

Ansible

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Once again we live amid Signs and Portents. Something is stirring in British fandom, something ancient and very terrible, dimly remembered only by those wrinkled fans in convention bars who swap their wheezy reminiscences of the bad old days. From its grave the age-old horror rises, no longer a mere phantasm of darkness but a tangible form revealed in leprous morning light, a ghostly revenant whose existence can no longer be denied. Yes ... we have another British worldcon bid which actually seems to be doing well.

Meanwhile, it's been a long time since *Ansible 50*. This 'second series' of cheapo one-pagers will no doubt contain many a news snippet as exciting and novel as the previous sentence. The reader is warned.

Meetings and Conventions

Not an exhaustive list but selected on grounds of imminence, con literature actually to hand, vile gossip received, etc.

17 Oct • **BSFA London meet** at Old Coffee House, Beak St: Kim Newman pleads with you to buy his new novel *Jago*.

19-20 Oct • **Philip K. Dick Celebration**, Epping Forest College, Borders Lane, Loughton, Essex, IG10 3SA. GoH Paul Williams. £20 reg to 'Connections', same address. Limited hotel space: £45/single, £55/double, £30/person in twin. Informal social evening Fri 18 Oct. Looking at the programme (a Phenomenological Examination; a panel on Revelatory Experiences; Sound Collages and Music; Youth Theatre Groups; Communal Painting of PKD Mural, etc), I think I'll celebrate by staying home and reading some actual Dick....

1-3 Nov • **Novacon 21**, Excelsior Hotel, near Birmingham NEC and airport. £15 reg. GoH Colin Greenland. Contact 121 Cape Hill, Smethwick, Warley, W. Midlands, B66 4SH. In a frenzy of numerological excitement, Novacon plans a special programme book with bits from all past guests.

15-17 Nov • **Fantasycon XIV**, Ramada Inn West London. £30 reg (£25 BFS members), which seems a lot: GoHs Dan Simmons, Jonathan Carroll and Brian Lumley, which is presumably where the money goes.... Rooms £44/single, £68/double. Contact 15 Stanley Rd, Morden, Surrey, SM4 5DE.

21 Nov • **BSFA London meet** with famous Iain Sinclair.

30 Nov to 1 Dec • **X-asm**, The Hotel Metropole, Leeds. £12 reg, £15 at door, rooms £25/person/night. GoH M. John Harrison. Contact 16 Aviary Place, Armley, Leeds, LS12 2NP. Highlight of the 'advance info' sheet is Simon Ings's hilarious parody of the Embarrassingly Overdone GoH Eulogy, bringing tears of mirth to Mike Harrison's friends and foes alike.

17-20 Apr 92 • **Illumination**, 43rd Eastercon, Norbreck Castle Hotel, Blackpool. £20 reg. GoHs Paul McAuley, Geoff Ryman, Pam Wells (fan). Contact 379 Myrtle Rd, Sheffield, S2 3HQ. A recent member got 'a slightly unnerving letter ... saying the hotel has just been sold, and the new owners have launched a major refurbishment campaign. Knocking down main wing, rebuilding all bedroom and function rooms, everything going to be rilly rilly triffic. What? By Easter?'

22-25 May 92 • **Inconsequential**, Aston Court Hotel, Derby. £15 reg, rooms £32/single, £52/double. Contact 12 Crich Avenue, Littleover, Derby, DE3 6ES. 'Humour' theme: fliers to date work determinedly at being funny, and one sympathizes with such evident sweat and toil.

Advance Rumblings: **Picocon**, annual one-day event of the Imperial College (London) SF Society, is 'provisionally planned' for 7 March 1992. **Mexicon V** hopes to return to the picturesquely decaying Cairn Hotel, Harrogate—still in receivership, so 'watch this space'—over late Spring bank holiday 1993. £18 reg, or £16 to Mexicon IV members until 31 Dec 91. Contact 121 Cape Hill, Smethwick, Warley, W. Midlands, B66 4SH. **Eastercon 1994:** bids in from **Sou'Wester** (Bristol; £2 presupporting to 3 West Shrubbery, Redland, Bristol, BS6 6SZ), and a rumoured **Manxcon** (said to be c/o PO Box 29, Hitchin, Herts, SG4 9TG). The *Independent* mag highlighted the latter venue by reminding us that the Isle of Man is the last place in Europe where gay sex is punishable by life imprisonment ... which as a programme-book warning should make a change from the usual stuff about corkage.

People, Publishing & Pubs

Brian Aldiss has recently been recovering from a double hernia operation and is hoped to be well on the mend....

Greg Bear (says the Brum Group newsletter) will be visiting Britain in February and Mingling with us.

John Brunner married LiYi Tan ('formerly of Guangzhou, Guangdong, People's Republic of China') on 27 Sept, with a vast party running in shifts for most of the following day.

David Gemmell endeared himself to the BSFA by failing for the second time this year to turn up as a London meeting guest (Sept). Unable in his absence to organize an anatomical workshop on 'The Intestines of David Gemmell', Maureen Speller ran a thrilling media discussion instead.

Martin Hoare was last seen in Berlin: 'Enjoyed Bärcon. The badge checking was less strict than previous years (see over).' ... on a tasteful postcard of Checkpoint Charlie.

Terry Pratchett would be news if he weren't completing a new book: this time it's Discworld the umpteenth, *Small Gods*.

David Pringle, not content with editorial mastery of *Intersone* and *Million*, is working on a new monthly fantasy (as distinct from sf) magazine for launch in early 1992. My suggested title *Comparable To Tolkien At His Best: The Magazine Of Top-Selling Sword'N'Sorcery* might not ... STOP PRESS! It's going to be called *Realms of Fantasy*.

Jane Yolen will be living in Scotland from March to September 1992 and hopes to get to some British conventions ... but possibly not *Illumination* since: 'I have won one of the most major children's book awards, the Regina Medal, given for a body of work by the Catholic Library Association, and have to fly back to America to get it April 21. So we will see.'

Infinitely Improbable

The **Roz Kaveney Memorial Prize** for fastest Mexicon report went to Michael Ashley for *Saliromania 2* ('Written 8 May, copied 9 May, distributed in Leeds on Friday 10 May. Suck on that, tardy foreigners,' says sultry thirtyish ex-toyboy Michael). His prize, a free copy of the *Pink Paper* (the periodical in which stakhanovite hackette Roz published a Mexicon III report three days after the con) can be collected at his local leather-bar in Bradford. Or if not there, he could try Surbiton. Suck on that, Michael! [*Abigail Frost*]

TAFF 1992 voting is on, with US candidates Jeanne

Bowman (supported by your editor) and Richard Brandt contending in a savage clash of hype, mutual nominations and nude mud-wrestling for the partially coveted trip to Illumination. Both boast fanzine and con credentials—see ballot, available from Usual Sources and Pam Wells. By a suspicious coincidence, copies of Richard's *Fanthology '87* reached Britain in September: 72pp of pretty damn star-studded stuff from 1987 fanzines, \$5 from him at 4740 N.Mesa #111, El Paso, TX 79912, USA. (Contents: Carr, Nielsen Haydens, Langford, Warner, Ortlieb, Hubbard, Edwards/Lake/Ounsley, Chauvin, Gillespie, Benford, Bushyager, Priest, Gomoll, Hlavaty/Bosky).

GUFF 1992 (Europe→Australian national con at Easter): candidates at last count were Eva Hauser of Czechoslovakia, whose Euro-nominators are all Brits, and Bridget Wilkinson, whose Euro-nominators are all Poles. Ballots imminent.

Job Centre: David Pringle has been made redundant as editor of the dread Games Workshop 'GW Books' line. Earlier, David V.Barrett suffered similarly at the hands of *Computer Weekly* and has been hunting freelance work ... but long-unemployed Martin Tudor is poised on the brink of mega-success as 'Clerical Assistant with Birmingham Social Services'.

Australian SF Review, one of the all too few readable mags of 'heavyweight' sf criticism (*Foundation* is the British exemplar), ceased with 1991's issue #27—a fearsomely exhaustive index compiled by Yvonne Rousseau. R.I.P....

Lawsuit News. It remains dangerous to be sceptical about UFO and paranormal excesses. Famous Uri Geller still intends to sue that nasty investigator James 'The Amazing' Randi 'in every state and every country': he's lost two suits so far, but since the defence has cost Randi \$155,000 and left him broke, Geller is effectively winning through sheer riches. Lewis Jones is running the UK side of Randi's defence fund (all donations to 23 Woodbastwick Rd, London, SE26 5LG); he passes on the report that CSICOP itself—the Committee for Scientific Investigation of the Paranormal, supported by countless famous names in science and sf—is similarly beset by often frivolous lawsuits and might well go bankrupt soon.

Hazel's UFO Lessons. A dictionary of modern Latin is in production at the Vatican, reports the *Evening Standard* (20 Sept)—full of vital everyday terms like *coruscans discus per convexa caeli volans*, or 'flying saucer with flashing lights'....

Summarizing the Chicago Worldcon in Five Words: 'It's not very well organized,' said fearless Pam Wells in an almost exclusive phone call from the Thick Of Things.

Stormin' Mormon: not many SF writers do theology on the side, so I was interested to receive Orson Scott Card's 1990 rant 'The Hypocrites of Homosexuality' from *Sunstone* (a 'Mormon issues' journal). Boy, Card really lays it on the line. Tolerance is a Bad Thing. Homosexuality is a Sin and its vile practitioners should jolly well Repent. They could be hetero if they only tried.... There is more, but I need a drink.

Total Insanity ... is the only excuse for producing this. Langfordian income was recently clobbered when the Amstrad PCW magazine *8000 Plus* decided to chop five editorial pages and make my column bimonthly. Maybe legions of fans will complain and boycott all the odd-numbered issues from #61 without the One True Page; maybe not. Now comes a merry summons to the creditors' meeting following the voluntary liquidation on 15 Sept of Newsfield Ltd, publishers of *Fear* and *GamesMaster International* ... the latter being the home of my remaining sf review column. (The liquidator is busy trying to sell off the Newsfield magazines—adv.) Help!

In Memoriam: The Cock

Caroline Mullan elegizes: The sign on the former Rank Xerox building invites you to *Make this Your Landmark*. The sign is new, but the London building has indeed been a fannish landmark: behind it lies the Cock Tavern, where the City Illiterates

and other groups have been meeting for 21 years. No longer. On 26 September the Cock closed for the last time.

It was a pleasant pub, not particularly distinguished but moderate in all things: medium size, moderately comfortable, middling good beer and food, an upstairs room that could be hired for a moderate fee. But it had fannish virtues: it was convenient for many people, it served pizzas years before most pubs offered proper food, it was quiet in the evening when business boozers had left it to us, and the juke-box was tame. Best of all, the staff were friendly. And, love him or loathe him, we must not forget Boot, the Old English Sheepdog we first knew as a bouncing large-pawed puppy in 1977 and who died last year of canine old age.

We did not let it go without a wake. On Friday 13 September more than 60 fans gathered to say goodbye, to the pub itself and to Jack, Barbara and Bernie who had served us for 14 years. Among them were Philip Strick, who founded the SF Evening Class at the Stanhope Institute 21 years ago, thus forming a group which needed somewhere to drink when the class was over but not the conversation; Malcolm Davies, Roger Perkins and Mike Westhead, veterans of the earliest years; John Clute, an ex-class-tutor (Lisa Tuttle, another, sent apologies from Scotland). City Illiterates of all generations were there, with conrunners, organizers of Beccons, Contrivance and Helicon, the Glasgow Worldcon bid; PAPA and Friends of Foundation; all had met regularly in the Cock. Some hadn't been for years, or had only visited once or twice: Tony Chester, many stone lighter and much prettier than when he last came, Chris Walton, Abi Frost, Tim Broadribb, and many more. Some even came for the first time ever—like our esteemed editor....

Now it is gone. The refurbished 'landmark' building is empty; without its lunchtime trade the Cock is not (despite fannish efforts) a viable business. The last guide dog has been bought with money collected across the bar. The brewery has removed the pumps, the signs have been taken down, the doors closed. The Cock Tavern is no more.

The City Illiterates continue. The Class runs again this year at the City Literary Institute in Stukely Street, Holborn, with Brian Stableford as tutor; the rest now meet every Friday at the Lord Nelson (Stanhope Street, close to the Cock). Other groups that met at the Cock are also moving there, at least for now: the Lord Nelson is smaller but quiet, the beer is better, and there are tables in the sheltered yard. Life goes on.

Editorial Waffle

This is all the fault of Bridget Wilkinson for Constructive Whingeing, the erstwhile *Intermediate Reptile* team for being horridly exemplary, and Martin Easterbrook for a partial power vacuum. Thanks also to Paul Dormer, who lugged my Hugo back from Chicago: this time (no doubt to the huge annoyance of Peter 'Vic Wilcox' Weston, Hereditary Supplier of Cast Metal Awards to the Gentry) the burden was lessened by the thing's being made of lightweight, see-through plastic. It reached me intact after its long journey and a bit fell off on the way home to Reading. There may be a moral in this.

And I urge you all to go to Boskone 29 (Springfield, MA, 14-16 Feb 92), which is madly flying me over as special guest. GoH is Jane Yolen ... see above. NESFA collections of Yolen and Langford writing are planned to appear at the con, the latter tastefully titled *Let's Hear It For The Deaf Man*. ●

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