

Ansible



Ansible 97½ Worldcon 1995

From Dave Langford, 94 London Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 5AU, UK. Fax 01734 669914. ISSN 0265-9816. E-mail ansible@cix.compulink.co.uk. Logo: Dan Steffan. Cartoon: the 1965 Terry Carr, by Atom (R.I.P. both)—in *Trapdoor 15*, 1995.

Stalking the Wild TAFF Report

The TransAtlantic Fan Fund still magically wafts its democratically chosen delegates from Europe to North America, and vice versa. Not all winners have published the once traditional full-length trip report ... but partial reports also include much nifty material. Here Ansible offers tiny extracts from Great Incomplete Trip Reports (some may yet be completed). To give the illusion of rigorous research, winners are listed chronologically with arrows to indicate eastward (→) or westward (←) transatlantic trips.

1952 ← Walt Willis. Technically pre-TAFF, but nevertheless the inspiration for it all. Report: *The Harp Stateside*, 1957.

1954 ← Vince Clarke. Could not make the trip.

1955 ← Ken Bulmer. Report: *TAFF Tales*, 1959-61, completed but not collected. '1. Thorn on the Rose' in *Orion 21*, 1959: 'Many of you must have heard of the rumours that Bulmer was arrested in the States, that he was sent for a term to Sing-Sing, that the FBI trailed him everywhere...' (A police car had stopped him for Pavement Walking in Cincinnati:) "What're you doing, bub?" [...] The driver was youngish, obviously swollen-headed over the fact that he wore a uniform and had a powerful car under his hands, a badge and a) a tommy gun down by his leg. b) a pistol at his belt. c) a riot gun in the back seat. d) and probably an H-bomb in a SAC B-52b on call from his car radio. I showed them my driving licence. The youngster started to tear off each year's licence as though the thing were a book. "Don't be stupid," I said, or something even more wounding, and snatched the thing away. He bristled. The older man at his side said a few quiet words to soothe him down and then casually, as though exercising Herlock Sholmesian craft, mentioned the word "English". [...] After that we got on like a house on fire.'

1956 → Lee Hoffman. Could not make the trip.

1957 → Bob Madle. Report: *A Fakefan In London*.

1958 ← Ron Bennett. Report: *Colonial Excursion*, 1961.

1959 → Don Ford. Report: *TAFF Baedeker* (in 2 parts, 1960?).

1960 ← Eric Bentcliffe. Report: *Epitaff*, 1961.

1961 → Ron Ellik. Report: *The Squirrel's Tale*, 1969.

1962 ← Ethel Lindsay. Report: *The Lindsay Report*, 1963.

1963 → Wally Weber. Partial report rumoured but not traced.

1964 ← Arthur Thomson (Atom). Report: *Atom Abroad*, 1965.

1965 → Terry Carr. 'Beyond the Mnemonic Statute of Limitations' in *Raffles 8*, 1984: 'Mike Moorcock introduced himself and insisted on buying me a pint even though he was in his scuffling days then. We talked about the time a few years before when he was scripting the British *Tarzan* comic book or some such and Tuckerized Dave Rike as one of the characters; Mike also mumbled and muttered, in that way he had even then, about London fan and pro factions—the New Wave was just getting started in 1965—and I never did get straight just who hated whom or why, except that everyone seemed to hate Charles Platt. *Plus ça change...*' • 'As a recent TAFF winner wrote to me, it's a "pain in the ass, remembering the names of all these foreigners"....' • 'All this happened nearly twenty years ago, in a time few people remember and even those of us who took part in it find nearly mythic and recall it through a pint, stoutly.'

1966 ← Tom Schluck. Nothing.

1968 → Steve Stiles. Various deranged fragments (with a slight gap between 1968 and 1984) under the overall title *Harrison Country*. 'Chapter 31, pg 147' in *BSFAN 15*, 1986, claims to be his TAFF speech: 'You're scum! Scum! Every last one of you. You know, as I look out over your sallow faces I, I ... ack! ack! ... I have to swallow very hard. There is something quite scabrous about British fandom [...] Decency ... You've heard of decency? Are you even aware of what the word means? I thought not ... I think that if I were to take that word and inscribe it on the head of this pin, and take that pin and immerse it in this pitcher of water and lock the pitcher in this drawer, and perhaps wrap the whole thing in pliable styrofoam ... why, if that word had sentience it would scream in outrage! • You're all damned! Damned and deserving

of those torments; deserving of the red hot gridirons blistering you up nice and crisp, the pong of sulphur in your nostrils, and you screaming for mercy but there will be no mercy, for you ... are ... British fandom!' **1969 ← Eddie Jones.** Apparently nothing.

1970 → Elliot Shorter. Said to have published chapters in *Locus*.

1971 ← Mario Bosnyak. Published nothing, mysteriously claiming that if he did he'd have had to tell the truth and cause offence.

1973 → Len Moffatt. Report: *The Moffatt House Abroad*, 1974.

1974 ← Peter Weston. Segments including 'Stranger in a Very Strange Land' in *SF Monthly*, 1974: 'Imagine 3,000 science fiction fans packed into one huge hall; a hotel reputed to possess nearly four miles of internal corridors; and total receipts of well over a quarter of a million dollars! Yes, everything is big at an American World Science Fiction Convention!' • "You Dirty Old Man, Asimov," called Ellison from a dais in the centre of the main hall. "Stand up, Harlan!" retorted Asimov from the top table, referring to Ellison's modest height.' • 'I noticed that as a result of the John Norman "Gor" books, slave girls in chains were particularly abundant this year!' • 'All too soon the next day, the WorldCon came to an end, its main arteries severed and its life-blood flowing down the steps of the hotel...'

1976 → Roy Tackett, Bill Bowers (tie; Bowers could not travel). Some say Tackett published a 'very brief' report; others disagree.

1977 ← Peter Roberts. 8 chapters of *New Routes In America...* '2. Big City Hustle', *Egg 11*, 1978: 'Ideally all fans should look thoroughly remarkable so that it would be simple and straightforward to introduce them; I could then say, for example, that Suzanne Tompkins was eight foot tall with green hair, or Gary Farber was the furry bloke with purple ears and a gold lamé eyepatch. No problems then. [...] In fact, of course, apart from a faintly luminous fannish aura, most fans look almost human.' • '5. Freeways and Turnpikes', *Mota 27*, 1979: 'American roads go straight ahead, oblivious of the landscape around them. Even a modern British motorway looks like a meandering folly beside a US highway. The Americans must have taken small maps and big rulers and drawn bloody great lines connecting the cities. Then they simply went out and built roads where the lines were marked. It didn't matter to them what was there: valleys, hills, forests, rivers—they ignored the lot.' • '7: SunCon and the Sea Off Miami' in *Gritbin 2*, 1980: 'The architect had apparently conceived the [hotel] as a synthesis of bus station and barracks, but the decorator had eschewed such utilitarianism and had done the whole thing up like a backwoods brothel.' • My favourite monstrosity was a chair outside the lifts near my room. It was massive, high-backed, covered in red plush, and winged with two elderly nymphs whose sharply-pointed breasts jutted out so far that they snagged the clothes of passers-by. I've never seen a chair with dangerous nipples before. I wouldn't have minded that as a souvenir.'

1979 → Terry Hughes. Chapter reputedly published; not traced.

1980 ← Dave Langford. *The Transatlantic Hearing Aid*, 1985.

1981 → Stu Shiffman. Published chapter, 'A Raffles Lad Abroad or The Road to Yorcon' in *Raffles 6*, 1982: 'It's hell in woman's undies.' • "Everyone," he called out at the boarding gate, "this man is being deported for income tax evasion!" and "Make room—he's running away from his four wives!" He's a good buddy... • "By spectacular coincidence, Reading [Berkshire] looks rather "British" to me. I haven't quite figured out why—aside from all the Britons and signs in English.' • 'There had been other sights, like the Town Hall-Library-Museum. The last had provided a good overview of local history, with relics of Roman, Saxon, Tudor and later times. Material on Reading Abbey, stuffed birds and animals, and a collection of Huntley & Palmer biscuit tins. I can't help it—I'm an unrepentant history freak.' • 'I read the *Twll-Ddu* that Dave had given me. It contained [...] the first instalment of the Dreaded Langford TAFF report. The filthy swine...'

1982 ← Kevin Smith. Nothing.

1983 → Avedon Carol. Bit in *Ansible 33*, 1983: 'They tell me that Albacon II was Not So Hot as Eastercons go, organizationally a mess

and all that, but I couldn't tell. I had the good luck to be mostly unfamiliar with the normal run of local fanpolitics, and I wasn't in on the gory details, which I must say I found refreshing. [...] I had no trouble finding the Panroom, and therefore the fans, which is the main thing. So as far as I was concerned everything was fine. My room was comfortable and conveniently located. I loved being able to make myself a cup of tea in the morning without having to get dressed first, and there were plenty of towels... Must say I got a bit tired of the same old fish for lunch every day, and breakfast was too early. I certainly would have preferred a better grade of soft drink, but the bartender who kept grabbing his crotch supplied an interesting floorshow. I do wish, however, that D. West would take up a game which makes a more interesting spectator sport.... And everyone was really just absolutely triffic and you see if I write my TAFF report right now it will be all mushy and effusive and even maudlin and not very funny and—shit, now I know why no one ever finishes a TAFF report.' (*The allusion to D. West's domino-playing, at a time when he was denying that he'd stand for TAFF, may hardly seem like calculated sabotage of D.'s 1984 candidacy. But that's how the instigator of the insane 1984 TAFF wars interpreted it....*)

1984 ← Rob Hansen. Published report: *On The Taff Trail*, 1994.

1985 → Patrick & Teresa Nielsen Hayden. 'Work in Progress' fragments and one full chapter: 'Aspects and Inclinations' in *Hyphen 37*, 1987: 'Another day we drove from Donaghadee up to Portstewart, to have tea with the Whites, give James his Doc Weir Award, and commit a silly oneshot on the impressive new White word processor by way of christening it. The official presentation of the Doc Weir Award was thorough, taking place six times so that James could be photographed trying to look Naughty with Teresa while she presented the cup and certificate. Our own snapshots reveal that neither party has the least talent for visible wickedness; the photo of James demonstrating Psneer-omics is much more striking. Meanwhile Peggy White laid out lavish quantities of food and conversation, including a lively reenactment of the time she got stuck on a programme item debating male vs. female superiority. At a loss for points of feminist theory to argue, she improvised by marching over to a short member of the opposing team (she's not far shy of six foot), putting her hand on the top of his head, and announcing, "I, for one, object to being referred to as The Little Woman!" To her great relief the point carried the day....'

1986 ← Greg Pickersgill. It was Greg's avowed plan that other fans should write up his travels. Thus Linda Blanchard in *Scattershot 3*, 1986, sees him interviewed by Ted White: "To the question of how, after years of speaking out against TAFF and belittling American fandom, he'd decided to run for TAFF and come over, Greg answered that he'd finally met some Americans "who weren't as dimwitted as we'd thought. You could actually hold a conversation with them." There had been some good Americans over in recent years, like Stu Shiffman, but they were rather quiet. "And you didn't notice that retiring violet, Avedon Carol, right?" Ted laughed. "No actually," Greg said, straight faced, "since she spent most of her time humping Rob Hansen." It was the visit from the Nielsen Haydens that knocked him silly. Suddenly there were these two quite interesting fans who just dropped in seeming to know about everything [...] and Pickersgill hadn't known them at all. Later, at home, he hauled out all the NH fanzines he'd received over the years and read them for the first time....' • 'Taffman in Toronto' by Mike Glicksohn in *The Caprician 4*, 1989: 'In order to demonstrate the intensity and sincerity of his feeling he abruptly left his couch, marched through the front door of the hotel and threw up against the side of the building.' • '... a Damn Fine TAFF delegate.'

1987 → Jeanne Gomoll. Portion(s?) under the overall title *Always Coming Home*. 'Chapter 2' in *Whimsey 7*, 1992: 'Greg said that Scott and I stood out as obviously American. Was it my backpack? Scott's jean jacket? Something about the way we moved? There didn't seem to be a huge difference in the way we dressed, not when you considered each garment, one at a time. Of course, people heard our American accents and would know, but even when we were silent, we were recognized. Toward the end of our trip, Scott and I were riding a train south [...], and Scott made his way to the rest room down an aisle through a group of young, male partyers. One guy yelled at the top of his lungs and pointed directly at Scott, "American!" Scott returned stunned and confused, wondering how he had betrayed his nationality....' • "Whatever you do," warned Linda [Krawecka], "don't go on about the cute, little packages in the stores." [...] A Brit within earshot of an American exclaiming over the "cute" packages would probably categorize the speaker as a typical American, obsessed with

bigness, wealth and over-indulgence. I figured it had more to do with the difference between American and Brit refrigerators....'

1988 ← Lillian Edwards & Christina Lake. *Lilian*—"I have to hang my head in shame and say I have never written any of my TAFF trip up...." *Christina*—four discontinuous segments including 'Voodoo Jambalaya' in *The Caprician 4*, 1989: 'Surely I would find something fabulous in the dealer's room of a big American convention? Surely it would be an experience not to be missed? Well, actually, no. I'd seen better selections of books in some of the stores of San Francisco, newer American editions at British conventions, more children's fantasy in Horfield junior library. In fact most of the stalls seemed mainly interested in selling Star Trek memorabilia or dragon/unicorn jewellery.' • 'Bill Wagner, a large, amiable American who was feeling a bit morose because he'd just split with his girl friend, began expounding his theory on the restoration of virginity. I forget the details, mainly because I wasn't taking it seriously at the time, but it seemed to involve nuns and strange popping noises on aeroplanes. "Yes, Bill," I said to keep him happy (after all, we were planning to crash at his flat in New York). "Yes, Bill, I'm sure that we'll all get our virginity back some day." But this seemed to be missing the point....'

1989 → Robert Lichtman. Portion in FAPA plus 'Doorway', *Trapdoor 9*, 1990: 'One of the fringe benefits of being a TAFF delegate is that you can generally move between feuding elements of the host fandom without rancour on anyone's part. Often I felt like a Heinlein-esque "fair witness" as I spent time with various of the warring factions and got to hear their respective viewpoints of the battle lines of British fandom. Preferring mostly to socialize and sightsee, when interfan hassles were discussed, I usually just listened—to scope out for myself (if possible) the truth (ever shifting and often elusive) of the various positions I'd seen espoused in fanzines. When I occasionally commented, it was mostly in a general way, trying my best not to take sides. Sometimes this was challenging....'

1991 ← Pam Wells. Nothing ... or so she claims.

1992 → Jeanne Bowman. *The Almost Factual Fan*, condensed reports for *Ansible ... 'Friday*. We must down to the sea—hustle to illumination in time to be identified from the opening audience. "Hello Jeanne." "Hello Pam." TAFF snapshots panel. 7 people attend, inc. ops personnel. Hotel room has a gorgeous Irish Sea view, and a peculiar plaintive wailing with the ocean breezes. *Saturday*. Illumination. Joseph Nicholas, Green, astonished, watches Greys hoist selves on own petards in panel debate. Ian Watson draws big crowd for "51st State" discussion. I assert Puerto Rico first in line for the honour. Brief pang of homesickness—where are the dozens of hard boiled eggs to colour? Haunting Ramsey Campbell reading. Disco sucks. *Sunday*. Illumination. Pam Wells reveals interest in filking. "Ghosts of Honour" panel—Don Herron flawless laconic Willeford, Ian Watson transcendent as Olaf Stapledon, sly double headed Wm. Burroughs characters and Bob Shaw. Howling success. Colour Coordinated TAFF Auction. *Monday*. Indian lunch with the Ramsey Campbells. Peter Atkins and Paul McAuley lasted till they threw us out at 4pm. Continued illumination with D. West in Keighley. *Tuesday*. Drag D. to Haworth (he offers to show street corner where Brontë boy bought dope) and we wuffer in the heights....'

1993 ← Abigail Frost. One-off fanzine *In Progress* produced on trip, plus 'The Frost Report' fragments sent to *Ansible ... 'You left your heroine at Seattle Zoo, finding a bright orange slug with beautifully crisp dotted lines on its back (I bet they don't come out in the slide, though). Seattle turns out to be paradise on Earth. As an estuarine port with an aviation factory, it is of course the colonial equivalent of Bristol, but that doesn't quite cover it adequately. Mostly I lotos-ate (Lebanese meal with le tout Seattle, party at Vonda McIntyre's where I was billed in her absence) and shopped (Pike Place Market, Left Bank Books and the unutterably wonderful Archie McPhee's), but had a healthy day walking in the foothills of Mt Rainier with Andy Hooper, Carrie Root and Bill "I tell you it's a gigantic mutant gerbil" Bodden. Pine martens chased ground squirrels up trees, marmots (words cannot express how ridiculous they are, honest) bared their teeth at Andy as he declaimed fanzine articles to the echoing glade, glaciers crept inexorably downwards and a chipmunk climbed up my jumper.'*

1995 → Dan Steffan. We'll let him finish his trip first. Maybe.

Ansible 97½ © Dave Langford, 1995. Thanks for help to Vin Clarke, Peter Roberts and the 'Timebinders' group. Current TAFF administrators are (Europe) Abigail Frost, 95 Wilmut St, London, E2 0BP, and (NA) Dan Steffan, 3804 S 9th St, Arlington, VA 22204, USA. My and Rob Hansen's trip reports are still being sold in aid of TAFF: ask us! August 95