

Write on in Hastings Steph Bennion

Locally-based science fiction for young adults author marks the 950th anniversary of The Battle of Hastings with new novel and book signing.

Pete Donohue

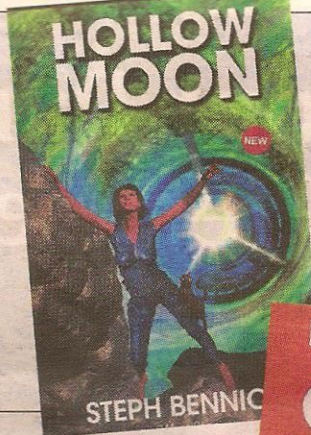
Steph Bennion is an author of science fiction for young adults and the young-at-heart. Born and bred in the Black Country, she spent far too many years living in the big bad city that is London before moving last year to Hastings. In addition to writing, Steph is also a policy advisor for the UK Government, having previously worked in a bakery, a bookshop, a garage, a warehouse and for three whole months as a staff writer for a local advertising journal.

Steph has a particular love of science fiction in all its forms and avidly follows developments in real-life space technology. She describes her books for young adults as an attempt to bring together the 'Two Arthurs': the adventurous spirit of the 'messing about in boats' books by Arthur Ransome with the futuristic science-fiction visions of Arthur C Clarke. Wider literary inspirations range from classic science-fiction writers such as Clarke, John Wyndham and Ursula le Guin to modern practitioners Peter Hamilton, Alastair Reynolds and the very funny Toby Frost (who deserves to be better known). Steph

embraced self-publishing after becoming fascinated with the 'do-it-yourself' mentality reminiscent of 1970s punk. She has also dabbled with music as songwriter and bassist for a folk-prog-rock band, playing London's pubs and clubs.

Hollow Moon and its sequels are space-opera tales of interstellar mystery and adventure, set in a 23rd Century when humanity has learned to cross the cosmos and reach the nearby stars. Readers will encounter reluctant heroes, fiendish villains, talking spaceships, clumsy freedom fighters, funny aliens, horrible giant spiders and wondrous technology, with a deft touch of humour throughout. *Hollow Moon* was published in 2012, followed by *Paw-Prints Of The Gods* in 2013 and *City Of Deceit* in June this year. The novels are about those who live on the fringes of society as they battle the upheavals caused by those in power. Ultimately they are tales of friendships and of how people come together in times of need.

In *City Of Deceit*, Steph's latest novel, the eponymous city is London: a dystopian sprawl ravaged by rising sea levels, social inequalities and terrible politics, its people bewitched by the hypnotic enhanced-reality of the holoverse. Surya and Zotz, the young heroes of the tale, find themselves at the centre of political skulduggery as rumours from a distant world of a



troubling 'first contact' with hostile alien creatures are hijacked by those with conquest in mind. The theme is that real change comes from within, whether it is by a virus burrowing deep or driven by the human angst in a city, colony or corporation.

City Of Deceit is available as an e-book from most online retailers, with a paperback edition following soon. *Hollow Moon* and *Paw-Prints Of The Gods* are available as e-books, in paperback from Amazon and also from Hastings' very own independent bookshop Bookbuster in Queens Road.

Away from the worlds of *Hollow Moon*, Steph has recently completed a short science-fiction novella called *The Battles Of Hastings*, a time-travelling escapade written to commemorate the 950th anniversary of William the Conqueror's victory over King Harold. Feisty adventurer 'Catastrophe' Jane Kennedy finds herself braving multiple realities as she tries to unravel the meddling of a rogue time traveller. The *Battles Of Hastings* will be published as an e-book in October.

Steph's WyrdStar self-publishing imprint has also published the multi-author science-fiction and fantasy short-story anthologies *Wyrd Worlds* and *Wyrd Worlds II*, as well as *Democracy: An Epitaph*, a short e-book of poetry by London-based poet Lallafa Jeltz.

Steph will be signing copies of her two available paperbacks at Bookbuster on Saturday 8th October from 4 p.m. *City Of Deceit* and *The Battles Of Hastings* are available from her WyrdStar website.

Crossword corner

Across

1. Rodent with electric atom only allowed fixed amount (6)
3. Secure say, like Arthur Daley's storage solution (4-2)
4. Hooray for Pye EP and I (6)

Down

1. Truly part of surreal lychee (6)
2. Outlet for milk

