

The Banksoniain #17

An Iain (M.) Banks Fanzine

April 2012

Editorial

The publication of *Stonemouth* is upon us. Apologies for not publishing in 2011, but then again neither did Iain. This issue looks at the build up to the new book, and also the next Culture novel, *The Hydrogen Sonata*. There is a bit more film news, and over a year of Banks's public appearances to report on, as well as the calendar of forthcoming Banks events on the back page.

The Wasp Factory Film

This is a long and complicated story previously discussed in various editions of *The Banksoniain*. There was a step forward when on the Friday of Novacon 40 (12/11/2010) Iain commented that a deal had been done, and on the night he mentioned Stephen Daldry.

Daldry had previously been attached to *The Wasp Factory* as the director of a proposed production by Renaissance Films back in the mid-1990s. This was the one with an early Purvis & Wade (the current Bond film writing team) script, and Stephen Evans as producer. This time round Daldry is busy working on the opening ceremony of the 2012 Olympic Games so is likely to take some sort of producer role rather than director. However, nothing official announcement has been forthcoming.

There has been the off mention of the project. A February 2011 profile of New Zealand based writer, Neil Cross listed a number of projects he was working on, which included a "film version of *The Wasp Factory*", and a short biography of Stephen Evans on the Green Screen Studios company website, ends with the fact that he "is working with Stephen Daldry on the film adaptation of Iain Banks' cult novel *The Wasp Factory*."

Banks's Next Book

Iain is writing, or hopefully just about finishing, an 'M' book at the moment. An early public comment about it was in an interview with Irish SF magazine *Albedo One* (issue 41) that was conducted in April 2011. At that point he said it was to be "written over Jan/Feb/Mar next year, and it's almost certain to be a Culture novel." He added that, "I think I need to tackle the idea of Subliming; it has delighted us with its vagueness long enough."

Early in January 2012 it got an ISBN, 9780356501505, and a listing on book selling websites calling it *Untitled New Iain M. Banks 1*. However, Iain said that the working title was, *The Hydrogen Sonata*, and this was confirmed when bookselling websites were updated in late February.

The Hope of Diamonds

Iain is the patron of a local (to him) charity called **Safe Space**. The Dunfermline based organisation provides a free and confidential range of support services for people who have experienced sexual abuse.

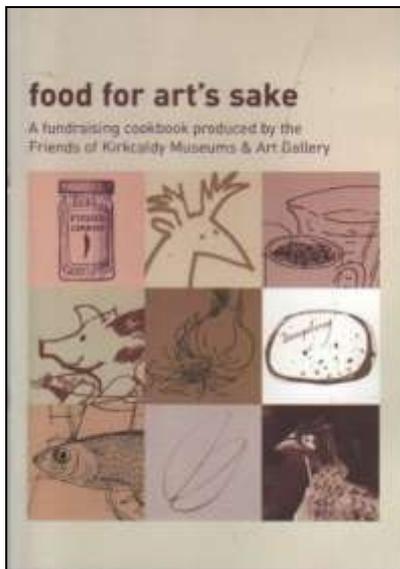
One of the many ways that the charity works is by using creative writing as a healing tool getting the abused to write about their experiences in a creative writing group. This helps the attendees to express and sort out their thoughts and feelings as well as exploring and expressing their memories, and enabling them to develop skills.

They have produced an anthology of the work, *The Hope of Diamonds*, from their writing group which has been published with a foreword by Iain. If you would like a copy then Safe Space can be contacted via their website: <http://www.safe-space.co.uk>

Media Scanner

Something that we missed when it was first published is a fundraising cookbook that Iain contributed to called, **food for art's sake**. This was produced by the Friends of Kirkcaldy Museums & Art Gallery in around 2006. It contains recipes from the likes of Ian Rankin, Gordon Brown, David Steel, Alex McLeish, Alex Salmond, as well as artists and friends.

There is a “comment” from Iain not a recipe. He wrote back thanking them for inviting him to contribute, but humorously explaining that his cooking skills were not really up to actually requiring recipes, as they mostly involved Smash which he didn't actually cook, just poured boiling water on.



Copies were still available in the summer of 2011. The booklet is priced at £3.00 if you buy it at the museum, but it can be obtained by post (adding £1.00 for postage) from Kirkcaldy Museum and Art Gallery, War Memorial Gardens, Abbotshall Road, Kirkcaldy, Fife, KY1 1YG

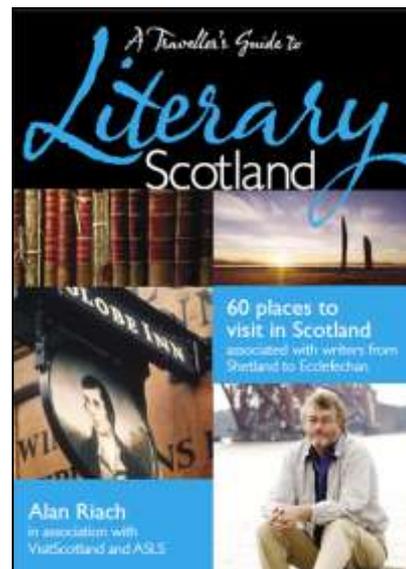
Another blast from the past occurred in early in 2011 when the BBC put a comprehensive database of **Desert Island Discs** guest online. This included a not inconsiderable number of episodes which includes Iain's from August 1997. It can be downloaded to as well as streamed from the webpage¹, which gives

¹ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/features/desert-island-discs/castaway/c5a41e86>

details of his musical choices as well as book choice and luxury. The database search allows users to search all aspects of the show, and so it identifies that the only person (so far) to choose a Banks book was the Conservative MP, David Davis, who wanted the complete works of Iain Banks.

Iain was interviewed for BBC Two's **The Culture Show**² which had a special edition about Alasdair Gray and his autopicography (first broadcast 21/10/2010).

Iain made the cover of Visit Scotland's **A Traveller's Guide to Literary Scotland** which listed 60 places associated with writers to visit, which was published in February 2011.



The entry associated with the Forth Bridges, says, "Iain Banks (b.1954), novelist, author of numerous sensational works combining fluent storytelling, political engagement and moral indignation, and many science fiction novels."

John Mullan picking his ten best locked rooms in literature in **The Guardian** (26/03/2011), included Angus's study from *The Wasp Factory* in a list that works by Charlotte Bronte, Oscar Wilde and CS Lewis.

The BBC's attitude to genre fiction in the corporation's coverage of 2011 World Book Night was questioned by author Stephen Hunt³. The fantasy author organised a letter

² <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00vfhfj>

³ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-13128769>

signed by 84 colleagues including Banks. The letter particularly complained about the “sneering tone” of a programme called *The Books We Really Read*.

BBC Radio’s magazine show **Saturday Live**⁴ has a feature each week called ‘Inheritance Tracks’, where someone discusses a piece of music they have “inherited” from their parents and one that they wish to pass on to the next generation. Iain’s choices were broadcast on 21/05/2011, and he spoke about *Shenandoah* by Paul Robeson and *For A Dancer* by Jackson Browne. The contribution had been recorded back in November 2010 during the publicity round for the hardback publication of *Surface Detail*, but did not get on air until the paperback was released.

In a live chat hosted on the **Guardian**⁵ website (08/07/2011) and Iain answered many questions, saying, amongst other things that he wouldn’t write for *Doctor Who* as the “monster has to go back inside the box”, and that he had no plans for “Another Big War” in the Culture. Asked what he really thought of Michael Moorcock he said “a great guy”. Iain continues to maintain that Frozen Gold are a “cross between Led Zep and Abba”.

Iain was interviewed on BBC Radio Scotland’s **Tom Morton Show**⁶ (17/08/2011). He chose three tracks to play and talk about: Frank Zappa, *Peaches en Regalia*, was Iain’s first pick, which he admitted that he had effectively used as a soundtrack to one of his early unpublished novels. Second choice, The Hooters, *Satellite*, was described by Iain as “prime Americana” with a moral point. Of the final track, some French electronica from Martin Solveig & Dragonette called *Hello*, Iain said that he loved it as “unpretentious pop”. He also talked about generally being more interested in melody than lyrics, with beat a poor third.

The Guardian (28/08/2011) asked the question “What future for the Union?” of a number of prominent Scots including Iain. Banks’s essay talked of his early feelings of being more British than Scottish which

⁴ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b0118bgr>

⁵ <http://tinyurl.com/67sc48g>

⁶ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b013912z>

changed around when Margaret Thatcher took the Conservative party to the right. He then said it was the fact that the English fell for it when the Scots did not, which meant the end of “one nation” and led to the rise in tactical voting in Scotland that has reduced the Tories to one MP. After Tony Blair “did the same trick with Labour” Iain said that he voted “Green, Scottish Socialist party, Lib Dem or SNP”, but eventually increasingly for the latter as they “were more progressive, more left wing, more fair”. He would still prefer a socialist UK to an independent socialist Scotland, but pragmatically sees the second as a more likely eventuality than the former.

Iain appeared on an episode of Channel 5’s **The Gadget Show** (Season 16, Episode 6, first broadcast 23/09/2011) where he judged the attempts of Suzi Perry and Ortis Deley to create their own interactive e-books, respectively revamping two classic novels: Jules Verne’s *Around the World in 80 Days* and Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*. The two presenters came up with the concepts to enhance their chosen books, and had help to realise their ideas, before pitching to Iain who got to decide the winner.



Iain judging on The Gadget Show

Musician Raymond Meade blogged⁷ (10/10/2011) that he recently spent an afternoon with Iain Banks working on a track for his new album. Further details were revealed in an article in the **Evening Times** (28/10/2011) stating that the musician had been working on a track called *Carnivores*

⁷ <http://raymondmeade.com/2011/10/october-musings/>

which he realised would benefit from having something spoken over it and remembered a passage from *The Steep Approach to Garbadale*. Meade wrote to Banks who readily agreed to read it. The track is from the album *Fables and Follies*, although this does yet seem to have seen the light of day yet.

Iain got to present his own radio programme, an edition of the series, **Paperback Writers**⁸, which was broadcast on BBC Radio 6 on 27/11/2011. Each edition hands over the airwaves to a writer to play and talk about music that reminds them of specific times in their life. Banks's choices were:

Kevin Ayers, *Didn't Feel Lonely Until...*
Fairport Convention, *Meet On The Ledge*
The Motels, *Total Control*
The Pogues, *Sally MacLennane*
Pixies, *Alec Eiffel*
Neil Young, *Rockin' In The Free World*
Warren Zevon, *Mohammed's Radio*
k.d. lang, *Season of Hollow Soul*
Joan Osborne, *Righteous Love*

Outwith the music Iain told stories of student days in Scotland, squatting in England, near death experiences, and finally his more serene life in the wilds of Scotland.

Issue #141 of **Writers' Forum** (December 2011) contained an interview with Iain. Banks described his writing career and his desire to be a writer from the age of 11, advising would-be authors to "write as much as you can as soon as you know how." Iain revealed that he thinks that the goal of the writer should be contentment with what you produce rather than trying to win others over. "Ask yourself if you're happy with what you've written. That's the important thing." *The Wasp Factory* was the first book he did a second draft of. He admits he had this "really stupid idea" that publishers would recognise his talent, but now sees that "you have to hand in the best you possibly can", however many drafts that takes. When asked about changing in the industry he answered that there was an extra hurdle nowadays as you have to submit via a literary agent, and says he was lucky to break in at the time he did. The publishing industry is less fun now that everything is run by accountants. The

⁸ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b017pncn>

interview finished with his top tips for writers which boil down to: 1) Read more, 2) Practise, Practise, Practise and 3) Get to the end.

Further writing advice was dispensed by Banks on **The Book Show** on Sky Arts (Season 5, Episode 5, first broadcast 11/11/2011). Asked to recommend something for writer to read he picked *Complete Plain Words*, saying that it does what it says on the cover, and is about "learning how to use words better". He added that even if you break the rules, you need to know what it is you are breaking to do it properly. His interview earlier in the programme with Mariella Frostrup, was ostensibly with Iain M. Banks, and plugging the paperback edition of *Surface Detail*. A quick overview of the Culture was followed by a discussion of the uploading of consciousness to computers and why Iain thought that this would produce a virtual heaven and inevitably to virtual hells. The character of Lededje (and her tattoos) was the next focus, along with her status as a trophy and slave. Diverting to "mainstream" and whether his M career had affected his literary career. Iain said that science fiction was the most important genre as it was he only one that looks at the issue of technological change on individuals.

Iain was interviewed for a two part BBC programme, **Cat Women of the Moon**⁹, that saw Sarah Hall (author of *The Carhullan Army*) investigating motif in science fiction of an all-women society surviving without men, which was epitomised by the 1953 film that had its title appropriated. In reality it looked beyond this in the first instalment to how science fiction has been used to examine relationships between the sexes - and in some cases, more than two sexes. The second part looked at science fiction's representation of reproducing and the various ways that can be used to continue the human race, test tube babies, parthenogenesis, cloning, male pregnancy and artificial wombs were all covered with collective consciousness and hive minds finishing off the discussion. Other authors involved included; China Mieville, Nicola Griffith and Geoff Ryman.

⁹ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b0149d00>

BBC Bookclub

BBC Radio 4's monthly **Bookclub** programme covered *The Wasp Factory* in the edition first broadcast on 06/11/2011¹⁰. The recording took place at the National Library of Scotland in Edinburgh on 19th September.

The recording lasted the best part of an hour, but the broadcast programme was edited down to fit into a half-hour slot, so it lasts just under 28 minutes. Iain said some of the more interesting snippets of information in the chatting to host, James Naughtie, when they were ironing out some technical issues before the recording proper commenced. Iain said that he had good ideas for sequels to both *Against a Dark Background* and *Matter*. When I asked him about this after the recording he said that whether they are still good ideas after he has thought about them in more depth remains to be seen, and besides that there were other book plans (e.g. what became *The Hydrogen Sonata*) to work on and if these ideas did come to fruition it would be a fair way down the line.

The audience had applied for tickets from the BBC and were a mix of Banks fans (and a guide dog sleeping at the front) who had read the book many times, one audience member admitted to trying to build his own Wasp Factory at the age of 15 when he first read the book. There were also members of local bookclubs who had read it specially for this occasion, so a variety of interesting questions were forthcoming after James's introductory question about Banks's breakthrough as a writer. Iain responded to this by saying it was really the first book where he left a lot to the reader's imagination, knowing what to leave out is as important as knowing what to put in.

Iain said that being a science fiction writer helped with getting into Frank's mind-set as it was all just exaggeration (although a more technical term would be extrapolation) from the dam building and things he got up to when he was a child. He just imagined how Frank would take those ideas and use them. The wasp factory fits Frank's character and his personal religion. Banks read the

description of how the factory works at this point, before getting further into the shamanistic aspects of Frank. Iain admitted that the book was "a dig at religion".

Discussing why Frank, and his father, hate women, Iain described Mrs Clamp as the Mrs Doyle of the book. A further question about his father's lies allowed Iain to list a few which included "fellatio is not a character in Hamlet". At this point in the recording the producer frowned but this part was broadcast.

Asked about the twist at the end, Iain said the book was 95% planned when he realised that there could be a surprise ending. He described his internal discussion with himself about whether it would work or not, and that he only put in quite subtle clues that would be easy to remove if he changed his mind. At this point Naughtie asked Iain if he had even been psychoanalysed, and Banks replied that he always thought of himself as pretty well balanced, adding that he did not want to find out if there was a reason for the way his creativity works for fear of messing with it. Iain did return the subject of the ending saying it was partly so that readers would think he was a "clever bugger" and go back and read the book again.

On the question of the relationship between Frank and his brother Eric, Iain replied that it is a little like Frasier and Niles, when you think you have encountered the biggest nutcase in a family you find an even more extreme one. The phone conversations with Eric were put into the narrative when Iain felt the book was dragging. It was always meant to be a black comedy which was why Iain was bemused by some of the reviews which completely missed that aspect of his novel.

The final question was about whether he had researched madness, which allowed him to trot out his "R-word" answer "it is not mentioned in polite company". He admitted that his most researched book, *Canal Dreams*, is probably the "runt of the litter" although he is still proud of it.

The whole of the back catalogue of the Bookclub is available from the BBC's website:

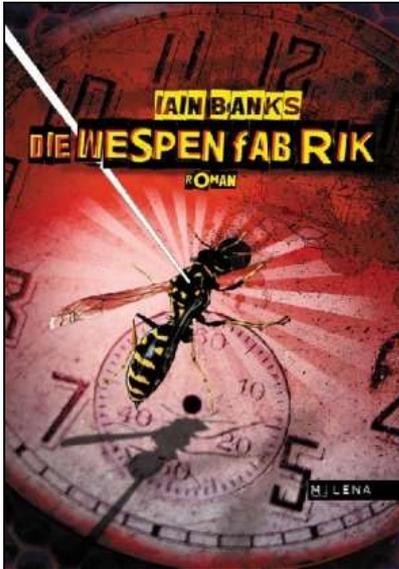
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006s5sf>

¹⁰ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b016w0nf>

Banks's Backlist

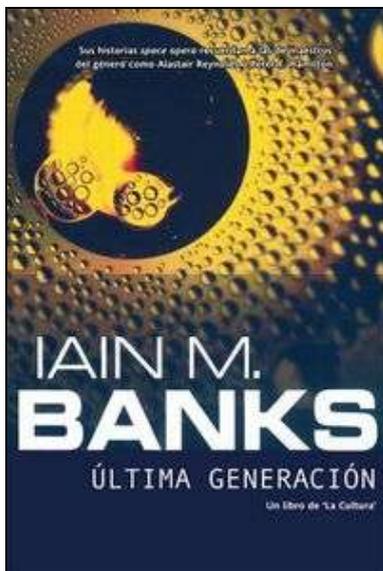
We have a heap of translations to get through, so here is a montage for this issue's centrespread.

Just to confuse collectors/bibliographers comes another German language edition of *Die Wespenfabrik* (The Wasp Factory) but from an Austrian publisher, Milena Verlag. As the translator is the same as the German editions where do we catalogue this one?



ISBN: 978-3-85286-205-7

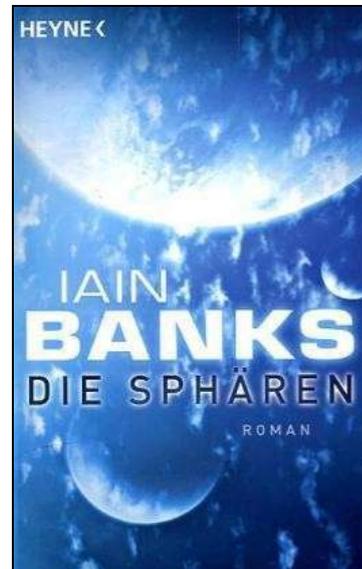
La Factoría de Ideas continue to publish Iain in Spanish at a commendable rate. Their latest is *Última Generación* (The State of the Art) which looks to be the whole collection.



ISBN: 978-84-9800-692-6

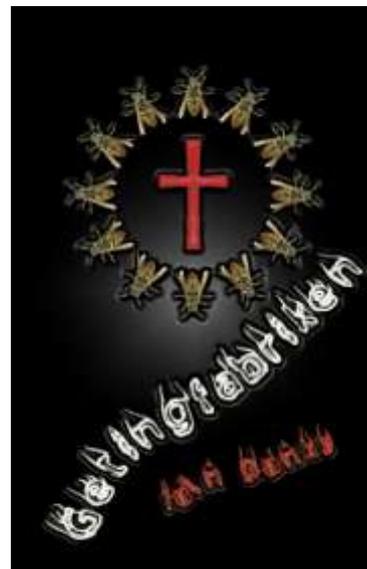
However, I do wish they would generate their own artwork rather than localise the UK versions.

German publisher Heyne issued *Die Sphären* (Matter) in a translation by Andreas Brandhorst. This was the first foreign language edition of that Banks work, published in June 2011.



ISBN: 978-3-453-53377-6

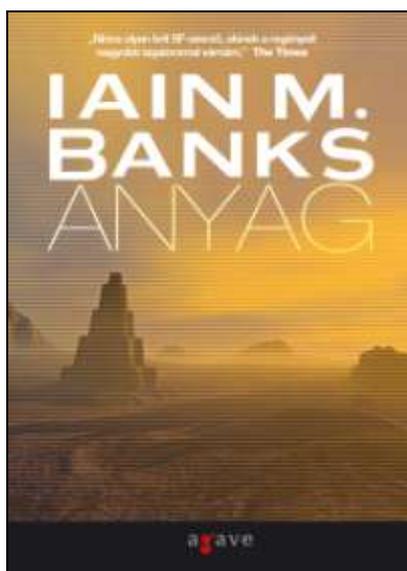
Getingfabriken, the late Roland Adlerberth's translation of *The Wasp Factory*, has been reissued in Sweden by Modernista, with a new cover.



ISBN: 978-91-86629-46-5

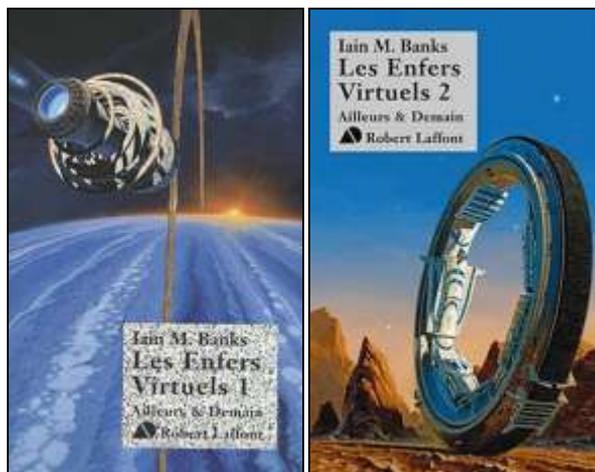
The Hungarian publisher Agave Könyvek used their regular translator of Banks, Nóra

Gála, for their edition of *Anyag* (Matter), which was published in October 2011.



ISBN: 978-615-5049-44-6

Enfers Virtuels, the French edition of *Surface Detail*, which translates back into English as *Virtual Underworld*, has been issued in two volumes by publisher Robert Laffont.



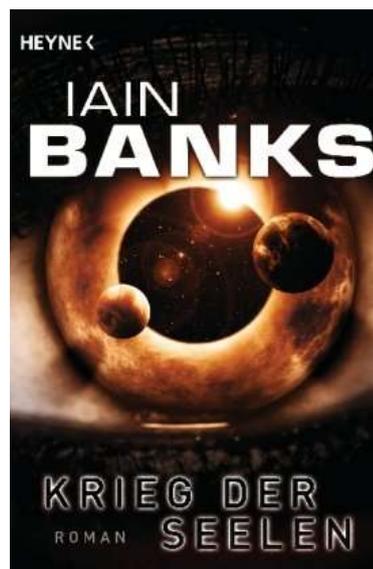
ISBN: 978-2-221-12790-2 / 978-2-221-12791-9

The books even have completely different covers by regular artist Manchu. He blogs regularly about his work, and there were a couple of entries about this commission, including some rough working sketches¹¹. One of these revealed that he thought it was to be called *Intaille*, and also that he likes the Culture vessels.

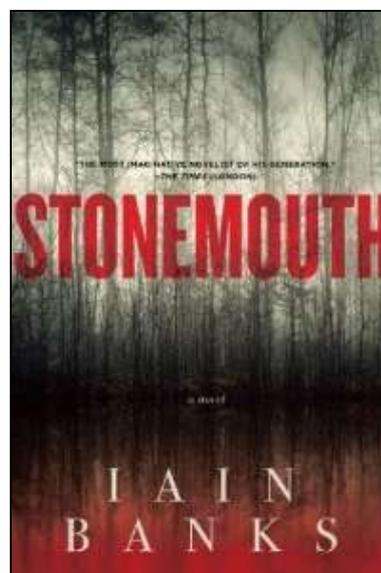
Krieg der Seelen, the German translation of *Surface Detail* by Andreas Brandhorst was

¹¹ http://manchu-sf.blogspot.co.uk/2011/07/iain-m-banks_28.html

published by Heyne in December 2011, a time of year at Iain's UK publishers will not use



Pegasus's US edition of *Stonemouth* is listed for January 2013, but already has a cover.



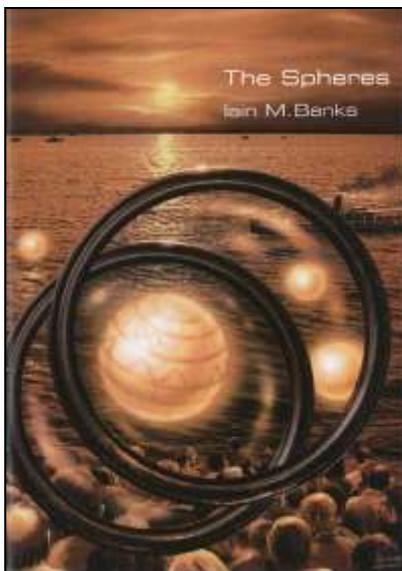
ISBN: 9781605983820

Rights that have been sold, but for which editions have not yet appeared include: Chinese rights for *The Player of Games*, Russian rights to *Matter*, and both the Russian and Finnish rights to *Surface Detail*,

The last of those will be called *Pintakuvio* (which translates back as into English *Texture*), and is due for publication in April by Gummerus Kustannus, a company that also has the rights to *Transition*. The translation is by Ville Keynäs, and the ISBN: 978-951-20-8649-8.

Banks on Tour

The main event to report on is Iain's appearance as Guest of Honour at Novacon 40 in Nottingham in November 2010. Birmingham Science Fiction Group, the organisation from which Novacon sprung, publish a chapbook each year to celebrate each year's guest. *The Spheres*, was the 2010 edition, in a limited edition of 500 copies, and it contained two chapters of work by Iain. The first piece, which gave its name to the book, was something that Iain written for *Transition* but was edited out. The second, called *The Secret Courtyard*, was in the original draft of *Matter*. As Iain said in the introduction it suffered a similar fate. The cover was by David A. Hardy, and the original artwork was sold in the convention auction. Although Iain bid on it, he graciously let a fan win the item.



Copies of the publication can be obtained through BSGF. The details are on their website at:

www.birminghamsfgroup.org.uk/Novacon.html

Iain's first main Novacon programme item was, *Friday Night With Steve Green*, where he was interviewed by a long standing fan who reminded Iain that they had met at Mexicon 2 in 1986, although Iain said 1987, and asked if that was Iain's first experience of fandom. Banks related a story about going to an event with Ken MacLeod ten years or so before that which had put both of them off for a while. The two then chatted about his first forays into writing including how Ken

rescued the structure of *Use of Weapons*. The history of *The Wasp Factory* as a film project was discussed, but just as it was getting interesting with Iain mentioning the rights currently being with Stephen Daldry, the focus switched to the fact that all his work is difficult to film. Steve suggested Iain talk to Paul Cornell (who writes books, comics as well as screen and radio plays) about this. Iain said that they had met, and Paul had explained the rules of *Doctor Who* to him, and that Iain would never write within those rules as the monster has to go back in the box which means there is never any real jeopardy. Iain described himself as the sort of writer that would want to kill James Bond. With a novel *The End is the end*, apart from the minor edits, but with a screenplay it is just the start.

The Guest of Honour slot was hosted by Iain's old school-friend, and fellow SF writer Ken MacLeod. Ken's opening gambit was to joking ask why Iain wasted his talents on SF. Banks answered that he had been asked that in all seriousness at Cheltenham Literary Festival, and that the answer is simply, "I love it", particularly for the freedom that it gives a writer. He further explained that if writing was like a mathematical equation, which are fixed values in mainstream can be variables in SF. Writing contemporary novels, says Iain, requires just character and plot, whereas science fiction needs ideas.

Ken recalled the two of them discovering the New Wave critique in their teens, and asked if that had affected his work. Iain replied that it opened up even more possibilities as up until then he had been reading the post war SF classics. The conversation touched on his University of Stirling days, "English, Philosophy and Psychology seemed a good idea at the time". Ken then talked about the Minds in *Excession*, and Iain expounded his Intelligence -> Imagination -> Empathy theory of why they are nice (in the main) to the people in his books, saying that other authors wrote about "bad" AIs, and he was a balancing force. He then mentioned the basic premise behind *Surface Detail* was picking up the Soulkeeper technology the Chels had in *Look to Windward* and deciding that if it was just an engineering problem then other societies would do it as well. That would

mean that there would be virtual heavens for each society, but that some would take that concept and produce virtual hells as well. He described that as the “strategic” story behind the book to which he added the human revenge story.

Ken returned to their schooldays to say that Iain's poetry back then was very promising, and that many Scottish writers had stared out with that form. Iain said that he always wanted to be a writer rather than a poet, and that he continued at University only as it was compulsory. An old poem from those days, *Feu de Joie*, eventually turned into *A Song of Stone*, but Iain said he also had his share of Vogon poetry which he had threatened to include in the Novacon chapbook.

When the audience started asking questions, one asked if the fact that Gold floating in Mercury was a subtle way of indicating that part of the book was in a virtual world. No, it was just a mistake. Another asked about the new branch of Special Circumstances that deals with Subliming. Iain said that he would probably take this up in more detail in his next SF book [we now know that to be the case in *The Hydrogen Sonata* - Ed], adding that it is different to being in a virtual world as that could always be turned off in the real world, where subliming took you beyond the fourth dimension to a life based outside the matter based universe. Asked if the pair of them would ever write a book together, Iain was quick to say that he was not a fan of such collaborations.

Asked how to bring about The Culture on Earth, Banks replied “never vote for right wing bastards; cancel your Sky subscription; never become a banker; get rid of plcs, there should be full liability; be nicer, behave, don't be selfish”, adding that genetic manipulation to get rid of -isms would be useful. The question of whether he would ever write a pre-Culture book was met with “Is that the time?” before saying that he had intentionally kept the origin story quite opaque as he didn't want to collapse any of the possibilities and tie himself down.

On the last day of Novacon Iain was a panellist on a group discussing the topic of “Hard SF” which began with Geoff Ryman

outlining the aims of the Mundane SF Manifesto, i.e. “to liberate authors from the inherited tropes”. Iain admitted that he had enough technological decency to be ashamed that the Culture has FTL - two types in fact. He knows he is on dodgy ground but it is sheer indulgence on his part, and that although he respects such movements he is too old to learn new tricks. In *Against a Dark Background*, the travel was Einsteinian, but then the lazy gun was “total bollocks”. He also said that he liked to think that he could close off some of his more stupid cylinders, but then he would not be firing on all of them if he wrote that way, and that he enjoyed the infinite SFX budget that you get in novels.

Iain's 2011 appearance at the Edinburgh Book Festival in August was notable this year as he was interviewed by the First Minister of Scotland, Alex Salmond of the Scottish National Party. Iain has recently become a supporter of Scottish independence, having given up hope that there will ever be another left wing government of the UK, he is now holding out his hopes that it can still happen in Scotland. Iain had been interviewed for **The Big Issue**¹² the week before by Neil Gaiman and made the point that it was uncommon for him not to be as famous as his inquisitor, but that it was happening twice quite quickly in succession.

The announcement that Salmond was to be chairing Banks's book festival appearance was made personally by the politician on Twitter, which is rapidly becoming a serious primary source for contemporary chroniclers. Iain has so far resisted the temptation to join its ranks, but this seems to his rankle with some fans, who demand his presence there. Iain Rankin who tweets as @Beathhigh sometimes gets mistaken for him. One of these was at Iain's talk in June at the Birmingham Science Fiction Group, and at the signing part asked Iain about this and then blogged about it¹³. He says Iain answer was that, “it's just like work — I do text entry for a living”, and that he added that he didn't, “want to be too easily contactable; to be connected all the time.”.

¹² <http://www.bigissue.com/mix/latest-issue/344/issue-960>

¹³ <http://pigsonthewing.org.uk/iain-m-banks-please-try-twitter/>

Stonemouth

This is the pre-publication history of the latest Iain Banks book told through his public comments about it. If you have not read the book, then any of the information and the blurbs quoted may be considered by some to be spoilers.

At the Roundhouse event for the launch of *Surface Detail* Iain described his “next” book as being 6 days into the planning process having started on October 1st. The next day at a signing at the London branch of Forbidden Planet when asked about a working title he admitted there was one, *Stonemouth*, but that at that time describes it as “the first candidate for rejection”, however we can see that it has made it all the way to publication.

Previously Banks had mentioned the book when he was at the 2010 Eastercon, saying that he planned to use *The Wasp Factory* as the template looking to produce something “short, sharp and shocking”.

At his appearance at the Glasgow Book Festival (Aye Write) on Saturday 12th March 2011, Iain said that he would be submitting the book to his publishers on the Monday (14th). A page for the book was then created on the Little, Brown website with a publication date of 1st March 2012. The blurb at that time said, “Pitched between *The Crow Road* and *The Wasp Factory*, *Stonemouth* is set in a small town north of Aberdeen and involves two warring crime families. Our hero was run out of town five years ago and now he's back for a family funeral - some closeted skeletons are about to appear!”

There was an interview with Iain in the **Aberdeen Press and Journal** (19/03/2011) promoting his appearance at Aberdeen Word 2011 which mentioned *Stonemouth*. It located the fictional town somewhere between Aberdeen and Peterhead.

A few of the more interesting quotes were:

“It was easier to make the town fictitious as I didn't want to get sued.”

“It's great writing fiction as you can shift places about as you like and in this novel I am shifting Aberdeen south a bit to make way for my fictional town.”

“I obviously couldn't call it Stonehaven but it's meant to be on an estuary.”

The article also mentioned Iain used his local knowledge, mentioning rowies and Doric in the book. Rowies, are savoury Scottish bread rolls, which according to Wikipedia are “noted for their flaky texture and buttery taste”. Doric is the name of the dialect spoken in the northeast of Scotland, the region where the book is set. At Eastercon in 2010 on a panel discussing dialects, Iain told a story about being in a pub near Aberdeen drinking with a friend and thinking some of the people in the pub were speaking a foreign language. As the evening wore on, Iain discovered that his alcohol intake increased his comprehension improved, and he worked out it was a Scots dialect being spoken by the locals.

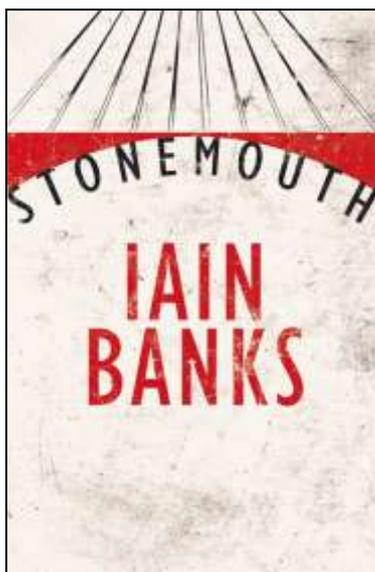
A different blurb was distributed by The March Agency, the company that sell Iain's translation rights round the world, at the London Book Fair (April 2011). “In north-east Scotland, beyond Aberdeen Stewart returns to his home town, run by a couple of crime families, for a funeral. Now in his mid-twenties five years earlier he had been run out of town after two-timing the girl he was to marry, the daughter of one of one of the leading crime lords. While there skeletons come violently out of the past to greet him, along with retributions.”

In an interview on **Radio Teesdale** (02/08/2011) mentioned the new book at the very end of the interview. He said that it had been ready for a couple of months, and he had wanted it to be published this year as it was set in September/October 2011. However, he commented that the publisher's view is that the end of the year is for celebrity memoirs and rubbish for Christmas and not for literary fiction, so April 2012 it will be. He mentioned that there was a car crash, but no car chases.

In October 2011 a longer blurb appeared on online bookselling sites: “Stewart Gilmour is back in *Stonemouth*. After five years in exile his presence is required at the funeral of patriarch Joe Murston, and even though the last time Stu saw the Murstons he was running for his life, staying away might be even more dangerous than turning up. An

estuary town north of Aberdeen, *Stonemouth*, with its five mile beach, can be beautiful on a sunny day. On a bleak one it can seem to offer little more than sea fog, gangsters, cheap drugs and a suspension bridge irresistible to suicides. And although there's supposed to be a temporary truce between Stewart and the town's biggest crime family, it's soon clear that only Stewart is taking this promise of peace seriously. Before long a quick drop into the cold grey Stoun begins to look like the soft option, and as he steps back into the minefield of his past to confront his guilt and all that it has lost him, Stu uncovers ever darker stories, and his homecoming takes a more lethal turn than even he had anticipated. Tough, funny, fast-paced and touching, *Stonemouth* cracks open adolescence, love, brotherhood and vengeance in a rite of passage novel like no other."

The cover art was unveiled near the end of November 2011. There was very little enthusiasm for it on the Iain Banks Forum. When asked about it by letter Iain said that "earlier versions were worse".



Some of the literary reviewing twitterati mentioned getting their advanced copies to review before Christmas 2011. An article in the **Daily Express** (1/1/2012) looking forward to books to be published later in the year mentioned the book, saying it was his, "most commercial novel since *The Crow Road*." The Marsh Agency also added to the website blurb, "Tough, funny, fast-paced and touching *Stonemouth* cracks open

adolescence, love, brotherhood and revenge in a rite of passage novel like no other."

The website www.iainbanks.net ran a competition for fans to win advance copies near the end of January 2012. A one line tag for the book on the site said, "Stonemouth. Home to sea fog. Gangsters. Lost love. And a suspension bridge ..."

Also at this time it was announced that the book would be featured on the BBC's "Book at Bedtime" in ten 15 minute parts on weekdays from March 19th. It was read by David Tennant, and abridged by Peter Mackie.

Near the end of March the website changed its colour scheme to the red and white of the book.



The **Irish Independent** (26/03/12) ran the first review of the book, with the positive headline, "Energetic master of set piece reigns supreme."

An interview in **The Scotsman**, (31/03/12) revealed the precise, in Iain's mind, location for Stonemouth, "Well, it's Montrose, except Aberdeen has been moved to where Dundee is. And there's a suspension bridge. There's a house there which is actually in Greenock. And there's a beach which is really that place in Fife, with the forest, what's it called? He pads off get a road atlas. "Tentsmuir Forest! That's the blighter!"

The book will be officially published on April 5th, and there is a launch event in at the Edinburgh West End branch of Waterstone's that day. Details of the promotional tour can be found on the back page.

An audio version has been recorded by Peter Kenny, and eBook editions will also be available. The UK paperback is expected in February 2013, with a US hardback listed for January 2013.

Banksoniain Calendar

2012

Edinburgh, Waterstone's West End
Thursday 5th April, 18:00
0131 226 2666

London, Foyles
Wednesday 11th April, 18:30
www.foyles.co.uk/events-at-foyles

Staines, Waterstone's
Thursday 12th April, 19:00
01784 490404

Cambridge, Wordfest
Friday 13th April, 17:30
www.cambridgewordfest.co.uk

Shoreham, Ropetackle Arts Centre
Tuesday 24th April, 19:00
www.city-books.co.uk/iain-banks/

Stratford-upon-Avon, Literary Festival
Wednesday 25th April, 18:30
www.stratfordliteraryfestival.co.uk/

Nottingham. Waterstone's
Thursday 26th April, 19:00
0843 290 8525

Huddersfield, Key's Restaurant
Dinner & Conversation
Friday 27th April, 18:30
<http://key-words.co.uk/events/>

Hexham, Book Festival
Saturday 28th April, 20:00
www.hexhambookfestival.co.uk/

Norwich, UEA Literary Festival
Tuesday 1st May, 19:00
www.uea.ac.uk/litfest/Spring+2012/iain-banks

Glasgow, Waterstone's
Thursday 3rd May, 18:00
0141 332 9105

Dundee, Central Library
Thursday 10th May, 19:00
0843 290 8287

Salisbury, Literature Festival
Saturday 9th June, 11:00
www.salisburyfestival.co.uk

Lochgelly, Lochgelly Centre
Thursday 21st June, 19:00
www.fife.gov.uk/events

Bath, Topping & Company
Launch event for *The Hydrogen Sonata* in
association with SFX
Thursday 4th October, 20:00
www.toppingbooks.co.uk/events/bath

Iain is also expected to attend events at:
Comédie du Livre, Montpellier (May/June)
Edinburgh Book Festival (August)
Marlborough LitFest (September)
Cheltenham Literature Festival (October)
Manchester Literature Festival (October)
So check nearer the time when they publish
their programmes.

N.B. Other Iain (M.) Banks events may be
available. Any calendar updates will appear in
our publically available Google Calendar:
<http://www.google.com/calendar/embed?src=banksoniain%40gmail.com>
Remember to confirm event details and Iain's
attendance with organisers before travelling.

World Book Night

On April 23rd volunteers will be giving away
copies of *The Player of Games* as part of
World Book Night.

The organisers ran a public vote / consultation
to help them choose the books to be given
away on Shakespeare's birthday, and
deathday, and also the deathday of Cervantes.
The public vote via a website produced a list
of 100 books. From these 15 authors were
chosen, of which four, including Iain, had
books substituted for the ones that had made
the list. The public had been voting for *The
Wasp Factory*, but although the panel agreed
a Banks book should be included it was the
second Culture novel that was listed.

The **Guardian** (17/02/2012) reported that the
special edition of *The Player of Games* will
have an extract from an Alan Moore work
that Iain had chosen.

The Banksoniain is available as a PDF from
<http://efanzines.com/>
If you have any corrections, comments,
contributions, or want a paper copy then
email: banksoniain@gmail.com

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