



ENTERTAINMENT

What's on

Today:

◆ **Guernsey Festival of Dance:** at Beau Sejour until Sunday, with adjudicator Heather Reece. For more information, call Hazel Rowe on 245257.

Monday:

◆ **The Guernsey Youth Orchestra and Concert Wind Band:** the island's most accomplished young musicians perform a varied programme, including Schubert's Unfinished Symphony and Duke Ellington, at St James at 7.30pm. Conductors are Mervyn Grand and Ann Stevens. Tickets are £6 (£5 FGMC), £2 for OAPs and restricted view and free for students; tel. 711361.

◆ **Concert of dance:** presented by the Dance Academy at Beau Sejour; tel. 241297.

Tuesday:

◆ **Guernsey Music Centre Youth Training Orchestra and Youth Wind Band:** these aspiring young musicians perform a varied concert, from Mozart to Elton John, at St James at 7.30pm, with conductors Keith Dawber and Tom Livermore. Sponsored by Da Nello's restaurant, tickets are £6 (£5 FGMC), £2 for OAPs and restricted view and free for students; tel. 711361.

Thursday:

◆ **The Turn of the Screw:** based on the novel by Henry James, adapted and performed by Philippa Urquhart, the production of this famous Victorian ghost story takes place at St James at 8pm. Tickets are £7 (£6 FOSJ), or £4 for students; tel. 711361. A joint ticket with Two Victorian Tales on 16 February is also available for £12 (£10 FOSJ).

'Guernsey is a fascinating mix of swords and sorcery'

Rowena Cherry

Chess queen

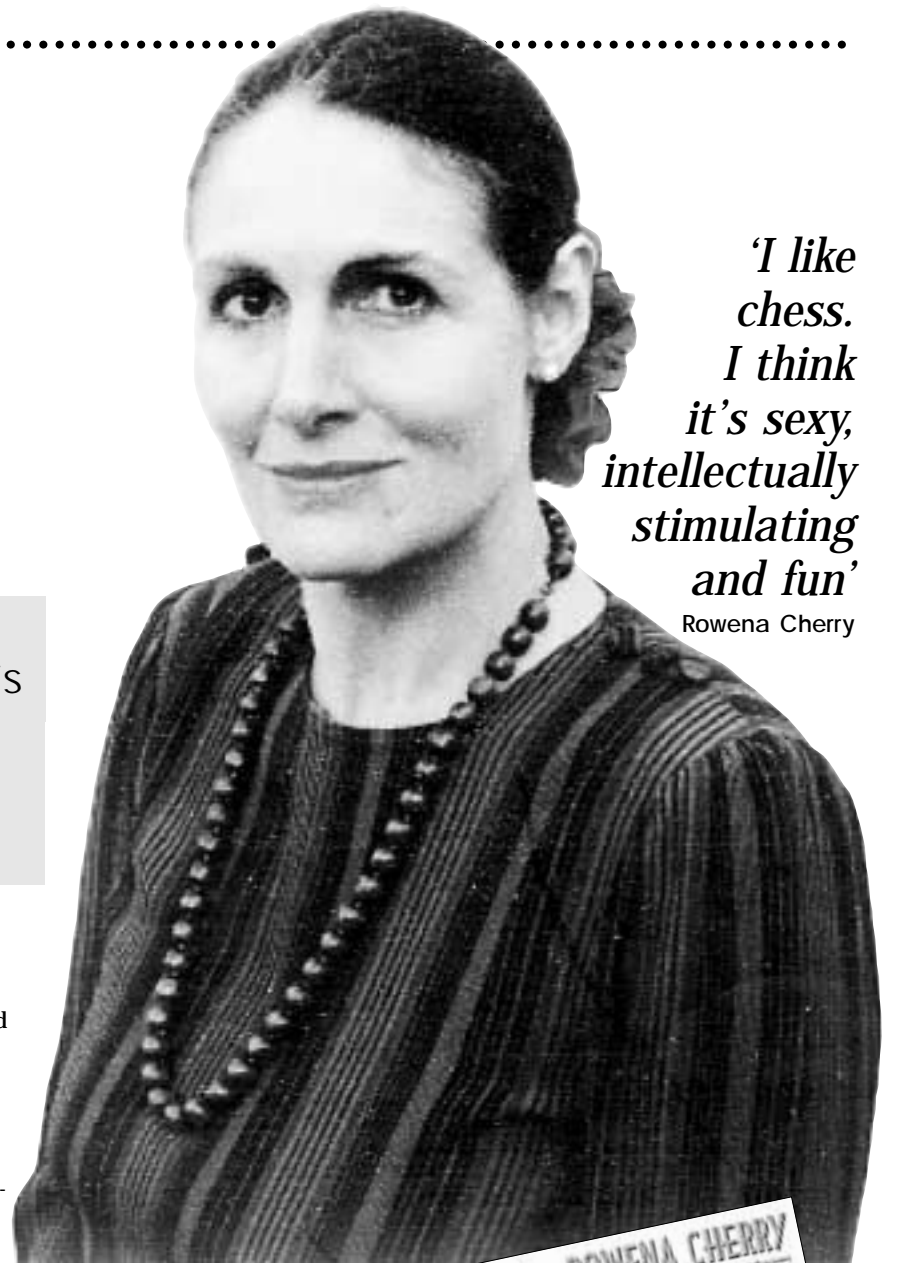
A science-fiction romance inspired by chess? If it sounds out of this world, that's because it is. **Ann Chadwick** investigates the paranormal with author and former Guernsey girl **Rowena Cherry**

BRACE yourself. Get ready for warp factor five. You've heard of sci-fi, romance, Mills and Boon. But this? 'An intergalactic, abduction/royal marriage of convenience romance?' That's got to be a new genre. It gets better. This alien romance is inspired by the steaming, passionate allure of... chess. Yep. The title of Rowena Cherry's novel, *Forced Mate*, is snaffled from a chess textbook. As one enthused reviewer announced (on Aromancereview.com): 'Don't be fooled by the title of this novel! This is no erotically drooling lust fest'. Shame. 'In fact, the term "Forced Mate" refers to a chess manoeuvre.' But this is clearly a not-so-subtle double entendre. Dipping into this galactic romance reveals a bit more than innocent textbook chess moves. Rowena, who grew up in Guernsey, now lives in the States. She is the sister of island cricketer Miles Dobson and daughter of Shirley Fox Reilly. Her obsession with chess, and romantic imagination, grew from her childhood in Guernsey, which she describes as 'a mystical, idyllic setting'.

This Ladies' College old girl once represented the island in a chess match against the late World Chess Federation president and grandmaster Max Euwe. And her life, she said, in many ways inspired her writing. From Guernsey, Rowena Jane Dobson left for Cambridge University. After a stint teaching, she met and married an American auto exec designer, Wayne K. Cherry, with whom she now lives in Michigan with their six-year-old daughter. Rowena gives an example of how chess is her signature theme with a quote from her book. 'My heroine rages: "I've never known anyone who took such delight in turning a harmless game of chess into a minefield of erotic pitfalls.'

It's a quirky move. Injecting the bearded-board game with eroticism is no mean feat. But it must have worked. *Forced Mate* was a finalist in the Romantic Times and Dorchester Publishing New Voice in Romance contest. And it has had a stack of excitable reviewers logging on to sing its praises: 'A fantastic tale of political intrigue, action and humour that had me whipping through this 230-page novel in one night,' wrote Izzy for an Amazon review. So what is the plot? As the next Emperor of Tigrion, Prince Tarrant-Arragon is renowned for his sexual prowess. But the Earthling mate of his dreams is not only a feminist, she is the secret daughter of his greatest enemy and has sworn to thwart him or die in the attempt. 'If you're a fan of romance, galactic adventure, and chess - then this unique tale is guaranteed to please,' concludes one of the enthused reviewers.

It's an odd combo. Rowena was so taken with a chess sub-theme, that at first each chapter had a title named after a chess position. 'I like chess. I think it's sexy, intellectually stimulating and fun. In my youth, I was a three-time school chess champion.' Did growing up in Guernsey influence her choice of genre? 'Not on a conscious level,' she said. A more overt influence, she said, was when she lived in Dorset, close to the Cerne Giant chalk hill-figure of a nude male. But Guernsey clearly has a place in her vivid imagination. 'Guernsey is a fascinating mix of swords and sorcery,' she said. 'Its martial history goes back, probably to when the Viking Rollo and his Norsemen settled in the North of France. It has pre-Martello towers, romantic Cavalier castles built out into the sea by the harbour, the gun emplacements, underground



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NEW GENRE?

Rowena Cherry used chess as her inspiration for her science-fiction novel, *Forced Mate*.

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tunnels and fortifications from when Guernsey was occupied and part of Hitler's Atlantic wall. Prehistoric dolmens, standing stone statues of the mother goddess (La Grandmere du Chimquiere), stone fairy rings and legends of faerie men emerging from a cave near Mount Hoummet and mating with the human women... They say that is why Guernseymen are a diminutive breed.' Hmm. Rowena has an affinity for science fiction. 'I have been an "alien" all my life,' she said. 'Of course, I was not explicitly called one until I married an American and came to the attention of the IRS and the INS. Other nationalities called me a "mainlander", a "furriner", a "grockle" or an "auslander".' My family moved from Royal Leamington Spa in the British Midlands to insular little Guernsey when I was about 12. One had to live in Guernsey for at least 15 years to be accepted as "local", so I was an outsider from the outset.'



Rowena states on her website that at one point in her colourful life, Prince Philip called her 'a cow', apparently because 'Guernsey is famous for its beautiful cows'. She received this ambiguous comment when she was awarded a Duke of Edinburgh award as a teenager. Rowena clearly has a character to match her science fiction. And *Forced Mate* is just the beginning. She plans a series and is already working on her next novel. Its working title? 'Insufficient Mating Material?' - another chess title.

◆ If you want to find out more about Rowena Cherry, visit www.rowenacherry.com

Join the club...

THE Sarnia Arts and Crafts Club holds its annual general meeting on Tuesday. The club goes from strength to strength with its exhibition, visiting tutors and their workshops, demonstrations and competitions. Last year was particularly busy, being the club's 80th anniversary. New members are very welcome,

whether it be to indulge one's artistic pleasures or help with the administration of a thriving club.

◆ If you would like to know more, please contact R. Waite, on 722121, Sheila Noble on 238622 or Richard Thompson on 721254.

Revolutionary Russian drama

ALIBERATED comedy which is widely held to have led the realist revolution in Russian drama hits the stage next week. Written by Nikolai Gogol in 1835, *The Government Inspector* caused a furore when first performed and its author was driven into exile. It is a classic satire on human

vanity with its story of a penniless nobody from Moscow who is mistaken for a Government inspector by the corrupt and self-seeking officials of a small town in Tsarist Russia. It is a set text for A2 theatre studies so The Grammar School sixth form's production offers an opportunity for students to

experience the play in production.

◆ The Government Inspector takes place in the Grammar School hall on Wednesday and Thursday at 7pm. Tickets are £4 for adults and £2 for students, available on the door or in advance by calling 256571.