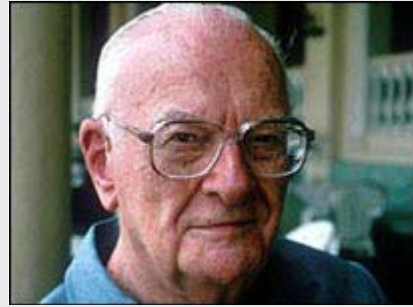


Obituary: Sir Arthur C Clarke **Science fiction writer Sir Arthur C Clarke** **has died at the age of 90 in Sri Lanka.**

Once called "the first dweller in the electronic cottage", his vision of the future, and its technology - popularised in films like 2001: A Space Odyssey - captured the popular imagination.



Sir Arthur C Clarke: Sci-fi seer

Arthur C Clarke's vivid - and detailed - descriptions of space shuttles, super-computers and rapid communications systems were enjoyed by millions of readers around the world.

His writings gave science fiction - a genre often accused of veering towards the fantastical - a refreshingly human and practical face.

Clarke's ideas and gadgets engaged his readers because of, not despite, their plausibility. Quite often, his fictional musings formed the basis of what we now see as science fact.

Passion for science

Arthur C Clarke was born in Minehead, a town in Somerset in the south-west of England, on 16 December 1917.

A farmer's son, he was educated at Huish's Grammar School in Taunton before joining the civil service.

A youthful interest in dinosaurs and Morse code blossomed into a fascination with all things scientific.

During World War II, Clarke volunteered for the Royal Air Force, where he worked in the, then highly-secretive, development of radar.

Demobbed at the war's end, he went to King's College, London, where he took a First in maths and physics, before becoming a full-time writer in the late 1940s.

He wrote story-lines for the comic-book hero, Dan Dare, inspired Gene Roddenberry to create Star Trek and posited Clarke's Law: "Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic."



Sir Arthur predicted the advent of communications satellites

Beyond this, during the war, he published a paper in which he predicted that, at 22,000 miles above the Earth's surface, communications satellites would sit in geo-stationary orbit, allowing electronic signals to be bounced off them around the globe.

2001

His vision, soon proved, revolutionised the communications and broadcasting industry.

No wonder, then, that Sir Arthur counted both Rupert Murdoch and CNN founder Ted Turner among his friends and acolytes.

But it was his creation, with the legendary film director Stanley Kubrick, of 2001: A Space Odyssey, that brought Arthur C Clarke world-wide fame.

Based on Sir Arthur's book, *Sentinel*, and with its mysterious monoliths, the psychopathic Hal 2000 computer and a final sequence which baffled many cinema-goers, 2001 quickly established itself as a cult classic.

He lectured, was feted by everyone from the astronaut Buzz Aldrin to R Buckminster Fuller, inventor of the geodesic dome, and appeared on television, most notably in Arthur C Clarke's *Mysterious World*.



Cult classic - 2001: A Space Odyssey

Sir Arthur's private life was as off-beat as his books. After a failed marriage, he moved to Sri Lanka, then Ceylon, in 1956, where he lived, with a business partner and his family, scuba-dived and played table-tennis with local youths.

But his status as the grand old man of science fiction was threatened when, in 1998, allegations of child abuse, which he strenuously denied, caused the confirmation of a knighthood to be delayed.

A seer of the modern age, Sir Arthur C Clarke was an original thinker, a scientific expert whose tales combined technology and good old-fashioned storytelling and whose influence went far beyond the written page.

Marking his 90th birthday last year, he told fans: "I want to be remembered most as a writer. I want to entertain readers and hopefully stretch their imaginations as well.

"If I have given you delight in all that I have done, let me lie quiet in that night, which shall be yours anon."