



Ansible 55 February 1992

From Dave Langford, 94 London Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 5AU. Fax 0734 669914. ISSN 0265-9816. Logo: Dan Steffan. Available at random fan gatherings, by whim or for stamped addressed envelopes—sorry, no paid subscriptions.

EDITORIAL PANIC! Time ticks away. On 10 Feb I fly west to be Famous For Fifteen Minutes at Boskone 29 (Springfield, MA). The metered gibber level has risen steadily since mid-January, not helped by work crises and a death in the family. Bear with me if bubbling, ebullient wit seems in short supply....

Name Droppings

Greg Bear, older readers will recall, was to appear in Birmingham in Feb 92 (*Brum SF Group Newsletter*), soon corrected to Feb 93 (*ibid*). The BSFGN now re-corrects this to 14 Feb 92 (at the White Lion pub), with snide remarks about the 'less than illustrious' BSFG ex-chair and newshound Chris Chivers.

John Brunner's marriage to LiYi Tan had spinoff coverage in *New Statesman* when he revealed that UK visas for Chinese fiancées now involve vast paperwork from the 'Identity Card Project, Working Group'. This, despite Home Office denials, convinces John that identity cards will be introduced here before 1997 to cope with the Hong Kong exodus. Blimey. [JN]

Gordon Dickson's sequel to his 1976 *The Dragon and the George* just came from Tor (plug). I distinctly remember the original book's lovable wolf called Aragh. Did Dickson sink gleaming fangs deep into the copyeditor's flesh on finding the wolf in *The Dragon Knight* renamed, throughout, 'Aargh'?

William Gibson can surely have nothing to do with the 'ANONYMOUS LEAK OF AN EXTRAORDINARY EXAMPLE OF UNCONSCIOUS COMMUNICATION' received here, purporting to be an exchange from Scene 109B of *Alien III* as revised on 17 Dec:

DAVID: *I have a problem with this.*

JUDE: *What part?*

DAVID: *The part where we run around in a dark fucking mase with that thing chasing us.*

Could the message be that the mantle of Shakespeare himself has fallen on screenwriters Walter Hill and David Giler?

John Gilbert 'is still hoping to relaunch *Fear*, but nothing is signed yet. *Terror* is nothing whatsoever to do with him (has anyone actually seen a copy of it?).' [DVB] Steve Green implies that he has; he didn't seem frightfully impressed—Ed.

Tanith Lee is exposed at last in the small print of *Kill the Dead* (reissue): 'The right of Tanith Lee to be identified as the author of this work has been asserted by him in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988....' [NE]

Chris Morgan requests samples of fans' scribble for his book on handwriting analysis (321 Sarehole Rd, Hall Green, Birmingham, B28 0AL). He adds: 'When's Dave Barrett going to produce an inferior *Encyclopaedia of Graphology*?' [CM]

John Julius Norwich seeks the title and author of a lousy novel at least 40 years old, notable for these lines: 'I glanced from the gems to the face of the girl ... and surprised a rapt, wondering look in her eyes. I saw her breasts rise and fall in a long sigh as she slipped them back into the soft leather wallet and passed them to her father. I would have given my right arm to have taken them and hung them from those delicate ears where they belonged.'

David Pringle's endless *Realms of Fantasy* saga continues: 'The fantasy magazine is on indefinite hold now, following Allan Bryce's "loss" of £20,000 income in the bankruptcy of one of his distributors, Periodicals in Particular (who used to handle *Interzone* years ago, but no more—thank God).' [DP]

Ian Watson suffers Administrative Error: 'VGSF have been reissuing Ian's stuff in paperback. W.H.Smith routinely order

150 or 200 copies for their hundreds of dynamic branches nationwide. When *The Jonah Kit* appeared they ordered 1500 copies, which were duly delivered. Yes! You guessed it! A typo! They'd only meant to order 150, tsk tsk ... but when they came to send back the surplus they found they had already sold 800.' [CP] So did WHS proceed to order only 150 of Ian's next paperback? To the amazement of cynics all over the *Ansible* staff, they actually ordered 600.... [W]

Ian Williams's first novel *The Lies That Bind* 'has hit the remainder shops of Leeds with a speed even you wouldn't envy. A snip at 99p for the hardback.' [NER]

Don Wismer, whose award log-rolling was noted in A54, did make it to the final Nebula ballot—as did 20 others. [DG]

Eastercon '94 Campaign News

At the Wellington pub meeting in January, a voice hissed in my editorial ear: 'Don't believe that beermat—it's a forgery!' This left me bemused until I got a letter and a beermat from David V.Barrett of the avowedly devious Sou'Wester (Bristol) bid. His letter claims that one Robert Newman of the Contact (Isle of Man) bid made, and signed before witnesses, the beermat's 'on-the-record statement': 'I am 100% in favour of homosexuality, I am 100% in favour of paganism. I can't think of a more stupid idea than holding a con on the Isle of Man.'

In my impartial way I invited Contact to comment, but got no reply. Could all this be the Contact dirty tricks department trying to make Sou'Wester look bad by persuading them to base their campaign on a spurious beermat? Unless it's the Sou'Wester dirty tricks department trying to make Contact look bad by conveying that they are up to dirty tricks as inept as in the preceding sentence? Or maybe ... my brain hurts.

The usual small drink is offered for further beer mats carrying damning, multiply witnessed revelations from either bid.

Infinitely Improbable

Ten Years Ago ... Kingsley Amis issued another definitive pronouncement that sf was dead. (*Radio Times*, 6 Feb 82)

Afterbirth of TAFF: famous Jeanne Bowman won by a narrow margin in both Europe and America, and will display her shy, retiring personality at Illumination. Ballots cast: 53 Europe, 125 US. First-place votes: Jeanne 87 (UK 27, US 60), Richard Brandt 81 (23/58), No Preference 4 (1/3), Hold Over Funds 2 (0/2) and 4 write-ins. [PW] Jeanne's victory statement explains all: 'I asked Robert Lichtman for some fan addresses and phone numbers and he got that aha ho ho ho tone in his voice and said, "Jeanne, when you have memorized 50 addresses then you will have become a TruFan." "Oh Robert no! I will be a boring old fart." In his graceful-loser statement, Richard adds: "Still awaiting the first publication of Larry Niven's correspondence with L.Ron Hubbard: *N-Grams*.'

Clarke Awards Shortlist: *Raft* (Baxter), *Eternal Light* (McAuley), *White Queen* (Jones), the *Hyperion* pair (Simmons), *Subterranean Gallery* (Russo) and *Synners* (Cadigan). Winner to be announced in July. A spy reports that Powers's *The Stress of Her Regard* would have been there but was excluded by majority vote as being fantasy. (The spy disagrees.)

SFWA Confirmed as 'Not SFWA'. 'Now officially SFFWA—Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America! Yippeel!' [DG] Drabbles. Book 1, *The Drabble Project*, has sold out: profit

to the RNIB, £1548.43. Book 3 is now open, a further 100 100-word stories with (this time, oh God) a *Dr Who* slant: 160 Beaumont Rd, Bournville, Birmingham, B30 1NY. [RR]

Musical Publishers: Deborah Beale has moved to Anthony Cheetham's spanking new Orion/Millennium sf imprint, and John Jarrold to Century/Arrow. Who's next at Futura/Orbit? [PG] Maxwell Gloom reached the MCC publishing companies with a spate of bounced royalty cheques ... companies in administration ... authors told to stop work on projects ... £10-12M reputedly owed to printers, authors etc. Mr Jarrold's scuttle down the Macdonald/Futura mooring lines was clearly well-timed. Only ever-cheery Chris Priest was gleefully able to report a silver lining: 'My Abacus titles don't earn royalties.'

SF Encyclopaedia II. Macdonald were allegedly conferring this week about the project, 'which cannot proceed with them or their (increasingly elusive) successor firm until they pay arrears due Paul Barnett for months of copy-editing [over £3000—Ed.] and Brian Stableford for revising his 1979 entries. The book itself is very near completion ... We expect to exceed a million words. If Macdonalds are forced to release us, we think we have homes to go to.' [JC]

Far Point: 'If you've seen the 2nd issue (Jan-Feb) of this new British sf mag, you may have found its cover art (by somebody called Tony Todd) familiar. It's a total rip-off of the cover of the great *Interzone* 31 (1989), exquisitely painted by David A. Hardy. I'm told by DAH that not only will he be paid the money due for the cover, but he has also been appointed Art Editor of *Far Point*.' [CM] Other editors receiving cover art submissions from T. Todd might check them for familiarity....

SFWA Coup Horror. 'Anzible should mention the new award from SFWA. The membership kept voting down the idea of a Nebula for "best dramatic presentation"—so Pres. Ben Bova starts a "President's Award". Just like that. The votes have always gone against the idea, so the top man decides what he wants. (Apparently Paul Di Filippo has suggested there should be a President's Award for "best spelling".)' [AAC] In a moving announcement, BB explains that his 'Best Dramatic Script' award is not actually a Nebula. Thus the members don't even get to vote on the winner: this is already being decided by a Bova-picked committee, and the award will be democratically presented at SFWA's Nebula banquet on 25 April, so there.

File 770: Mike Glycer's fanzine just brought me hot news of ConFiction '90. I do love his prejudices: 'The daily newzine's British editors predictably took a kill-the-messenger approach ... and panned Konkol's announcement [no flash photos during the Hugos] as brusque and unnecessary.' FACT: the newsletter merely said 'unnecessarily brusque', which is not the same. FACT: its predictably vile, British Hugo coverage was by one German/Dutch and one Finland-dwelling American fan.

1991 'Fastellers'. The *Guardian's* UK Top 100 had only one 'sf' item, *Better Than Life* (#60); four fantasies, Eddings's *Ruby Knight* (#45) and three by or half-by our Mr Ubiquitous—*Moving Pictures* (#47), *Good Omens* (#61) and *Diggers* (#76); and under horror, the usual Kings (#13, #44, #71) plus Herbert's *Creed* (#19). What of the appallingly popular Dean R. Koontz? His entries (#27, #56, #58) are listed as Thrillers. Best new category: echoing the critics' reaction, Stephen Donaldson's sf *Gap into Conflict* (#95) appears under '???'.

Not Hazel's Language Lessons. *Qagh*—a serpent worm, used (live) as food? Even if there is now an official Klingon dictionary, by Marc Okrand, Hazel does not wish to know. [MMW]

SF Foundation Threat? The Polytechnic of East London has reportedly decided to evict the unique SFF library/archive in 1993, unless after ten years on a starvation budget it becomes 'self-financing'. *Foundation* magazine is almost so and would probably survive: the library could face a ruinous dispersal. Confirmation of PoEL plans is expected imminently. [AAC]

Weerde Doings ... The second Midnight Rose shared-world

series, *The Weerde* ('It's werewolves but we're calling them something different'), had an invisibly publicized launch at the inevitable Café Munchen on 1 Feb. Our fashion correspondent claims that no one looked at the book because they were staring at Storm Constantine's low-cut dress in scarlet crushed velvet; our literary correspondent incontinently fled Charles Stross and the two complete novel MSS in his bulging briefcase. Brian Stableford revealed his big new contract, £50 for wearing a borrowed dinner-jacket and addressing a herd of quantity surveyors at Trinity College. The *Weerde* 2 line-up was leaked: Steve Baxter, Molly Brown, Colin Greenland, Graham Higgins, Liz Holliday (twice!), Roz Kaveney, Mike Ibeji, D. Langford, Marcus Rowland, Charles Stross and Liz Young. Paymaster Alex Stewart and his magic chequebook were much sought after. So were the general book-buying public, who proved elusive.

Concaulescence: Updates

Once again I shirk the mind-numbing tedium of a 'complete' con list....

Monthly • BSFA London meetings cancelled until further notice—the pub is redecorating the room and plans to hold (shudder) music nights there. New venue hoped for by May. • **Brum Group** ... similar trouble. 3rd Fri meetings now at the White Lion, Bristol St, Birmingham city centre. NB extra Greg Bear event, 14 Feb • **The Leeds Nova Award Collecting Club** meets in the Adelphi almost every Friday night. Last night we shared the back room with gruff, bluff northern playwright Alan Plater and a funny-looking man with a strange beard who was hanging on to his every (loud, beery) word. Which goes to show that even real writers don't always get a better class of groupie than you sci-fi guys.' [NER, 4 Jan] • **Black Lodge** horror meeting (correction) 2nd Thur monthly, Australian Bar, Birmingham.

7-9 Feb • **Trincon 400**, Trinity Coll/Powers Hotel, Dublin. IR£15 reg. IR£7/day at door; IR£25 hotel b&b (sharing). Contact 75 Kincora Ave, Clontarf, Dublin 3. Quickly. Quicker than that, in fact.

14-16 Feb • **Maque**, Cobden Hotel, Birmingham. £20 reg. Contact 27 Coltsfoot Dr, Waterlooville, Hants, PO7 8DD. A 'convention for costumers'—ha ha, I'll be in America.

21-23 Feb • **Lacon IVy**, Leeds University Union. £7 reg. GoH Gwyneth Jones. Contact LU SF Soc, PO Box 157, Leeds, LS1 1UH.

29 Feb - 1 Mar • **Microcon 12**, Exeter University. GoH: various. Overturms tradition by not clashing with Picocon! Contact K403, Cornwall House, St German's Road, Exeter, EX4 6TJ.

7 Mar • **Picocon 10**, Imperial Coll. Union, Beit Hall, Prince Consort Rd, SW7 2BB. GoHs Brian Stableford and me. £5 reg. 'Cheap bar'

30 Apr - 3 May • **Warp One**, 35th UK Trek con, Middleton Tower Holiday Centre, Morecambe. £30 reg, rooms from £26.70/person/night full board. Set phasers on 'maim' and contact 69 Merlin Crescent, Edgware, Middlesex, HA8 6JB.

21-25 Aug • **Portmeiricon**, 'Prisoner' society con, Portmeirion, Gwynedd. Outdoor events open to all, indoor ones Members Only (I assume anyone can join). Contact Six of One, PO Box 60, Harrogate.

2-4 Oct • **Fantasycon XVII**, Midland Hotel, Birmingham. £10 'deductible pre-reg': full, appalling cost to be announced. Ditto the guest or guests. Contact 15 Stanley Rd, Morden, Surrey, SM4 5DE.

16-19 Oct • **Octocon**, 3rd Irish national con, Royal Marine Hotel, Dun Laoghaire, Dublin. Contact 30 Beverley Downs, Dublin 16, Eire.

6-8 Nov • **Novacon 22**, Royal Angus Hotel, Birmingham—note laudably changed venue. £18 reg. GoH Storm Constantine. Contact 121 Cape Hill, Smethwick, Warley, W. Midlands, B66 4SH.

26-29 Mar 93 • **The Adventurers Con** (not confirmed) for fans of anything from the Saint via Gerry Anderson to Danger Man. Contact 10 Brook Ave, Edgware, Middlesex.

8-12 Apr 93 • **Helicon**, 44th Eastercon and Eurocon—£22 reg, £1 for kids under 8, rates firm until after Easter. See next....

16-18 Apr 93 • **Smofcon** con-runners' con, imported at colossal expense from America to the Hotel de France, Jersey. (The idea is that you stay over from Helicon in the same hotel on the previous weekend. Gorbliney.) £20 reg, £2 off if you join(ed) Helicon. Contact for both: 63 Drake Rd, Chessington, Surrey, KT9 1LQ.

Anzible 55 © Dave Langford, 1992. Inputs: David V. Barrett, Ned Brooks, John Clute, An Anonymous Correspondent, Abigail Frost, David Garner, Steve Green, Tim Illingworth, Dave Lally, Chris Morgan, Joseph Nicholas, Chris Priest, David Pringle, Nigel E. Richardson, Roger Robinson, Ian Watson, Pam [TAFF] Wells, Martin Morse Wooster. 7/2/92