

# Ansible



Ansible 129 April 1998

From Dave Langford, 94 London Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 5AU, UK. Fax 0118 966 9914. ISSN 0265-9816. E-mail ansible@cix.co.uk. Logo: Dan Steffan. Cartoon: Bryan Talbot (L.Arkwright pub scene detail). Available for SAE or GoH perks.

**FANFALL.** Worldwide panic was narrowly averted after premature NASA reports that a rogue British Worldcon bid hurtling in from extralogical space would pass close to Glasgow early next century, impacting within 30,000 miles (plus or minus 180,000 miles) of the Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre. But later releases indicated that the whole story was a horrible mistake.

## The March of Slime

**Paul Barnett** is 'attempting impossible deadlines' on another movie encyclopedia. Light relief: 'the cinematographer on *Tiger Cage* (1990), a routine Hong Kong kickboxing actioner, is called Lee Ping.'

**David Brin's** praise of *The Postman* movie's 'theme of hope' (A126) reminded *Yvonne Rousseau* of Brinnish remarks on *The Lathe of Heaven*: 'he mentioned how wistful he felt, remembering that Ursula had been consulted both in the scripting and the shooting of this movie, whereas in the movie of *The Postman* Brin had been able to detect just two similarities with his novel: the hero was delivering mail, and the hero didn't seem to be utterly obviously villainous.'

**Arthur C. Clarke** issued a Statement, received too late for A128: 'At this stage I can only comment briefly on what has, ironically, become one of the most heart-warming events of my life: I never knew that I had so many friends and admirers all over the world. As my conscience is perfectly clear, my only regret now is the embarrassment the *Sunday Mirror's* allegations have caused to others. ● Having always had a particular dislike of paedophiles, few charges could be more revolting to me than to be classed as one. However, the accusations are so ludicrous that I have found it difficult to take them seriously, or even to treat them with the contempt that they deserve. ● As I am now taking legal advice, I cannot go into details, but I realise that responsible members of the media deserve some kind of statement: moreover, silence can be easily taken as an admission of guilt. Indeed, I must confess to a mild sense of guilt, for not giving public support to the Gay Rights movement. Now my last feeble (though valid) excuses are eliminated, and I fear I may be pregnant with another book. (Outed at 80?) I rather hope not: the last is a year overdue....' [Colombo, Feb] *Late extra* from ACC, 2 Apr: allegations supposedly 'conclusively demolished' as fabrications by reporters 'who are now themselves under investigation.'

**Lester del Rey's** supposed full name was Ramon Felipe San Juan Mario Silvio Enrico Smith Heathcourt-Brace Sierra y Alvarez-del Rey y de los Verdes (*SF Encyclopedia*). Recent efforts to settle his estate (he died intestate) led to word that he was in fact just Ramon Alvarez y del Rey, which was then corrected by 'reliable gossip' to ... Leonard Stamm.

**Captain W.E. Johns** has been a bit unproductive since his death in June 1968, but after 30 years his estate has reportedly allowed publication of Johns's final, unfinished Biggles novel *Biggles Does Some Homework*, 97th in the series. With a commercial acumen that drew gasps of awe from the Tolkien estate, this was confined to a one-time-only limited edition of 300 numbered copies—already sold out. [BB]

**Ken McLeod** is the latest author to court *Ansible* publicity by writing me into his fiction. Ha! I flick my fingers at him! I am not so easily lured into plugging pages 40-41 of *The Cassini Division*....

**Ian Stewart** was on *Desert Island Discs* (R4, Mar) and got in a tiny plug for a coming book co-written with Jack Cohen. His luxury object: 'a Damien Hirst statue of Margaret Thatcher in a tank of formaldehyde. He didn't say why he wanted it, and Sue Lawley didn't ask.' [PW]

## Confervoid

4 Apr ● **BFS Open Night**, Princess Louise pub, Holborn (upstairs bar), 7pm on. Guest to be confirmed: Douglas E. Winter.

10-12 Apr ● **Minicon 33**, Radisson Hotel S, Minneapolis, MN, USA. GoH Gardner Dozois and me (yes, *this* is how US non-Worldcons can get a mention in nasty parochial *Ansible*). \$70 at door for a Drinking membership, or, for Non-Drinking, \$70 ... which shall it be, Langford, which shall it be? Voicemail +1 612 333 7533.

10-13 Apr ● **Intuition** (Eastercon), Jarvis Piccadilly Hotel, Man-

chester. Advance bookings closed. £40 at door; £20/day Sat/Sun; £15/day Fri/Mon. Contact 1 Waverley Way, Carshalton Beeches, SM5 3LQ.

18-19 Apr ● **Mecon**, SCR, Queen's U, Belfast. GoH James White. £10 reg; £12 from 1 Apr. Contact 38 Palestine St, Belfast, BT7 1QJ.

22 Apr ● **BSFA Open Meet**, Jubilee pub, nr Waterloo, 5-7pm on.

24-6 Apr ● **SFeracon** (national con and 'Euroconference' in place of Eurocon), Zagreb, Croatia. \$20 reg. GoH not Guy Gavriel Kay but TBC. Contact Jagoda Matovina, M.Haberlea 2, 10000 Zagreb, Croatia. Phone/fax +385 1383 5951 or +385 1383 5973 (ask for Tanja).

25-6 Apr ● **Unconvention 98** (Fortean/UFO/weird), U of London Union, Malet St. £12.50 day, £20 both days; £15/£25 after 9 Mar; advance booking closes 6 Apr. Contact (cheques to John Brown Publishing) PO Box 444, Woking, Surrey, GE21 1GZ. 01795 414925.

1-4 May ● **The Dominion** (45th UK *Trek* con), Palace Hotel, Manchester. GoH: numerous. £45 reg, £50 at door. Contact (SAE) 35 Kings Ave, New Malden, Surrey, KT3 4DU.

11-13 Sep ● **AKFT 98** (*Trek*), Warwick Arms Hotel, Warwick. £30 reg. Contact (SAE) 7 Belgrave Clo, St Mary Cray, Orpington, BR5 3TJ.

**Rumblings ● Millennium Bug.** 'The Radicon committee regret to announce our decision not to bid for Eastercon 2000. We will contact pre-supporters regarding money already taken. We wish the winning bid well and thank everyone who gave us help and support.' [BH] ● **San Francisco in 2002:** this bid was forced to shift dates by one day to 30 Aug - 3 Sep (Fri-Tue, not Thur-Mon) to allow move-in time. [KS]

## Infinitely Improbable

**Publishers & Sinners.** *Omni On-Line* has been cancelled and all staff laid off; it continues as a 'static' web site. ● *The SF Encyclopedia's* 1995 Grolier CD-ROM has been reissued by Focus Multimedia at £9.99 ... which came as a total surprise to editors John Clute & Peter Nicholls.

**Awards.** *The Paper Tiger Art Award* is being launched at Intuition as an annual Eastercon presentation (£100 plus framed certificate) for 'best bit of art on display at the con.' **Paul Barnett:** 'I must get a T-shirt emblazoned PAPER TIGER ART AWARD ADMINISTRATOR so that I need to buy myself neither meat nor drink in Manchester as artists in quest of that magic hundred quid ingratiate themselves.' ● *The 1998 Hugo Nominations* are embargoed until 10 April, and so my lips are sealed as regards current whispers of at least six nominated British items.

**R.L.P. Archie Goodwin** (1937-1998), the veteran comics writer and editor, died on 1 March aged 60. His career began in 1965; he scripted stories for many noted superhero characters including Batman, Spider-Man and the Hulk, won the genre's Shazam and Eisner Awards, and was editor-in-chief for Warren (*Creepy*, *Eerie* etc) and Marvel before becoming a group editor at DC for the last nine years of his life. Many tributes were paid to his professionalism, popularity and good humour.

● **Archie Mercer**, long-time British fan, died on 21 March; he was popular and active in fanzines, APAS (a founder member of OMPA), convention organization and the BSFA from the 1950s to the 1970s. Chris Priest remembers: 'Archie wrote a novel about fandom called *The Meadows of Fantasy*, which I must have read in about 1965/66. It was a little tentative at the beginning, but as I remember it the thing developed quickly into a real novel, with a brisk plot, good handling of cleft characters and some well observed satire. I knew Archie first by his writing. He was editing for the BSFA at the time, and was one of the few established fans who took a tolerant and indeed indulgent line on the unruly young fans—me and Charles Platt in particular—then emerging. He was an amusing correspondent, too. But Archie was one of those fans who acquitted himself best by the written word, presumably because of his immense personal shyness: at conventions he tended to stand around in a smelly old green shirt, and utter one embarrassingly awful pun after another. I used to dread what people might think of him, who had not seen how witty and eloquent his writing could be.'

**Random Fandom.** *Vincent Clarke* is having a glum time in hospital, feeling very weak indeed. MRI scanning confirmed a severe but unnoticed heart attack, with complications. Visiting hours (see CoA):

10am-1pm, 2.30pm-9.00pm. • *Ian Gunn* has bad news: 'Victory celebrations have proved to be somewhat premature. My cancer has flared up again in exactly the same spots, and I resume chemotherapy tomorrow [17 Mar]. This time they're going to hit it harder with extra drugs and five-day treatment sessions instead of two-day ones. At least I'll be an outpatient which means I won't have to spend sleepless nights in hospital (sleepless nights at home are much more preferable, there's books, TV, internet ...). Karen's pretty upset, but we at least know what to expect this time—to some degree. So much for my hair growing back.' Fingers painfully crossed, again. • *Andrew I. Porter* declared himself 'not too thrilled' that my *Odyssey* column is called 'Critical Mass', a title used by his *SFC* reviewer Don D'Amassa since 1988. Harmony was restored by my frank admission that the UK run of 100+ Langford 'Critical Mass' columns began in 1983.... • *Elliott Shorter*, US TAFF winner in 1970, had a double bypass operation on 20 Mar, following leaky heart valve problems. • *Alan Stewart of Thyme* has recovered from recent surgery: 'They found I only have one kidney; the 9 cm abdominal lump turned out to be a cyst; and the lumps on my left testicle (now removed) also turned out to be cysts. Apparently the whole no left kidney/cysts etc are a legacy of something happening before I was born.' Ouch. • *Peter Wareham* reports a line from Radio 4's *Start the Week* (16 Mar): "'There's wonderful science fiction and literature about robots.' It's good to know that the important distinction between sf and literature is being maintained.' • *Bridget Wilkinson's* Fans Across the World newsletter is delayed: she's been groggy since an operation in early March, may need a further op soon, and can't make it to Intuition.

**Blurbismo.** Time-Life Books circular for its new series *Myth and Mankind*: 'Fight with Lancelot. Feast with Arthur. Make love with Guinevere. And save 45% while you're at it.' [DK]

C.O.A. A.V. Clarke, Gillies Ward, St Mary Hospital, Sidcup, DA14 6LT (temporary ... NB they don't know him as 'Vincent'). *John Dallman*, 92 Lichfield Rd, Cambridge, CB1 3TR. *Vincent Docherty*, PIM/1, NAM BV, Po Box 28000, 9400 HH Assen, Netherlands. *Gordon Eklund*, 4420 176th St SW, #C-3, Lynnwood, WA 98037, USA. *Amanda Kear*, 3 Greenbank Avenue West, Easton, Bristol, BS5 6EP. *Jackie McRobert*, 388 St Vincent St, Glasgow, G3 8RN. *Tom Springer*, 2255 E Sunset Bldg 18, Apt 2030, Las Vegas, NV 89119, USA. *Jim Kennedy*, Corpul Pacii (Peace Corps), Str Anton Crihan, 2009 Chisinau, Moldova. *Craig Smith*, 10329 Meridian Ave N, Apt A-103, Seattle, WA 98133, USA. *David Redd* (temporary), 18 Byron Lane, Lowton, Leigh, WA3 1BL, *Bjo & John Trimble*, 601 E Foothill Blvd, Monrovia, CA 91016-2403, USA.

**Flowers of Rhetoric.** In Lauray of Salisbury plant catalogue: 'EPHYLLUMS Small Flowered Hybrids [...] "Ursula Le Guin"—Broad, deep raspberry pink petals form tulip-shaped funnel. recurved sepals have beige overtones. [...] "Robert Silverberg"—Small, satiny, watermelon red flowers, recurved petals. Free flowering, basket type growth.' [RC]

**Small Press.** *Light's List 1998* (13th year of publication) gives 1,200+ titles, addresses and brief descriptions. A5, 56pp. £1.50 post free: John Light, 37 The Meadows, Berwick upon Tweed, TD15 1NY.

**The G-Spot: Outraged Letters.** *David Garnett* is 'very disappointed not to find any contribution from Mr Simon R.Green in #128. I do hope this is only a temporary oversight ...' • *Simon R.Green* rushes to the rescue: 'Have you heard the Yank TV stations have refused to buy the Teletubbies? (That well-known series not at all created by people on very heavy drugs.) Apparently they couldn't understand it. Maybe we should have given them sub-titles.' [Supposedly showing on US public TV within the week—Ed.] • *Steve Green*: 'So pleased to learn that Dick Geis still has a weekly orgasm. Could the sparky septuagenarian confirm whether they follow a set schedule, like Old Faithful, or force him to wear special underwear?' • *Richard E.Geis*: 'If I'd suspected you would use my orgasm brag in *Ansible* I would have made it once a day.'

**Thog's Masterclass.** *Dept of Vacuum Physics*: 'It completed the move with its laser firing in the direction of the incoming ship, which swerved to avoid contact with the beam.' All this at sub-light velocity, too. (Robert J.Sawyer, *Starplex*, 1996) [LP] ... 'No book is written in a vacuum, especially a mystery, since inside a vacuum, it's too dark to type.' (Rosemary Edghill, *The Bowl of Night*) [PB] • 'The tea in the cups shimmered, along with the tears brimming over her eyes.' (Paul Levinson, 'The Copyright Notice Case', *Analog* 4/96) ... 'He guessed that the Apache who appeared over him, his arm upraised, was only a few years older than him, a kid too, then the arm came down and his eyes filled with vermilion fires.' (Jake Page, *Apacheria*, 1998) [SHS] • *Dept of Privy Purposes*: 'As for me, I scavenged funnels and lengths of tubing and, in the privacy of an old lean-to, began conducting intense private experiments.' (Stephen Baxter, *The Time Ships*, 1995) [BS]

## Corflu UK, Leeds, 13-15 March

Would this British incarnation of the great US fanzine convention be a completely alien gene injected into our fannish biosphere? (*Mot juste* © Steve Green 1997: do not impinge copyright or the Astral League will take MEASURES.) No, it seemed just like any small and ostentatiously ill-organized UK event, except for the welcome US presence—official count 23 of 102 members—and, possibly to make visitors feel at home, lack of real beer. *Many British Fans*: 'What's on that real-ale tap?' *Strainedly Smiling Barman*: 'It's a dummy....' • *John D.Rickett* had his name plucked from the hat and so became the most popular Guest of Honour in the history of UK Corflu. • *FAAn Awards* were presented and runners-up later detailed at length: herewith the top 5 for each. FANZINE *Idea*, 105 votes (*Attitude* 63, *Trap Door* 51, *Apparatchik* 39, *Banana Wings* 34). FANWRITER Christina Lake, 64 (G.Sullivan 56, D.Langford 31, V.Gonzalez 24, M.Plummer 23). FAN ARTIST D.West, 94 (I.Gunn 70, B. Rotsler 55, S.Stiles 54, Sue Mason 30). LETTERHACK Harry Warner, 71 (L.Penney 42, V.Rosenzweig 37, R.Lichtman 35, S.Jeffery 20). NEW FANZINE FAN Lesley Reece, 71 (Ulrika O'Brien 47, Claire Brialey 23, Aileen Forman 21, Tom Springer 21). #1 FAN FACE, totalling votes over all above categories: Geri Sullivan, 161 (D.West 104, Robert Lichtman 92, Christina Lake 88, Mike Abbott 83, Lesley Reece 83). [AH] The FAAn trophies were too tasteful ever to make the grade as Nova Awards, being certificates with nifty calligraphy by Jae Leslie Adams: Geri Sullivan modestly showed us her two awards only a few score times. • The banquet, in a restaurant into which the entire con almost fitted, seemed OK despite alarmingly ichorous paté ('It wasn't killed, just frightened to death on the plate') and house wines whose quality faithfully echoed the hotel beer. I failed to hear rich brown's presentation of Corflu 1999 in Panama City; apparently fandom was nearly plunged into war by a false announcement of the date as March rather than 'late April/early May'. • Strange sights of Corflu included Martin Smith's prolonged collapse in the bar, suitably placarded (I DIED IN THE WAR FOR PEOPLE LIKE YOU. PLEASE GIVE GENEROUSLY), Greg Pickersgill gulping an appalling lumpy soft drink resembling a lava lamp charged with bubble-gum, and Joseph Nicholas's fascinating range of mini-skirts. 'Joseph Tunicata?' asked Hazel afterwards, in her classical way. We realized with alarm that since they were such little skirts, it would be more like 'Joseph Tuniculus'. Something in the fannish air must have been conducive to this kind of thing: at one point I found myself arguing that following Maureen K.Speller's fanzine *Snuffkin's Bum* and TAFF compilation *Bumper Snuffkin*, it was now necessary that she produce a zine crammed with gory colour photos of beheaded and eviscerated country yokels, thereby justifying the title *Bumpkin Snuff*. A great silence followed. • With a TAFF delegate (Ulrika O'Brien, slightly traumatized from being showered with broken glass when a train window burst inward), current contenders and several past winners present, it seemed ironic that one of the latter cancelled the Transatlantic Relationships panel as not half so interesting as a postponed discussion on 'Milk and Alcohol'. • Bossman *Jan Sorensen*, having basked in praise from drunken attendees at Corflu itself, was bemused to find Usenet rec.arts.sf.fandom discussion dominated by whinges about the droll newsletter *The Debauched Sloth* (too hastily placed on the web by the hard-pressed *Plokza* team): 'If ever there was an argument for eugenics, rassif is it.' • Can I really not have mentioned Ted White? Or Victor Gonzalez and Vicki Rosenzweig (whose presence inspired idle thoughts of sending the SAS to kidnap Tom Sadler so we'd have the entire 1997 US TAFF slate)? Or Christina Lake's Incredibly Alcoholic 40th Birthday Party, with the whole con invited? Or the tale of Lilian Edwards pouring a full pint of wine over Eugene Doherty's head just as though he were a Scientologist, later claiming amnesia just like me in 1987? Or the awesome confrontation of Mike Ford and Mike Ford? • Special bonus points for con badges which shrank the Corflu Corporate Image to a small but perfectly formed Sue Mason logo, leaving room for **READABLE NAMES IN HUGE LETTERS**. Everyone please copy. • On the long rail journey home, I slowly realized my awful fate—following an incautious TAFF auction bid—of having nothing to read but *Flight* by Vanna Bonta. Surely one random peep would do no harm ... 'In the Lauryad's control chamber, the victor was Understanding and it prevailed, buffing the environ with mollifying ease.' Buffing the environ? Beam me up, Thog.

*Ansible* 129 © Dave Langford, 1998. Thanks to Paul Barnett, Barbara Barrett, Raphael Carter, Bridget Hardcastle, Andy Hooper, Dan Krushin, Lawrence Person, Bernard Sigaud, Steven H.Silver, Kevin Standlee, Geri Sullivan, Peter Wareham and our Hero Distributors Janice Murray (NA), SCIS, Alan Stewart (Oz), and Martin Tudor (Brum Group). 2 Apr 98