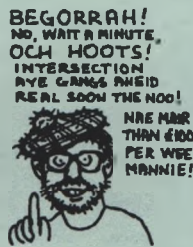


Ansible



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DISCLAIMER: apparent lies, libels, errors and insults are merely symptoms of your editor's imminent death from heatstroke....

Stands Scotland Where It Did?

Brian Aldiss, having modestly called our attention to who wrote the text in the Royal Mail's H.G.Wells philatelic presentation pack, announces a new campaign: 'to persuade the R.M. to produce a Mary Shelley stamp in two years' time—preferably without using Boris Karloff as a cultural totem.'

Paul Barnett offers updates: 'Your coverage of the new Voyager imprint is matched by that in *Publishing News*, whose anonymous columnist displays a deep knowledge of the field. "Indeed new talent is strongly represented. Pat Cardigan [sic] ... Certainly one quality of the genre is that the writing is invariably of a high order [an assertion which caused John Clute to collapse in strong hysterics] ... Undoubtedly Ballard's *Empire of the Sun* was a turning point [in the general acceptance of sf]." The article backs up its feisty evangelization of sf/fantasy as true literature by lip-smackingly describing some upcoming goodies. The novelization of the movie *Johnny Mnemonic*. The novelizations of *The X-Files*. The novelizations of Gerry Anderson's *Space Precinct*. And, er, that's it. • Poor Jane Johnson. Professionally she must be delighted by the splash coverage. Personally she must be tearing her hair out.'

Steve Brown pooh-poohs my trepidation about his posh mag *SF Eye*: 'As to the *Eye*'s awesome standards, I have been trying for some time to lower those standards. I want *SFE* to be the people's mag, where they can sit back on the sofa, grunt, scratch their naily chest through a dirty T-shirt, pop the top from a cheap can of beer and begin to read.'

Roald Dahl remains controversial despite being dead: July saw an abortive attempt to ban his books from the elementary school syllabus in Virginia, for 'glorifying dangerous and disrespectful behaviour in children'. [MMW]

Greg Egan won the John W. Campbell Memorial Award (the other JWC award) for his spiffy novel *Permutation City*.

Laurence James was rushed to hospital in July with critical kidney failure, cause still worryingly unknown. [CP]

Katharine Kerr is chastened: 'I've just had a card from a fan denouncing me for the "appalling lack of a new Deverry novel" this year. He went on to imply that I'm doing this for the crassest of reasons, i.e., to pump up sales next year. "Just like Eddings did," he goes on to say. Surely not.... I thought I'd reassure him and any one else wondering or hoping if I've finally shut up that actually I've had one of the worst years of my life for personal disasters. Money does not enter into this except for my wishing I had the advance on-acceptance payment for the as yet unwritten *Red Wyvern*. Things are looking up, though, and eventually I really will finish the last part of the sequence as promised.' (We need to know whether the postcard was written in green ink and 'SINED IN BLOOD'—these are important matters of etiquette.)

Paul J. McAuley gurgles distantly, 'Here's a candidate for *Thog's Masterclass*; our hero seems to have unusual physiological reactions to stress: "Moh heard the sound of blood draining from his head, like a faraway waterfall." From Ken MacLeod's *The Star Fraction*. Of course, my books are probably riddled with this stuff, but I'm fed up after having had to plough through this "thriller" and want revenge ha ha!'

Peter Weston can't get on with *Interzone* ... 'Having seen some recent issues, including the one edited by Charles Platt, explains the steady decline of the magazine's readership. The future looks greyer, more dismal than ever, as numbers drop to the fanzine levels. The old itch remains, to see if a really exciting sf magazine could actually start to sell once again: after all, the BRE *Astounding* did 25-30,000/month

for 20 years!' (But did it have racks and racks of sf/fantasy novels to compete with? Mr Pringle, I am assured, remains Vibrantly Optimistic.)

Philip G. Williamson rang to seek advice: was it a social gaffe to phone Pauline Morgan ('I got the number from my editor') and point out an error in her *Fantasy Review* coverage of his world-famous *Heart of Shadows*? Why had nice Chris Morgan hung up on him? Then irate Pauline Morgan rang me to demand the public crucifixion of whichever Legend editor handed out confidential phone numbers and thus encouraged pained calls at inconvenient times on hot days. (Come to think of it, my number is supposed to be ex-directory....)

Condamine

11-13 Aug • **Nexus** (*Trek/sf*), Holiday Inn Crowne Plaza, Bristol. £35 reg (less for 1/2 days only); no more advance bookings. Contact 26 Milner Rd, Horfield, Bristol, BS7 9PQ.

13-14 Aug • **UFO Research Centre Conference**. Contact (SAE) 30 Stonebridge Ct, Lings, Northampton, NN3 8LY.

18-20 Aug • **Portmeiricon**, 18th annual *Prisoner* con, Portmeirion, North Wales. Contact Six of One, PO Box 66, Ipswich.

18-20 Aug • **Precursor**, Hertfordpark Hotel, Stevenage: pre-Worldcon 'fannish relaxaon' party. Contact 144 Plashet Grove, East Ham, London, E6 1AB.

23 Aug • **BSFA Meeting Cancelled** for Caledonian reasons.

24 Aug • Some backstreet fannish outfit called Microsoft urges in very expensive ads worldwide: 'don't plan on spending the entire day at the 53rd world science fiction convention in glasgow, scotland.' Will this inability to use the shift key (except for 'Microsoft') provoke a wrathful response from the WSFS Mark Protection Committee? [SB]

24-8 Aug • **The Scottish Convention** (Worldcon/Eurocon), SECC, Glasgow. £100 at door; no more advance memberships. Contact Intersection, Admail 336, Glasgow, G2 1BR. Mere weeks and, in theory, no more *Ansibles* before It All Happens.... Late July saw a frenzied re-mailing of British Hugo ballot forms as it emerged that an estimated 10-20% of UK PR6 packets had been devoured by postal gremlins; the Hugo deadline was dynamically extended to 3 August.

1-3 Sep • **Lightspeed '95** (*Trek* etc), Hilton International Hotel, Leeds. £35 reg. Contact 16 Bramwell St, Eastwood, Rotherham, S.Yorks, S65 1RZ.

28 Sep - 1 Oct • **Bouchercon 25** (World Mystery Con), Royal Moat House Hotel, Nottingham. GoH Colin Dexter, James Elroy. £55 reg. Cheques to Conference Nottingham, Business Info Centre, 309 Haydn Rd, Nottingham, NG5 1DG.

5-8 Apr 96 • **Evolution** (Eastercon), Radisson Edwardian Hotel, nr Heathrow. Lots of fabulous guests whom I forget. £24 reg. Contact 13 Lindfield Gdns, Hampstead, London, NW3 6PX.

28-31 Mar 97 • **Intervention** (Eastercon), Adelphi Hotel, Liverpool. *New GoH list*: B. Aldiss, D. Langford and, now, Octavia Butler and John Bing. £20 reg; cheques now to 'Intervention'. Contact 12 Crowsbury Close, Emsworth, Hants, PO10 7TS.

Rumblings • Colin Fine offers an Alternative Attraction, 28 Aug - 2 Sep, Greyfriars Kirk House, Candlemaker Row, Edinburgh, 1:30pm: *The Hunting of the Snark* by Lewis Carroll, adapted/directed by CF. £5/£3.

Infinitely Improbable

Channel 4's invitation to a press launch for their imminent 'Sci-Fi Weekend' indicated profound respect for the genre of Mary Shelley and H.G. Wells: 'Channel 4 hits Warp Factor Nine this August bank holiday with a celebration of the weird and wonderful world of science fiction. This outlandish weekend

will unzip the anorak and explore ...' At this point, passing up the chance to 'Mingle with Daleks, Cylons, Klingons, & Ewoks', your reporter made an excuse and left.

Savoy Books are still enmeshed in legal toils: on 19 July, after a 5-day hearing in Manchester, stipendiary magistrate Janet Howard rejected all defence arguments and decided that 4,000 police-seized Savoy comics (copies of *Lord Horror 1-2*, *Hard Core Horror 1-5* and *Meng & Ecker 1-3*) were (a) obscene, and (b) had no literary or artistic merit that might support a 'public good' defence. The Savoy chaps stress the 'anti-Nazi' thrust of the comics, and are also grumpy about 'the Solicitor General's assurance that these sort of summary proceedings would not be instituted if publishers expressed a preference for trial by jury'—which Savoy did, only to be refused.

Random Fandom. *John Bangsund* mourns: 'It is my melancholy duty to inform you that Dylan, the only Australian cat mentioned by name in the 50th anniversary of *Amazing SF* (June 1976, p129), died on 10 July, aged almost 21.' • *Ethel Lindsay* boggles: 'Over 4,000 members at **The Scottish Con** has me well overawed. No wonder they need such a big committee. A far cry from the Worldcon in London [1965] which had a committee of 5 ... Ella Parker, Peter Mabey, Jim Groves, Keith [Otter?] and myself. Fred Parkes was honorary teamaker. Ella and Fred now dead, Jim Groves married in New York, and Peter still faithfully attends cons, whilst I only appear at Novacons. [Intersection] will be my last appearance at a big con...' • *Greg Pickersgill* had an exciting time getting Brian Burgess's sf collection ready to be sold off: 'the dust and rubbish on the books has given me a really severe respiratory problem that actually had me thinking serious things like Ambulances, Hospitals and Death more than once during the sorting process.' • *Peter Roberts*, from the distant glades of the advertising world, confirms that his abandoned 1977 TAFF trip report has two unpublished chapters besides the eight published ('I spent a couple of months touring around, so the whole thing would have been 30+ chapters, or something equally foolish.') The existing material is enough to warrant a collected edition, if... • *D.M. Sherwood* threatened me with kneecapping and worse for having embezzled his *Ansible* SAEs; it was all quite tense and paranoid here until our wonderful Royal Mail returned the packet he'd unerringly sent to 20 London Road, Reading.

Publishers & Sinners. More razor-sharp paperback critiques from *The Bookseller's* Sarah Broadhurst! Bruce Bethke, *Headcrash*: 'I like the shout line: "The laptop novel with the seedy-romp drive."' Storm Constantine, *Stalking Tender Prey*: 'Signet is ultra-keen on this 688-page extravaganza, which is the first of a trilogy, and is speaking of an "English Anne Rice".' (Will Storm sue?) Michael Moorcock, *Blood*: 'It has been three years since his last new fantasy, so this will be good.'

C.O.A. *Mike Cheater*, 42 Elm Grove, Southsea, Portsmouth, Hants, PO5 1JG ('The solicitors gave me details of the property going back to 1850 and it looks likely that this is the site where H.G. Wells did his apprenticeship as a draper...'). *Simon R. Green*, 40 St Laurence Rd, Bradford-on-Avon, Wilts, BA15 1JQ. *Rob Meades & Alice Kohler*, 7 Vernham Rd, Weeke, Winchester, Hants, SO22 6BP. TAFF US administrator is now *Dan Steffan*, 3804 S 9th St, Arlington, VA 22204, USA ... who will be passing among us this very month.

Clarke Award submissions begin to arrive.... NEL try to cover all bases with a stack of 10 books, from well-regarded stuff like Robert Charles Wilson's *Mysterium* to W.A. Harbinson's terrible UFO tat in *Phoenix*; HarperCollins pin their hopes on Steve Baxter's *The Time Ships* and Ringpull on the inevitable Jeff Noon *Pollen*; Bloomsbury offer the first surprise item with Gene Brewer's debut novel *K-PAX*, seemingly a sort of 'Man Who Fell To Earth (Or Did He?) Gets Psychoanalysed'....

Harlanwatch. *Malcolm Edwards* gleefully passes on a *Publishers Weekly* ad explaining that Harlan Ellison's new collection *Slippage*, though scheduled for this month, will be delayed for an unknown period to allow New Stuff to be included.... "Tee hee," quoth Malcolm. 'Did he know that "slippage" is the term we use for books which have to be postponed? Can it be a hoax?' • *George Alec Effinger* remarked at the recent NASFiC opening ceremony that this was the 25th anniversary of his first ever sale ... and, being persistently heckled by a co-guest,

threatened: 'Harlan, if you don't shut up, I'm going to tell everyone what that first sale was *to!*' Collapse into silence of *Last Dangerous Visions* editor.... • *Paul Wrigley* reminisces, 'My favourite Ellison non-book is his Bibliography, hawked by him at the Portland Westercon in 1984. To be published within the year. I foolishly bought a copy!'

DUFF. Down Under Fan Fund nominations are open, for the trip from Down There to LAGon III in 1996. Candidates need 3 Australasian and 2 N.American nominators by 31 Oct. Administrators: Alan Stewart, PO Box 222, World Trade Centre, Melbourne, Vic 3005, Australia; Pat & Roger Sims, 34 Creekwood Sq, Cincinnati, OH 45246, USA.

Ten Years Ago. *J.G. Ballard* caused fans to worry that the J stood for Jerry after all: 'I want *more* nuclear weapons! ... I want my own cruise missile at the bottom of my garden.' (*Ansible* 44, 1985)

Marketry. *Garth Spencer* sends his 'Electronic Scrapbook', a survey of US/UK/Canadian/Aussie sf/fantasy/horror markets (including small press) on IBM disk, updated quarterly; over 900k in plain text files; \$10 US. Stop Press, PO Box 15335, VMPO, Vancouver, BC, Canada V6B 5B1.

Weird Tales. *Stu Shiffman* passes on an anecdote about the 'Darwin Awards', said to be given posthumously to people who improve the human gene pool by killing themselves in memorably cretinous ways. A strong contender this year was deduced by the US Arizona Highway Patrol from a mass of smouldering metal embedded in a roadside cliff—looking like a plane crash but proving to be the remains of a Chevy Impala. Lab reconstruction: the late driver was a speed enthusiast who had enhanced his car with a solid-fuel JATO rocket (as used in heavy military transport planes to boost takeoff on short runways), found a nice long straight stretch of road, got up to speed, fired the JATO ... and subsequently, with the brakes burned out of existence by failed efforts to slow down, encountered a slight curve at 250-300mph. Gulp.

Hazel's Language Lessons: Bislama. *kakae* ... 1 food, meal, 2 staples, 3 feast, 4 celebration, 5 fruit of tree that is bearing, 6 favourite indulgence, 7 to eat, 8 to bite, 9 to chew, 10 (of fire) to burn up, 11 (of fuel) to use, 12 (of clothes) to chafe, 13 to speak fluently; *k.bolet* to get shot; *k.frut* to get what is coming to one; *k.han* to get punched; *k.kalahus* to receive a prison sentence; *k.kan* to practise cannibalism; *k.kok* to practise fellatio; *k.maot* to kiss with open mouth; *k.tut* 1 to gnash one's teeth, 2 to clench one's teeth, 3 to get punched in the mouth. [KL]

SF Prophecies. Apt name for fiendish villain in a context of communications media: Murdoch. (George O. Smith, *Venus Equilateral*, 1947.)

Boomerang Attack! *Peter Nicholls's* bit in A96 provoked frenetic response. *Nitpickers Anonymous* insisted that 'Nicholls's gong wasn't a special Atheling award, it was a special committee award by those running Thylacon.' *Marc Ortlieb's* correction went, 'I never would have muttered "Who is that mad old fart?" with reference to Peter Nicholls. I know exactly who the mad old fart is. He's the loud and inconsiderate bastard who smokes foul smelling cigars at social events....' *Andrew Porter* was pissed off by PN's self-description as 'Australia's Andy Porter', to which Peter responds: 'All I meant was that both he and I at one time were given committee awards (his a Hugo, mine an Atheling) when the nicest thing would be a fairer run at the award itself, and not a committee substitute, however well meant. Since then Andrew has amply confirmed his status with two successive Hugos.... But I can see that my remark could be construed by Andy as offensive, and I apologize to him. All I meant was to include Andrew in the fellowship of those who have felt justifiably pissed off at award systems, and then embarrassed by the gift of a nice present from the committee. But my sardonic tone, meant to be joky, made it come out looking bitchy. I have nothing against Andrew, well, only one thing. He recently published my photo in *SFC* and labelled it Damien Broderick. I don't see why Damien should be given credit for my outstanding beauty.' (*Slightly cut—Ed.*)

Rob Holdstock Monument Scheduled. Seen on a hoarding: 'On this site a block-long erection will arise.' [GS]

Great Langfords in Fiction. 'A right rabbit bastard was Langford. Once he'd excluded me from a debate because I couldn't tell'm where the US Seventh Fleet (or was it the Sixth?) was foregathered. "The planet's supreme bastion of sea power and you haven't a clue where it is!" he'd raved. "Out! Go on—bugger off!"' (Jeff Torrington, *Swing Hammer Swing!*, 1992) Wholly unsolicited research: John Bark.