

Marcin "Alqua" Kłak

THE GIANT LEAP TO NEVER NEVER



The giant leap to Never Never

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GUFF Trip Report 2018



Preface

Have you ever wondered what GUFF really is¹? Maybe you know it is a Fan Fund. Some readers also know that it is the programme of fannish exchange between Australasia and Europe. Yet now – when I am writing these words – I know one more thing: GUFF is an adventure. Maybe even the biggest fannish adventure of my life.

I joined fandom in 2002. This means that now my "fandom times" constitute around half of my whole life and definitely more than half of the life I remember. I have done a lot of fannish things. I have been writing for fanzines and running conventions; I chaired a few cons as well. I had the chance of visiting conventions in my country and in the rest of Europe and, thanks to CanSMOF, I had the opportunity to visit SMOFcon 35 in Boston. In 2017 I had the great pleasure to hand out the Hugo Award for the Best Fancast. I treasure all those memories. Each and every one of them is something I value. I am not sure whether I can say that I am FIAWOL but definitely this concept is dear to my heart.

And here we come: GUFF was the biggest adventure in my fannish life. It is not because it is so far away, it is because of what happened. Since my very first convention – DOJIcon 2 in March 2002 – I had this impression that fandom is my place on earth. Thanks to many great people I have met, I still have this feeling today. And GUFF was a reminder of how true this is.

¹ For those who are not yet familiar with GUFF, a short introduction: GUFF stands for the Get Up-and-over Fan Fund or Going Under Fan Fund (depending on whether the trip is from Australasia to Europe or the other way round). It is a fan fund – meaning that the costs are covered by fans. The purpose of GUFF is to allow for the exchange of fans between Australasia and Europe. Everything started in the late 1970s when GUFF joined the other big funds: DUFF (Down Under Fan Fund) and the original, TAFF (TransAtlantic Fan Fund). Those were allowing for fannish exchange between Australasia and North America (DUFF) as well as North America and Europe (TAFF).

A person who becomes a GUFF delegate is sent to the other hemisphere (for me it was a trip from Poland to Australia and New Zealand) to meet fans and attend at least one convention there. After the trip, the delegate becomes an administrator and needs to take care of the fund for the next two trips (it means that at each moment there are two administrators – one in Europe and the other in Australia or New Zealand. Administrators are responsible for organising GUFF voting and for raising funds. The latter may be achieved in multiple ways – one of those being Fan Funds auctions where items donated by fans are auctioned. Another is by distributing trip reports like the one you are now reading.

Should you be interested in supporting Fan Funds in any way, please get in touch with us. Current administrators for GUFF can be found in the GUFF section of the website <http://ozfanfunds.com/>

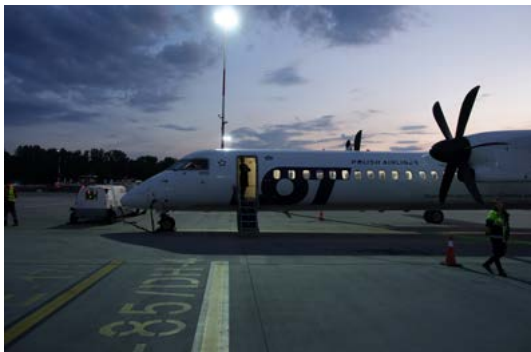
On my trip to Australia and New Zealand I met people who did everything to show me their support – people whom, in the great majority, I had not met before. All of them invested their time to show me their country. Some of them were kind enough to host me. All of them made this trip my greatest fannish adventure. And the importance of this adventure lies not in the fact that both New Zealand and Australia are fantastic places. It is not because I had the opportunity to visit fascinating SFF and science related places. The real greatness of GUFF is in meeting People. And now, when it is over six months since my trip ended, I am still impressed by all of you; I am extremely grateful for the time we spent together, and I hope I'll manage to come back and meet you all again.

And here, my dear reader, I will try to show you how the trip looked for me. I was writing this report while I was there. I think it is a little bit of a diary rather than a report but I hope you don't mind. Let me invite you to my adventure. Let me show you my GUFF memories.

22nd / 23rd May

So the trip has began. I was kinda terrified by the prospect of such a long journey. But haven't I been waiting for the trip for such a long time too?

After work I was panicking about whether I would manage to be at the airport on time, whether my luggage is not too heavy and whether the stuff inside will not come out of my suitcase like an Alien from poor Kane. Then at the airport I was told that there is a short time for my transfers and there is a risk my suitcase will arrive



This is where my trip began. I was flying on a small plane from Cracow to Warsaw.

the next day (first moment of joy!) and that they cannot give me a boarding pass for the last part of the journey as it is run by Qantas, not LOT, and they have different ticketing systems (second moment of joy).

Well, after a short trip to Warsaw and a waaaaaay longer one to Singapore, I was there on time. Considering I didn't have much time I was running to the gate, looking for a transfer desk on my way. I had been told I should be able to get my boarding pass at the gate, so I wasn't that scared. But when I finally was at the gate I was told I had to get the boarding pass from the transfer desk (which I obviously overlooked) and so I would have to go back to find it (third moment of joy).

It turned out, though, that all my panic was not needed as I got the boarding pass and my suitcase arrived with me. I was picked up from the airport by David Cake at whose place I was staying. It was a long trip but I made it. Still, I made one mistake... I slept too much in the planes and I had slight jet lag. It was not really bad, but if I had only been stronger there would be no jet lag at all.

One thing I am really happy about is the fact that I finally got to watch Black Panther. I was planning to see it for a long time but somehow I didn't have the

time. Now, long hours of flights (in total ~21 hours) gave me the opportunity to see it. I have also seen part of Blade Runner 2049, but the entertainment system went down for whole plane and I didn't finish the film. I promise it was not my fault. Really.

24th May

I had so many plans! We were about to go to the city to buy a SIM card for me, see the city, and maybe visit some museums... But then, firstly, Optus told me they don't offer a prepaid card which will also work in New Zealand (why?), and then I was told the same by Vodafone (:() but they were at least cheaper. So I bought the card and started my mobile and was gladly ready to open google maps... and it came out that Orange has had my phone SIM-locked... So I had to call them and ask for the unlock code (which was not as easy as I thought) but finally, late at night, my phone with an Australian SIM started to work. Oh dear, what a joy it was. Being in a foreign country with no viable option to contact people was frustrating. I also feel a lot safer when I know that at any time I can use my mobile to find a way to a certain place etc.

After I bought the SIM card and realised I won't be able to use it on that day David and I went to the tourist information stand. I received a map and some advice, and David offered to give me a ride to King's Park. He just wanted to show me where the bus stop is, in case I needed to get to his place by bus later.



Interior of The White Dwarf with *Pathfinder* RPG visible in the centre.

And the bus stop was right there, but then my eyes have seen what I hadn't seen before! The White Dwarf – Science Fiction bookshop.

Would you think that the fact I had absolutely no space in my luggage would stop me from entering? If yes you would be wrong, but I do believe you knew better. Of course, I had

to get inside and see all the lovely books that were there. And we met David's friend, Helen, and I learned that apart from Swancon there is a second fan-run convention in Perth. It is GenghisCon, which takes place in January (and I regretted it was May already); Helen had chaired it several times, but she does not do it any more.

I decided to look for books by Polish authors, or to be more precise by Andrzej Sapkowski as unfortunately not many writers from Poland are translated into English. I was a little bit surprised not to find him on the book shelf under the letter S. It was kinda disappointing. Still, when we were about to leave I did find his books on the shelf for games fiction. Knowing Sapkowski's opinion about games and gamers, and that he believes games did nothing good for him, he would probably be angry (at the least). But you know, it makes sense to put those books there. All in all he became famous in the English speaking world thanks to The Witcher game series. I talked about it with Helen and I advised her not to read the newest volume – Season of Storms – as it is not too good (so to say).

The White Dwarf had not only books but also some geek stuff and RPGs, and I realised that Pathfinder must be the most popular RPG in Australia (or at least in Perth). Then I was told that what I could see here was nothing compared to the games shop that happens to be nearby. So we went to the Tactics Games and Hobby store. As a good shop for geeks, it was located in the basement. And OMG how much stuff there was! It was really difficult to walk between the shelves with my backpack (the small one). There were a lot of RPGs, with a big shelf dedicated solely to Pathfinder. But there were also board games, war games, models, some books and tons of other things I didn't manage to realise.

When we were finished with Tactics it was a good time for lunch and so we walked to a place where we could eat something. It was a kind of Vietnamese restaurant that I quite enjoyed (unfortunately I don't know how to use chopsticks...). After lunch it was a great time to visit the bookshop that David had been recommending. It was Stefan's Books, run by David's friend Stefan. We spent a lot of time there, discussing multiple things – beginning with books and authors, through fandom matters, and finishing with politics. I found some beautiful books: British classic editions of *The Handmaid's Tale* and *Brave New World*

and also some nice editions of Lovecraft. I got recommendations on Australian writers (highly appreciated). All in all it was a long and fruitful discussion. And when we checked our watches it was too late for any sightseeing, as it was already starting to get dark. So in the end my whole first day was a lazy one and devoted to geek shops in Perth. I quite enjoyed it. I was able to get some rest after the flight and see some places that I believe I should've seen.

In the evening I had the pleasure to meet David's wife, Karen. We had a talk about some fandom and literary matters. Karen explained me how I should get to Mandurah, which was the plan for the next day. There was just one issue... the wind was blowing like crazy and the rain decided that clouds are boring and it would be better on earth. Actually it seemed as if Perth is the best place for water...

25th May

Some people say that you should lay plans in order not to follow them. I don't agree. When I am preparing a plan I want to follow it. I know that sometimes it is impossible... but I do my best to follow the plan. Still, considering the weather, I was not sure if I would manage to get to Mandurah. Fortunately in the morning the weather looked acceptable (if not nice), so I went to the station. I won't describe the trip as it won't be interesting for you. For me it was nice, though, as I got the chance to see some relatively "wild" parts of Australia. What is important is that I was lucky enough not to get lost (yay).

In Mandurah I met with Glenda Larke, who offered to give me a tour around the city and its vicinity. We had discussed before the possibility for a barbecue, but considering the weather that was not an option. Speaking of weather – it seems that as a Pole I am defining "nice weather" or "relatively



Glenda and I at Lake Clifton.

nice weather" differently than people here in Australia do. When I was getting close to Mandurah Glenda texted me that the weather was awful and for me it was more or less OK. It became much worse later, but give me a moment until we get there.

We started the trip by visiting a café. It was near the estuary where you can meet dolphins, but I was not that lucky. The estuary was nice, though, and a cup of tea is a good thing in the morning. Later on Glenda took me to Lake Clifton to see the thrombolites. It was windy as hell but, you know, it may have been my last opportunity to see them so we went. It is part of a National Park and is a really lovely place. The thrombolites themselves look like stones, but they are way younger than many stones. Those ones were "merely" 2,000 years old. Although not overwhelming visually, those microbial colonies are quite interesting – check them out on the internet. On our way back from the lake it started to rain, and then the weather got better and we went to the restaurant in a place where you can often see dolphins (again I was not the lucky one) and mantas (I believe you can see a pattern here already). Still, the lunch was good.

The last part of the trip was devoted to the Ocean. I had wanted to see it and thanks to Glenda I did. The wind was momentarily so strong I was not sure if I would be able to move forward, but I managed somehow. I even collected a few shells on the beach. The bad part of the experience was that both my glasses and camera lens became covered with the salt from the water droplets. But it was worth it.



One of my first views of the Indian Ocean.

Getting close to the end of the trip, Glenda took me to a place where she knew some marsupials are living. We were very quiet in order not to scare them. However, although the place was really beautiful it wasn't "marsupialful" at all. I am not the one for whom the Australian mammals would appear. I was

way luckier with the birds: Glenda showed me pelicans, ibises, ducks, parrots, seagulls, crows and so on.

It was a great day trip; I saw a lot of interesting places and I felt I was in Australia. Even so, the tour would not make so much sense if not for Glenda. She not only gave me a ride around the Mandurah, but mainly we were talking. All the time – while walking, eating, looking at the wonders of nature – we were chatting. We covered a lot of topics, from Polish fandom and literature, through literature and writing in general, up to private matters and even history and politics. It was a wonderful day I would love to repeat.

And the evening came afterwards. David had let local fandom know that I was there and willing to meet. He and Karen were so nice that they offered to host other fans at their place for the evening. So after dinner we prepared to greet the guests and started talking. One of the topics we diverted into was fanzines. And here I got a great opportunity. They had the whole series of two Perth-based fanzines (or maybe rather semi-prozines). The first was *Eidolon*; there were multiple issues, and one thing I must mention is the covers. Some of the issues have absolutely fabulous simple covers with just one relatively small piece of art on the whole cover. I love such minimalist style. The second zine, *Borderlands*, was one where David was doing editorial stuff. There were eleven issues in total and I had the chance to browse through some of them. I want to read both *Borderlands* and *Eidolon*; I hope I will squeeze in some time to do that.

I wanted to present Polish fanzines as well, as I had an English issue of *Smokopolitan* with me (I took a few to donate for the Fan Funda auction and to show to local publishers, hoping that maybe some will be interested in translating Polish authors). I am not sure how David and Karen enjoyed it but David spotted one thing: he asked if the biggest Polish convention is really 40,000 people. I confirmed this, and asked if they wanted to see the pictures as I had some with me. They both expressed interest.

When we started to look at pictures some kind of magic happened and the invited fans appeared. The first to arrive was Shay and afterwards another David. I think it took us an hour to browse through my pictures from the last Pyrkon

(that took place the weekend before I left for the GUFF trip). The con was huge with 43,000 members. I must admit I was a little bit proud we have such big convention in Poland. I was happy to explain what was shown in the pictures. I also mentioned some "dark sides" of growing conventions to this size – the queues are one of those downsides.

After the "official" part of the meeting we moved to the loose talk when we browsed through countless topics. I am not able to list all of them and I am not sure how we got to a few of them (energetic politics of Poland and Germany as an example). I think this is the special kind of magic which happens when friends meet: you start talking and the discussion becomes alive and drags you to places you were not considering as worth visiting. From the very beginning of my fannish existence, I felt that fandom is my family and we are all a group of friends even if we haven't yet met. So here it proved to be true...

26th May

It was the late morning. I had to get some rest and I am glad I got that today. Nonetheless, after eating breakfast there was no time to be wasted. Our original plan was to go to Rottne Island to see some cute local marsupials: quokkas. Unfortunately, because of the storm the day before and the waves' height, it was impossible to get to the island by ferry. Thankfully Karen and David proposed another trip. We decided to visit Caversham Wildlife Park.

As you may guess it is not a typical SF-related destination, but everyone who visits Australia should see some local marsupials and as I was not lucky the day before we tried again. Firstly, just on our way to the park, Karen spotted large mobs of kangaroos grazing near the road. Have you ever seen a child looking at something awesome for the first time in their life? Well, I looked exactly the same way. I know it was childish but I was so excited. Kangaroos are so cute and nice, and it is so easy to forget that one should not be hugging them as they are able to disembowel you. In fact, hugging is part of the disembowelling process. Fortunately they would only do that if you corner them.

When we arrived at the park we were given a plan of the events and it looked interesting; we managed to be on time to see part of the park and then go to meet wombats and koalas. First we entered the kangaroo area. Those ones were really tame and I was able to feed them (it was allowed). If I hadn't looked like a child before I certainly



Karen and I feeding the kangaroos
in Caversham Wildlife Park.

did then. Animals were quite eager to approach you when you had the special food which was available in a bin there. So I fed the kangaroos and stroked them. When tamed they are as cute as they seem. It was a lovely experience. Apart from the adult ones there were also young kangaroos – joeys. Some of them were still in the pouch and some were already walking on their own.

It's worth pointing out that many of them looked like they were not giving a shit about anything. They are so cool that nothing can affect them. Check the pictures – really, I will never be able to be so cool and relaxed as those kangaroos seem to be.

Then we went to meet the wombat and his friends. Here I was slightly disappointed as a few birds were chained to the tree trunks. I do understand why it was



Meeting the wombat.

done; I know it is easier to show them this way to children, but I simply don't like it. I decided not to photograph those birds, despite the fact they didn't look uncomfortable. There were some other animals here that you were able to stroke including wallabies (smaller cousins of kangaroos – some of them



David and Karen in Caversham Wildlife Park.

look more rodent-like), lizards, possum, snake... And there was a wombat. Oh, those are huge and unbelievably cute. People were not allowed to touch it apart from a small area on its leg, as wombats have some sensitive whiskers on the body. I decided not to stroke it, just to make sure I wouldn't make it suffer.

And later we met koalas. I could describe how cute they look but let's face the truth: everyone knows how cute koalas are. Their caretakers had taken two out so that people could take a picture with them. One was simply sitting on a tree trunk, seemingly sleeping. The other was hugging the caretaker. She tried to put him on a tree trunk, but what fun would that be to him? He started to move down so she had to take him in her arms again. I was told this one was called Kyle and it seemed he really enjoyed people :)

There were a lot of birds in the park. Some of them were fenced in and some were kept in cages. I saw emus, parrots, pigeons, kingfishers, a cassowary and wrens. Those last ones are so small and so beautiful. The flocks must be similar to a flock of butterflies! There were also other birds, including a pelican, swans, geese and Australian small penguins – the last of which I was able to see being fed. It is fascinating how this small creature can eat four fishes in a row by just swallowing them.

I also saw the happiest animal in the world – a quokka. They always look like they have a smile on their face. Echidnae



This quokka may seem angry but look at its smile!

were also present, but they were all in a house as the day was cool and a little bit rainy. I could go on like this for the next few pages. There were plenty of animals from multiple taxonomy groups. Still, as it is not really SF-related, I will stop here. I believe I gave you a snapshot of what the day was to me. I am really happy about this trip. I am not a big fan of zoos and the park was a little bit zoo-like, but I still enjoyed my time there. I am only hoping that those animals are tamed enough that they don't mind all of us – tourists looking at them and taking their pictures.

I thought it was the end of the day but when we had our evening chat David proposed to go somewhere else and I said, why not? So he drove me to King's Park to show me Perth at night. It is a huge park located on the hill topping the city. It has a beautiful view over the city and the Swan River. At night the river looked like a great blackness and I was barely able to believe it was so wide.

27th May

This was a sad day. Well, it was actually a very nice one, but I knew I would be leaving for New Zealand in the evening. Although I was quite excited about that, I also had a feeling there was not enough time for me to see Perth and its surroundings and to meet the Perth fans.

In the morning David and I went for our last excursion. We started with King's Park, so that I could compare the view from the night with how it looks in daylight. We also took the opportunity to see the park itself, as the night before I saw only the panorama of the city. Oh gosh, the river in daylight seems to be even wider than at night! I am not sure how wide it is, but the word I would use is colossal. The other important thing in King's Park is a treetop route. I love seeing places from above and thus being able to admire the botanic garden which is located in the park from above was awesome. And I got to know some trees (well, truth be told, I forgot the names but at least I got a glimpse of Australian trees). The one thing we missed in King's Park is to see the kangaroo paw flower. I hope I will see it when I'm back.



In the maritime museum in Perth.

After the King's Park we went to the maritime museum; Karen suggested it to me when I said I am an ex-sailor. It was a nice place. Probably it is not one of the top attractions of the city, but it is worth visiting. There was an exhibition on fishing and fish poachers, and there were also some yachts

and ships to see. We didn't have time for the submarine but it was also available. What I enjoyed the most, however, was the big tank with a megamouth shark inside. It looked a little bit terrifying but it was awesome.

After the museum we went back to Karen's and David's place. There was a meeting organised there with their friends, some of whom were from the SF circle. Here I must admit I didn't have enough time to meet everyone. I talked to people and I regret the meeting was so short for me. Still, I had to leave early for the evening flight to New Zealand.

At the airport I had to do some repacking as it turned out my hand luggage was too heavy. It was not an easy task to repack so that I wouldn't have to throw anything away. All in all I was thinking about throwing away my small backpack that I had in the suitcase. The main problem was that my big suitcase was full of stuff for the Fan Funds auctions. It weighed a few kilograms less than my allowance but it was so full that I could hardly close it. Somehow I was able to put the chocolate and a thick pile of postcards inside, and by doing this limit the weight of the hand luggage.

Then my overnight flight started. I was not sure how much sleep I would get but I decided to try my best to sleep as much as I could manage. To my delight a lot of seats were empty so I changed from my standard seat to the one with extra legroom which helped me to get some rest.

28th May

Have I ever mentioned I hate early mornings? If not then this is the right moment to say it. My flight was landing in Auckland at a quite ungodly hour, so I had to be awake and happy at this time. Then I had to go through the immigration procedure and biosafety check. I was not sure what to answer for some of the questions so I wanted to ask the inspector, but the lady simply started to ask me questions and made some notes on the immigration document. I hadn't filled in all the fields but was still accepted into the country. I did not spend time in Auckland as I just had to change flight and go to Wellington.

The flight to the capital of New Zealand was, I believe, my best air trip ever. The flight from Auckland to Wellington is very short, and I did my best to sleep during it. But, mind you, it was not the flight that was great. Here there will be some spoilers so if you are thinking about visiting Wellington you may want to skip the next paragraph.

The landing was terrifying and awesome at the same time. Firstly I got to see the beautiful panorama of the city and surrounding green hills. Then the strange thing happened. Do you know the feeling when your guts are going up because of the pressure change? Usually it only lasts for a very short time while landing. Here it lasted longer. I am not sure if that is because of how the winds usually are here or if I was just lucky (or unlucky – whichever you believe is a better description). I had this unnerving experience for quite a long time; it was a little bit like a long roller coaster :D. And then I looked out of the window and we were getting lower and lower and we were just above the wavy sea. I started to panic, thinking we may have to land on the water for some technical reason... And then the water ended and we hit the airport. I want to repeat it! Seriously, I could spend a lot of time just repeating this awesome experience. I know not all of you would enjoy it, but for me it was a great joy (once the panic finished, of course).

I was expecting to be extremely tired after the flight but it happened that I wasn't (yet). Norman greeted me at the airport and took me to a wonderful place. It was the Weta Workshop cave. For those of you who don't know what Weta is – it is



Kyle the koala (Caversham Wildlife Park).



Night view of Perth from King's Park.



- What did you do in New Zealand?
- Nothing special - just piloting the Thunderbird...
At Weta Workshop.



View over Wellington from a windy Mount Victoria top.

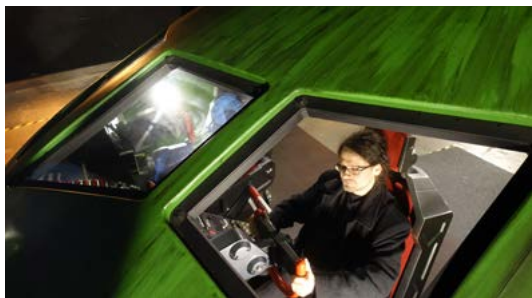
a group of companies working for the film industry (among other things). They are known for such movies as *The Lord of the Rings* or *The Hobbit*, for example, but also some older stuff – *Braindead* being my favourite one. So the first thing you can see there (for free) is the shop. There you can buy some replicas of props and also figures made for merchandising – and gosh, some of those are awesome (and some can cost over 1,000 NZ\$). There is also a mini museum (literally one small room) with a display of their works. Even outside the building you can see great trolls looking to eat some dwarves. Lastly there is an interesting free movie about Weta history. All of this is a really cool thing to see. If you like *The Lord of the Rings* movies, you must go there. The only thing that stopped me from buying some of the stuff was the fact I had my suitcase full.

There is also something more interesting than the shop: the tours. Here you must spend some money, \$45 for two trips they are offering. But it is worth each and every cent you will pay – trust me. I am not into media myself; I rarely watch movies or TV series, so the tours were not really of interest to me by default. (The first was a general one presenting Weta's works. The second tour was about a new series of *Thunderbirds*; I haven't seen it, and neither did I see the original one.) The reason why I wanted to go on the tours was simply to check as it seemed to be an interesting place.

The first tour actually brings you into the Weta workshop. It was a few rooms for tourists, but through the windows we were able to see the places where people are actually working on some stuff. The bad thing is you cannot take pictures on the tour as Weta only makes the props and doesn't own rights to let people publish those pictures. So you need to trust me you'll see some magnificent stuff here. I have seen different phases of production of the dwarves' helmets for *The Hobbit*. There were weapons from multiple movies. I also learned that Microsoft was planning a *Halo* film which was not realised, but there were a few props (including a car) that were created for it. As stated, I was impressed despite the fact that I am not really into movies, so if you like watching films Weta Workshop is one of the must see places in Wellington.

Then it was the time for the *Thunderbirds* tour. It was showing how the miniature based filming is done, and this is really interesting stuff. The guide clearly

liked this method of movie-making and was explaining in detail how everything is done. The new Thunderbirds is using classical miniature technique coupled with computer animation to insert characters into the plans. I was really surprised how easy it is to change



Thunderbirds Are Go! At Weta Workshop.

simple junk (like old computer parts, broken vacuum cleaner etc.) into fascinating filming props and locations. It was interesting enough that I decided to try watching the show (and I hope I'll do that). The other good part was that we were allowed to take pictures on this tour.

After seeing everything Norman took me to the city centre where, after eating a quick lunch, I went to Te Papa museum. The museum was a good introduction to New Zealand. There were some displays about nature and culture and history and art. Here, however, the poor quality of my sleep in the aeroplane showed. I became so sleepy that once I nearly fell on the ground when I dozed off while standing and reading some description. Fortunately this gave me enough adrenaline to survive the afternoon. I didn't manage to see the exhibition on the First World War, but as the museum has free entry I decided to see it on the next day. How good was the exhibition? This depends on what are you interested in. I am quite happy about the visit, but as I was quite tired and very excited by the Weta Workshop it was not a "must see" experience for me.

Then I had to wait an hour for Norman so that he could finish his work. It was early evening so I went on a Pavlova dessert hunt. It is a dessert traditional to both New Zealand and Australia; unfortunately it is not often offered in restaurants and cafés. I didn't find any, but decided to stop in one café where I had a different cake. The place was called Sweet Mother's Kitchen, but I am telling you that not because it was so awesome that you must visit it (well, it was really nice and I enjoyed the pumpkin pie I received); I am mentioning it as it is located very close to the crossroads where I saw an interesting sculpture. It

looked like a Martian tripod from Wells' The War of the Worlds. The sculpture was made by Weta Workshop and later in the evening I browsed the internet to check if there are any of their other works in the city...

I spent the evening talking with Norman about fandom and other topics. He was interested in Polish fandom so I was able to talk again about Pyrkon, but I also mentioned other stuff. We also got a chance to discuss the NZ in 2020 bid for Worldcon a little bit.

29th May

The original plan for the day was to start at 9:00 but I asked if we can move it to 9:30 as I had to get some more sleep. Ross, who was about to show me the city that day, agreed so I got to have a little bit more sleep to recover from the flight here.

We started with Te Papa museum – at least the part I hadn't yet seen the day before. One of the things I missed was a giant squid exhibition. Unfortunately it was small and didn't contain the whole squid but there were huge eyes, and the beak and tentacles... Then there was the part I was aware of omitting on Monday – the exhibition on NZ involvement in the World War I. I not only read the explanations but also talked with Ross, who provided me with a lot of additional insights into the history.



One of the proposed NZ2020 Worldcon buildings.

After the museum we had a small fandom-related activity. Ross showed me some buildings that are supposed to be used for NZ in 2020 Worldcon provided they won the bid (and they did). I did not get inside, so I cannot really describe the proposed venues to you, but I wanted to see it and I managed to do so :)

Next we went to the chocolate factory. I am a chocoholic so whenever there is an option for some chocolate-related activities I do my best to use it. Unfortunately the tours were available only on Saturdays, but fortunately the staff member was kind enough to give me an ultra-short private tour. What I found interesting



Did someone say chocolate?
Chocolate factory in Wellington.

is that, despite being a rather small place, they were going all the way from bean to bar. It meant that for the first time I was able to see the whole production process (or at least see the devices that are used for it). Not all places were opened for visitors, but they had big windows so that I was able to look inside. Of course, part of the tour was tasting two types of chocolate. At the end I ordered a hot chocolate and a praline. The chocolate itself was not to my taste but the place is definitely interesting (and if you like chocolate the smell inside is intoxicating).

There was one thing I realised that day that was proven in the chocolate factory: people here in New Zealand and also in Australia are so nice to you. At first in Perth I thought that maybe I was just lucky, but here I realised that it is not luck – simply everyone is so nice. Apart from the individual tour I got, I can mention two more situations from Tuesday alone. I tried to navigate myself in the city and I asked Ross (on our way) if I was thinking correctly that Te Papa museum is in the direction I pointed. Some other man on the street just stopped and pointed me in the proper direction. Later I was in the shop looking for change to pay for the stuff I bought, and another customer, seeing I could not find the coin, mentioned to me that I should be looking for a big silver one. And one more thing that was happening both here and in Perth: whenever I was in a shop, someone came to ask whether I needed some help. You may say this is normal, but usually in Poland I don't like people doing that; here it was nice, and I think the difference is that the people are really interested in helping you and

are not only fulfilling their duty. I may be exaggerating a bit but the realisation of how cool people were there, down under, made me really happy.

Then we went to the city museum, which is quite interesting. One of the rooms is devoted to the 20th century, with a small piece of information on something important for New Zealand that happened in the given year. One of the things mentioned is The Lord of the Rings movies and at the exhibition you may see the foot of Pippin (or maybe it was Merry? I am not 100% sure). Among other things that are shown there were two close to my fannish heart. One was a time machine. Well, not the machine itself, but one of the exhibitions was in fact a movie designed to suggest that it is the time machine and that it was bringing you through the ages. The other were a few museum pieces dedicated to UFOs in New Zealand.

Ross also took me to another chocolate shop: Schock chocolates. This one I must describe as the really alluring one. They didn't have any kind of exhibition but for sure they had interesting flavours of chocolates – both bars and pralines. After checking a few types of bars, just to learn how good the chocolate is, I decided to buy pralines. Instead of taking flavours I enjoy I decided to take ones that are unusual, which were: lavender with caramel, lemon and thyme, and honey with cumin. Were they good? For sure they were surprising. I think I liked the cumin and honey one the most, but it's hard to tell. For sure I won't be eating such chocolates on a daily basis but now I am slightly tempted to go and try some more unusual combinations.

When we were walking from one place to another, of course we talked a lot on multiple topics but we were also visiting bookshops and other interesting shops. Apart from souvenir shops that I wanted to check we were able to get into comic shops, modellers' shops, and one gaming and comic shop. The only reason why I did not buy some stuff was the lack of space in my baggage (I wondered how many more times I would write this before the trip ended). Ross showed me some worthy SFF books by New Zealand authors. In general it was a long and interesting day.

The evening I again spent chatting with Norman at his place. This time the main topics included his involvement in the production of The Lord of the Rings film and my explanations on Polish pronunciation. The more I explained, the more I was convinced that Polish was designed to make people from other countries suffer when they try to master it ;)

30th May

In the morning Lynelle came to pick me up and show me some more of Wellington. Our first planned stop was the Mount Victoria lookout. The mountain is one of the high hills in this area and from the top one gets beautiful views of the whole city. I was able to spot some planes approaching the airport and also a ferry going round. The view was truly magnificent and I would say visiting Mount Victoria is a must-do part of the visit. There was, however, one bad side to it – the weather.

In general it was late autumn/winter in the southern hemisphere. Still, the winters here are not generally very harsh. But I am the lucky one – I managed to experience the first storm of the season in Perth and similarly the first cold strike in Wellington. Of course, the temperatures were not as low as during winters in Poland, but Wellington is pretty windy. And, as we all know, mountain tops (and hilltops as well) are usually not the calmest places in the city, so it was really cold there. As a side note: houses here are not insulated from cold as well as they are in Poland, so it was pretty cold inside as well. I am really thankful to Norman for offering me an electric blanket, which made my time in bed so comfortable and warm...

What I was not able to imagine was a trip to New Zealand without a visit to the beach. Lynelle was kind enough to take me to one and wait for me patiently when I went looking for shells. It took me a while and it got me to a place which in the evening became a small rocky "island" near the shore. To my deepest regret, almost all snails' shells were inhabited, so I took back almost exclusively clam shells.



Cable car museum – Wellington.

One of the top attractions (pun intended) of Wellington is a cable car. It goes from the city centre up to the top of one of the hills – oh yes, Wellington is a hilly place with lots and lots of steep slopes. The upper station of the cable car was our next destination. There is a small cable car museum here with a historic coach inside. It must have been awesome as most of the seats were outside and you had to be careful in order not to fall out. It was not safe for sure, but I would love to try such a trip one day. From the museum we went to the astronomical observatory which is just a couple of minutes away. To my great disappointment it was closed – and I was really hoping to see a nice exhibition.

Finally we used the cable car to get down to the city. Lynelle took me to the supermarket to check if there would be Pavlova cake there, but I wasn't lucky. Then she had to get back home and I was on my mission to find Pavlova in one of the cafés. The direction I chose was towards the parliament as the building looked interesting. I managed to get there without any problems, but there was no Pavlova for me. It reminded me of the situation from a few weeks before the GUFF trip when I tried to find traditional Lithuanian cake (Šakotis) while

I was visiting Vilnius for Lituanicon. I spent a lot of time going from café to restaurant and I managed to find it only in one place... Here it was similar, with one difference – I didn't find any Pavlova that day.

What was nice, however, was that when I reached the parliament I realised there is a potentially interesting museum there. It is the small museum of the national Reserve Bank of New Zealand. I enjoyed two things there: firstly, the MONIAC, which is generally an analogous "computer" which uses water flow to demonstrate macroeconomics. It was not turned on but the idea of it alone is fascinating. The second thing was more genre-related. It seems that New Zealand had quite a few commemorative coins from The Lord of the Rings and The Hobbit movies. Some of those were so cool that I said to myself "My preciousssss" and asked about the possibility of buying one. I was given an address for the numismatic shop and after the museum visit I headed towards it. What I did not realise was the fact that the coins I really wanted were made from gold/silver and, despite being only 1 dollar coins, they cost \$200 (and only one of them was available). I had to choose something cheaper, so now I am the proud owner of the 50 cent coin featuring Gandalf.

Then I spent quite a lot of time looking for a maritime museum and the waterfront. Finally, when I was not able to find it, I asked where it is and was told that the old Maritime Museum is now called Wellington Museum and it was the one I visited the day before. Totally my fault for not checking this. Still, the walk along the waterfront gave me some nice opportunities. Apart from beautiful views I managed to look more at the New Zealand in 2020 bid's venue (or rather one of the planned venues). Lastly I got to the main post office where I saw the rol-up presenting the collection of



Part of the UFO exhibition at Wellington Museum.

stamps to commemorate New Zealand getting into space. I did not buy the set but I was slightly tempted to do so.

Then I had some time to kill and I was walking about, but I will not be describing each and every step. The one thing I need to mention, though, is the tripod I described before. It seems that, although at night it looked like a Martian from *The War of the Worlds*, in the daylight I realised it was a film camera on a tripod. It was erected to commemorate the NZ film industry. However, I believe that the shape was somehow inspired by Wells.

That evening was a time we had reserved for a dinner with the SF fans from Wellington. We went to a Chinese restaurant and had dinner and a talk. To my great joy, Michałki candies I brought from Poland were well received :) There were seven of us and we had a nice conversation on a few topics – including the impact of censorship on writing. It seems that when it is not possible to write about the government openly, writers are using our favourite genres to comment on the world. In Poland it was SF and in South America it was magical realism. I only regret that the meeting was so short. Well, maybe it wasn't as it was a proper dinner with the time before and after eating; but it ended so quickly and I would definitely love to spend more time with fans.

31st May

It was my last day in New Zealand; I was sad because of that. Yet I was also looking forward to what the day would bring – and there were plenty of things worth waiting for. In the morning Simon, whom I met the day before, picked me up and we started our tour. Firstly we picked up Ross and then we headed to Pukaha Mount Bruce National Wildlife Centre.

I think the road from Wellington to Mount Bruce took us a little bit more than an hour. The time was spent nicely in chatting on multiple topics. As usual within fandom I was feeling really comfortable and I had the feeling that I was welcomed. This is the feeling that accompanies me since my very first convention back in 2002. When I am with fandom I feel part of the family. Guys were sharing with me their knowledge of New Zealand and especially the places we were driving through.



Tall trees and a short fan at Pukaha Mount Bruce National Wildlife Centre.

In the middle of the trip we stopped at the lookout. The view was blocked by the clouds and mist but still amazing. In fact, clouds were adding some atmosphere to it. On our way back the clouds had risen so I got the chance to admire the full view from the mountain top into two valleys.

Pukaha Mount Bruce National Wildlife Centre is an appealing place where you can see the local birds. We need to remember, however, that one of its functions is birds breeding and being released into the wild. In fact, that is the function I admire more than being a tourist attraction (but I am happy for the opportunity I got as a tourist). We were not able to spot all the birds and reptiles; the cages/terrariums were big enough to let the animals hide somewhere inside. Apart from the animals kept in captivity we also saw some wild birds flying in the forest and we were able to listen to even more without the possibility of spotting them with our eyes. There were two kiwi birds but I managed to see only one (as it was white). The other one was brown and spotting it in the dark room, only slightly illuminated by the red light, was too hard for me.

On our way back we stopped to see Rivendell or, to be more precise, the place where Rivendell was filmed. I didn't know what to expect but I was hoping to recognise the places from the movie. This was not so easy as there was only one piece of the building left – and in the film we were able



The Last Homely House is that way!

to experience the magic of the cinema. The whole set was way smaller than I expected it to be, but it was still quite nice. We spent a little bit more time in the vicinity there and we got back to Wellington.

During dinner the day before we had checked where it would be possible to eat Pavlova in the city and Simon and Ross gave me a lift to that place. It was a little bit of a fancy restaurant and the dessert was relatively expensive, but I decided it would be a shame should I leave New Zealand without trying the traditional dessert. So I ordered it. Unlike the typical Pavlova this one was small, brownish and topped with tamarillos. Maybe it was not a traditional one, but it gave me an idea of the taste I should expect.



Picture taken next to the Remutaka crossing memorial on our way to Pukaha Mount Bruce National Wildlife Centre.

1st June

Oh dear, that was a long day! My plane to Sydney was leaving at 6:30 so to get to the airport on time (2 hours before the flight) I had to wake up at 3:30 in the morning – what a great beginning of the day it was... Norman was kind enough to wake up with me and drive me to the airport at this extremely ungodly hour. My gratitude for that is unspeakable.



In front of the Sydney Opera House.

When I landed in Sydney (changing my timezone for a third time within a week) I met with Nick at whose place I was staying. We took a tour around the city. One of the things Nick asked me was about my preferences in terms of art. I mentioned sculpture and architecture so, apart from showing me the harbour with the Opera House, he took me to the Rocks district to see the old brutalist building.

The Opera House is huge. I was expecting it to be maybe half of what it actually is. It is definitely an amazing and impressive building (or maybe I should



This building in Sydney gives me so many ideas for SF animations. I regret I cannot draw as I would love to create some.

rather say a complex of a few buildings?). It isn't as white as I thought; what usually appears on pictures as flat white surface is a mixture of two colours. From the fannish perspective it was the brutalist building that I found more interesting. It is created from multiple cuboids. I totally see them as being some kind of space pods or maybe space containers.



Dinner with Wellington fans – two of them are running for GUFF in 2019.



Sydney Opera House during Vivid festival.



Vivid festival – selfie with Sydney Opera House in the background.



Vivid festival in Sydney – did you know that one sneeze can contain 100,000 cold viruses?



Games Paradise shop in Sydney.

the shop was spanning two floors and although it was not dedicated only to SFF fans it contained a large amount of merchandise (figures!) and games that may have been of potential interest. I resisted the urge to buy something and we left it.

Later on we had a grand tour around the geek shops of Sydney. Firstly there was a games shop. It contained everything from classical card games through board games up to the RPGs. The last one was the most interesting part as the choice was really huge. The variety of titles was really impressive – starting with Pathfinder and Dungeons & Dragons through Call of Cthulhu and some indie games up to the collectors’ edition of Metamorphosis Alpha and some expansions to it. I was really impressed and happy. Then we headed to the comics shop; although I am not deeply into comics myself I like to visit such places. Apart from comics there was a lot of merchandise to choose from. Lastly we visited a manga and anime merchandise shop. Again I had a big urge to buy some stuff for which I didn’t have enough space in my luggage. What is awesome that all three shops are on the same street and it takes no more than three minutes to get from one to the other. Definitely this is not a safe space for geeks’ wallets ;)

After sightseeing we headed back home to get some rest and meet Nick’s partner, Ad-

I would love to see an animation (or even a movie) showing how those are used to build a multi-generational ship that will leave Earth to get to some distant star...

We also got to see a shopping centre with nice architecture and a shop for hobbyists. The



Kings Comics shop in Sydney.

rian. After some bookish/movieish/fandomish conversation we went out for a dinner and a special event. The Vivid festival was just beginning in Sydney and we headed to the harbour to see the animated illuminations on the building there. What can I say – the illuminations were magnificent. The Opera House used as a giant screen looks terrific. What I didn't like was the fact that the music accompanying the illumination of the Opera House was possible to hear only in places from which you weren't really able to enjoy the illuminations.

The animation I liked the most was the one on the Customs House. It was one of the stories about Snugglepoot and Cuddlepoot. You may ask, who are they? They are characters from an Australian children's book. As many tales for children are, the story is in fact a fantasy one. I liked this one the most as I had learned about Snugglepoot and Cuddlepoot from David in Perth and now I got the chance to watch and listen to the story. The artist who created the animation paid attention to not only using the building as a giant screen but to actually use the building's elements as parts of the animation. It wasn't visible all the time but I really liked the moments when it was taking place (e.g. when windows were not penetrable for air bubbles under water).

I must mention one more illuminated animation that I liked. I have no idea what was the name of the building, but the animation was showing different pathogens and information about them. I have the feeling that the depiction of the Ebola virus was not the best, but I am quite happy that basic information about some pathogenic viruses and fungi were presented to people. I didn't watch the whole presentation, though, as we were already heading back home.

When we got back to Nick's and Adrian's place I simply went to sleep. It was a long day for me – lasting for around 22 hours. I got some sleep on the plane but even considering this the whole day was very tiring.

2nd June

The plan had been to leave early but after the Vivid festival we were all sleepy. We managed to wake up around an hour later than initially planned. On this day my adventure with Sydney had finished. We headed to the Blue Mountains



Cable Car over Blue Mountains.



Some of the Japanese giant robots Lewis enjoys.



Three Sisters rock formation in Blue Mountains.



My first evening in Canberra – meeting with Canberra Speculative Fiction Group and my hosts in King O'Malley's pub.

(to the city of Katoomba, to be more precise). My weariness asked me to pay the toll and instead of accompanying Adrian and Nick on our way I dozed off just after we got out of the city. I am still feeling a little bit ashamed for that but sometimes biology is stronger than the will :(.

We had a short tour to see some views on the Blue Mountains. I must admit they are wonderful. There was a cable car there but we didn't manage to see it. Still, even from the lookouts the views were really breathtaking and I know I will have to return there one day.

After the short tour Nick and I headed off to meet his fandom friends living in the Blue Mountains. The fans mentioned were Lewis and Marilyn; they are artists and in touch with the filming industry. Unfortunately Marilyn was able to spend only a short time with us as she had some work to do, but Lewis was kind enough to host us for some more time. We discussed multiple topics including his involvement in movie props preparation and his interest in Japanese giant robots. Inevitably we also went through some book-related and fandom-related topics.

Lewis and Marilyn also showed me their house and garden. I was feeling like I was in a geek heaven. There were some movie props prepared by them as well as their art stored here and there. Some of them I saw just when leaving their place and I am sure I haven't seen all of the items they keep. A few were small things but there were also some bigger ones, like Lewis's old costume from one



Nothing to see here – move along.

of the cons. Lewis also has a collection of robot figures and this one is quite impressive. In the garden, apart from flowers, there were some SFictional busts lurking from behind the grass.

The conversation I had with Lewis was so interesting that I really didn't want to leave. The initial plan was that maybe I'd manage to get to the cable car (it was running till 17:00) or see some more places, but in the end we spent so much time with Lewis that

it became impossible to do any more sightseeing that day. Of course I don't regret that – interesting conversation with a fellow fan is always welcomed. I only regret that it had to end.

The plan for the evening was a dinner with Nick's and Adrian's friends. They were not SF fans but the discussion somehow diverged to fandom-related topics (like what I am doing in Australia). I also got the occasion to show to Nick and his friend Jude (they are both artists, although only Nick is involved in SF art) some of the postcards donated by Autun Purser for the GUFF auction. This is not related to Australia, but in case you haven't seen Autun's works you should stop reading and check his website to see his great works!

3rd June

Another day and another journey for me. In the morning Nick gave me a lift to the railway station so that I could head back into Sydney, where I was meeting with Gillian to travel to Canberra. I tried to do some reading on my way to Sydney but I was pretty tired and I read just a little bit of *The Left Hand of Darkness*.

Once I met with Gillian we went to the souvenir shop, where I had the chance to buy some souvenirs for my relatives and for GUFF auctions in Europe.

After shopping we headed to the bus stop and we were on our way to Canberra. Those of you who know either me or Gillian are aware that we are both quite talkative. The ~3 hour ride was almost a constant stream of conversation; I am not able to list now all the topics we covered. We got the front seats so Gillian was able to show me all the nice views on the way. One of the most interesting is Lake George, which is sometimes dry and sometimes full. I promised myself that I would check the details once I was back in Europe.

Of all the topics we touched on there is one I think is worth mentioning here, and it is related to writers' responsibility. We discussed the problem of liking an author's stories when we don't like or even strongly disapprove of his behaviours. Gillian pointed out that authors should be aware of their impact on people and therefore should always consider what behaviours they are promoting, both in their works and in what they are saying. We agreed it is a pity that sometimes

it happens that authors promote behaviours which tend to hurt some people or even large groups of people.

When we arrived in Canberra, Ken picked us up. He and Gillian gave me a short car tour around the city – or, to be more precise, around the administrative centre – so I got a chance to see the parliament building as well as multiple embassies and other official places. Later I got to the home of Ken and his friend, who hosted me in Canberra. Here I decided to get some comfortable quiet time and afterwards I was ready for the evening with people.

The dinner was organised by the current Australian administrator of GUFF, Donna Maree Hanson. The plan was for me to meet with the Canberra Speculative Fiction Group. Together with my hosts, we arrived in the restaurant and met with other people. In total there were eight of us. I got the chance to meet one of the Continuum Guests of Honour in advance, Cat Sparks. The dinner was great, with tasty food and nice conversation. We got the chance to discuss both Polish fandom and some science fiction and science-related topics. Again I had the same issue with the dinner as I had in Wellington: it ended way too soon. This is the real hardship of life – all the good things end so fast.

4th June

Some of you probably hate Mondays, but this Monday was a good one for me. It was one of my more leisurely days; although I love travelling, sightseeing and meeting people, sometimes I need to get some rest. Yet this doesn't mean I did nothing for the whole day! After a late breakfast, Ken and his friend took me to the city to see what Canberra has to offer. We were not running like crazy so we got to see just a few things, but this was exactly what I needed.

We started with the guided tour of the War Memorial commemorating Australian participation in different military conflicts. Then we went to the Royal Australian Mint. I liked this place very much. It is not very big and the guided tour was only half an hour long, but the stuff to see and learn was amazing. I got the chance to see a 1kg golden coin as well as the working mint. the guide explained to us the difference in approach between making collectors' coins and

the circulating ones. Although the place was totally not SF-related we spotted a few coins of potential interests to SF fans. Three coins on display were dome-shaped and were showing the stars visible from the southern hemisphere. We were told that those were sold pretty fast (I think within only one day). In the mint shop it was possible to buy a set of solar system coins – those I would really love to have but the price was unfortunately too high.

After the museums we headed for lunch, but before we reached the place I received another tour around the city. Important views included the so-called Martian embassy as well as the John Curtin School of Medical Research. The Martian embassy is unfortunately not a proof of life on Mars; it is



The John Curtin School building with DNA ornaments.

only one of the Australian Academy of Science buildings. People tend to call it the Martian Embassy because it is a dome-shaped building which reminds them of a flying saucer. The John Curtin School was interesting to me because the building was nicely planned. What made me ask Ken to stop by was the elevation on which DNA is depicted as both double helix and as the string of base pairs. Although I broke my connection with biology ten years ago, it seems I am still impressed with any biological references.

Apart from sightseeing, we were talking a lot. The conversation we had during our late lunch break was concentrated on Polish conventions. I described some of the events organised by the SFF club I am chairing, as well as our plans for the future. I also mentioned a little bit about the general Polish convention scene. My hosts on the other hand provided me with some information on Conflux. This is a convention held in Canberra which tends to concentrate on professionals rather than fans. It is attended by writers, publishers and artists, but it is not attracting many fans. This was quite surprising for me. Myself I am a fan who is not a professional, but I would gladly attend such a convention in Kraków where I live.

After lunch we managed to find two geek shops. One was devoted to comics and was full of merchandise, starting from some small stuff, through figures – including a large selection of POP vinyls – up to a big (I think 1:1 scale) bust of the Phantom. The second shop was a game centre. Here the choice of games was not as good as in Sydney, but there was much more space for gamers to play.

There was a slight chance that in the evening a Conflux committee meeting would be held and I would get the chance to meet the convention team. Unfortunately in the end the meeting was not held that day so I didn't manage to meet all those people.

5th June

This was a very special day. It was planned that we would visit the Canberra Deep Space Communication Complex. It was one of the things I really wanted to see and I am happy I managed to do so. How did the day go?

Firstly we went to pick up Phil who was going with us. At the Deep Space Communication Complex we met with Donna, Elizabeth and Gillian. Together we went to the museum. How should I describe it? It was totally awesome. Even before getting inside the museum we saw the antennas. The biggest one had the diameter of 70 meters and smaller ones were "only" 34 meters big. Most of them are still in service. The place offers you a chance to see also some antennas which are out of service – the most remarkable one being Deep Space Station 46. Originally it stood in a different place and it is the antenna that received the signal from Neil Armstrong landing on the moon.

After seeing the dishes we moved to the museum. I have the feeling that it was me who spent the most time looking at the things there. Yet it was so fascinating! I suppose that we



Ready for my space mission – at Canberra Deep Space Communication Complex.



This little piece of rock was brought to us from the moon.

me to learn something more about space missions. And this proves to me that the museum is good; if such a place inspires you to learn more, it means that it succeeds in its mission.

Then we had a fandom picnic just outside the museum – still within the complex, with a nice view of the big antennas' dishes. Even despite the relatively cold weather it was awesome. Such moments will remain in my memory for a long time. We were supposed to have Pavlova as a dessert, but it seems that the tourist fridge that was used froze the whipped cream so we decided to wait

all, SF fans, like the space stuff. Of course the museum was full of models but it contained also some original things – among those, parts of the old devices that were in space and the moon rock brought by the Apollo XI mission. There was a lot of reading which inspired



The GUFFers – left to right: Donna, me and Gillian.



Home-made Pavlova dessert by Donna.

a little more and we headed to Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve.

I was really hoping to see the platypus there. Those creatures are not easy to spot as they spend a lot of time underwater and they are quite shy. I was lucky enough to spot one from a relatively short distance. I tried to take a picture without looking at the camera so that I would not lose the more important view. I am so happy now; I know it is kinda childish but, well, platypuses are cute and I always wanted to see one.

Even before seeing the platypus we had an opportunity to see grazing koalas as well as a few potoroos. I was not aware of these mar-

supials before, so that was a good occasion to learn about those little creatures. I won't be describing all the animals and plants we spotted; it was a nice walk in great company and I am really happy for that. Once it was getting late we moved to the picnic ground and had our Pavlova which was not frozen any more. I have a sweet tooth. I am not a foodie, but when it comes to sweets I love to explore new, local cuisines. Pavlova was my must-have dessert in Australia and New Zealand. After the one I had in a restaurant in Wellington, that day I had one that was home-made by Donna. I prefer the home-made one and am happy I had the chance to try it. Later I asked Donna for a recipe and I tried it at home, but this is a different story.

On that day (and even the day before in Canberra), I received some donations for the GUFF



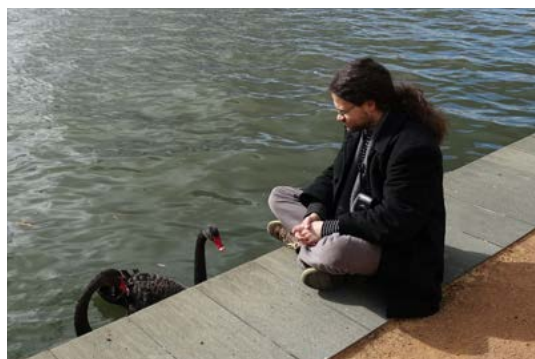
Look at this cutie!

auctions. They were brought to me by my hosts and by Gillian. What I was really moved by was that once Phil learned about the trip and fundraising, he asked us to wait while giving him a lift to his place so that he could donate something as well. Phil is not a member of fandom and it really moved me that he donated an eucalyptus leaf blacksmithed by himself. It is a nice piece of art and I do hope it will find a good new home in Europe.

6th June

It was my last day in Canberra and I was sad again. It is so absolutely awesome to meet all the people and spend time with them, but then you have to go onwards. I really would have loved to stay there longer and have some more conversations and so on... Still, the day was ahead of me so I did my best to enjoy it. The good part of my stay in Canberra was that I didn't have to run everywhere; I had some feeling of calmness. Provided I could have woken up an hour earlier we would probably have been able to see one museum more per day. Nonetheless, the calmness and relaxation were very precious.

With my hosts, we started with a short visit to Mount Ainslie from which I had the chance to see the beautiful panorama of the city. It took us probably around 30 minutes to see everything. After this we headed down to the city to see the National Gallery of Australia. Because of limited time I decided to



When I told Ken that my nickname (Alqua) means swan in elvish he decided I need to have a picture taken with black swans.

see only the part of the gallery that was devoted to the indigenous art. There were pieces created by Aborigines as well as Torres Strait Islanders. The art was a difficult one for me to understand. The paintings were beautiful and I was simply enjoying them by themselves. Yet I would have a very difficult time to try to explain their meaning.



Beauty is in the eye of the beholder – literally ;) Game shop in Canberra.



Fannish picnic outside the Canberra Deep Space Communication Complex museum.



Koalas in Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve.



This is a platypus in the water – trust me. I was told I was lucky to spot it.
In Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve.

The last stop on our trip was a tour around the parliament building. It was, again, a short guided tour giving the overview of how the parliament works. The thing I enjoyed was the fact that Australia pays attention to educating children about citizenship and their rights. During sitting days, classes are invited to look at the work of the parliament and they have the chance to discuss it.



In Australian parliament building, Canberra.

Later the evening changed into a sweet feast. Together with my hosts I visited a local shop. I decided to look for some sweets that I can take back for Fan Funds auctions in Europe. Unfortunately they had too short best-before dates. Ken, however, decided to give me a try of many local sweets. I tried some jellies, BB's, Royals, mint slices, chocolates etc. I liked some of them and Ken prepared me a snack pack for the following day.

The evening was reserved for a dinner with members of the Canberra Science Fiction Society. I was so happy when I realised how many people came. There were thirteen of us in the restaurant. It was the biggest gathering so far and it was really cool. The bad thing, however, was that because there were so many people I didn't get the chance to talk properly with everyone. The evening was very nice and the food was good. I was surprised to meet with Peter whom I have seen before at Loncon 3 and Worldcon 75. He gave me some donations to be taken back to Europe and also to be sold at Continuum. Like all of the previous fannish meetings this one ended way too soon. I knew that the time spent with interesting people flies by faster, but it is always happening so fast that it tends to amaze me.

Late in the evening, when I was just about to go to sleep, Ken asked me to get outside. I went and saw a possum. I was asked if I would like to feed it. As you can probably guess by reading this far through my report, I was very keen to do so. I gave the possum a banana and it took it. I must admit it was a funny

feeling. On one hand I was careful, as you should always be when interacting with wild animals. On the other, I would gladly get closer. All in all, the possum took half of the banana in its paws and ran away to eat it in a place where we could see it but where we were posing no threat.

7th June

This was a long day. Before my trip Donna mentioned that she would be driving to Continuum and that we might go there together. I said that was an excellent idea, but I asked to travel one day earlier so that we won't be going to the con directly after the long trip (almost 700 km). In the morning Donna arrived to pick me up. We did some quick packing and adding sweet stuff to our travel snacks and off we went.



Look out – there might be koalas on the road.

The road was long and we had plenty of time to talk. We discussed books, and fandom, and Fan Funds and so on. It was really nice and time flew by pretty quickly (at least for me). On the road we managed to see two interesting places. The first one was a monument of the Dog on the Tuckerbox near Gundagai. The second one was a submarine in Holbrook. For those of you who are curious: Holbrook is way over 200 km from the ocean. The submarine (or in fact part of the submarine) is there to honour Lieutenant Holbrook, for whom the town was renamed during the First World War.

In the evening we arrived in Melbourne. I was extremely happy as we were hosted by one of the writers I truly enjoy, Trudi Canavan, and her partner Paul. We started the evening with a pizza that was followed by a long discussion mainly about books and topics around them. Trudi showed us her books in different languages. Sometimes the covers were really surprising and not really properly reflecting what the book was about. Of course, some of the covers were pretty

good (I really enjoyed the French ones). I went slightly into fanboyish mode when Trudi shown us some of her art that was created as the idea for the covers of her first two books.

I was even more fanboyish when I received a signed set of the Australian editions of the Black Magician trilogy. I love autographs that bring me some memories. Usually my favourite ones have some story behind them. And here not only did I get to meet an author I adored for many years but I also got an autographed set of books. Trudi also signed the Polish edition of the Magicians' Guild that will be sold in Poland to raise money for GUFF. Finally she was kind enough to donate some of her works, as well as signed bookmarks, to the GUFF auctions in Europe.

The evening was really lovely and it is one of the moments I will cherish for a long time. One of the greatest things I really love in fandom is that we are able to meet authors and discuss their books with them – that we can become acquaintances or even friends.

8th June

The morning was, in fact, a continuation of the previous day. Four of us were talking and the time flew by faster than I would ever imagine. I thought I just finished breakfast and it was already time for lunch (and that was only partially related to the fact that I woke up last). Then lunch was over and we had to go to the convention.

There was no parking at the hotel so we had to use a small parking place on the other side of the road. You were allowed to stay there just for a few minutes. We managed to unload everything (meaning the stuff of Donna and myself plus a lot of things for the Fan Funds auction) in just two trips. Everything would have been good if not for the trolley. We packed it pretty full (although not fully stable) and Donna went off to find a parking place. The problem was that the trolley had four wheels and each of them was supposed to be held in place by four bolts, but one of the wheels had only one bolt... Fortunately I received some help on the street and in the hotel, and I managed to deliver everything to where it should be.

The convention started late as the first programme items were taking place at 17:00. Unfortunately I did not manage to attend those; I had to take a short rest and help Donna with the Fan Funds table. The latter was a good opportunity to meet other people. Here I would love to provide you with a long list of names of people to whom I was introduced, but I am sure that if I would tried to list everyone I would forget about someone so I will just skip the listing part.

When we had more or less put our stuff on the Fan Funds table Justin came and started to put out books he donated to the funds. This was a pretty awesome amount of books and the prices were very good. I really wanted to start buying, but I had to restrain myself and keep reminding myself that I might not have enough free space in my luggage.

The first programme item I attended was the Opening Ceremony. As the convention was not very big the ceremony was quite short. Of course, the chair introduced Guests of Honour – Cat Sparks (whom I have met in Canberra) and Alison Evans. What was important to me were some explanations about the con and its approach. I realised that the very simple badges were designed



Lunch with Trudi, Donna and Paul.

to make them recyclable. The programme book was printed only for those members who mentioned that they want to receive one. I am thinking about making conventions more environment friendly and I think some of these ideas are worth "stealing".

Directly after the ceremony was the meeting with the GUFF delegate – meaning meeting with me. Oh dear, I was stressed. I am OK with participating in programme items as the speaker or moderator; I did panels, talks, competitions etc. But this was the first time when I was being interviewed as a kind of guest. I think that for half of the whole session when I was speaking, instead of looking at people, I was looking at the microphone. After some initial questions covering European fandom and Polish SFF history, we went to the topic of Polish conventions. It



With Kat just before my interview at Continuum – I look way more confident than I felt.

ended up on a picture showcase from this year's Pyrkon – the biggest Polish convention (over 40,000 members, you might remember). I think this was the good part as I became more relaxed. I hope that what I was talking about was interesting to the audience. All in all, when we had to end I was feeling that I could go on and talk for the next hour or two (or even three). I am really grateful to Kat, my interviewer, thanks to whom I was able to open up and enjoy this hour despite my initial stress.

After the talk I went for dinner with Donna and Catherine M. Walker, whom I met that day. We had to do it to take away as the noodle place in front of the hotel was already closing. After dinner I joined a few fans in discussion, but I was feeling tired and decided to go to bed. And that was it – my first day at a convention in the Southern hemisphere.

9th June

Do you know that feeling when you promise to wake up early at the con and you are so tired you would love to sleep for the next few hours? This is how I felt that morning. However, as there were things to be done, I braced myself and woke up at an ungodly early hour – namely 8:30.

After breakfast I helped a little bit (only a tiny one) at the Fan Funds table and I went to the programme item in which I wanted to participate. It was a zines panel. At least it was supposed to be a panel, but it changed into a more informal fanzine discussion. Apart from talking about the history and present situation of zines, we also had a chance to explore some of the contemporary zines. I was really impressed with the ones that were in fact comic gamebooks. One was a folded gamebook where depending on your decisions you had to unfold the proper part of the zine. One of the things I learned is that there is a "zinstore" in Melbourne. I decided I needed to visit that place during my few days after the con.



One of the fanzines presented during the fanzine panel at Continuum.



Dealers' hall at Continuum.



Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve.



Dinner with members of Canberra Science Fiction Society inside Flavours of India restaurant.



Submarine in Holbrook.



Continuum opening ceremony.



Meet the GUFFers. Left to right: Donna, Trevor, me, Irwin, Sue Ann, Roman and Gillian.

After the discussion I was manning the Fan Funds table and then we had to prepare for the Fan Funds auction. It was not the first auction I have seen but the first where I was a Fan Fund delegate and I had to do stuff. Unlike the auction that took place at Eastercon in Harrogate this one was way faster. There were plenty of items, starting with books, through art and finishing with pins, magnets and all kind of strange and funny things. Two hours flew by pretty quickly. I am not sure how good an auctioneer I was but it was a pretty fun experience. I realised, however, that way too often my English pronunciation was doing weird things ;). All in all I bought only one thing – a set of Welsh coasters – but I was tempted to buy so many more... Some books went for really good prices and if I had only had luggage space I would certainly have bid higher for them.

Barely had we recovered from the auction when I found myself running to the next programme item. It was a con-runners' confab and by design it was informal. I didn't know what exactly to expect but it was a really interesting item. In the beginning there were only two of us and we started to compare Lajconik (gaming



Our Fan Funds table at Continuum.

convention held in Kraków) and Conquest (gaming convention held in Melbourne). We spotted some similarities as well as differences. Then two more people showed up and somehow we went into a fascinating discussion on convention guests and how cons should be reacting when they receive complaints that invited person should not be a guest. We didn't reach any particular conclusion, apart from the fact that it is not so easy. But I really think that discussion gave me some material for consideration.

After the discussion I had to prepare for dinner. I was really hungry, as for the whole day I hadn't any opportunity for lunch; I had to go only on breakfast and way too many sweets. This time, dinner was a bigger gathering. There were ten

of us and we landed in a Japanese restaurant. Although Trudi was not attending Continuum she found time to come to the dinner, so again I had the chance to meet with her and chat a little bit. Once we ate dessert we headed back to the convention hotel, but on our way there was a shop that we decided to visit so that we could find some mochi. I also got the occasion to buy Japanese chocolate that I planned to taste later on.

Officially the evening programme was devoted to the costume parade and contest and the maskobalo. I went there for a little bit and took some pictures, but then I headed to the bar to spend some more time chatting with people. There were multiple ongoing conversations and it was quite noisy, so I had issues with following any of the conversations. All in all it was easier for me to join a small discussion about the Ditmar Awards and their issues (surprisingly similar to the issues we have with Polish Janusz A. Zajdel Award). Later on I talked with Donna about gender bias imposed on people by the language (e.g. in Polish gender is impacting the verbs and even objects have gender).

When the time came I headed to the room in order to catch some sleep before the third day of Continuum.

10th June

The morning was a slightly stressful one. Breakfast took me a little bit too much time and I got to the first programme item just on time (and as a panel participant I wanted to be there earlier). The topic that we were covering was The Legacy of Le Guin. I wanted to be a member of this panel as I really love Ursula K. Le Guin's works. Still, it was stressful as I am not a specialist; I am just a fan who enjoys her writing. There were people with way deeper knowledge than



Justin during the Fan Fund auction.

me, and thanks to them a lot of aspects were discussed. Here I may just hope that what I was sharing was also interesting for the audience.

For early afternoon I planned what I keep calling the Great GUFF Chocolate Tour. The idea appeared to me when we were discussing chocolate places with Trudi. She printed me a map so that I would be able to find the Koko Black chocolatier. Then I thought that making a tour to experience Australian chocolate together with Australian fans would be a good idea. When the time came we were able to gather six people who wanted to try some tastes of chocolate. So the dream team was (in alphabetical order) Alan, Candice, Catherine, Donna, Roman , and myself.

The tour went pretty well. All the places were relatively close to the convention venue. The expedition, however, lasted longer than expected. The first place on our list was Chocolait where we tried just a little bit of what they had to offer. Right afterwards we started to discuss what we just tasted. It was really cool. Then we headed to the shop of the company that, as some people state, makes the best chocolate in Australia: Haigh's. The shops are quite expensive, but together with every order you receive a small treat for tasting; the quality is also quite good. The crowning moment of the tour was next on the list. In Koko Black we stopped for a while longer and I ordered hot chocolate. It was not what I expected. Instead of a beverage that was very thick and extremely rich in taste, I received something more similar to cocoa; it was pretty good but took me by surprise. The last two places were a challenge so I only bought some samples to try later. Those were the Lindt and Ganache shops.

Apart from enjoying chocolate, of course we also discussed multiple topics. Conversation was sometimes taking place among all six of us and sometimes in smaller "subgroups". This was truly a worthy experience and I would gladly repeat it someday (anyone interested?).

During our way back Alan and I stopped in two geek shops. First was Mino-taur where one could buy all sorts of things – from books, through comics and merchandise, up to RPGs and board games. The place is pretty impressive and I decided to go there again on another day. The second shop was devoted to

games. The RPG shelf was not as big as the one I saw before in Sydney but it was bigger than in Minotaur.

In the evening Gillian had her newest book launched. There was an organised event for that, with some speakers sharing their thoughts on Gillian's works. Then Gillian did a re-



Gillian reading her short story during her book launch.

ading from one of the stories and the unofficial part began. There were some cakes (I tasted a little bit but was still full after the chocolate tour) and some loose conversations.

The last thing I had planned was a "Fan Fund" dinner. There were twelve of us and we all are/were involved with Fan Funds. Only one of us was not a previous delegate – but Carey has still been helping Fan Funds for many years. The dinner was pretty nice, and I managed to meet many other delegates. What surprised me is that dinner was relatively short and I still had time for the last programme item in the evening.

11th June

Monday was the last day of Continuum. As always, I was feeling a little bit sad that the convention was coming to an end. However, as usual I was doing my best to enjoy myself. On Sunday I proposed that I could give a talk about Polish / European fandom as my earlier interview was scheduled against the Norma K. Hemming Awards Ceremony and not everyone was able to participate in my item. This was accepted, so in the morning I went to the assigned room.

There were not too many fans interested in a newly added programme item but in the end three people appeared to talk a little bit and view the European natcons' pictures. The presentation was followed by an interesting discussion

with one of the fans present. We moved from the fandom to the politics topic and the chat gave me some material to think about.

After the programme we had to pack up the Fan Funds table, which took a little bit of time. The good thing was that it seemed that the things I brought from Europe were able to more or less cover my Australian expenses. Now I just needed to make sure that the bigger chunk of the expenses from the European side of the fund would be covered as well.

The closing ceremony was rather quick and nice. We saw the Continuum movie again (you may want to check it on youtube – the name is: Continuum 14: Conjugation) and the convention chair said a few words about the con. The convention gave some small presents to the GoHs. What was a nice thing is that during the closing ceremony all members who have attended ten Continuums received a special Continuum pin. It is a really nice gesture. At the same time the pin's design is really elegant, making it possible to wear even for pretty official occasions. At the end the chair of the next year's Continuum announced the invited Guests of Honour (Kate Elliott and Ken Liu) and that was it.

The convention was over and I was kinda melancholic. The time had come to say goodbye to all the people whom I have met. Of course, the goodbye part was also packed with some conversations and discussions, but this was inevitably an end. Together with Julian I took a train to the house where he and Lucy live and which was to become my home for the next few days.

Was it the end of the day? Of course not. It was only afternoon when we arrived and I had only to unpack my things and do the laundry. This didn't take too much time and the evening was a gaming one. Alan (whom I had met at the convention) and Craig (whom I had just met) appeared and we played some card games. It could probably have gone on for longer, but at some point between the games (filled in with discussions) I decided I was too tired and I had to go to sleep. This is related to the overheated rooms at the Jasper Hotel where the con was held. As the temperature wasn't dropping below 23.5 degrees Celsius, my sleep was not perfect and the time came for me to pay the price.

12th June

Tuesday was a sightseeing day, or at least it was planned to be such a day. Although I spent most of it out of the house, I saw just a few places. It seems that when I'm tired I seem to be pretty lazy.

The first thing in the morning was a journey to the Jewish museum. Here I met with Irwin and his wife Wendy as well as with Gillian. Together we had a tour around the museum where I managed to learn more about Jewish history. It was an interesting visit to the museum and the synagogue and I am grateful to my friends that they shared their insights with me.

After the museum we went to an Irish pub to have lunch. Gillian had to run for the bus to the airport just after lunch so soon after Wendy, Irwin and I also finished the conversation and we parted. My plan was to go to St. Kilda beach where I was hoping to find some shells. And I managed to find a lot. Some of them were pretty interesting and I took them back to Poland. From the beach it was easy to get to the St. Kilda pier where it is sometimes possible to spot little

penguins. Unfortunately I was not so lucky (or maybe it was just not good timing, as the penguins are there in the morning and in the evening and not during the day).



The Shot Tower in Melbourne Central complex.

Finally the time had come for me to get back to the city centre. Here I finally got a chance to walk around the city (well, the chocolate tour was also a good opportunity). I visited the cathedral, which surprised me with ornaments in the shape of inverted pentagrams (you know, the shape is nice, but it has certain connotations). Then I walked through Swanston and Elizabeth Streets. Around 17:30 I met with Julian in front of the Shot Tower. The place is slightly surprising – it seems that it was planned to build

a shopping mall here but the tower had to be preserved. So what was done was to build the mall around the tower, making it a characteristic place in the centre of the mall. It was Candice who told me that, and she made me really look forward to seeing the tower.

We went to do some shopping (I wanted to buy Tim Tams for Ytterbium – 2019 Eastercon) but it seems that they all had really short expiry dates and I wasn't able to find a pack that would survive till the convention.

In the evening we changed again into gamers. Alan picked up Julian and myself and we headed to David's place where we met with David and Duncan. The game for the evening was a board game dungeon crawl called Sword and Sorcery: Immortal Souls. My character was a paladin (and a tank) so most of the really big monsters were attacking me. All in all, I died. The game allows you to resurrect characters but the night is always too short. In the end we had to pause the game and head back home. The next day, however, Julian received information that the game was continued and we won (meaning we completed the quest).

13th June

In the morning Lucy and Julian took me for a tour. We started with the State Library where Lucy works. She showed me the place and it is terrific. I really love books and I love the places where books are stored. Here, the place itself is amazing. The laaaarge reading room, with a glass ceiling far above our heads, looks magnificent. It is not maximizing usage space but at least it is breathtaking. There was also an exhibition about the history of books and a part of it was a short movie about zines. Lucy was kind enough to keep explaining the exhibition as well as the library building itself.



Lucy and me in State Library Victoria.

After the lunch Lucy went back to work and Julian and I headed to some bookshops and to Sticky Institute. The latter is also a kind of bookshop, but filled only with zines. An amazing place – on the shelves you have zines of different formats and quality. Some of them look like pieces of art, while others



Sticky Institute – fanzines and where to find them ;)

are just roughly made to share the thoughts of the author. Some are comics but some contain only writing with no / almost no art at all. The thing I found disappointing was the lack of SF fanzines. Some of the comics were SF in nature but I was not able to find any typical SF zines (but, considering the amount of zines in the Institute, maybe I was just not able to spot them).

Then we headed back to the Minotaur shop where I realised that the figure I was thinking about was sold out :(Later in the evening, though, I thought that was good as I would have had no option of fitting it into my suitcase. From Minotaur we went onward to meet with Narrelle. We met during the convention and it seems she lived in Kraków for almost a year. Lucy joined us in the café and the four of us had a discussion about fanzines and stories related to their production.

The end of the day was reserved for a Nova Mob – an (ir)regular meeting that is held in Melbourne since the 1970s if I am not mistaken. The plan was to start at 18:00 with dinner and then have some more chatting afterwards. There was quite a number of us appearing for the dinner. When we finished more people joined us and to my surprise it turned out that there is an official part to the meeting as well. Bruce was asked to tell us about Ursula K. Le Guin. Together with other people who had the chance to meet her he told us a story about this great writer. Then we discussed some of her works. It was a very pleasant discussion and it made me sad once again about her death.

Here I must rewind the story to a few days earlier. I think I was in Sydney at this moment when Jan Maszczyzyn – the Polish SF writer – approached me on



The Great GUFF Chocolate Tour in front of the Chocolait shop (Melbourne).
Left to right: Catherine, Donna, Alan, Roman and Candice.



St. Kilda pier in Melbourne.



Flinders Street Station (Melbourne).



Nova Mob meeting – just before dinner (Melbourne).

Facebook. To my surprise it transpired that he lives in Melbourne. We agreed to meet when I was in the city and so here we met, at the Nova Mob. Jan was kind enough to bring for me the steampunk trilogy he published. To my surprise he brought also some other writings he has published over the years, including the Somnambul – the first Polish fanzine, from 1978. Julian seized the opportunity and during the "official" part of the meeting he asked Jan to present his writings as part of Polish SF history. I was really glad as I was able to talk about Polish SFF but I had no materials to show – and Jan not only described a little bit of the history but also brought all his materials.

During the meeting I received a precious artefact from Alan. It is a small plate with indigenous art that was being given to Hugo finalists back during Aussiecon 4 in 2010. I do hope I'll manage to bid for it during the Fan Funds auction as it is both pretty and closely related to SF fandom.

After the Nova Mob meeting we went home and although I was thinking about going to sleep I somehow ended having a loooong conversation with Julian. While we talked I promised myself a few times that I would go to bed very soon... Finally we finished talking around one or two hours after midnight.

14th June

Because of the late night conversation the day before, we didn't start really early. I did not sleep till really late but waking up at 8:00 would have been way too early. This means that on my last day in Melbourne I had no time to really see or do a lot. Our plan was to visit Victoria Market and this we did. There is even a Polish store there (yay) but apart from Polish stuff it sells also things from Spain and Germany (and possibly more).

I took the opportunity to buy some last souvenirs and then it was time for an early lunch. Lucy joined me and Julian for it and after this last opportunity to talk we had to go to the station so that I could catch the bus to the airport. I know I am repeating myself but again it was too early for me to leave the city.

At the airport I found that my carry-on baggage was too heavy and I had to either throw away something or pay A\$46 for overweighted baggage. I had no

choice but to get rid of my small backpack. It was not fully functional so it was not that bad, but still the stress of repacking at the airport is not the best thing.

In Perth David once again came to pick me up from the airport. I asked for a visit to a supermarket, hoping that maybe I would find Tim Tams that I could bring to Ytterbium but no – all of them had too short best-before date. Afterwards we went for dinner. Of course we talked during the evening. Before going to sleep I took some of the Borderlands to take back home.

15th / 16th June

So this was my last day in Australia. I woke up in the morning being sad; I knew that the great excursion had finished. The adventure was really something big. I met so many great people – those who hosted me, those giving me tours around their cities and those I had the chance to talk to during dinners or at Continuum. The memories from the trip are those I will treasure for many years to come.

The day itself was quite a calm one. After breakfast and preparing suitcases for the trip, David and I went for an early lunch. As we had some time afterwards we visited the Diabolik bookshop – just opposite our lunch place. Inside we met Robin who, I was told, is a fan who had a big impact on the fannish community of Western Australia. As per David it is partially thanks to Robin that the literary and media fandom are together in WA. Here we spent a little time chatting about fanzines and fandom wars – especially those early ones related to the exclusion of the Futurians from the first Worldcon back in 1939.

Lastly David gave me a lift to the airport... Just before starting my last ride on Australian roads I realised that the flight would be 20 minutes early (I am so happy no one from the LOT Polish Airlines found this information important enough to send e-mail...). Then, at the airport, security screening of my bag had to be repeated because one of the donated gifts for the auction seemed suspicious to the security check (a gum tree leaf a few cm long, made of steel). Then, on my way to the gates, it seemed that I needed to undergo a second security screening as there are separate places for international flights. I forgot

to close my suitcase before taking it and part of the stuff fell outside. Finally I reached a gate and fortunately I was on time. Yet this was a stressful visit at the airport.

And then I was waiting for my aircraft that would take me back to Poland...

