I didn't wake up – not probable, but a fine theory otherwise) and hid it from myself. I also can't find my new pet cockroach. He's a tree roach, and he couldn't stand the cold and he rather likes the papers on my desk and he and I have come to a quiet agreement to not annoy each other. I shrieked a fair amount before we came to this agreement.

He's a very fine specimen: he's a very dark grey with white trim. I normally dislike cockroaches so for me to be accepting of him sitting under my paper, staying out of the cold, means that he's rather beautiful. Also, that I'm very nervous about this trip and haven't energy to spend being worried about random visitors from gum trees. (I get random visitors from the big gums outside my back door quite regularly. Once it was a squirming black mass of spitfires, which was horrid, but it's more likely to be giant spiders. Canberra refuses to be boring. I want to write it a school report that says 'Must try harder'.)

And now I must finish that paper and send it off and then slowly work through the small things, since all the big things will be complete. No more from me until I'm en route. You don't need to worry about the cockroach at that stage, for I will have transferred this document to my portable office.

Instead of using my proper computer, I'll be using my improper one, which is a Transformer and thus my first step to complete science fictionality for five weeks. I've already transferred my reading for the plane trip: fifteen books, none published more recently than 1715.

At least one of the books is seventeenth century speculative fiction. Friar Rush was not a nice probable-demon and got up to much mischief when he came into contact with clergy. I'm not sure I should be reading him on the plane, but I finished with my 1699 *Memoirs of a Secret Service Agent* yesterday. And now you know how I fit tons of research for my fiction into a life that's impossibly busy – I squiggle it into odd spaces, like the one yesterday when I was procrastinating and the one next Wednesday when I will be in transit for 27 hours. If you don't hear from me until I'm 10,000 miles away, then, you can blame Friar Rush.

Blogpost: 5th August, 2014. 3:51 pm.

I have a mildly radical new haircut (I was talked into it and I said "Just as long as it's easy to take care of") and I have received my course evaluation for Sunday and I'm happy with the world. My new approach to

learning worldbuilding worked rather well,
it seems and people want more of it.

7 August

Blogpost: 6th August, 2014. 8:55 am. (Note: all blogposts are in Australian time, mainly to confuse people. The amazing typos in my blogposts have mostly been cleaned up.)

They're drilling madly just outside my bedroom. Or just above my bedroom, on the outside wall. I'm getting out of here for a little! My students need me. I need coffee, but at this moment, not being dinned is more important. More important than coffee? Well, it's big noise and much vibration and I've firmly decided that today is not the day of the migraine. The builders can fix our building without me personally cheering them on. (I am indeed cheering them on, though, even though it feels as if the whole thing will fall down any minute. I want it done and my place to be wonderfully uncracked!)

Gillian's schedule:

6 August. Teach. Perishables and keys and printout of this and authority to collect mail to G and L. Catch plane for London.

7 Arrive London. Get Oystercard. Piccadilly Line to Russell Square. Check in at Connaught Hall, 35-45 Tavistock Square London. Quick unpack and etc. Sort out broadband access, get SIM. Rest, if possible. Check emails.

First Thursday meeting from 6 pm (the pub has food) – 14-18 Holborn (basement of Melton Mowbray) see map

Notes on schedule

I had three seats to myself for the longest leg of the flight. Nothing else was particularly remarkable about it, except its length. It was not the longest flight I've ever made, but it was too long by about 15 hours. I emerged to London with great relief and found myself an oyster card and hid myself to Bloomsbury and my accommodation and wondered why everything looked so very bright when I was internally grey. This turned out not to be my jetlag, but a recent rainstorm and some strange vagary of light. I may never trust jetlag again. After I was settled, I went for a long walk that brought me to the Melton Mowbray to meet with London fans. I appeared a lot more compos mentis than I was. In fact, I was scarcely upright for the jetlag finally hit when I was walking down the stairs in the Melton Mowbray in search of the meeting. Still, I met some lovely folks and there is a photo somewhere of an inordinate number of fan fund people all who overtook that group of very nice Londoners. The locals handled us well and were very charming.

My first First Thursday (yes, intend to get much mileage from bad jokes this report) was lovely, despite the fact that I was so very tired that it took me forty minutes to walk five minutes from the station to Connaught Hall afterwards. I'm even more tired now, but I hurt less and I need to get into the habit of reporting. I got through the last few hours due to help from so many people, all of them strangers. I checked myself out in the mirror just now in case all the help was because I was a delicate shade of puce. Not even the offer of a seat on the train was due to that, so it's just people being nice. Thinking back, the fact that I got home at all is because of the kind First Thursdayite who caught the same trains, just to be certain. Apparently I looked a bit spacey... but I'm well enough, considering that my visit to the Melton Mowbray to meet the First Thursday mob was the same day I actually touched down at Heathrow. No time for jetlag, this trip.

Speaking of First Thursday, I like British fandom very much. Just the right combination of high seriousness and low mockery. Also an extraordinary amount of kindness.

Six GUFF people were at the pub meeting, by the way, and I kindly explained to one of them that he was stalking me. (Add as later footnote: This became a recurring joke. Of course it did. There were so many conven-



The amazing Emma Andrews with a piece of her work for Game of Thrones.

tions and so many meetings of friends that this trip was all about seeing the cool folks over and over again.)

I need to apologise I was so very tired that I only got to talk to a few people. As I made my 40 minute walk a short time ago, I was both impressed that I'd made it and entirely saddened at my incapacity to do the First Thursday justice. I didn't get to talk to more than a half dozen people. I didn't even finish my pie. I shall sleep now and work harder tomorrow. Sleeep...

Gillian's schedule

8 St Pauls to Museum of London. Walk to Blackfriars Stn to pick up Dublin ticket. On way, check out St Paul's area for C17 novel (ie New St Pauls and its remaining stuff). After Blackfriars, clutching ticket, walk to and along Cheapside with sidetrip to Old Jenry. Catch train home from Monument

9 Globe, Lear 2 pm, Borough Market, Golden Hind – The Victorias 10 – be wary of cycle closures, National Gallery (Leicester Square), National Portrait Gallery,

11 meet Elizabeth Chadwick midday, V&A

12 CmcK British Museum – 10 am

13 Greenwich (see notes and map), 4.45-5 Cathy Butler, find book benches, pub dinner

14 Check out of Connaught Hall 8 am. Tube then DLR to ExCeL/Aloft, unpack (again) and sort what goes where from my luggage. Register. Collect books from everywhere and deliver them to dealers' room, any remaining auction stuff to collection spot at ops. Check in with Green Room. Check in with Shana (or she will get stuff to me – to be decided)

Opening ceremony Rehearsal 10 am

Opening ceremony midday.

7 pm YA book panel

Notes: This is the simplified version of my itinerary. I don't want to remember the things I didn't quite get to do. My entries below explain why things had to be modified. This 'why' is the main reason I came early, and I'm very relieved I did.



The Dotbraki jewellery workshop at Shamrokon

Friday 8 August

I'm reporting in at an unholy hour on Saturday morning. I keep forgetting that my body clock adjusts well to some aspects of the UK but that it likes early mornings. My brain likes late nights. By the time they talk to each other, I get very tired. I've had seven hours sleep (almost) which is more than I got before I left, though, so I will deal. Not only will I deal, but everyone will deal with me for we really have no choice. And this is why I am here a week early. Not for the people I will meet and the things I shall do, but because I need to adjust a bit more before Loncon.

Yesterday evening Julie Hoffman and I had dinner and caught up on matters fannish and other. Yesterday during the day I navigated the City using seventeenth century maps and taught myself a lot about space and time and how writers can put places together and how one actual place operated over time (from the medieval to the modern, basically). My camera was working, so I have some material for my Conflux presentation and for my class next month and for my database. My camera has decided to be unpredictable, which is a pain, but better than it breaking down entirely. I've decided that if it lasts out the trip I'll be happy (I won't be – I like that camera, but at least I'll have it for a bit longer and will have its fabbo museum function for the trip).

Speaking of museums, yesterday I checked out the museum of London. I've been there before, but wasn't interested in the seventeenth century then. I'm looking at where we get our historical narratives from and how we develop sfnal narratives in relation to them. Also I'm researching a novel. I could have just holed up in a café for the day, for I was jetlagged, brain dead and full of aches and pains, but I didn't want to waste time in London. So most of yesterday was not fannish, it was spent doing things that I had on my ever-increasing list of want-to-do and today my body is thanking me. Slow movement and much of it is helping me adjust. I feel as if I've been here days in terms of time adjustment, when, really, I've been here less than 48 hours.

Today is my day with the Victorias, who are NZ artists and writers and fans. Mary has a fantasy trilogy to her name and Frank and Mary both have much work on films. We're visiting Southwark and the Globe and possibly picnicking by the Thames. I guess this means getting dressed and actually going.

London's warm and muggy and my clothes are all wrong. They'll come into their own when I get into airconditioned buildings, I hope, or maybe when I reach Finland. Or I'll always look a bit slack and under-dressed.

If I get to the Refectory (Connaught Hall has a Refectory, where I breakfast) early I can check my email before breakfast. This is not such a useful thing, to be honest, for I don't need to leave until 9.30, but if my body won't let me sleep then checking email is always handy. Also, I probably should start learning my lines for the Opening Ceremony. I will be much more useful if I know my lines. I keep thinking that if I learn them then I'll have to accept that the event is real and then I'll get nervous, but nerves are inevitable and learning lines is not, so I shall just bite the bullet.

PS People gave me seats on trains yesterday. This is how I know I'm in London. It makes me feel like a person of dignity. I'm not a person of dignity, but it's nice to feel like one from time to time.

PPS I got my phone sorted and spent my first hour at the Museum of London sitting down with a big cup of tea and messaging UK fan friends. They cannot escape me! This is how I got tea with Julie Hoffman and worked out how to meet Mary Victoria this morning. I feel terribly connected and modern. Also, less lost. You do not want to (or maybe you do, but I shan't tell you) know just how long it took me to get my jetlagged self to and from places before my phone could find me on a map. Of course, the moment

I had this new ability, I turned to seventeenth century maps to guide me around the City. Some people just never learn.

I didn't get lost with the seventeenth century maps, but I discovered some significant changes in streets and that they happened quite recently. Also that it's possible to cover quite a distance if one sits down when life gets too much and if one allows far more time than one does on a normal, jetlag free day. And now I need coffee. I can't attain coffee without getting dressed. I'm in a coupon-redemption quest fantasy.

Blogpost: 8th August, 2014. 6:23 pm.

I had a good journey, but am really glad I came a few days early and that I've said 'I can't' to about half the things people wanted me to do in these few days. The long trip and the heavy baggage have set me back to where I was a few months ago, movement-wise. I'm not on pain relievers today, though, which is a rather big something. It means that all I need is a couple of days of taking care. I can't stay in bed (alas) because I have to adjust to the time differences, but I can do three hours activity over about ten hours, with many breaks to sit and admire the flowers. I shall be admiring the flowers in the vicinity of St Pauls and Cheapside and will do some work for my Medieval London course.

Bottom line (for those who worry) all is better than it could have been. Although right now, twenty four hours of sleep would be lovely, I shall take my day slowly, do the important stuff and not sweat the rest.

Yesterday my camera decided it would never work again. The power of SF fandom is such that someone fixed it (the battery was playing up - I took the battery out for an hour and now it's fine). This means that there was no jam today, but there will be jam tomorrow.

And this post was brought to you by both the University of London and the ANU, for technical reasons. I log into the University of London secure system (which is a big plus - I can eat brekkie in the basement refectory, check my email then do stuff) and then access most other things through my own university. It's all a bit odd.

If I sit here much longer, I shall sleep, and what I need to do is find a phone shop. There were none visible yesterday. None. I walked many miles (well, 2, but I hurt) and there was no shop. For anyone Londonish who needs me, I'm at Connaught Hall. I'm mostly not, though, so phones are important.

Saturday 9 August

It's Sunday morning and I had forgotten how hard it is to sleep past the early morning in English summer. Such a gentle light, and so inexorable. I can sleep all day in Australia, but I wake up at impossible hours in England. This gives me time to write before breakfast, but my body says "Sleep" and my body says "Eat!" and my mind wonders why everything else recharges but my computer consistently fails to. I'm OK for a couple more days (just as long as I don't use it for more than a half hour here and an hour there): if I can last til Loncon maybe I can borrow an adaptor and recharge. And then do the same at Fantasycon. Not quite my usual portaoffice, though, when I can't just whip out my machine and read for an hour.¹¹



The Finns with the help of Johann Anglemark) encouraging people to drink at Shamrokon

Yesterday was a happy confluence of fannishness and friends. The Victorias and I went to the Globe. Mary and I saw *King Lear*, but we all went to the exhibit there and Frank told me about designing Hobbit swords and working for Peter Jackson. Mary and I talked about the source of the income for the bishops of Winchester as we walked through Southwark and admired the cathedral, and Faith (their daughter) totally fell in love with the Golden Hind. We all had lunch at the Borough market (and for anyone tempted to follow this journey on a map, don't for I'm reciting events entirely out of order). I ate a particularly fine beef and stilton pie for lunch, which entirely made up for the rather ordinary pie at the Melton Mowbray at First Thursday. I was so jetlagged that I only managed a corner of the rather ordinary pie, but I managed the whole of the particularly fine pie. I wasn't hungry all afternoon, but I ate the whole pie.

I still hurt when I walk – the flight encouraged inflammatory issues and the medicine brings down the inflammation but doesn't remind the muscles to behave as muscles ought – but I'm otherwise doing rather well. I'd do better if I could whip out my computer at all times and read or write or email, but it won't hurt me to not

¹¹ I sorted the problem. My computer has been wonderfully kind most of the trip, and just occasionally a bit temperamental on busses.

work ten hours a day, just for a change. It will annoy me, but it won't hurt me.

Today is not fannish at all. It was supposed to be, but I'm not quite up to sorting picnic lunches and sitting on the ground for a few hours (Caroline Mullan suggested an outdoor concert). In two days' time this would probably have been possible, but if I'd done it today then there'd be nothing else in the day at all except pain, and quite possibly I'd be paying for it tomorrow, too. My other fannish activity today was seeing Shana, but she is as busy now as I was last week, so we're leaving it til September. My physically impossible day, therefore, has become controllable but I am missing people I want to see and events I want to be part of. I came to London a few days early so that I'd be well enough to be the GUFF person at Loncon, though, so it's very important I pace myself.

I won't give you a report on the rest of the day, then, for it's not SFnal. What it will be is another stage on me sorting out how to advise writers on history (this is a forever-task, but I'm achieving breakthroughs at the moment because I've finding clever ways around some aspects) and sorting out some of the visuals for my next novel. This will take me to various museums, which means I (hopefully) will avoid the cycle race that is plaguing most of central London's streets (which is why I'm not going to the Tower and Tower Hamlets, which is what I wanted to do). And that's it. Breakfast and museums and sitting and cups of tea. Along with the cups of tea, I might start learning my lines for the opening ceremony. For my first trick, I shall learn how to say "ass" without looking amused. The trouble is that whenever I read the script, I think of my students and their faces and they are not tolerant of even mild bad language, and so I smile. And I'm saying 'ass' in a moment that doesn't not permit anything less than grump.

Random notes, translated from scribble:

1. Written from totally illegible notes taken on a 737 800. My netbook was out of reach, so I used paper and pen. My writing is challenging at the best of times, and so is my brain. I was fascinated by the thought that the notebook would shrink as I wrote up its content and that I would arrive back home with no paper. This appeals to me still, but I don't know why I spent ten minutes explaining it (or why I'm spending another two minutes now).
2. The things that one writes notes on at airports are not that interesting. I was very concerned with getting a window seat so that I could sleep, for instance. I did, and I had two pillows and an extra seat or two for my legs and the long leg was the best long leg I've ever endured, but did I have to write two pages of notes explaining my delight in a window seat to myself, especially when I booked that window seat all on my own, just a month or so ago? I put it down to nerves. I was nervous. Am nervous. Will be nervous until this is all safely over. Fans analyse everything in excruciating detail, it's who we are. Being the subject of such analysis rather than the person-who-analyses is a little nerve wracking. Also, I still think that Shay or Alison should have won. Three different people have told me the narrowness of the result, but I think they're seeing it in majority terms, not in preferential vote terms. How one reads numbers is different from Canberra. Me, I see exactly where a few votes would have changed the result, but in overall terms I was the clear winner. I just didn't achieve over 50% until we were down to two candidates, which means that every single voter's preferences counted,

which is very satisfying, for that's what preferential voting is all about.

3. About to land at Heathrow. Films seen: *Amazing Spider Man 2* (sorry fans, but it wasn't my favourite Spiderman film), *Desolation of Smang* (nothing to do with *The Hobbit* and accepting that, a fun film – much better than its predecessor), *Transcendence* (surprisingly unoriginal, but good for all that), *Divergent* (*Hunger Games* it isn't). I saw a bit of *I, Frankenstein* but got out of it rather quickly. And I saw three episodes of *Scandal* and one of *Downton Abbey* – I hope both of these will be available for my return journey, so that I can finish what I began.
4. None of my flight-neighbours were interested in SF. One of them was 50% of the Zimbabwean Jewish under tens, though – and I thought I belonged to a minority! His mother and I talked genealogy for a bit. I used to do volunteer work with one of her distant cousins. Sally (the cousin, who died some time ago) was one of my grandmother's friends. This woman is only just now discovering her Jewishness, and we really didn't have a lot in common. She was very nice, and we live in different universes. The staff on the plane gave me much extra cake, which I handed on to the young Jewish remnant.
5. The Dubai airport gave me the ankle etc issues that I'm dealing with in London. I had to get from one end of it to another. I had plenty of time, so it didn't matter when I got lost and when the airport staff couldn't find my flight. From one gate lounge to another, however, took me several escalators and moving walkways, a train, a lift and about 3 km of walking.

Blogpost: 11th August, 2014. 6:03 pm.

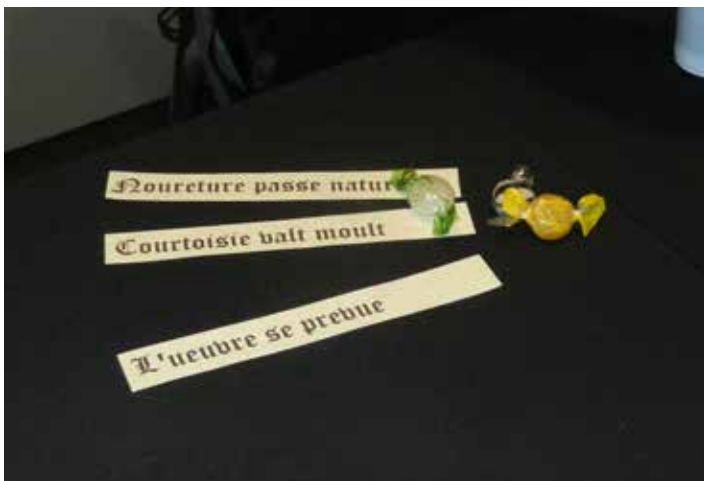
Whenever I open my LJ to blog, I want to curl up and sleep. It's cause and effect.

[lots cut - because I've already said it and you don't really want this stuff twice!]

I'm getting loads of handy advice from good-looking male strangers about ten years my senior. It's as if they're hanging round streets, watching for me. I also had a thoroughly cheerful conversation with a young chef called Chris yesterday. Does this mean I've lost my school principal air? One of my precious possessions, gone, gone, faded into the London smog...

I want to sleep. I always want to sleep at the moment; it's the side effect of the inflammation and will pass. Instead, I shall check some computer stuff out (since Kensington Gardens are tempting, but one step too far) and sort out which route for Thursday has the fewest impossible changes.

I'm not reading blogs while I'm away, BTW. I just don't have enough online time in a day. I miss you all, though.



My sweets and bookmarks went feral at Shamrokon thanks to Ian Watson. A picture of them taken in the wild.

11 August

Things I didn't do today: about 50% of what I'd planned. No Kensington Gardens and no Camden, in other words. This is because there was Weather, last night and most of today and last night it coincided with general aches and pains, so I decided not to push things this morning. After all, I came here a few days early precisely to not push and to be able to get past any aches before Loncon. The biggest and best things of the day were still accomplished I spent the whole afternoon (and am about to have dinner) with Elizabeth Chadwick. We caught up, swapped stories, and went through various parts of the V&A together. She now knows all my latest theories and we both have many photographs for research. We didn't get to one exhibit, but I suspect it's one we've both seen before. And all is good. She's someone whose company is golden and it was a wonderful afternoon. Not fannish, but some of the pictures I took will be pressed into fannish use. And my cautiousness with the day has paid dividends, for the aches are abating and my brain is gearing up.

I have lines to learn for the Opening Ceremony tonight (for I still keep putting them off), and need to check my schedules for Loncon. Tomorrow morning is the excitement of washing clothes and also checking revision notes for a paper. I'll be back in the land of everyone else around 11 am tomorrow, however, and then I won't leave it for quite a bit.

I read some books when I had my time out this morning and the phrase that sticks from them is "Turneps, ho! Four bunches a penny." It's very good to know how much turnips cost in the late seventeenth century. Not so good to know a London street cry when one is wandering the streets of London. I kept expecting to hear it and I had a penny all ready, too, and couldn't spend it. I've put my one new penny (all bright and shiny) to the side and will give it to the first person who reads this and wants to buy their four bunches of turnips. You will have to sort the time travel (and possibly space travel) aspect of it all on your own. "Turneps, ho!"

Blogpost: 11th August, 2014. 6:57 pm. [PS How to avoid me at Shamrokon](#)

Avoiding me at Shamrokon is a breeze. All you have to do is eschew fan funds events (no auction! even though there are the coolest things being auctioned and you will weep bitter tears for missing them!!) and

you will have to miss two panels. Just two. A doddle.

The two panels are (and yes, I'm still getting the best panels - yay for awesome programming!):

Friday, August 22 3pm

European Focus: Missing Medieval Women

K. A. Laity, Susan Bartholomew, Gillian Polack

Sunday, August 24 10am

Who Owns A Myth?

Tasha Cady, Catherine Sharp, Gunnar Roxen, Gillian Polack

Blogpost: 12th August, 2014. 6:22 pm.

This is what I look like when I do laundry in London. The laundry room is in the basement of Connaught Hall (£2 for a small load, then some more for the dryer) and so is the best wi-fi signal, so I'm sitting on a very comfortable couch in the nearest common room to the laundry and I'm doing various bits and pieces while waiting. I should have put my laundry off for one more day, but I have more time this morning in any case. What I want is to be out and about and doing things, but this trip is all about fandom and this week has to be gentle so that, in two days' time, I can push myself as far as I need to push.

In other news, London is warm. Not hot. Spring weather, but with an occasional glimpse of real summer. And I met Italian and French students at breakfast. Staying in uni halls is very cool (despite the shared



SFnal graffiti on Vienna's waterfront

and basic bathroom). I get my quiet time, but I also get interesting conversations.

Last night's reading included a whole book of bad political satire about the Rump (seventeenth century English politics), some Robin Hood ballads (including one where Robin got annoyed and committed mass murder) and... I forget the rest. I'm halfway through the books I need to have read by Loncon. The pressure is now on for these books because the Aurealis books have begun to arrive. The Aurealis books are so far all in platforms that my eyes dislike, so I'm saving them til my return. It was much easier on the vision in the old days, when I got pdfs for the electronic and hard copy for the most part. Also, epub is a bit of a nuisance for a very fast reader. My clever crystal ball says that there will be much reading in my future, but not quite yet. This means my book for the evening is a study on the current state of London (not a new study!) and maybe another book or two. The more I read tonight the easier things will be when the Aurealis and I commune closely.

Last night's dinner, for those who want to know, was duck with sour cherry sauce and vegies and yes, I had chocolate cake and a big Greek coffee. Yesterday was more than somewhat foodie all round and this morning I made amends by breakfasting on yoghurt and fruit.

And now I must check my washing!

It's Tuesday morning and my laundry is underway. I successfully negotiated the washing machine and my clothes are now in the dryer. I can only give them an hour there, for I'm meeting someone at 11 am, but an hour should suffice. £2 worth of washing and £1 worth of drying and I found the £ key on my keyboard earlier and typing



Vienna's clearly a Dr Who city

that was purely an excuse to show this off. I really ought to find a Euro key and turn cosmopolitan, but I'm not cosmopolitan. Also, I need to buy another pair of summer slacks. Today I'm wearing leggings due to my deficit of such things. The pair I have is fine for Australia when it's 40, but not really respectable enough for elsewhere. So I wear leggings and embarrass my friends. Some days I wear my single pair of smart slacks (they were smart once, but I fear they are closer to the end of their life than I realised when I packed) and all this is a great sorrow to those easily embarrassed, but only actually worries me for a short time a day. I shall be at the disreputable end of GUFF (GUFFish raffishness) for most of the trip. Unless I find a shop, of course, then I shall upgrade my wardrobe. By 'a shop' I mean one that I can enter without feeling uncomfortable. Mostly I buy clothes at factory outlets, for the people are less judgemental there. Once (in the days when I was incomer) I wanted to buy a coat and dress in my favourite brand. I had \$600 saved up for each, for I wanted just one item of lasting smartness to turn my wardrobe round. I was ignored for 25 minutes – the staff talked with each other to avoid looking me in the eye. So I learned that it's better to be scraggily uncouth than to be embarrassed by sales folk and so I buy from catalogues and get stuff posted, or I buy from factory outlets. And this works for tops, but not for slacks. And so I am wearing leggings (home made by my friend Marilla) throughout London.

I have forty minutes before my clothing is ready, then I shall put everything away and saunter out towards the British Museum, where I shall spend the day with a friend. I am saying this to myself over and over, for the couch in this common room is remarkably comfy and my body tells me it's Sunday morning (my brain tells my body how stupid it is to think this and my body just says 'Sunday, sleep!') and sleep is not what I need. And now I cease to make sense. Must stay awake... must stay awake... must stay awake... only thirty seven minutes

Later: I have seen much Sutton Hoo, run into Jenny and Russell Blackford (who I've never seen in their home town), lunched on marmite and cheese sandwich, met Deep Thought (one of my favourite University of London buildings and one which I had completely forgotten), sat on a Day of the Triffids book bench and taken pictures of a 1901 taxi driver shelter hut. I also ventured a bookshop and found books by people I know and by people I don't. I was after books for my research and ended up with three travel narratives, only one of which was useful but all of which are fun. My reading tonight will be life of a Protestant galley slave. It fills a gap in my history – I now know what happened to the people who didn't flee or convert subsequent to the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. They became slaves. It's not going to be a cheerful evening, for reading accounts of slavery doesn't show humankind in its best light, but it will be educational.

My feet and legs are still hurting, but the rest of me is perfectly fine. Since there won't be much opportunity for walking at Loncon I am not as worried as I should be by the soreness of my feet. I do find it annoying that many weeks of work on making myself capable of walking for three miles at a stretch should be all laid to waste by a simple airflight of a bare few miles, but these are the breaks. And it does mean I get to see Bloomsbury very gently and closely (for walking cannot happen at any faster speed). The issue of getting my baggage to Loncon loomed large, but Julie Hoffman is kindly taking the Loncon fan fund donations for me, which saves me carrying them to the ExCeL and also means I don't have to shepherd them from the Aloft to Ops. This means, in turn, that I get to the Aloft, check in, unpack, register for Loncon then hie me as quickly as possible to the rehearsal for the opening ceremony. That's one whole less process in my morning, which is a vast vast relief. Less pain and less process – can't get better than that! I'll in-

roduce myself to ops after the opening ceremony, I think, for that will be when I have time. I'll also sign up for the Green Room then and get my books to Ticonderoga and sort out when they want me and check in with Katrin Kania in the Dealers' Room.

That first day of Loncon is when all my selves (except my teaching self) will appear at once. I've never been all the Gillians on the same day before and I am a bit nervous. Katrin represents the Medieval me, for she is my co-writer for the Beast. She has a stall in the dealers' room. The rest is either self-evident or will become self-evident. Fandom is wonderful in allowing complex people to be all of themselves. The question is whether one can be all these things in the one convention without imploding. Watch this space, for if I implode I promise to tell you all about it. If I do implode, at least there will be chocolate.

Shana Worthen took delivery of much chocolate on my behalf and she's bringing both the chocolate and my novel to Loncon for me. I need to sort out with her how to get these things. I haven't even thought that far ahead, which is very unlike me. I'm simplifying the logistics I can simplify thanks to the kindness of friends (for instance, Julie and the auction package) and I'm down to throwing my hands up in the air for the rest of it.

I ought to be thinking "What do I do about chocolate?" – instead, I'm thinking "Will I know someone with a TV in their room for Shamrokon?"

Why is this such a burning issue? I'm very glad you asked. The bottom line is that Doctor Who is on when I'm in Dublin, and I would be terribly upset to have to miss it. I may want a female doctor (or Paterson Joseph as the Doctor – that would do nicely, too) but I want to see how Capaldi does. I have very low expectations for the script, since Moffat doesn't seem to see Doctor Who in anything like the way I do: it's not a world I want to play in anymore, but I want to keep watching.

Ideally, I want to see it in a room filled with other fans, and to feed them toffees and to enjoy the whole thing. I mean, I will be at Eurocon and there will be Doctor Who – so not only do I not want to miss it, but I don't want to see it alone. And all this is in another country and another convention and I still haven't finished memorising my script for the Loncon opening ceremony and all I can think about is the Doctor Who theme. It's a proud kind of sadness, and all my own.

I just realised – have mobile can move. I shall take my mobile and seek

dinner. Julie will be able to find me. I am so not used to such modern conveniences!



There are no kangaroos in Austria - nor in Australia, if roos look like this

13 August

'Twas the night before Loncon... the day leading up to it having been mixed.

This evening was great. I met up with Cathy Butler and we talked and she edited something of mine (for she is very cool) and we ate and I am happy. I enjoyed the earlier day, too, despite the efforts of my feet to spoil it. I am just one book bench short of my ultimate aim (ah, woe!) for it hurt too much to go those last few steps and so I am agonising over taking the rational route to Loncon (which involves about a half mile walking-with-suitcase or of taking a convoluted step-free route that entails me actually knowing when to get off and on various forms of transport but which has much less dragging of suitcase. Since the convoluted route also entails me leaving at 8 am and skipping breakfast (I get breakfast and emails with the more onerous and faster route, if I'm clever) I think I shall go to bed early, instruct my pains to absent themselves from my life, and deal with steps and walking. I do not want to wake up at 7 and deal with hectic Loncon with no breakfast! Normally I wouldn't fret about missing breakfast for there's always lunch, but given my first day's schedule, lunch is not a given and even dinner might be pushing it. The formal programme has me down on just one item, but the formal programme is sad and innocent and will soon learn better.

I have a rehearsal for the opening ceremony at 10 am and the ceremony itself at midday. I have a panel at 7 pm and a thousand and one things to sort between now and then. I'd hoped to sort some things today but the GUFF accommodation was for five nights and I had to make a choice between sorting things early and finding alternate routes to Dublin. I chose another night in Bloomsbury, for one cannot have too many nights in Bloomsbury. In fact, I'm at the stage where I would rather like to stay here another month and walk to the BL and do research and walk to the BM and ogle statues and discover all the cute corner shops and... I've hardly made a dint in Bloomsbury and already I'm leaving.

Today's work was not happy, even though the day was lovely and Greenwich is delightful. I eventually gave up trying to work and switched on my tourist brain, for it was the only way I was going to get through. The museums at Greenwich were easy on the brain, which meant that they were very lovely to look at (and there were definitely some things worth seeing) but they weren't a whole day's worth of work. If I had known that, I would have gone to the Tate Britain, which was high on my list but not so easy to get to. In fact, I nearly went to London Docklands to make up, but I am all museumed out and besides the lack of material in the museum threw me a problem for my research (how on earth do other writers manage when faced with this as their main research option?) and I dealt with it and that meant all future museums in London would have been for fun only and one cannot have fun when one's feet and legs are not working in the way that mine are not working. Whenever they cease to work, London gets a thunderstorm or a semi-tropical variety, so there is no mystery to my feet not wanting to work. The mystery is why London has Sydney weather.

Anyhow, my weather sense can stop showing off now. Every time I've needed and wanted cover from the rain I've had it, but I'm very tired of my feet! London is currently anti-my-podes. And yes, I've been waiting to make that joke all week.

I've only been partly fannish so far this trip, but as of this moment I am in full fan mode. This means getting to Euston Station tomorrow. I wonder if Euston has more or less stairs than Russell Square? Stairs are an issue – I shall go investigate. When I write my diary next time it will be fan-Gillian writing. I hope this means more bad jokes.

14 August Loncon day 1

I didn't get much sleep last night, because it was student party night. The undergrads were very merry and I lay in bed thinking "Why do they not have a curfew?" And now here I am, awake an hour too early because I'm quite worried about hefting that suitcase. I even had nightmares about it! I can leave for Loncon earlier than I had intended, but I can't leave now (which is an hour after dawn) because the hotel is very unlikely to have a room ready before 8 am. So I'm updating here, checking my email, going back to bed for a micronap and then puddling my way along. The whole world is nervous and echoing this morning – obviously it wasn't just the laughter of undergraduates that left me unable to sleep.

It's a bit after 3 pm and I so need a breather. I have some water and some tea in front of me and I'm sitting at a table in the Boulevard pretending that I was not just overwhelmed. I wanted to attend Paul Cornell's interview of two rather famous writers with interests similar to my own. So did about 1000 other people. The sheer numbers were so much in an enclosed space (the corridor leading to the room) that I gave up on that and gave up on finding Emma England (I'm carrying around her tiara) and found some good strong tea and sat myself down. It's about time I reported in.

I arrived later than expected despite having left so early this morning and would have made it inside in time for the rehearsal of the opening ceremony except that the queue to register was two stories long. By the time I was processed (and everyone moved very quickly – it's just an enormous convention) I was well and truly late. The ExCeL staff wouldn't let me into the auditorium. I asked one of the Con chairs and she pulled rank and got me in.

At that point all those involved in the Opening talked through everything. We didn't actually rehearse, which meant I tangled some things, for I am a creature of context, but Ian Sorensen did a fine job at reflecting who we are as fans in the stuff leading to the actual ceremony and so it felt very much like being at home, playing with the things I like to play with. My favourite moment was when I got to dress as Darth Vader and attack a Jedi knight with a light sabre (actually a giant bubble blower and we turned it unexpectedly into Monty Python. I also took some pictures on stage as part of my pretending-to-be-a-fan-while-actually-being-a-fan.

I'm not making sense, am I? How the opening ceremony unrolled was that while the audience slowly settled in the auditorium, four of us went on stage and played with some carefully prepared

materials and re-enacted our very own scenes from various iconic TV programmes. We had a lot of fun and there was an almost audible sigh from the audience when we (fans) filed off stage and were replaced by the actual ceremony. The ceremony was low key and full of bad jokes, and I wore a pointy hat and smiled at apposite places.

Since the ceremony, I have been inundated with friends. Mostly they've been Australian. I was joking with Ian Nichols that it was like attending an Australian convention and lo, Janeen Webb appeared. Ian and Janeen have gone to a panel, but I'm hanging out here a bit longer. I can play spot-the-person-who-knows-me along with the best of them, from where I'm sitting in the Boulevard area, which is a giant open space lined with eateries and swarming with SF fans.

Most of the fan fund auction material is now with ops. I have some (and owe Kyla Ward for a packet of Tim Tams) but the worst of the first set of handling is done.

I feel as if I've run a thousand messages, but, really, I've only run a hundred. I have more messages to run, though, when energy permits.

And I'm distracted from my fannish thoughts by fannish voices. Because we have much storm outside, this giant space echoes and voices carry. I might be seeing a thousand and one Australian friends, but I hear American voices. The British voices are quiet and pleasant but I have to listen very carefully to hear them above the din, which the American voices carry and the Aussie faces appear all over. I could have sworn I saw Dave Lockett, and then Ian Nichols confirmed "Yes, he's here."¹²

And now thoughts have run out from me entirely. I might go sort my luggage while I have a quiet moment. Quiet moments are going to fade soon, for I can't refuse to check my programme forever. I shouldn't.

Fan moment: sitting around a table in the fan village, eating clotted cream with home-made jam with the fans from the Ancient Arts stall. The chaser was quite obviously going to be dark, dark Belgian chocolate, so I whipped some out of my bag as if we had always intended it.

Gillian's schedule

15 Loncon 11 am Food in SF/F, lunch with Shana

16 Loncon Academic paper 12 pm

Free trips to Foreign parts 8 pm – early dinner

Fan funds casino 10 pm

17 Loncon Fan funds auction 12 pm (gather stuff for it from 1 am) – possibly late lunch (or very early one)

Hugo rehearsal 1.30 -3 (have said I won't be there til after 2, possibly 2.30)

6 pm Hugo reception then Hugos and related activities until midnight

18 Loncon Time travel narratives 11 am

Notes: The food panel was a lot of fun. I didn't actually poison anyone, either, with my strange Aussie cooking ingredients.

¹² It turned out that there were enough of the Aussie mob at Loncon to form a complete Australian convention of the regular Australian size. It wasn't my imagination that I kept seeing Australians – we were the fourth largest national contingent at the convention.



According to the locals, this is an ordinary train journey (looking out the window between Vienna and Zagreb)

My academic paper created a little stir, just enough so that I was approached about it by a number of interesting people over the rest of the convention. I wish there had been longer for questions and discussion, however, for I think the three papers fitted together in very interesting ways and we had no time to explore this.

Free trips to foreign parts was a group of us talking about what we did, how we did it and why we did it. I wanted to wear a t-shirt saying "I don't mean to be controversial, honest" for I do seem to see life a bit differently to many other people. I thought these differences would be most apparent at the academic panel, but they were really rather evident on the fan fund one. It's a nice bunch of people, the fan fund bods, and the others handled my strange nature with charm and courtesy and didn't even stir me about it afterwards. It's a very cool group to be part of.

I ought to say something useful about the panel, but the biggest thing I got out of it is that no two fan fund travel experiences or election experiences are the same. At one stage I wanted to explain preferential voting to everyone, and I nearly whipped out my trusty whiteboard marker (the purple one, which later found its permanent home in Finland, with Sari) but there was no need. I like explaining preferential voting. Canberra becomes a part of one's soul...

The Hugo rehearsal was well-done, which showed on the night. We were each talked through what we needed to know, one by one, and got to walk the stage and lose our biggest fears. There was time to ask questions and time to make bad jokes and I don't think I've ever seen as cleverly managed rehearsal for a big event. Not even I tripped up on the night, which says something, for I am the idiot who lost a shoe on the way to an Auralis presentation earlier in the year.

The Hugo reception is discussed enough in its place, although the surge of VIPs heading towards the Doctor Who mob as our group (Jukka Halme, me, Nige Furlong) emerged from chatting with them had to be seen to be believed. So many fans among the Hugo nominees and accepters and presenters and plus ones! Of course I was one of them, but I beat the rush. Ms Kowal beat those of us who beat the rush. And the actors remained professional and courteous and charming throughout it all, from which I plan to take many lessons, none of which I will ever need.

I didn't notice any insufficiency of the alcohol at the post-party, for I gave one ticket and half a drink away. I just didn't feel like more alcohol at that point. I made one and a half people that much happier, I suspect. What I did do was discover really yummy petit fours and decided they would do in lieu of dinner (since the pre-Hugo nibbles had been in lieu of lunch). Other days I ate more sensibly, but my schedule was not good for proper meals on that day.

I want to see reports on the time travel panel, for I don't know how much of a fool I made of myself. Let us just say that I was not passive on that panel. The other panellists were very nice, but appeared a little surprised by me. My historianness showed and my historianness is partly at the very theoretical end of things, which all my historian friends understand but which science-based bods are sometimes not aware of. I can talk (and will talk) about Medieval toilets, but they're the research of others. This confuses people and it gave that panel certain moments.



Even more ordinary

Green Room:

Before I won the GUFF race, I'd planned to spend a few hours each day helping out in the Green Room, partly because I wanted to help out at the con, partly because I wanted to understand how Green Rooms operate, and partly because it meant I got to spend time with friends. In the end, I could only do one shift of three hours but it was a wonderful shift of three hours.

Highlights included seeing Kari and Sue Edwards in action. I learned a lot about creating a comfortable and welcoming atmosphere while running a tight ship. I also learned just how much troubleshooting is done in the Green Room. Many, many potential programme crises were averted during those three hours, through redirecting people or finding headache tablets or simply providing stressed programmed participant with a quiet space. It was the natural balance of the work Liz Batty and James Bacon and Emma England and everyone else did on programming before the con (in this I was also a very junior volunteer and in this GUFF also ran unintentional interference. It's not impossible to be a volunteer and a fan fund delegate, but it's not easy, either).

I had a my-gaming-friends-will-kill-me moment when Steve Jackson simply sat himself beside me and chatted as if we'd known each other forever. We'd met once, at another con, but I was in a crowd and we met for precisely three seconds, and somehow he remembered.¹³

I cannot measure how many times I got to tell favourite authors how much I love their work. I don't know if it was appropriate to do this, but when Jon Courtenay Grimwood or Frances Hardinge is there, standing over you, a bit worried about their panel, it just slips out. In other words, the Green Room was an honour and a joy and I wish I could have had more time helping out there.

It's now Monday morning and I'm in the Green Room (for myself, not as volunteer), seeking quiet time. People keep coming up to me and we chat and it's wonderful and quiet time is a mystical place that needs a lengthy quest.

I have so many things to report. Being the GUFF delegate gives me some amazing permissions. I can't be shy, for example, when there are two Doctors at the Hugo reception and I am the Official Fan Delegate there. I am a Fan and they are Doctors, therefore a meeting had to ensue. I was encouraged in this loss of reticence by

¹³ At Liburnicon it was my comics-fans-friends-will-kill me, for I spent a bunch of time with Ian Gibson.

Saturday, just before my academic paper

Last night I sat upon the Iron Throne and just now I got a hug from John Clute. These things are not connected, but they ought to be. I ought to be able to report here, thoughts-streaming, as the cool things happen, too.



My first name in Godelic, by Ema

Jukka (Jukka Halme, Finnish fan extraordinaire and my plus one for all the Hugo events). Yes, I have photos of Davison and Tennant (let me show you them, one with me and one with Jukka) - yes, I got hugs, and yes I chatted. Everyone should be a fan delegate, just so that they can be hugged by a Doctor.

I was restrained, you will be pleased to know, and I didn't tell them my three doctors joke. Instead, it was in the Pigeon Post, as a footnote. For I am not only doing atypically bold things while I'm here, but I'm also being very much myself (for it was me that everyone sent) and getting footnotes into the con broadsheet, for the world always needs more footnotes. Footnotes improve so many things.

So... what have I done in the last three days? So much. So very much.

Early on I discovered that one of the reasons people hang out with folks they know is because we have the same habits. I was eating with my friends from Australia and laughing with my friends from Australia and thinking "I'm in London - this needs to be trouble-shot." So I worked out that my normal habits were the same as my friends, because we are friends of course, and I didn't stop spending time with them (because we're friends, of course) but after the meal or coffee we had because we happened to run into each other, I wandered to new zones and tried new activities and have met so very many wonderful people as a result. I've missed most of the programming, also as a result, but however awesome the programme is (and it really is amazing) it's not what I'm here for. I'm here as a fan to meet other fans.

Last night (for example) the Finns got me drunk and the Poles failed to (but gave me a mobile phone cover to make up). I discovered that the new generation of Polish fans rock bigtime. They're English-speaking, internationalist, charming - and they don't make the division I sometimes encounter between Polish and Jewish. They were happy to accept my Polish ancestry and I was happy to be proud of it in their company.

The Finns and Croats have won my heart. My sort of fan. Antti (from Finnish online fandom) was entirely right about Finns and Aussies sharing a sense of humour. I told Tero Ykspetäjää and the others at the Finnish party last night (while they persuaded me into yet another drink) my theory that my visit to Finland was actually going to be an extended pub tour. They entirely agreed.

Fan moments

The Finnish fans were determined to get me drunk at Loncon. They didn't succeed until the second last night, so I determined I would not drink on the last night. That last night, however, Emma England gave me a half glass of the nicest rum. I am not usually much of a drinker. Quite obviously 'not much of' meant my resistance to offers of rum was low. There were results. No Hangover. Instead we talked hangovers and who had which and when. Jeremy Zerfoss and I hung out while both slightly inebriated, which was a lot of fun. The fan zone at Loncon led to many, many moments such as these. It was a brilliant space.

I've met so many people and had so many great conversations. I have always been the sort of person that strangers come up to and start chatting to as if we've always known each other. I can't assume that I know that person who is telling me their intimate private stories in a low voice. Loncon is no different in this respect. Some people (just a couple) saw me on stage last night and so I am hearing about a new friend's late wife's writing talent or another new friend's luggage problems. I love these conversations. It's as if fellow fans recognise each other and we take up conversations from previous lives. I've heard some amazing dreams and stories.

I'm living in a rich and joyous reality, full of complex and wonderful people with whom I share many important things. One young and beautiful (and blonde) fan was just a bit jealous of me for meeting the two Doctors, but when she heard I'd seen all the early Doctor Who when it was first shown, apparently I soared in her estimation. Fandom entirely gets that with age comes experience and so being middle aged doesn't mean one is invisible, it means one has seen all the missing episodes.

My last panel is in just under an hour. It's the one I'm most, most scared about. A time travel panel with Joe Haldeman. I can't hide behind the "I'm just a historian" for I have a novel. I'm not alone, though. Katrin Kania (who has the Ancient Arts stall in the dealers' room) sold a pattern for her Dread Pirate Roberts Winter Beanie to Ben Bova. Why worldcons are so amazing are these moments, when our heroes demonstrate they are lovely people and that we share bits of our lives.

And now I'm thinking back to the Hugos. Someone, afterwards (just after I chatted with Dave Langford - I have finally achieved one of my dreams and told him I crave a mention in Thog's Masterclass, for I totally love Thog's Masterclass) was impressed that it wasn't apparent I was reading my introduction to the nominees. I explained that this was because I wasn't reading. Let me tell you what I did for that introduction (apart from panicking).

I thought and thought ahead of the award ceremony how to communicate what fanzines are and why they are important. I wanted just a few people to think about them and go out and read them with fresh eyes. The Hugos are a time when we celebrate them. So this was my opportunity to say why they're so important.

I didn't know how I was going to communicate this (though at one stage I had an elaborate metaphor using Virgil, which snuck into the final short speech as a simple parallel) then I walked onto the stage. We had been told (during that careful and considered rehearsal) to stand at a particular point and be applauded before we went to the mike. When I was standing there, I looked at the audience. I saw darkness. Many, many people, but you couldn't tell who they were. There was no difference in the dark between the astonishingly gifted (which was, in the case, the majority) and the astonishingly drab (the slender few).

When I teach I tend to assume that we're all astonishingly gifted, and my students assume I'm right and they push themselves. But when I want a book to read, I want guidance. When I want to navigate a strange and unfamiliar writing and media world, I want guidance. I want my thoughts to be provoked and my brain stimulated. I want contexts for my stories and comments on them. In SF this function is more likely to be filled by the work of fanzines. I looked out into that darkness and realised that I could say this.

Why I write for Bruce Gillespie is because I love the conversations that we have through the zines. These conversations can take months. They connect us and they shine light for us and for other readers and we can navigate the darkness and find the authors who will enrich our lives and the films we should only see with a bottle of strong liquor before us. And this is why I was so honoured to

present the fanzine category: I will always love fanzines and their writers, for they give me so very, very much.

And now it's time to find my fellow-panellists and fall about in a bit of fangirl squee. If I don't come back, this paragraph is dedicated to Joe Haldeman.

Fan moments: The Hugos

I wish I had time with Paul Cornell and Rob Shearman, for they are favourite people online (as in... I stir them – this is secret Gillian code I am letting you into, so please respect it and use your newfound power for good) but at least I got to meet them in person. I got to meet and to stir Jeff VanderMeer in person, for Jeff and Ann and Jukka Halme and I made a Hugos posse and refused to take things too seriously. Jukka is better at non-seriousness than the rest of us, which, given the party, took some doing. Other people I hung out with at the Hugos included Ellen Kushner and Cory Doctorow (where I admitted to my year in Toronto) and, at the after party, Justina Robson and Geoff Ryman (Geoff and I promised a proper talk sometime but never got round to it) and, for a glorious three minutes, the two doctors and a doctor's daughter and wife.

Fan moment: meeting a new worldcon attendee in the foyer and spending an hour with them and their friends in the fan village later. I still don't know any of their names, but I had a ball. They fed me chocolate and we shared the newssheet and I didn't realise I didn't know their names until it was too late to find out. I'm hoping we'll run into each other again, for I so enjoyed their company.

Blogpost: 19th August, 2014. 2:26 pm.

I'm watching dawn rise over London. I'm also in bed. I need to be asleep, but I'm leaving for Dublin in 2 hours and London was just so amazing that my body is refusing to listen to commonsense. The best I can do is lie in bed and dream of sleep. It's a poor best, I know, but London has a slow dawn and I have seen many friends, made many more and entirely startled both by walking on stage to present a Hugo. The world startled me when I found out that the whole ceremony was online: I'm rather relieved I didn't know this in advance.

I keep wanting to wave a wand and say Guffus Fanfundus and get some sleep, but the phrase didn't work in the opening ceremony and it won't work now.

Anyhow, my millisecond of almost-fame is over and I can look round and see what remains. What remains are friends and a deep inner joy. Also the fulfilment of some very deep dreams. I've finally been the historiographer on a time travel panel with Geoffrey Landis, Ian Watson and Joe Haldeman, and hung out with oh-so-many people who get my sense of humour. I'll put more in the trip report, but you need

to know that I'm alive and that fandom is determined to get me drunk on a regular basis and that not even that or a sudden onset of happiness could get me enough sleep tonight. So I'm watching London's nightlights wink out and thinking how entirely much I owe to just a couple of blogland friends (Ross Temple!) who somehow persuaded me to go entirely against Gillian-tradition and stand for a fan fund.

Gillian's schedule

19 Check out of Aloft, 9 ish am train to Dublin (check out of hotel unbody hour) – arrive Dublin 5.25 pm, staying with James Shields
20 Dublin
21 Dublin
22 move to Convention hotel, Shamrokon
23 Shamrokon
24 Shamrokon

Notes: In the end James Shields and I shared a taxi to Euston, for the thought of those Tube stairs and my suitcase worried me: I was tired. I was so tired that I reverted to strict Gillian form and James and the taxi driver got a tour through central London. As we passed something interesting I talked about its history. Loads of Middle Ages. Also, I think, William Blake. There wasn't enough time for an entire recital of the poem London as I glimpsed the Embankment, for which the others in the cab are probably very grateful.

When I reach the right level of fatigue, I'm afraid I become educative. Beyond that, I become wildly theoretical. I'm much easier to deal with when I'm awake and can repress these tendencies.

Still, it was funny to be an unintentional tour guide. The taxi driver thanked me! And James returned the favour when he showed me Dublin. James is a more interesting tour guide than I am, but I have some really bizarre anecdotes to counterbalance that, for I know where to buy meat pies in the twelfth century.



Marko, Milena and Ema in Zagreb

19 August

I have some notes to add here later, but I'm wedged in between a giant suitcase and a wall in what James Shields calls Traincon. There are two versions of Traincon – cars A-G and cars H and etc. He's on H and etc, so we're meeting up in Holyhead. I'm in car B, which is the cool one. Not so cool for non SF folk and definitely not cool for the train staff. We have so many suitcases! People have helped me with my case and the nice guy in the seat in front is taking photos for me, for I only have a window in theory. I can see the landscape if I squint, but my camera can't. Anyhow, the camaraderie is high and we're all amazingly tired and very happy. The shop at Euston sold out of Doctor Who magazines just before the train pulled out. Such an amazing coincidence.



Mihaela at work

I love people's baggage, even when I'm wedged in by it and must mountain climb to go to the toilet. Not everyone is so enamoured and there are many sighs and one (non SFnal) complaint about "this should not happen". In her reincarnation this woman will be an almost-Picard, never quite making it so.

I'm at the stage where everyone knows me as the GUFF person. There's no "Hey, you're GUFF" but occasionally there are jokes about the continent I represent.

I don't have to know people for them to feel they're friends. It's wonderfully comforting. It's like being among my huge extended family (for I have a huge extended family) but without the cousins-I-almost-recognise reporting back to Mum. It's not a license for misbehaviour, but I get to be confident. Like asking the nice bloke in front of me (who has a window) if he'd mind taking pictures for me and having a chat with him about how historians use pictures.

Just for the record, Traincon started at Euston. Carolina Gómez Lagerhög from Sweden found us, and then we were hailed by random Finns and Mihaela and her family and then a horde of Irish, British and US fans. I will never see Euston in the same way again.

I ought to tell you about that last panel of mine. I've postponed this too long. Those poor science-based writers. That poor audience.

I'm not sure they've seen a time-travel-addicted historiographer on a time travel panel before. It was a bit the same as the equivalent panel at Conflux a couple of years ago, except in spades. Ian Watson and Joe Haldeman and Geoffrey Landis were the hard core science types, Suzanne Palmer was the voice of rationality, and I

was...me. I silenced everyone (including the audience) at one stage. It was entirely unintentional.

It appears that the gulf between traditional science and post-post-modern history (or however what I do is defined) is just as curious as ever. I don't think it was a good thing that I said something that was obvious to me and so conversation-ending that no-one knew how to follow it, but it was certainly interesting. I think it a worry that I was the panellist who rejoiced in both *Time Tunnel* and *Madoka Magika Puella*, but I still think that the latter is a lovely hypothetical about the human consequences for one particular model of a quantum reality.

I live in a universe which gets constantly redefined according to cultural norms and our changing them, while the scientists and science-based writers are looking for realities. Except we're not. I need to actually define this, otherwise I will continue to astonish people on time travel panels. Maybe if I can find words to explain the differences I will continue to astonish people, but it will be entirely intentional, which is much better.

All I did was point out that human knowledge is mediated by humans and that this affects everything we know. People were probably silenced because it was so obvious, even coming on top of some "Look this is physics, we explain reality" discussion.

I've had so much feedback on the Hugos So many people liked what I said, though one woman said she had to go away and think. I'm so relieved!

I worried so much, for I seldom seem to do things as others. In this instance, it was totally remarked upon. "It was different" I've been told over and over, "But in a good way."

I ought to make a list of cool people I've met, but there are so many of them. Loncon was full of cool. Also full of charm and intellect and thought and kindness. Where were these men when I was at an impressionable age? And, this is lack of sleep speaking. I am never good the night before travel and last night I was less good than most times. Less good to the extent of only getting two hours.

We're at the Colwyn Bay Station now. This epically fannish train trip is at its last stages. I'm so glad I took this train rather than flying – some experiences make life bizarrely better.

For those wondering, previous fund winners are already vetting my admin plans. So far no-one has objected to me continuing to work on getting Europeans interested and involved. I'm not going to change GUFF, though, just extend it a bit. Worldcon and Eurocon are not solely English language (though English is the lingua franca – and yes, that was a very bad joke) and I love the internationalism of fandom.

Later that day

I like typing 'later that day' – it makes my narrative sound vaguely literary. Later this day, however, which is the actual truth sounds vague and unfinished, because this day is, in fact, vague and unfinished.

Traincon mutated into SFerryCon (and three of us queuing for Dublin Ferry are guilty of that pun, and two of the three were indeed, I think, possibly Croatian while the third was quite possibly the party guiltiest of punning and is Australian and known to you) into Dublin Bus 53 con and then James and I missed the express train to his town and are now sitting on the slower train at a table, with other people around us doing any number of different things. It's a nice train, and I feel mellow because I just ate an egg salad sandwich and am no longer stupidly tired. Also, if I'm lucky, my tomorrow includes Newgrange, which I've wanted to see since who knows when.

20 August

I've also wanted to take the ferry from Holyhead to Dublin since who knows when and I have done so and totally enjoyed it. The ferry felt very like the Tradie's Club, right down to the presence of pokies. The Tradie's now need to add sincere smoke stacks and the serenity of the harbour coming into Dublin. I don't think I've felt that particular serenity from a harbour before. It coloured my whole next hour, so I waited placidly for a bus with the SFerryCon remnants.

James Shields is a very good bloke. He made sure everyone knew how to get to their various accommodations and he told the bus driver who was going where. That remnant of fans had been standing around for an hour, waiting for a way to get into the city, so it made a difference, I think, that they had specific instructions to follow. Me, I followed James and James dealt with the big suitcases, through bus, rail, ferry, hail and come-what-may. As I said, a good bloke.

I hate to say this, because so many people have said it before me, but Ireland is a very green country. People keep saying that the green has a special quality, but they don't say that the pasture is verdant with greenness (more punning, sorry) and that it's terribly soothing. We'll be shortly arriving at Port Mearnog (which is lacking its accent), the announcer says, and the station sign agrees with the announcer, bilingually.

And so I'm here, in Dublin, and moving out of it apace, through the green, nine tenths asleep and more than somewhat happy. My main aim for the rest of the evening is to stay awake long enough.

Shamrokon moments:

It's not Shamrokon yet. In fact, it's still 20 August, but I'm in the con hotel. James had to pick Andrzej Sapkowski from the airport and deliver him so I tagged along and we all sat down for a drink. Conversation ranged from tornadoes to pickles. Andrzej is immensely travelled, so we've swapped travellers' tales and he thought at one stage I was telling a tall tale (when I explained that there was a firm in Australia marketing numberplates as tools to stop men using women's cars) but honestly, I was not. It's unAustralian not to tell tall tales, so I have some ground to make up by creating disbelief with the use of the absolute (if puerile) truth.

Blogpost: 20th August, 2014. 8:22 am.

I need to do a guide to avoiding me at Shamrokon, but I'm typing this while sitting on the Chair of Shamrokon's very comfortable couch (chairs have couches, please note) and it would be churlish to tell you to avoid it. Also, for anyone who has a liking for Croatian seaside resorts, try visiting Opatija for Liburnicon. I may or may not be unavoidable (being a GoH) but seaside resort! fandom!

And I must go, for washing beckons.



Ian Gibson being interviewed, Liburnicon

This morning I went to Newgrange. I can't walk far (though I am healing and I can walk again) so I only saw Newgrange itself, but I did, and I took many, many photos and I had discussions with everyone. I talked with the gardener who pointed out when I said how beautiful and green it all was that it didn't feel quite as wonderful when one had to cut the lawn (the rest of the discussion was mainly about football) and with some nice American tourists who dealt enthusiastically with my random lecture on the nature of hedgerows and my even more random SFnal comments. In fact, one of them joined in and we speculated on potential stories set at Newgrange.

I found the place itself complex and moving.

In the exhibition centre attached to it, there is a craft display for five weeks every year and I was so very fortunate and not only was it on, but there were craftspeople in residence and I had a spare twenty minutes. I chatted with the rather good potter: I have no idea if she is well-behaved, but she makes beautiful pots and she showed me a very clever glaze she had been experimenting with. I admired the jewellery and watched the silversmith wield a saw on silver. I then moved on to a lady who was spinning. I asked about her work, because Katrin (one of the German Ancient Arts stallholders, and a friend and a colleague) has enhanced my interest in textiles: I was rather glad I did. The wool she was spinning came from the local sheep (which I saw outside twenty minutes later and which I duly photographed in their natural contexts) and they were of an ancient breed. By ancient, I mean it has been clearly traced back to Ancient Israel. So I bought a beanie and the spinner is going to post me more information. The final craftswoman was an artist and she was painting Celtic knotwork that I recognised and she recognised that I recognised and we spent a lovely few minutes waxing ecstatic about the Book of Kells.

James and I lunched at a place called Applesomething (it was not really called Applesomething – I do not remember the name!), where I had my first ever piri piri chicken wrap with mango. I've had mango chicken, and piri piri chicken, but never the combination.

Right now I'm typing up the day so far in a back street in central Dublin, for I'm tagging along while James does Chair duties still, and those duties have taken him round the corner and it's a luxury to have time to sort this report, so I opted to stay in the car. I have taken a photo of the Dublin doors outside which we are parked (and I'm so not going to make a collection of Dublin doors – this is irony, for normally I photograph doorways, because to me they're always potentially portals to somewhere strange, but everyone photographs Dublin doors and I'm respecting their privacy just this

once. I'm noticing them, though, for they are doors and doors are potentially portals to somewhere strange). And all this paragraph is related to fandom, for James is working on Shamrokon stuff, so it's all relevant to my report. I'm explaining because I had a sudden vision of Bill Wright shaking his head, sadly. Bill, if you've reached this far, maybe score the number of times you shake your head sadly and count them at the end of the report. If you reach 150, I'll buy you a drink.

21 August

I'm sitting in almost-the-middle of Merrion Square in central Dublin and I'm pleasantly full of rather good steak and ciabatta with pepper sauce and rocket and just a touch of red onion. It was called a steak sandwich, but if it was that, then the Irish have very superior steak sandwiches. I had my coffee first, for there is a 'market' of food stalls in Merrion Square today and I encountered the coffee first. I asked (I knew but my mind lapses) what an Americano was and the guy serving said "Black coffee".

"When I get home," I said, "I'm going to have six flat whites."

"Real coffee," agreed the man making my coffee.

"Real coffee."

This is just one of ten million reasons to love Dublin. Australians are not a dime a dozen as they are in England, but a barista understands my taste in coffee.

Kylie Ding advised me at Loncon that I needed to schedule occasional time out from GUFF. I took two hours yesterday and am taking until late afternoon today. From late arvo I've volunteered for Shamrokon¹⁴. By then the big set-up will be done and new volunteers will be of use. Volunteering is my way of meeting people without complex and sometimes embarrassing explanations, and it always has been. One instantly belongs if one is a worker. This means that I'm officially a washer-up of dishes after meetings (though I hate dish washing and prefer volunteering for something like sorting papers, as paper and I have a natural affinity). I don't actually need to volunteer here, but I always feel better when I can be useful. One of my US publishers quakes under the bed when I ask "Can I be useful?" but con organisers are made of sterner stuff.

This morning we relocated from Drogheda to Dublin via an audio place, so I'm the second Eurocon attendee to meet Seanan Maguire's keyboard. It took up the whole back seat in James' car.

My luggage is stored in Ops and I am at large in Dublin. By a happy coincidence (if you believe this, I have a bridge to sell you, nicely located in central Sydney) there are museums next to Merrion Square, which is, of course, where I'm typing this, seated opposite a statue. When I need my soul replenished, there are many things that will do the job, and museums and parks and food stalls are three of them. This means I should be full of bonhomie throughout Shamrokon.

Pity con-goers, for me replenished is me ... noisy. I'm noisy in a quiet and gentle fashion, but I'm definitely noisy. And I've had two nights' sleep and visited several places of childhood dreams. I don't know what this means for my two panels, for I was ill for so long that I'm not sure fandom knows what a replenished Gillian looks like. Watch this space or look for con reports or be safe and do what other people do and hide under the bed.

For the record, I'm very pleased with my weather sense. I may hurt a great deal and have to take medicine, but locals were not prepared for today's weather and I totally was. I'm wearing Canberra autumn clothes: open sandals and a t-shirt (a Conflux one, of course) and a really solid windproof, rainproof and warm short jacket. It's bright cobalt so that everyone can see me coming. I feel this is only fair to Dublin.

Dublin is such a comfortable city. I shall add it to my list of Great Liveable Cities of the World. When the public transport is fixed (which is apparently underway) its idiosyncrasies are mine. Well, the ones I've seen are. Although I am good at finding my way around here. I use a map but my feet want to take me in quite dif-

ferent directions. This is how I got a very slightly early lunch rather than visiting a museum then getting lunch, for when I finally ignore my feet and worked out street signs (which are in different place for each street and sometimes refer to a cross street or a t-junction street rather than the road they're on) it was nearly midday. It worked out well, and better than the singer performing for the market. His sax is fine, but he sometimes approximates notes when he sings. I assume this is artistic, but it can make my ears hurt. And now the clouds have come over again and the chrysanthemum beds are glowing. I should pack up here and find a museum before the real rain hits. My quiet time is almost over, so expect less detailed reports at the precise moment you want to hear EVERYTHING.

Speaking of everything, one reason I love Ireland I because they still punctuate properly. Real English here and not a greengrocer's apostrophe in sight. Here comes the rain and here leaves the Gillian.



The Liburnicon location

Blogpost: 22nd August, 2014. 6:53 pm.

I'm removed to Dublin and concerned about luggage. Otherwise, life is lovely. Even my feet are lovely (and finally behaving like feet).

Last night I met a dancer who knows the Gardens¹⁵ and we waxed lyrical about the Library of Congress and its online materials. I sat in the foyer of the hotel for hours and talked to people about things. Some of it was fandom, but for ages Robin Johnson and a fan whose name I forget (there is a lot of this going round, especially as we weren't tagged last night for the most part) talked about planes and then wars and related subjects.

Today the con begins and I doubt you'll see me (this is my quiet time before breakfast). Tomorrow is Doctor Who. I'm going to see Capaldi on a big screen in a giant room filled with fans, and in the same week as I scored hugs from Tennant and Davison. I scorn your reality and replace it with fandom.

¹⁴ Except they didn't need me, so I spent valuable time in the foyer of the hotel meeting interesting new people. Shamrokon had an unlimited supply of interesting new people and very comfortable chairs and very good chips.

¹⁵ a Canberra couple who do historical dance

23 August

I don't know how other GUFFites managed to take notes during a convention. Every time I sit down, I meet interesting people and cannot write. Every time I stand up I meet interesting people, and cannot write. Last night, for instance, I met a person who had clearance to press a button or turn a key or otherwise produce World War Three some years ago, should the need arise. Very soft-spoken and charming and gentle and fannish. And he had the clearance to press that button...

I woke up a bit early this morning, which is just as well. I've lost my alarm clock and the hotel forgot my wake-up call. I'm in time for everything. And that was the magic I needed. I have nearly forty-five minutes before I have to be even at breakfast, so you get the pleasure of the rest of yesterday.

Because my brain is scrambled, I'm not going to explain anything consecutively. Besides, I didn't live yesterday consecutively. I lived yesterday foodishly, in fact.

CE Murphy makes one of the best chocolate cupcakes I have ever tasted. Also, she's nice. Also, she feeds masses marvellous morsels. And that's your token alliteration of the day, in honour of a writer who is a fan who is a baker and should be celebrated for all three. While eating cakes, I met cool people, including a wonderful person whose day job is as a switchboard operator. She has greater patience than I.

I had breakfast with a mother and a daughter who turned out to be from Port Lincoln in South Australia. They were equally interesting. I love meeting people from so many backgrounds. Not a boring one among them. Annie (the mother) was a farmer until she retired. One of those enormous pieces of land you get in that part of Australia, probably bigger than Monaco. Grains by the thousand acre.

My first panel went well, I think. KA Laity and I are interesting on panels together. We're both very firm in our opinions and we come from quite different backgrounds. We talked about everything from women who fought to sumptuary laws. The amazingness that is Medieval Ireland was brought up, and so was the trial of Alice Kyteler (though no-one laughed at my Judge Drede joke – it was a sober audience even after sweets were thrown at it). The moderator (Susan Bartholomew) dealt with our differences well – also, she's an interesting person and her books are on my read-as-soon-as-Aurealis-judging-is-over list.

I don't know where the time went between my 3 pm panel and the opening ceremony. I talked to people from the audience (all our panel did – the audience may have been serious, but they were enthusiastic and I may possibly have made new friends. Yet another reason to do panels at cons.

At 6 pm I followed the crowds and found myself at the opening ceremony. It was casual and friendly and delightfully welcoming. Brian and James simply introduced everything, made jokes and let us know why there are lollipops everywhere (fundraising for the con charity, which is a foundation that works on oesophageal cancer – I must buy a lollipop, even if it means taking it back to Australia).

My books have mostly arrived from London. I don't know if they've all arrived, or if some have disappeared en route, but I'll find out today. Only two have been sold so far, so my tomorrow may have headaches.

After the opening ceremony (and before it, I recall) I hung out at tables, mostly stirring Finns. I made jokes about bands containing Finns, too. I also met the editor of that wonderful French magazine, *Galaxies*, and we chatted. He kindly gave me a copy. In fact, he asked me "How often do you read it," and I shamefully admitted "When I can get hold of a copy." And now I have a copy. I'm ecstatic that it contains something by Michel Jeury. I had no idea he was still writing, but that copy of *Galaxies* is mine and you will rip

it from my rotting corpse at your peril. Michel Jeury's work brought me into modern French SF. I haven't read as much as I ought (because he's hard to obtain in Australia) but his writing will always have a special place in my heart.

I also rambled the dealers' room and found myself talking to a French Canadian artist who does lovely work inspired by the Middle Ages. "I've handled that manuscript this piece of yours is based on," I declared. I was rather relieved to discover I was right and I had, and ashamed to admit that the *Roman de la Rose* isn't my favourite work.

Between the dealers' room (which closed and that's why I followed the crowd to the opening ceremony) and the cake was the Maguire. I sent about a half hour listening to Seanan Maguire and her band. I had to talk to the front desk about something, so I couldn't stay for the whole session, alas.

The guy at the front desk asked me if we all knew each other. When we queue, he explained, everyone jokes and laughs. It's one of the happiest and most relaxed conventions he's seen. I started noticing then, for we're at the stage where Shamrokon has developed its particular style and he's entirely right, we act as if we've known each other forever and it is very relaxed and very, very happy.

The fact that many of us came from Loncon is part of this, but most of it is the committee and the gophers. And the enthusiasm of everyone taking part.

There is a guy in a corner with a computer set up so that an old



Fannish ninjas in the back of the bus at Liburnicon

fashioned fanzine can be produced for the daily newsheet. It's a special set-up. It mimics a typewriter, with a bell at the end of the line and with carriage returns and with a printed result that looks very like the roneo'd sheets of my childhood. My entry consisted of putting out a plea for people to find me and demand sweets, though I think I also may have mentioned that I'm the GUFF person.

GUFF here is one of the mob – none of the panoply of Loncon. I like being myself again, but it was nice to be special for a few days.

Now you're all caught up. If I don't get a move on, I'll miss my Dothraki jewellery workshop, and I rather want to make myself a piece of Dothraki jewellery.

You may or may not hear from me today. I may be beginning the day with breakfast and Dothraki jewellery, but I shall end it with Doctor Who and with an international fan party.



I met many cats and dogs and loved them all, but this one nearly came home with me

Have I said how much I love fandom recently? I've been thinking it a great, great deal. It attracts all the coolest people and most of them don't even know how cool they are and I reap the benefit of a thousand fascinating conversations with a thousand fascinating people. And here endeth my story of yesterday.

Gillian's schedule

25 Dublin to Vienna (very early morning direct flight, breakfast on flight) arrive Vienna 11 am. Pension Dr Geissler.

26 to Zagreb (fast train, be at station c 3 pm), Milena Benini and Marko Fančović will meet me (also put me up til Mihaela takes over)

Notes: I ended up with two breakfasts, for the hotel in Dublin worried I wasn't eating and packed me a sandwich bag. Those hotel staff were very nice. Vienna was welcoming, and gave me time out. I never did catch the tram or go to a museum. I just kept moving at the rate of a snail and this gave me back some of my energy: it was like winding a spring up again. When I got on the train, therefore, I was able to chat wildly in the little German I have and to enjoy the fabulous scenery. "It's just ordinary" said one of the people in my carriage and I looked at the mountains and the fields and the fabulousness of the castle we'd just passed and suggested she look again. "I see it all the time," she confessed. That's what tourists are for, sometimes, to remind us how remarkable our everyday can be.

Blogpost: 25th August, 2014. 9:42 pm.

Never fear, I am here! Only here is Vienna. I left Dublin at such an unholy hour that the hotel staff tried to get me to drink coffee before going to the airport. I needed all the time I could get at the airport, though, for security was extra-specially exciting and extra-specially slow. I should have stayed in Ireland one more day and rested, for I am beyond tired. I have 2/3 of tomorrow in Vienna though, and the small pension I'm staying at does tours if there are enough people, so I'm going to ask

about that and do as little walking as I can (except tonight to get dinner). It's a little pension with a little lift and some very hardworking staff. I looked at them and started thinking of stories. I also started thinking that a pension is not something I ever plan to run.

I have heaps of things I ought to tell you, but I wish to test the texture of Viennese pillows so I invite you to imagine them.

Today, Vienna; tomorrow Zagreb! This is Gillian in the closest to world-conquering mode she has ever been.

PS My pension has some truly interesting uses of the apostrophe. I have markers in my handbag. It's such a shame I was brought up not to use them on other people's signs.

PPS I have used German! I have said 'Danke' numerous times and explained that I only speak a little German but that I speak English and French. Very useful German I have, though not nearly enough. People here are very good at faking when they don't understand and one says something they don't need to know and even better at asking for a repeat when it's something important. When I caught the taxi driver out on this he apologised for his lack of English and I said he had 'genug' and honour was satisfied.

'Genug' alas, does not describe my German at all, but at least I have enough to be polite about my lack. And no-one wants to speak French AT ALL so far. If I hadn't had such a recent fine time with very polite French fans and editors and critics at Shamrokon (two of the first and one each of the others) I would have thought this was deplorable - as it is, I'm very glad that the Viennese can deal with me, in whatever language.

PPPS No more postscripts because I need to rest except, Chaz Brenchley, you need to know that Ramsay Campbell will be at FantasyCon and so will I and if you want to put our theory of the huggability of horror writers to the test, you might want to explain it to him.

25 August

I meant to update yesterday, truly I did. Yesterday was magnificent, but right now I'm taken up with the awesomeness of fandom again. I have a pillow in my suitcase for delivery to Finland and a leaflet for signing in Croatian for Robin Johnson and then for delivery to Australia. A Finn has been persuaded by Jukka to carry the Finnish consignment of my books and several Croatians have been persuaded by Mihaela to carry the same for Croatia. Sue Edwards and Kylie Ding have the UK books and I have the overflow. I have one batch of stuff for auction for fan funds in Croatia and... I forget the rest, but the Croatian auctioneer has big plans to fill my suitcase with delicious chocolate to fundraise in Australia. To clear space for all of this, Robin Johnson is being very kind and posting my papers and books to myself (I'm packaging and paying – he's doing the hard yards) and so the circle is complete.

I did indeed make Dothraki jewellery yesterday and I got to actually handle a garment from Game of Thrones (and have a picture to prove it) and the maker-of-amazing-Game-of-Thrones-things told us stories and gave us advice and asked for my card in case she had questions concerning Medievalism. I still feel as if I'm living in an alternate reality, but it's a very nice alternate reality and I'll stay here, if I may, please.

Doctor Who was astonishing. A vast room of fans laughing at the same jokes says something quite important about why we love each other's company.

The international fan party started off as a tight queue of people assiduously trying alcohol from around the world, for the tables were lined around the wall and encouraged person-compression. I stuck to spirits and, by the time I finished in Canada, just barely felt the effects. I was skiting about this and paid for it today with the con lurgie. As con lurgies go, it's not a bad one. I even did a panel with it. I was contentious on that panel (myths) for I felt a driving need to challenge Eurocentricity and the notion that story is safe. I also felt a driving need to give Gunnar Roxen (who was brought up in the ancient religion and tradition of his region and who I would very much like to sit down with and talk to at great length one day) the Kirk vs Khan figurine I picked up at the fan fund auction. He made the mistake of saying "Khaaan!" in just the right tone of voice, you see. So he has it and I am bereft, but happy. Evil Gillian has only outed that once all convention.

I have only a very few more sweets and gave all my spare chocolate to Ticonderoga Press for distribution to happy customers. This is how I made space for the pillow, of course. It means I am much less worried about traipsing through Vienna with a giant suitcase, for pillows are much lighter than chocolate, sweet and books. Pillows and dirty washing are much lighter, if I were being honest, but dirty washing is not something one admits to.

Susan Bartholomew and I had dinner after the closing ceremony then she found Gaie Sebold and Gary Mullen and Regina Kanyu Wang and we had drinks while they had dinner and we all had very serious and very funny conversation. Russell Farr and Liz Gryzb joined us at one stage and it was quite obvious that Russell and I knew each other by how rude we were to each other. Australians can't be taken anywhere.

I then chased James to say goodbye and sort out GUFFishness and collected my pillow (not my pillow, I am merely transport – it came from the US and will end up in Finland, but will go via Austria and Croatia and England) and stirred Jukka one last time and said more farewells and I don't quite want to leave Ireland, but I must. Shamrokon was very relaxed and friendly. I pretended to drink far more than I actually drank and I met many wonderful people. I'm running out of personal cards to give folks – I might have



The bar at FantasyCon in York

to stick to my writer card for a bit. There are so many folk I want to stay in touch with, though.

Loncon and Shamrokon were two sides of a coin and the coin is a very beautiful one.

On a less elevated note, I have lived on hot chips here, but I did have a healthy breakfast this morning. I say this a bit defensively, of course. So much activity has been around mealtimes that getting proper meals has been a bit difficult. Just like certain recent Aussie cons, in fact (though not the recent Continuum, which was very meal-aware). The only way I could eat at all was to stay in the hotel the whole time. This worked, but I rather feel as if I shall be venturing into a strange new world tomorrow. Dublin is no longer: all that remains is the hotel. Oh, and one small bag of chocolate I carefully kept aside¹⁶.

I don't know if I'll add to the trip report in Vienna (which is my fannish day out, for the fans will still be in Dublin) or from Croatia, or from somewhere in between realms. I wonder if I put many blank pages in now would you experience my transit in real time? I guess not.



Lunch with Glenda Larke in York included this wall

¹⁶ This chocolate was finally eaten in two different Finnish cities by five different people. A good fate.

Vienna doesn't just render me full of irony, but it turns my camera ironic. I meant to be a good little tourist, but Evil Gillian still echoes and Evil Gillian, it appears, cannot take cities at obvious value. Instead of dutifully hopping on and off a tram or visiting museums, I wandered down to the waterfront to take pictures of graffiti. The graffiti was science fictional.

Because I've discovered this Viennese secret and my hands are stained with fresh blackberries¹⁷ and my stomach is full of Tirolerbrot, my body is in *Heidi* even as my mind notes that Vienna is a severely conflicted city. There are many Turkish names, and they are attached to solid citizens of this place. The tourist posters are full of a new permanent exhibition at the Jewish Museum: the exhibition doesn't go as far as the 1930s. In fact, it stops at Freud's Vienna, and there are also posters about Freud. A major world city, dynamic force in Europe, centre of big and colonising empire, defines itself in terms of its guilty past.

I feel I've been here before. I walk in the right direction and know where things are. I even knew when the taxi driver took me the long way round and I knew exactly how he'd done it. This is not at all remarkable for those of you gifted with a sense of direction, but my gift is a sense of weather and the reason I'd planned to go on the tourist tram was because I thought I'd get lost within a block. I get lost in York every time I visit (watch this space for news of Gillian getting lost at FantasyCon...).

I found myself a path from the water to the city park and I didn't really use a map. I checked one, to make sure I wasn't going too far wrong, but I knew where it would be and how far it would be.

I started off with more German than I have now. I want to defend Edith's father (Edith was born in Vienna, and later married my father's cousin Albert) who defended the aqueducts during World War I and whose near-departure to the Russian front is the reason I have the Governor's wife's recipe for Linzertorte. Edith left on the brink of World War II: we became her family when everyone here was killed.

I told myself I was coming to Vienna for Edith. That was only a part of the truth. I'm only passing through the city because it may be a while before I'm ready for a proper visit. It's a lovely city, but it has produced monsters. Some cities sorted themselves after the Shoah – I'm not yet sure that Vienna is one of them. A half day here is not enough to know, though, nor even nearly enough. One day I'll have to come back and sort myself out. My feet are already sorted out, and that disturbs me.

¹⁷ There were also peaches – foodie Gillian found a probably-illicit stall – but they were puerile peaches and I did not feel impelled to finish them.

I never got to a museum. I never even got to the Shoah Memorial (though that's another story) – I'm sitting here at Meidling Station feeling my native language seep back into me and thinking how nice the locals are in Vienna and how tourists here would make life better for everyone if they smiled and didn't walk through people. I'm eyeing off the Turkish takeaway that a US group is eating right now, for lunch was light and I am hungry, but I really can't eat a whole meal at 3ish pm, nor even at 11ish pm. Whichever timezone I am in, it is wrong. Me being hungry is me still living in Irish time and having had late lunches at Eurocon.

I need to give you just one of the many SFnal photographs I took in Vienna and then I need to move back to fandom and into the wonderfulness that is Croatia.

I never got the sachertorte I promised myself, by the way, for I forgot to find the café. I was too busy being ironic and discovering the back streets and generally ignoring the tourist advice. As the

nice lady said when she gave me a curtsy (I am still me, because elderly Viennese women smile at me and curtsy acknowledgement) I will have to return.

I also have a photo of a tourist souvenir I totally refrained from buying. I wanted to (I've wanted one for a long time) but they turned out to be poorly made and overpriced. We don't have kangaroos in Australia, either, though, if this is what a roo looks like.



Lingonberries, bilberries and cloudberry by the pint in Turku

Gillian's schedule

27 Zagreb

28 Zagreb

29 Zagreb to Opatija for Liburnicon, Q&A

30 Liburnicon lecture afternoon/early evening on fandom and SF in Australia (slide show, books) GUFF auction

31 Liburnicon, Opatija to Zagreb

Notes: The fan fund auction at Liburnicon was quite different to other auctions. No tabs, for this was Croatia and tabs are apparently Australian. Also, no English, so I had to ask for the best jokes to be translated. I also had to ask for the winning bids to be translated, since I was keeping a running tally and collecting money. I can now recognise the Croatian "Going, going, gone" words. It's a bit of a worry when these are among the first words one learns in a language. I was very grateful when kindly fans bought Baggage and my cookbook. I hope they get much pleasure out of them! I donated the first (and that edition is rare) and Conflux the second.

August 27

I saw much of Vienna, inch by inch, yesterday morning and into the afternoon. No museums. I meant to see museums, but the streets and people were telling me so much that I stuck to them. I found some smiling Viennese, in the end (they just needed someone to chat with them) and was much less worried thereby. I fear I am not made for a serious city.

A few minutes ago a cannon went “Boom” which reminded me that I am now in Zagreb staying with Milena Benini and Marko Fančović. Everyone said “They’re your kind of people, you’ll like them” and indeed they are and indeed I do. We talked very late into the night, even though my train came in around 11 pm. They fed me cheese and olives and beautifully fresh bread, and so it mattered not a jot that all I’d eaten on the train was chocolate. I do this on longer train journeys – I plan to eat at the buffet car and then I decide I can’t leave my luggage. Sometimes I remember to buy a picnic for meal times, but there was a dearth of supermarkets in the parts of downtown Vienna I visited, so I forgot. I had two bars of chocolate and one I ate en route and the other we finished during our late night discovery of new friends. I’d say it was chocolate well-bought, but chocolate is very seldom not well-bought, so this would be a redundant comment.

The train was interesting. It went from sublime to gorbliney. The sublime was discovering that the carriage was full of SF fans (three of us!) and that the youngest of us was a translator. When I got stuck, she helped out. The older lady (about my age) had to get off quite soon, but gave me the most effusive and loving farewell I’ve ever had from a stranger. She’s a very big fan, you see. She explained that she likes SF for its challenge of social reality. No other genre does that, she said. My high school German was up to this conversation, which really surprised me. Always study languages in high school!

The translator and I talked a lot. Or rather, I talked and she was very nice about it. Then came two backpackers who knew nothing about SF so we talked about language. Then came the two young girls who heard me say “English-speaking” and didn’t hear the “Australian”. They also didn’t understand quite how much I understood so when they were polite in English but said in German that they didn’t want to share a carriage with an English, I suddenly realised what the Brits sometimes endure when they travel. Aussies are more privileged than I knew.

Soon after, the train passed through Maribor. I need to learn the town. I need to get past its recent history. I need to not judge it the way the two Austrians judged me as an English.

After this, it was dark and I was alone, so I sang Japanese folk-songs into the empty carriage.

28 August

It’s a muggy late summer morning in Zagreb. On the table with my computer is a first edition of *2001* (kindly donated for the next fan fun auction by Marko and Milena) and all my electronics. I’m sitting in the living room (one of two giant living rooms) in a very heimische apartment from the 1920s. It’s a few minutes from the intercity trains, it’s on a tramline, it has museums opposite and round the corner and it’s just down the road from the central parks and gardens. How could it be more perfect? It could be full of specific, both pictures and books. I am adding it to my list of Perfect Dwellings for SF writers, along with Janeen Webb’s hilltop home in Gippisland.

Milena and I have talked late into the night two nights running. There’s so much to say on so many subjects. Marko and a friend took me walking yesterday, and we visited old Zagreb and the Museum of Broken Relationships and I finally got some cash and bought coffees. I fell in love with all the cities of Zagreb yesterday: it wasn’t hard to do.

What I also fell in love with was the fact that the people here do not turn their back on the past as Vienna seemed to. The past jostles the present and people are still hurting and the stories I was told recognised this. Zagreb is elegant and charming and understands where hurts lie. Vienna is gracious, but you can’t tell from talking to locals (which I did, of course) that it contains Empire and it contains darkness. You can see Empire in the streets, but the people walking with no care for others are modern Empire-builders, wearing black from head to foot and carrying shopping bags. I saw so much of this in central Vienna that I began to interpret the black and the posture and to see the women beneath, but it was still Empire overlaying Empire and added to my sense of irony in Vienna.

They still walked the streets with more sense of belonging than I did. This was odd, because (one of the women on the train explained it) I belong here, in Middle Europe. I have the face and the figure and no-one knows I am from the other end of reality until I speak. This tangles everyone, for I ask for the wrong coffee and when flustered I excuse myself in English. I see people do a double-take, “This woman is not what we thought she was.”

I’ve never experienced this before, fitting in so very neatly that I could belong here, that I could fade into the streets and be safe. Despite the Australian Bureau of Statistics and its determination that I’m from North Africa, I am from Europe, and despite the countries my family thinks it comes from, I am as much of Central as of Eastern and Western Europe. When Wanta (Steven Wanta Jampijinpi Patrick – guest teacher of my Wednesday class last year) said that I was Australian and gave me a Warlpiri skin name I felt a kind of refuge: this is quite a different kind of refuge. If my family had stayed in Europe, I would not be alive. But still. But still. I can walk these streets and I can catch a train without anyone thinking “Where does she come from? Why is she here?” Thank you, GUFF, for adding to Wanta’s gift and teaching me that it’s OK for me to walk on the earth.

Yesterday was washing-day and my clothes are still drying. I can’t get dressed until they’re dry, for I’ve run out of most things. All the extra things I brought “In case” turned out to be essential because of the shape of this journey.

Only seventeen days to go. Still two more conventions, two more countries. This life-changing trip is well past its middle. And I was just visited by a beautiful and very gentle dog. I think this was a hint that I ought to check my email. I trust dogs and cats on these things.



Turku fans (so many cool people!)

I've slept in for two glorious days. Late nights, later mornings and the best conversations with the most interesting people. These people are still Milena and Marko, although Mihaela was added to their number yesterday afternoon for coffee. These people are fans and readers and writers and thinkers after my own heart, and Ema (age nine) and I share an outlook on the world¹⁸. I shall treasure these three days. I shall treasure GUFF for teaching me that that fandom is full of richness and wonder.

Yesterday we walked through the horseshoe (a strip of gardens in Zagreb) and I learned that some buildings age in unexpected ways (they turn out to be paint that looks like plaster and stone, and peel to reveal brickwork) and that a botanical garden can feel as peaceful and comforting as the front garden of my childhood. I met turtles (but they could have been tortoises) that posed for pictures and I shared some chips with Ema.

I missed museums except (yesterday) The Museum of Broken Relationships, which is everything everyone said it was. And Zagreb is rather more than everyone said.

I met the sun twice in downtown Zagreb (I have been waiting to make that joke: there is a model of the sun and the solar system, spread throughout the city). I met a Medieval tower and many statues (some of which were splendid, but three of which were simply amazing works of art and which still move me when I think of them). Mostly, though, I talked. I suspect this generous household is a bit tired of me, but they're far too nice to say so. They get relief, however, for I remove to Opatija today. Or rather I will be removed to Opatija today. Liburnicon beckons!

At Liburnicon I have a Q&A to start with (tonight), but also a writers' workshop and my talk. I think that's all, but in a moment I'll check the programme to be safe.

I'm suddenly shy, but that will pass when I arrive and see people. I enjoy the people side. The concept of people and being a guest at a convention where I do not speak their language is a worry. Mihaela has promised to be there in case I need an interpreter but she doesn't think I actually need an interpreter and she knows her own fandom so... that means my fear is just the usual "They need someone better than me. I shall do my best, but they really need someone else." That's why the fear fades when I see people, for I am pragmatic – once I'm at a convention, I am the person they have, whether or not there's someone better.

For my next trick I shall check my email, pack my bags, get dressed... that kind of thing.



Susanna asking me which I wanted at the Turku market. I said 'All'

Where did the last few days go? I'm glad you asked. I've been talking to all the most wonderful people and falling in love with Zagreb. Right now, I'm in Opatija and ignoring the beach. It's a very nice beach¹⁹ and it's just a few metres from the SF convention. I'm also ignoring breakfast. This is because I'm in training for tonight, which will be long and late. I'm expected to rest this afternoon, so maybe I can rest on the beach then but I know from history that I'll be better with finishing programming at midnight (and then joining the barcon crowd) if I rest in the morning.

Last night I gave a talk about Australia and its fandom and writers and artists. Several of you-who-read-this-blog have

had your pictures on a wall in Opatija²⁰. The audience comment was that it was a relaxed talk - this is because the programme shifts here in a way peculiar to the convention and I lost the nervous energy I usually draw on for such things. The audience was lovely, and they dealt with my English and I taught them just a few words of Australian English. A few words, but important ones.

And now, if you will excuse me, I'm going to return to studiously ignoring the beach just for a little. I'll be honest - I can ignore beaches with the best of them, but this part of the world is particularly beautiful and it takes intense determination to stay indoors and do useful things and sleep and otherwise be sensible.

¹⁹ It had no sand. It wasn't really a beach. But it was by a very beautiful shoreline and 'beach' is what I typed, so I'm sticking to it. There was a medieval monastery and much souvenir shopping and the very best icecream.

²⁰ This would include Danny Oz, who was naked in the picture, reading one of my novels at a forlorn railway station in midwinter. Fans who heard about this, and that the wall was on the terrace and visible to the whole convention crowd and anyone down by the sea, declared that this was a Fannish Moment.

¹⁸ Ema and I are now penfriends and she has taught me how to write my name in a script I didn't know.

Mihaela and I are waiting to get rooms sorted for Liburnicon accommodation. There is some confusion. What I love and shall continue to love is that I don't have to sort it. I've never actually been a guest where I've had people taking care of me like this. Every other time I've had special status at a convention I've had so much impossibility attached that life became interesting. This time, I've found everything interesting but life only became challenging about twenty minutes ago, and at that moment I was told to sit down while Mihaela sorted things.

I'm unwinding and checking my email and writing this, and I shall sleep way in tomorrow. Croatian seaside time permits that. I can apparently eat breakfast until 11 am, but I don't know whether the change of rooms includes breakfast and I'm too tired to ask. Also, I don't really want a continental breakfast (which is what they offer) – I miss the tea and coffee of other days, but I can drink water and I believe there is a big (and possibly late) lunch in store. That and the very long evening seem to comprise all my programming for tomorrow.

What is Liburnicon? It's a relaxed and mildly chaotic seaside convention, where one can encounter cosplayers and gamers and Sith duellers. I spent a lovely chunk of tonight meeting near-local writers, including one whose work I knew of by repute and was rather pleased to talk to him about. This region's writers are very interesting and deserve to be better known.

I also met two of my fellow guests (a duo of game designers from France) and they are lovely. **Véronique** Lejeune is interested in my work and I am very interested in theirs. European fandom is very open to work across borders and I need to carry those lessons, home, too. I met a Slovenian student of archaeology and we talked shop, but we also talked about how ethical storywriting can operate to help preserve regional story traditions in smaller countries. He's also a smith, and demonstrated how very sharp his blade was by close-shaving his arm.

So many reasons to love fandom here, tonight, in this seaside town. There's also a bunch of possibilities here for getting the younger fans involved. The con is exceptionally cheap and casual and there are drinks and reasonably priced accommodation available (although some people are simply sleeping on the beach, they tell me) and there are tables set up for gaming and a ton of cool cosplay and a popular vote for the best costumes and there are talks (my first one had slides displayed on the outside wall, which was a lot of fun) and...it's gorgeous. Big and friendly and gorgeous. The core of it isn't the guests or the programme, but the party and fun. So many young fans having a fabulous time. Right now they're having that time outside my bedroom window, but that's OK, for happiness is a good thing.

I frittered away this morning, sitting in the sun, eating breakfast with **Véronique Lejeune** and **Frédéric Pinson (the French guests)**. Mihaela joined us after a bit and we sat around on the patio, drinking fine coffee and me wondering how the programming would go.

It wasn't going to start for hours. In fact, it's only just started now. We've missed one talk I would've liked to go to and the powers-that-mind-us think that it's quite possible for Ian Gibson and myself to meet the speaker later.

A lot of normal fan interaction is quite difficult here. Many, many people speak English, but it's not the main language (or even close). I'm meeting some wonderful folk, but not as many as I normally would. On the other hand, I'm being spectacularly well taken care of. I haven't felt as energetic as this at this stage in a con for years. Part of it is the minding, but another part of it is that there was no programming until 4 pm. Hanging out *is* a part of the programme.

My stuff tonight is a Q&A and a fan auction and I finish at midnight. I'm going to Ian Gibson's Q&A before then because he's an interesting bloke. We sat opposite each other at the guest lunch and we ate traditional Istrian food (so much truffle!) and talked about life and the universe for three hours. If I could sing then at this moment the song would be "The world is a many-truffled thing".

Right now I'm in the con coffee place. The con has shifted locations from the seaside resort to a convention centre, but it still has its tables of serious gamers and Xena chatting to a face painter while a Jedi knight strolls past. I met Xena earlier and we chatted about how tight corsets should be. Maja Mirković (who was our lunch hostess) is desperately jealous of me because of the Doctor Who incident at worldcon, and I've taught her some Japanese bad language: she speaks more Japanese than I do, but her teachers are polite and mine were my friends. And suddenly all the language differences fall away, for we are all in a young and vibrant SF convention at the seaside on a beautiful summer day. And I am fuller of truffled dishes than anyone has a right to be and all I need is a nap and life will be perfect.

My bed is miles away, so no nap (for calling on minders to drive me away from the con for this purpose seems wrong, even though it was actually put into the planning as a possibility – the Liburnicon folk are wonderfully caring and totally awesome at making sure I get coffee at all appropriate moments) but I can sit quietly for a minute and pull together some strength. I'm better than I was, but I am still obviously sub-optimal. I didn't realise this until I stopped.

Speaking of stopping, Igor Puhar (who was my email contact for the con) just checked in to see how lunch was. We both waxed lyrical about food, friends and truffles. I didn't tease this Igor about Gothic novels, but I did tease Igor-the-writer (whose surname I have lost) last night, for he has the same wonderful bounce of one of my nephews and so I succumbed to temptation and the lure of the name Igor. This is a very youthful convention and the mature citizens are twenty years my junior and a lot of fun. And now I need to be a good child and find people. It was a lovely little break and thank you for sharing it with me.

Gillian's schedule

SEPTEMBER

1 Zagreb to St Ives (fly to Heathrow, Piccadilly line to Kings Cross, fast train to Cambridge, J and R to meet me at Cambridge), check into Golden Lion

1 September

I'm en route to London. By this I mean I am at Zagreb airport, having passed through immigration and am drinking my last Croatian cunas (as coffee and water, for it's too early for grog) and staring at a bus outside the gate for the next flight to Girona. The bus claims to be going to Istanbul.

I was offered 250 euros to stay overnight in Zagreb, for they overbooked my flight, but I have fan-friends and research waiting for me in Cambridge. Also, if I stayed here another night, all I'd do is sleep.

There is one group of Croatian fans (who also happen to be con runners) who are awesomely efficient. Not only was my big suitcase waiting for me at Mihaela's place after Liburnicon, but they'd found a bunch of things I needed. Some were foodish and some were fannish and it's all organised that the ones I don't need immediately will be posted to me. This meant I could buy a small present for the friends who were taking care of my place while I'm away, for my luggage is beginning to be sufficient for such things.

Liburnicon was a very odd con in some ways. The bits at the hostel were some of the best bits I've ever experienced at a con. People were engaging in swordplay near the intellectual fans who were drinking beer and coffee and talking deep matters. Cosplayers (with some amazing costumes – and I missed being a judge because my talk ran late because the transport from Zagreb was fraught with problems) drifted among us and there is a picture somewhere of me with them. Inside there were tables of dedicated gamers, dedicatedly gaming. The gaming set-up was transferred to the hotel the next day and it was wonderfully conceived. There were not just games and tables: there was also a host or hostess so that anyone could game, whether they were alone or in company, experienced or novice.

This host system carried through the whole con. Where it worked (with the gaming) it was entirely wonderful. It worked for me yesterday afternoon, for I got a late lunch, fine company, an icecream and a guided tour. It got me my camera found when I left it behind and it dealt with my pain when weather changed. Some of the hosts were less experienced or were shyer or the roster failed and at those moments things were funky. I only got dinner one night because Mihaela made it happen, for instance. We really needed those handlers, to get from and to the day's events (for, after that first night, they were in a different town to the place we slept) and for basics. Mine were serial and all of them were exceptionally nice. I'm hoping they'll keep in touch, for the other benefit of this system is creating new friends.

I don't know how good a job I did as guest. This style convention was quite foreign (obviously) and I was fumbling somewhat. I did throw sweets at the audience for my Q&A, for it was essential to break the decorum at that stage. I am particularly good at breaking decorum when I have a packet of everyone's favourite childhood sweets. For these sweets I owe a new friend who was not my handler. She was just a nice person with a good sense of humour.

I spent a lot of time with the French guests, especially with **Véronique**, who is lovely and does gorgeous work. The Fred joined us sometimes and I joined them sometimes. We switched between French and English and I could tell precisely how tired I was by how much my French was actually French.

I also spent a fair amount of time with Ian Gibson, who I am guilty of stirring. He took it very well. It was kinda nice to meet the person behind the art. I've wondered for ages about how artists deal with Alan Moore. I didn't ask Ian because I didn't have to. His personality tells the story. He's charming and gentle when he needs to be, but he is also demanding and wants good work. He was very



Finnish fans are terribly serious, I'm told, so I obtained proof

- 2 St Ives, J and R til 2 pm, then Norris Museum, then check last bits of town for research.
- 3 check out of Golden Lion, Kari to pick me up and we go to Huntingdon market then to Cambridge
- 4 Kari and Cambridge, Caroline Mullan and lunch

Notes: Kari Sperring and I are the mistresses of the fine pub lunch. My favourite was The George in Huntingdon, for it was a nice age and had good food and interesting drinks. My other favourite was... actually, I liked them all. Cambridge and region turned out to be a series of pub lunches with friends and much talk about fannish issues and literature and history and cats.



Gillian meets moomin.

good with the young artists. I've seen many artists who tell the stories and don't share the techniques: Ian did both.

It was lovely for me to spend so much time with the other guests, but it meant none of us were available to the rest of the convention for quite as much as would be the case in Aussie conventions. It was much easier on our nerves, though, for we weren't on show in the same way, either. I would like to see how SFeracon handles their guests, one day, for I think it might be interesting.

One of the many things I love about being the GUFF person is that it's giving me an apprenticeship in a whole range of con organisation techniques. I can see why so many fan fund people end up running conventions. When my life is sorted, I might get back onto a con committee. While some aspects of these cons would not work in Australia, some would be quite magic. Australian young fans would love the Liburnicon gaming set-up, for instance.

In other news, Hairy Lemons are such a wild success here that I'm almost out of them. They turn out to be brilliant for post-worldcon lurgies. Tim Tams are not as popular outside Ireland and Britain but Hairy Lemons actually elicited several "We need to import these" conversations. Cat Sparks will be so proud.

I really like this country. I really like these people. There's a reserve and a politeness and an openness and an honesty and a great deal of courage. Also, they don't just say "We speak English" they really do speak English. I'm hoping some of the work of Croatian writers will hit the international scene soon, for every writer I spoke to had things to say and strong voices to say them with. And now it's almost time to leave the Istanbul bus behind and move to my gate. Boarding doesn't start for a few minutes, but I'm sitting near the café and I'd feel safer if I relocated to within sight of the correct gate. Because of the bus system, this means walking maybe 30 metres.

Everywhere outside the airport are stairs upon stairs and I had to ask for a lot of help with luggage, but inside the airport is a friendly place. It also has a duty free with the right balance between local chocolate and international goods. I had intended to conserve all my euros for Finland, but finding this out was such a happy moment that I quite gave up being sensible for five minutes. I bought truffle and olive spread for my friends and I bought chocolate for myself. Not much of either, but enough to cause small happiness.

And now my plane is late... I need to text someone and to contemplate my dangerous move to a few metres away.

More Random Notes:

1. 26 August 12.30 pm I have walked for two hours and can hardly think in English, much less German. German words float through my brain, however, and tangle the remnants of my English. They play tag with each other, desultorily. A kind bit from a shower washer...no, that can't be right. I'm actually writing this up from my notes and it's really St Ives on 2 September, having developed some kind of thingummie (I have medicine, I have bed, I have SG1 on the TV, but I don't have internet and can't find out when I'm being picked up until I do. My tired brain then and my breathless brain now are acting as an unsuccessful go-between with my appalling handwriting. I wrote down a great deal about a glass of water. I do not know why this water was so important. Yes I do! It was lunch just before I decided not to walk any more and ended up walking for two more hours. I saw much of central Vienna. My wobbly legs then were due to two cons in rapid succession. My brain is sludge.

2. Now that you'd endured more explanation than you ought, let me see if there's anything at all interesting in my notes from that day. Nup. Nothing. Never write notes when you are so very tired, like now. Obviously all that appears is nonsense.
3. All the conventions and travel have caught up with me. I'm really hoping Kari will ring and all will be solved without me getting out of my cocoon. This afternoon was pretty much a perfect storm of minor ailments, I got my work done, but not as well as I would like. And I got to catch up with friends and be a bit fannish before things went too funky. Fortunately the museum I'd lined up was very small and also fortunately the staff there was amazing. I have an email address for further inquiries, and they've emailed me a 1720 map so that I can trace the streets in my mind. It's a few years too late, but I wasn't expecting a map at all for St Ives and this is a wonderfully detailed one and it had only just barely been scanned, by a volunteer. This is why writers should visit locations wherever they can: people care and are helpful and can change novels. That's what happened this morning. Friends picked me up and David showed us the roads around here and explained how fenland operates. It has changed everything. St Ives makes sense and my characters make sense. And we all ate regional cheeses and the Istrian white I bought for this purpose for lunch. I was dropped back to the hotel and everyone else went their way, and it was lovely.



Muscovy duck three ways at Harald's

3 September

What have I done (apart from the last few hours, which were spent watching SF TV)? I have danced on a village green (four steps, but still, dancing), I have harvested haws and blackberries in a deserted Anglo-Saxon village and eaten them. I have explored bits of the fens and most of St Ives. I have eaten cheese and cherries in Ely and been given much help by many people, one of whom was a pharmacist. I have been given smiles by many people. I have had a conversation with a goodlooking (albeit inebriated) gentleman who was sitting on the steps at the back entrance to Cromwell's childhood church. We talked about the empty statue niches and the childhood habits of rulers. He also told me which pub Cromwell visited when he returned to his home town. I don't know why this gentleman was getting drunk at the back of the church, but he was a good conversationalist. Also, I think I may have persuaded a teenager working in the local supermarket to check out working visas.

There were fannish bits to my St Ives trip, of course: we talked about SFerakon 2000 in The Golden Lion last night, for instance.

I'm almost over the health blip, but I don't think I'll be up to going down to the bar to check my email tonight. Do not get con lurgie.

Gillian's schedule

SEPTEMBER

5 *The Great Fan Road Trip – Cambridge to York*

Check in at Linden Lodge

FantasyCon

6 *FantasyCon*

7 *FantasyCon*

8 *Check out Linden Lodge 10 am. 11.24 am train to Manchester*

Airport. 5 pm flight to Helsinki. Arrive Helsinki 10.30 pm arrival in Helsinki (22:30); Ben pick up and to Vahto.

9 *Turku*

10 *train from Turku to Tampere. Contact in Tampere is Marianna Leikomaa.*

11 *train from Tampere to Helsinki. Contacts in Helsinki are Sari Polvinen and Jukka Halme.*

12 *train or bus from Helsinki to Jyväskylä. Contacts in Jyväskylä are Irma Hirsjärvi and Jussi Väinikainen.*

13 *train or bus from Jyväskylä to Helsinki. Contacts in Helsinki are once again Sari and Jukka.*

14 *Sari & Jukka will take Gillian to the airport for the flight leaving at 17:10. Helsinki to London (Gatwick) Overnight in exotic Gatwick. Final dinner (sob).*

15 *10 am flight home*

Notes: No notes. There are none. I did so much in Finland and the Great Fan Road Trip was fun, but I'm tired. Also dreaming. I spent much time with cats in Cambridge and I saw museums and the Northern Lights and other things of great fabulousness in Finland. I also discovered that my weather sense is spot-on in all countries. And that Finnish fans rock and their pub behaviour is like that of Aussie fans (except that drinking etiquette differs significantly). And I didn't get to try a sauna because of the relics of my concrud, which means I'm going to have to return. In fact, I'm going to have to return to all these places, for I met so many wonderful people and I can't imagine not seeing them again.

5 September York, FantasyCon

Lots to report, so let me start with where I am. I'm in the bar of a slightly oversized hotel, drinking tapwater and keeping an eye out for friends. I've already caught up with Lee Harris (who is frantic) and Marc Gascoigne (who is more relaxed) and met David Tallerman and worried about Rob Shearman. I've run briefly into Kate Elliott, but she's impossibly busy so catching up will have to wait. Several people have admitted they know me from Loncon (but I suspect can't quite work out in what context) and I ought to be braving the Dealers' Room and persuading someone to sell my books for me. The trouble is that I have a chest infection and the Loncon lurgie. It's not quite bad enough to take to the doctor, but it definitely dints my style.

Susan Bartholomew has appeared, which is very good. I shall sit and chat a while.



Finnish vegetarian Viking food and proof that Finns appreciate vegetarian food - at Harald's

6 September

I did that, then I chatted with various people, including Foz Meadows and Ian Sales. I ended up having dinner with Edward James and Farah Mendlesohn and two PhD students, who are each doing fascinating subjects. They're at the stage in their research where the world is shrinking around them a bit and it was very salutary for me to have a dinner where my research was immaterial and my contracts an aside. It's interesting how the contracts of writers are more important to the writers than to anyone else except their readers, and I can tell my readers instantly for they want to know what the next book is about and when it will be available. All my publications are as nothing, as straw on the wind, says Gillian, dramatically, which is not at all true. The last year of the PhD is a peculiar place and my work was only of interest in that it could help – which, actually, it could. One of the students needs my unpublished monograph (and I hope will email me and remind me of this) and hopefully has already consulted my articles on the subject. I don't think she has, though, for people keep introducing me as a YA expert (which I am only in part) not as someone who does narrative studies of a particular kind. Even people who have seen my CV describe me as this, which is curious. I need to get that monograph in print and change this, for it was a bit daft sitting next to someone working in my field and have her be quietly tactful as if I were someone who might not be interested.

I really do have con lurgie. We're all hoping I don't have it as badly as everyone else, because of where I am in relation to my own home, but it's not a nice one. What I thought was something else, turns out to be the standard Loncon one. The next few days could be interesting. And I really regret not staying at the expensive hotel. This very nice B&B was better from the GUFF view (ie a lot cheaper), but is a fair walk from the con for someone who has wobbly legs. The bus that the website claimed was every ten mins turns out to be once an hour and two blocks away. I am taxiing back every night, and dealing that way. I might also have an early night tonight. Alas. And now, breakfast and people beckon!

Blogpost: 8th September, 2014. 3:09 am.

York is consistently wonderful to me and consistently quite difficult. The quite difficult aspect meant I left FantasyCon somewhat early and am in bed with a chocolate orange. They sell them here for £1. I would have bought a dozen if there was any space in my luggage, which there is not. Three days ago my luggage was nearly empty, except for dirty clothes, chocolate and the pillow that's bound for Finland (it has Moomins on the pillowslip, so there is no other possible destination) but FantasyCon intervened. Never visit the freebie tables at FantasyCon (or, in fact, the bookdealers) but, if you must, avoid the company of Edward James and Ian Sales for they enable the possession of books.

In fact, I've done pretty well considering I'm rather down with the Lonconflu. I have had to be in bed at reasonable hours each night, so I've missed the fun each evening, but I've met some amazing and wonderful people and talked shop and fannishness and

books and had a ball. I don't know if the people I met had quite the same time with me as I had with them, for they didn't know quite how ill I was and my mind led me into some interesting places, but they handled me very kindly and gently and if I went far wrong at all, they never let me know.

The people who rock above all others are Kari and all who share a household with her, and Glenda Larke. I suspect that the last few days would have been rather worse than occasionally troubling without them looking out for me. It was Glenda who found me a taxi a little while ago when I realised that if I didn't do some troubleshooting I would be at a doctor tomorrow instead of on a plane to Finland. Now that I'm lying down, my confused mind is less confused and it is really quite obvious that I possibly should not have emerged from bed at all today. But I did and I entirely enjoyed the session on worldbuilding with Kate Elliott and Tom Pollock (I keep saying that his surname isn't quite perfect, but it's pretty good). I looked for Kate later, for I had some thoughts on the guilt vs shame thing she mentioned, but my life was starting to go awry at that point and she turned invisible.

Much of the morning was spent hanging out in the dealers' room, buying a few books despite myself and discovering that people are so awesome in so many ways. I talked and I listened and I found a small part of myself unwinding and realising that not all of the world is as unsafe as it sometimes appears.

Glenda found me and we went for lunch. We found one of the places I wanted to lunch at this trip (all the other places went the way of all good things because I was husbanding my resources) and Glenda and I enjoyed playing spot-the-beheaded-animal while we ate. We then went to Barley Hall, which was our intent and partway through that it became obvious my day was not going to be a long one. Let me just say that there was blood involved in interesting amounts. Glenda handled me with calm and cheer and I am all sorted and provided for and, as I keep saying, probably just need bedrest, but I've had more unexpected strange and small crises in York than in any other place I've been, ever. I've also had some of the best experiences, and FantasyCon was definitely up there with the most delightful of them. When British writers get together, they are fun and thoughtful and very, very cool. Also (this mob, anyhow) delightfully unpretentious. There was one person who was pretentious for precisely 45 seconds and I wanted to study them for mutant behaviour. I missed my chance, for they ceased being pretentious before I had enough data.

8 September, at Manchester Airport

The free wifi here tells me that I am part of “le cool” in Tampere this week. I bought a Doctor Who magazine for the TARDIS, but I think the TARDIS faded at security. Security is uber-tough now. I commented that it was getting tougher and tougher and the security guy admitted that this was so and that all kinds of things were being screened that a few weeks ago were fine. Interestingly, Luton was closed today, due to security concerns. I hope I’m OK on this front. I do hope I’m OK.

I can’t do much online using the free wifi at the airport, but I can find out that I’m currently cool in Finland, and that Ian Watson has blogged our panel. And I apparently found this out before the intro screen cut in – I was supposed to choose an hour free wifi before I went exploring, it seems. I’m much more daring than I used to be... exploring without a permit.

I had a fabulous FantasyCon and spent most of it talking to people (some more new people in my life, and some catching-up with people I already know and love – only one panel, on fanfiction, and a reading where I tested the water for both my time travel novel and my cursed novel), but it was foreshortened due to lurgie. I could hardly move by this time yesterday and I had a rather bad cough. Glenda Larke found me a cab and I spent the evening dealing with much excitement, for my body decided that one thing wrong is never enough. Today I’m excessively tired, but not doing too badly overall. I’m making it places when I have to make it to places, basically, and I’m mucking up small things but, considering that this time yesterday I was walking dead, I’m doing quite well. I told the taxi driver this morning that what I really needed was two days in bed, but it turns out that what I really needed were three symptoms to stop symptoming and for me to reach the places I must. I want to be well for Finland, though. The Finns are so very awesome and are making so many interesting plans, that I want to enjoy every minute.

About yesterday, you really don’t want to know why, but I really did spend a half hour washing blood out of things at one stage. No-one died, but I will now forever associate FantasyCon with washing blood out of things.

I spent the morning doing proper SFnal things. I went to a worldbuilding workshop with Kate Elliott and Tom-of-the-near-perfect-surname. I didn’t spend nearly enough time with KE (but then, none of us did – she is much loved) and I think I blogged some of the rest of it. Let me check this out, if the free wifi will let me, for I could be saved remembering, if I’ve already said it somewhere (I’m a lazy sod, one day the world will recognise this fact) and the free wifi will not let me, so I’m giving up on unsafe and unreliable onlineness and returning to ordinary reporting.

There were no highlights of FantasyCon: this is because it was all good. Everything from hanging in the foyer with Kari Sperring and friends through meeting a bunch of totally nice British writers (I have a reading list as long as my arm, and that’s the short version of it) and hanging with them a bit, through kidnapping Glenda Larke and being fed lunch by her at the pub of my choice (which was a place called Trembling Madness which I chose 80% for the décor, which we both admired greatly: beams and stuffed animals make a fabbo combo) and then visiting Barley Hall with her, being told by a fanfiction writer after the fanfiction panel that she knew someone was going to raise the tough copyright questions but that she thought that I did it sensitively. It’s such a vexed and troubling question; fanfiction is important and yet currently it can border on the illegal. We probably need to have an industry rethink as to the ways we can be permissive without damaging our own work. I have let people play in my New Ceres universe – whether they did it as fans or pro - but I’m reluctant to do the same with my other

creations. As I told the audience, right now things are so much in flux that I do not want to hear about fanfiction based in my worlds, because if I hear about it I’ll have to do things I may not want to. I think we’re on the verge of sorting out some major copyright issues and that fanfiction writers might have to bear the brunt of that and it isn’t at all fair on so many people and in so many ways, but the issues still need resolving. It’s not as simple a matter as plagiarism and it may not be plagiarism at all (though sometimes it definitely is) and now I’m wittering. I only had the one panel and the one reading and the readings were a little hard to find, which means a whole heap of us less-famous writers joked about the size of our audiences.

The red shirt system FantasyCon uses to keep events to time and to keep speakers supplied with water and etc was mostly very effective. It didn’t work for my panel, but it worked for most other panels and it worked wonderfully well for the readings.

I had some fascinating conversations with Kev McVeigh and with Ian Sales (Kev worked out for me why I had been told I needed to meet Ian, but Ian and I talked about the life and universe things before we discovered we had politics in common) and discovered that Roy Gray is a mensch. He was so very supportive of a number of us and he and Susan Bartholomew and Kari and Phil Nanson and Sue Edwards and Brian Amerigen are the reasons the potential nightmare of being haunted by my books never eventuated. They each sorted a part of the problem and for my last leg of this journey I can now focus on the reasons I’m over here, rather than on troubleshooting.

I looked at what they all did for me and for others and realised what very good problemsolvers are in British fandom. They do this calmly and with a smile and it looks magically as if there wasn’t a problem. Except there was. Not just for me, but for big events like Loncon and medium events like FantasyCon. One of the FantasyCon organisers had to resign for she was temporarily homeless and another broke a leg and Lee changed his job and still FantasyCon was wonderful. Sophia McDougall was a bit defensive about having left the committee (but her reason was impeccable – no-one should have to continue volunteering when sorting out major life issues) and told me/us/audiences several times that she planned the programme, but I think that this was a sign that she wanted to do more.

My only quibble with the programme would be that some people did many panels and most did only one. I skipped items because I didn’t need to see the same people over and again, however interest-



Jukka showing us all a restaurant designed by a Leningrad Cowboy (Helsinki)

ing they were. It was a good programme, but not a big one and the multiple items impacted on choices because of this.

I need to keep this in mind, for the programmes I tend to work on tend to be around the same size. We don't have nearly the pool of talent to draw from in Australia, so there isn't a simple solution apart from capping the number of items people get put on. At Loncon this wasn't an issue: Loncon was so huge and there were so many programme participants that we were all spoiled for choice. Also, for the most part, Loncon organisers were very careful not to overwork people.

The Guests of Honour did much work, of course, but I suspect the only person who really slipped through the how-much-should-one-person-do net was me. This was because I was a bit bizarre, being an academic and a writer and the GUFF delegate, and that accounts for a quarter of my workload. The next quarter came from having a book on a bookstall and sitting there looking encouraging for a bit (this worked better at Shamrokon, but it was helpful at Loncon... when I could get there). The third quarter was the extended bits of the programme, that weren't allowed for in the printed version – rehearsals and receptions and suchlike. And the last quarter was the other side of GUFF: everyone stops and talks with you. And then there was my volunteer work, except that most of it was over before Loncon started – I only did three hours work at the con itself. I would've done more if I had more time, for the Green Room is wonderful and I will work under the guidance of Kari and Sue anytime, for they do such a marvellous job and I learned so very much from them.

The bottom line is that I was massively overprogrammed at Loncon (and I enjoyed it, but was a bit overwhelmed) but no-one really noticed except me, because Loncon was so huge. All it did, in fact, was give me a gold standard for overwork. If someone isn't on a programme for 25% of the time (I didn't work this out – someone else did the arithmetic, Caroline Mullan, perhaps?) then I shall say that they need to work harder.

No I won't. I will continue to think about the balance between participation and level of programming, for I don't think there is one single recipe or one simple answer. I think programming is one of those things that gets learned by doing and by watching how audiences respond. This is what I was doing at FantasyCon – I noticed that even an outstanding panellist was less regarded by audiences as someone to choose above a drink with friends when they'd seen that panellist in action four times that same convention and hadn't seen a group of others above once. Since programming is all about audience needs (or mostly, anyhow) this reaction was a really interesting one.

It's obvious my thoughts are on analysis rather than reporting today, so I might stop here. It's fifty minutes before my flight, so maybe they'll have finally announced the gate lounge. If it's one of the ones that's fifteen minutes away, I'll need to leave now, anyway, given my current snailspeed. Next time I report in, I may well be in Finland. I say this with the benefit of foresight... my plane is going to Helsinki.

Twenty minutes later. I hope you're impressed that I found my gate and that I trudged here with great rapidity. I am. I'm less impressed that I can't remember if I sent Ben Roimola my temporary mobile number, and that I can't remember where I stored his number. I suspect his was one of the numbers that failed because I didn't know how to turn it into an international number, in which case I sent him my number but he didn't get it. I am not so expert with mobile phones, for some reason.

Life is full of mysteries... I shall rummage through papers and see if that provides a solution. If it doesn't, then at least I shall look as if I know what I'm doing. The Finns, most fortunately, are more organised than me.



Jukka and Sari just before I met the Helsinki mafia and just outside their regular haunt

An hour later

My computer tells me it's an hour later, but it lies. For one thing, I've been on the plane a while. I've eaten my reindeer-in-mayo roll (and was very glad of my medieval languages, for they helped me piece out most of the other ingredients from the Swedish list – apart from the small amount of reindeer, they were pedestrian and safe) and drunk my water and watched the moon rise from gloriously yellow and patterned and high above the horizon to where it is now which is white and patterned and ignoring the horizon entirely. We've over Sweden, or we were over Sweden at the time of the last announcement and I'm a bit worried. People look at me on this plane and instantly speak English, or, in the case of the lady next to me, smile politely. I tried to chat and found out that she quite possibly has English but not of the Australian variety. It's funny that in Croatia I had to explain I was English-speaking for I look much more central European than I expected and here... well, I look very far from Finnish. Which I knew, but it's one thing to know and quite another to experience.

I don't know why it surprises me so much that I am visibly different²¹. But it does. Mind you, I don't know why it surprised me so much when I reached Vienna and had to laboriously explain (every single time) that really, my German was non-existent. I don't even have enough Finnish for this apology, for there wasn't time and my ears aren't yet accustomed to the sound of Finnish. It's a very beau-

²¹ It turned out I was shorter than most Finns, but that I was spoken to in Finnish just as often as in English. No-one was surprised that I was an English speaker (ie I didn't look local) and that, truly, everyone in Finland speaks English. The experience on the plane was a blip. An interesting blip, but a blip.

tiful language to listen to. Whenever there's an announcement I stop and listen, for it's too lovely not to. Maybe it's just as well I only have two words, for I'd not understand anyway, being too taken up with the music of it all.

While I'm on the subject of accents, mine rounded out a bit by the end of FantasyCon. My childhood accent returned in its full somethingness and occasional bods had trouble believing I was Australian, for it's closer to RP than most other Australian English. Those bods were none of them watchers of Neighbours. I got to use my Neighbours joke often and often and it's now quite worn out.

Is this the report you thought you were getting? It's the report one writes while floating in the air above Sweden watching the moon grow smaller and colder. (And I've just discovered that the nice lady sitting next to me is reading Russian – life is full of curious moments)

I spent a bit of time at FantasyCon chatting with anyone who couldn't get away fast enough about the fannishness of writers. There was a rumble of agreement that we are fans if we are fans, regardless of level of payment for work science fictional. I suggested to Roy Gray a continuum of work where amateur and professional divisions are less useful than quality of work, nature of work and nature of audience. Mostly, though, when we were talking about being fans we were arguing about which was our Doctor and other important matters. It is possible, therefore, to be a writer or an artist and even to make a living from it and to be a fan in a bunch of ways that may or may not link to the work one writes. Sometimes I think we create simple dichotomies or have catastrophic divides simply to mask our complexity and luminosity.

I suspect we have a half hour to go, or maybe forty-five minutes. This might be because it's dark outside and we arrive at 10 something. Looking at my timepiece won't help, for it's not set to Finnish time yet. Looking at my computer won't help, for it claims it's 4.43 am: I keep it on Canberra time in case work intervenes and in case I need Canberra time. Also to annoy anyone reading my blog, for it means that I post mostly with the Canberra time and people think I'm awake at unholy hours. Mostly, though, it's for work, since occasional emails drift through the travel and reach me and it makes it much easier to answer them in a timely fashion if I know what time it is and when they were sent. The moon is now very high and very white and far less interesting. I shall stop staring at it and stop writing and start reading one of the books I still haven't got round to reading (for this trip has been unaccountably busy).

Blogpost: 10th September, 2014. 5:11 pm.

I'm leaving Turku with great reluctance. I left Zagreb with great reluctance. In fact, I've left most places with great reluctance. What is wonderful about GUFF is that people open their doors to me because of it and we discover that we're friends.

This part of Finland is neither too hot nor too cold at this time of year. I'm wearing my blue jacket for a bit of warmth, but I'm also wearing sandals. Mind you, the sandals are a stopgap because I really need closed shoes at this point and do not have them because it's so very hard to find shoes that

fit me in Australia. My toes aren't cold, but they are a bit obviously visible.²²

Do you really want to read about my toes? Possibly not.

I'm on the fast train to Tampere. I have four stops and just over an hour and a half until I get there. Tonight I'm meeting Tampere fans and I've been warned that there may be a Viking restaurant. Last night we spent most of the evening hanging out in an old school house that has been turned into a brewery, and drinking their product and chatting. So many fans are historians of various sorts and they're all doing interesting work. One of them took us round the castle at Turku yesterday, and we also visited a fabulous archaeological museum. And markets. Did I tell you about the markets? I have pictures...

The code on my ticket has just been read by a passing conductor. She said Hello, waved her device over my paper (and before that over a series of mobile phones), said Thank you and went. This means I can now deal with Hello and Thank you in Finnish.

And now, if you'll excuse me, it's time to admire the scenery for a bit. This is a very green land and I want to enjoy the last of



The best cake of my whole trip - thanks Heli!

the morning mist. Autumn has just hit, and it's that beautiful eternal moment I love.

Turku was amazing. In fact, all of Finland was amazing. I spent my time with teachers and translators and writers and a whole

²² I wasn't the only one who thought this. Susanna gave very firm instructions to everyone in Tampere that I needed to purchase footwear. In Tampere we found me a nice pair of closed shoes, very comfortable, and they were a normal size and not too expensive, which is almost impossible for me in Australia. I celebrated this by buying two pairs of Crocs in Helsinki, with the aid of Sari. I now have three pairs of new shoes and all of them fit, which is a small miracle.

bunch of people who shared my fannish interests and had interesting lives, to boot. Because Finland was last, however, I didn't write things down. I didn't write down, for instance, the long bookish conversations I had in the Finnish countryside, or that Ben Roimo-

11 September

I'm down to my final days abroad. I don't want to write this report, though. I want to go right back to enjoying myself. I'm on the train between Tampere and Helsinki (we are surrounded by morning mist, for it is autumn and the trees and fields are slowly emerging – there will be a castle on my right in ten minutes, my ticket says, for my ticket was annotated with important information last night at the pub) and halfway through my Finnish sojourn. It's a wonderful sojourn. The Finns are tremendous hosts and it would take a total grouch to not enjoy every moment. My inner grouch has been frightened and has gone into hiding. I didn't realise this until yesterday, though, when a small group of us visited the Moomin Museum in Tampere. I may insert a picture at this point, to demonstrate what a middle-aged grouchy Australian thinks of the Moomin Museum in Tampere or maybe what serious Finnish fans actually look like.

The museum is of original art by Tove Jansson and her partner (I can now pronounce Tove Jansson in an un-Australian fashion – I do not know if I'm correct, but it now is recognisable to Finns, which is rather an improvement) and it includes my dream house. All it needs is a few extra rooms for books and the Moomintroll Mansion would be totally perfect.

Jansson's art is totally perfect: the art for the books is even more amazing in pen and ink than in print.

After the Moomins (and several people back home will find themselves the happy owners of miniature moomins at some stage) we went to a museum that showed the homes of factory workers over nearly 100 years. It was like Susannah Place House in Sydney, with different rooms for different families over time and covering different situations. Australian factory workers had a lot more space (at least three times the amount) and a lot more privacy and, generally, better quality lives. Finnish factory workers, on the other hand, had saunas and a really strong community set-up. One room for six people, though, for everything except cooking and washing (and these were done using shared facilities) can't have been easy. I can see why Australia looked tempting to people, with its separate bedrooms and private kitchens.

We had an early dinner yesterday, and an amazing one. There's a place called Harald, a small Finnish restaurant chain. It claims to be Viking, but that's the gimmick to get people in. It's really rather fine food using local ingredients. I ate Muscovy duck cooked three ways, for instead ("Be careful of the bullets" said the waitress, for it was wild duck) and three flavours of icecream (sweetgrass, cardamom and lingonberry/heather) served with an apple and sea-buckthorn sauce. The flavours were so good that I wasn't interested in food at all for the rest of the day – those flavours sat with me and made me smile every time I thought of them.

After dinner, we went to find me shoes, for Susanna was worried (justifiably) about the state of my footwear. All I had were old sandals, for the other sandals had died. I now have a fine pair of walking shoes, not cheap, but about half the price they would have been in Australia. The odd thing was walking into an ordinary shoe shop and finding something on the rack that fitted me.

Clutching the bag with my new shoes, I met the Tampere mafia. Such a nice bunch of people! They gave me warnings about the Helsinki group, which I am meeting tonight. The Turku mob also gave me warnings about the Helsinki group (who apparently really know how to live). In preparation, I drank only water last night. I didn't drink only water the night before. We met in an old school-house that has been turned into a brewery, and I tried the cranberry cider and then a blackcurrant cider and then Tero persuaded me to try a drink that is very trendy (basically gin and grapefruit – initially it tasted suspiciously like Alka Selzer, but it improved upon acquaintance and made me feel healthier and less drunk each sip) and ate a



Irma at the primary school

la picked me up at an unholy hour and drove me there. I learned about the Finnish translation of Robert Jordan's Wheel of Time and about saunas and about politics and about ... so many things. Of all the stages of my journey, the Finnish one is the least well described. It was full of wonderment: museums, a school fair, food, and friends. The Northern Lights (I've now seen both southern and northern auroras) and medieval castles. There was no convention in Finland, because my timing was not good, so fans had meetings in each city I visited and my evenings were spent talking. It was perfect.

14 September

I'm on my way home. Actually, I'm on my way to Gatwick, but that's step one towards home. I have somewhat of reporting to catch up on, but I don't know if I'll get it done right now. I ought to, but my mind is geared up for travel rather than for reporting. Also, I'm trying to use Norwegian's famous free wifi to check my email for something a bit urgent (about tonight's accommodation) and the single account it doesn't want to connect to is that one. It also won't connect to Facebook, but Facebook I am not in urgent need of. Facebook was just a matter of checking in and maybe saying hi.

Security is fierce right now. Even at Helsinki I was patted down because the scanner was set to look-for-everything so underwire bras set it off. Australian friends are reassuring me that Tony Abbott's "Look, threat!" is a way of taking attention away from our sorry excuse for a budget, but it's more than that and, yes, I'm worried. I'll be relieved to be home, from that end.

I will be sorry to be home from so many other angles. No-one told me that GUFF would find me my kind of people in four different countries. People who understand the importance of Doctor Who, chocolate, moomins and seeing the Northern Lights in Jyväskylä. People who totally get that if one cares about rocks then one will be delighted by seeing a giant cutting in the rain (thanks, Mr Roimola!) and that when one is a bit of a foodie then one wants to eat elk and get drunk on cloudberry liqueur and meet Finnish fandom's best chef (and by 'meet' I mean 'eat much fabulous food made by her'— though the reindeer and cheese pastries Marko made and the drink I started calling Finnish Kir were also amazing). And, and, and... so many conversations about so many subjects that matter. We talked politics and fandom and went to a primary school fete to put in a bid against the closure of a local branch library in Jyväskylä. We saw holy lakes (in Turku) and layers of hills and lakes and deep green trees (why did no-one tell me how beautiful Jyväskylä was?) and museums and ate the best doughnuts ever and laughed a great deal.

The Finnish sense of humour is wonderful and the Finnish practical approach to allergies is tremendously reassuring. The Finns understand food allergies and mould sensitivity and animal sensitive and they handle all of these without fuss and with a great deal of care. Even the best doughnuts in Turku (at the lookout tower) are available gluten free and dairy free for those who need them thus.

When I download my photos I'll add to this and tell you a bit about what I did in Finland (besides the small bits already documented) but now I'm flying over Denmark and it looks like Cloud Cuckoo Land because of the number and variety of clouds. Also, I want to try again to find that missing email. There are other ways to find the information when I get to Gatwick, but reading my email would be so much the easiest.

At Gatwick, I'm having dinner with some of the London fans, one of whom I met on the first night of this amazing journey. Things do come full circle, sometimes in our lives. I'm not finished reporting yet, for I'm still 10,000 miles (or thereabouts) from home, but I nearly am. I am a different person from five weeks ago. GUFF kindly found me my feet after over ten years of me not knowing where they were. I am walking more firmly in the world.



What the Finns drink at home - Moomins!

'snack' for dinner. It was a generous plate of fried onion rings and chips and a pickled cucumber, served with a good mayo (which was flavoured with capsicum, which I'm writing in order to remember, as it was yummy and easy to make).

I've run out of time, for the sun is making the mist lift and I've just got a picture of the castle by the lake at Hameenlinna and this means I have scenery to watch for the next fifty minutes. I fell in love with Croatia and now I'm falling in love with Finland. The Finns may be reserved to strangers (and the Finnish fans tell me this is so) but they're exceptionally wonderful to friends and to fellow-fans. And even the reserved public face is never an impolite one. It's like having loads of personal space and privacy in public, which is rather nice, especially when it's accompanied by coffee and hugs and friendship in private.

I asked Marianna if cons were public or private (not quite in those words) and she pointed out it was fandom, so they were private ie the friendly and warm side of the Finns. I need to live closer to Finland, for I need their conventions the way I now need SFerakon in my life. People of awe, both fannish groups.



Liburnicon (courtesy the organisers)

16 September (this date is wrong, but at this stage, no date is quite right)

My mind is back in Australian time already and complaining a bit about being up at nearly 3 am. I can't so much as nap for another hour, though, for I'm sitting in the gate lounge at Dubai, my baggage having been checked and checked and checked (and those three checks were just this last hour). Security is significantly higher than when I left, but everyone is so polite and efficient that it's not a big deal. And I didn't have to catch a train, escalators, moving walkways and walk three kms this time. I wandered for a bit to stretch my legs (for the long haul is such a pain even with a bit of walking, but without that bit of walking it can be unendurable, especially when one lacks a window to lean on and sleep on, which I do (I didn't get any Emirates windows but all my Qantas legs are windows – this gave me a window and some sleep for the fourteen hour big leg to the UK but none for the ten hour leg coming back).

I'm pondering the possibility of an Arrow marathon instead of sleep, for I'll be at the relaxed part of the flight just when I ought to be waking up. A TV marathon means I can catnap and I think I've worked out how to tell Emirates' system to play its way through, in sequence.

We'll find out if I'm clever in an hour. Or we won't.

My movie for the first leg was *The Monuments Men*, for there is a dearth of SF. Qantas is the airline for SF, in case you were wondering, while Emirates has a bunch of fun TV series and some really interesting programming in other languages.

My only airport purchase was a *Doctor Who* magazine (at Gatwick) for I and a friend (I bought two copies) really need cybermen keyrings in our lives. And all this is the riveting stuff one contemplates when partway through an intercontinental flight when one really doesn't want to spend too long dwelling on the reasons why the security people are so very careful. A friend in Australia said "It's just Abbott diverting attention from the budget" but I doubt the nice lady and gentleman inspecting every single component of every single bag were thinking of Australian politics.

We need reliable teleportation. I need to be closer to Europe.

I possibly also ought to tell you about my overnight in exotic Gatwick. Claire Brialey and Mark Plummer met me for dinner. Mark bought us dinner, in fact, which meant I had emergency taxi money when the shuttle bus system proved less than transparent and my aches too much for comfort and also for those *Doctor Who* magazine. I debriefed Claire and she seemed happy with my GUFFdom, so I can now retire (in a mere few hours, but 'mere' I mean of course nineteen) and become one of the GUFF administrators for two seasons.

GUFF expenses were unpredictable in different countries. In some places people kindly bought me drinks and dinner and in other cases I kindly bought them the same. I'm a little worse off financially than I had predicted, but I have three new pairs of shoes (that fit! My feet fit European shoes – they seldom fit Australian shoes) and also sweets and chocolate to hand out at Conflux, so it probably works out as even.

They're starting to call us for boarding. I shall leave you now and focus on getting on the plane and finding my seat and and preparing for immense fatigue at the other end. Exciting stuff, I know. This report is totally full of exciting stuff you need to know, or maybe it's entirely full of something else...

Now I'm in Perth, with much suddenness. Also with a viewing of eighteen episodes of *Arrow* Season 2. I am significantly worse for wear, for sleep was not easy and so I had a series of tiny catnaps rather than actual sleep, but I am in Australia again and my mobile phone has its local chip in (I'm so amazingly international – my mobile has cards for different countries).

Perth airport was somewhat refreshing after the heightened security of all the European airways. The queue for the actual security coming into the domestic terminal was precisely one person deep. I learned from my experiences and put everything possible on the belt and didn't get beeped at (no-one was being patted down here, but there was re-checking when people were beeped at) and the lady processing me joked about my line of trays and we started chatting about the trip and reluctantly had to give up the conversation when I realised I was delaying things.

Border security was likewise entertaining. When my list of things I was not bringing in was checked (everything was checked by mobile staff, so it felt as if we were all wandering randomly through space and being chatted with by bods in uniforms) I heard an announcement from my flight "Would the person who left their dentures on flight EK012 please report to staff." My next report was to a nice lady who was asking if I had food and I admitted to chocolate and that the dentures were not mine.

Where things are different here is invisibility. This was my last attempt to find my dream handbag, since airport shops are more likely to stock the kind of thing I want than regular handbag stores. I have checked every single shop I've had time to check at every single airport and was almost tempted to give up. There were a few shops here, though, so I entered one saying "I am questing for a handbag" and the lady was useful even though they had nothing suitable. She sent me to Witchery and my visit there reminded me why I avoid shops like that in Australia, even if they have Objects of Interest. Women of certain waistlines and insufficiently obvious wealth are studiously ignored in such shops. I decided to not even walk into Victoria's Secret, but checked from a safe distance. I've been used to being delightfully visible for weeks and the return to cellophane was dispiriting. At the last shop, though, I was served by a woman my own age and found the bag I needed. I haven't transferred things yet, for I've noticed that the more incrementally fatigued I am the more likely I am to leave my prize possessions where they ought not be.

All this is my way of saying "I'm back in Australia, and only a few thousand miles from home." We were told by the pilot that the weather is brisk today in Perth and all the tourists on the plane carefully put jackets on so that they would not suffer from the vilely cool weather that is Perth in September. Right now it's a brisk 25 degrees outside and the sky is a long pale blue. I suddenly remember that we do big skies in Australia. (And I just fell asleep on my keyboard, here in the transit lounge. I am pure class.)

And that is the end of my report. There are so many things I haven't talked about that I should, but life is about to move on. Thank you everyone who voted for me, who supported me, who hosted me, who carried my suitcases, who helped me in various ways. Thank you especially to friends, old and new. The fan funds are all about community and I really love my new one. If I had the chance to do it all again (without conclud and one particular evening in York) I would. I already miss everyone.

POLICE PUBLIC CALL BOX

THIS
IS A
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CALL
BOX
PULL TO OPEN

