

Ansible



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From **Dave Langford**, 94 London Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 5AU, UK. Fax 0705 080 1534. ISSN 0265-9816. E-mail ansible@cix.co.uk. Logo: **Dan Stefan**. Cartoon: **Sue Mason**. Available for SAE or Haslam's *A General History of Labyrinths*.

NOVACON 29. The usual semi-desperate fun took place in Birmingham. GoH *Ian Stewart* made a lot of people wish they'd had him as a maths teacher. *Ken MacLeod* won applause with his instant definition, 'Science fiction is the blood that flows at the cutting edge of science!' The 'Myths of Fandom' panel was dominated by loquacious *Peter Weston* (silent participant *Steve Green* drew a sign: 'This is the easiest pint I've ever earned'), who brought matters to a revivalist climax by persuading the entire audience to sing an Astral League Hymn hastily plucked from memory by your editor. *Nova Awards*: FANZINE *Barmaid* ed *Yvonne Rowse* (runners-up *Plokta*, *Banana Wings*); FAN WRITER *Yvonne Rowse* (tied runners-up *Claire Brialey*, *Mark Plummer*); FAN ARTIST *Sue Mason* (runners-up *Dave Hicks*, *Steve Jeffery*). *Nova* boss *Tony Berry* grumbled: '31 ballots were cast, which is somewhat disappointing. Must do better.' Also at 'the closing, I mean the awards ceremony', as the committee was seemingly required by contract to call it, *Maureen Kincaid Speller* was rewarded for 13 years of staunch BSFA work with an arcanelly symbolic cross-stitched sampler. Of the Real Ale, we will not speak.

Masque of the Red Shift

Paul Barnett enjoyed the World Fantasy Convention, with certain reservations about banquet prizes: 'the centrepiece of each table was a bowl containing a Siamese Fighting Fish; at each table one "lucky" person won the fish. This was actually pretty goddamned stupid on the part of the organizers, because the guests had come from far and wide and either (a) couldn't take the bloody things home or (b) could try to, the probable result being the death of the fish. As my agent (*Chris Lotts* of *Vicinanza*) angrily put it, "They might as well have put a live puppy on the table." *Pain* [*Scoville*] was one of the "winners", and there was no way we could get the thing home through a 4.5hr train journey followed by the Manhattan subway.'

Ray Bradbury, who is 79, was hospitalized with a stroke in early November. His mind seems unharmed and a full recovery is expected.

Ellen Datlow is suspending her web magazine as of 15 December: 'Event Horizon: SF, Fantasy, Horror will be going on indefinite hiatus in order to seek investors and/or a buyer to underwrite its continuation.' Critics' and readers' enthusiasm, alas, doesn't pay the bills.

A.A.Gill's Star-Crossed won the *Literary Review* Bad Sex Prize for 'the year's literary novel with the worst, most redundant or embarrassing description of the sexual act'. It's evidently skiffy: 'The scene involving a deep-sea diver and a genetically-modified, homosexually-inclined giant squid has to be read to be believed,' wrote the *Daily Mirror*.

Michael Moorcock is 60 on 16 December. (The party's in Texas.) Just now he's hopping mad about the 'crap-gobbling cocksuckers in Texas' responsible for a recent *Guardian* sf supplement—actually a HarperCollins promotion—which to the surprise of contributors like *David Pringle* and myself was packaged as a digest sf magazine called ... *New Worlds*. 'I'm really pissed off. Jesus Christ, what else can these shit-mongers loot? [...] This is passing off and their lawyers would know it.'

Brian Stableford was initially too modest to reveal his SF Research Association Pilgrim Award for sf scholarship: 'The SFRA even paid my plane fare to Mobile, Alabama in June so I could collect it in person. I'd have told you if I'd thought it qualified as interesting news. It completes my set of academic awards (I already had an IAFA Distinguished Scholarship Award and a Pioneer Award, and once read in *Locus* that I had received a J.Lloyd Eaton Award, although the organization never made contact or supplied any kind of certificate or whatever).'

Contection

10 Dec • **BFS Open Night** • Princess Louise pub (upstairs), High Holborn, London. 6:30pm on. With *Juliet McKenna*.

22 Dec • **BSFA Open Meeting** in London CANCELLED.

23 Dec • **London Xmas Meeting**, Florence Nightingale pub, 5pm on. Upstairs room booked, alas: fans must squeeze in downstairs.

4-6 Feb 00, **Didgeri-12** (filk), Forte Posthouse, Milton Keynes. £22 reg, £11 unwaged. Contact 119 Whitehill Lane, Gravesend, DA12 5LU.

21-23 Mar 00 • **Portmeiricon (Prisoner)**—guess where in North Wales? Contact (SAE) Six of One, PO Box 66, Ipswich.

21-24 Apr 00 • **2Kon** (51st Eastercon), Central Hotel, Glasgow. Now £30/\$55 reg. Contact 30 Woodburn Tce, St Andrews, KY16 8BA.

7-8 Oct 00, **Octocon 11**, Royal Marine Hotel, Dun Laoghaire, Dublin. GoH TBA. £10(I) reg to 42 Capel Court, Dublin 1, Ireland, or £10 to D.J.Lally, 64 Richborne Tce, London, SW8 1AX.

27-9 Oct 00, **Bats 2000** (multimedia/horror/sf), Radisson Edwardian Hotel, Heathrow. GoH Storm Constantine, others. £45 reg (£25/day) rising to £50 (£30/day) on 1 Jan. Lower rates for under-18s. Contact (SAE) 47 Bennetts Court, Bristol, BS37 4XH.

27-30 Oct 00, **Cult TV Festival**, Barton Hall, Torquay. GoH Patrick McGoochan. Contact Cult TV, PO Box 1701, Peterborough, PE7 1ER.

Rumblings • Eastercon 2002 ... *Martin Hoare* is muttering that it's time for another Jersey bid using the Hotel de France. The alternative bid, known as *Incandescent* or 'Pat McMurray's bid', maintains discreet silence; unattributable rumours hint that the intended south-coast venue may have given way to a familiar hotel not adjacent to Heathrow.

Infinitely Improbable

Publishers and Sinners. Virgin commissioning editor *James Marriott* announced that 'the Virgin Worlds imprint has been in limbo while we assessed the sales reaction to the launch titles. Unfortunately this reaction has been less enthusiastic than we'd hoped, and we will not be commissioning any more titles for the foreseeable future.' [24 Nov] For those who wondered why *VW* began with three unknown authors and no obvious lead title, *Ian Watson* can reveal this wasn't the editor's idea: 'Virgin had been hanging on to a copy of my newest novel *Mockymen*, which perceptive *Peter Darvill-Evans*, now departed, wished to buy over a year ago as the lead title for the launch. He was on the point of sending me a contract when the sales force told him, to his surprise, "You already have 3 titles; you can't have another one till we know how those ones go." Now they know; they went to their doom.' (*Mockymen* will instead appear from Pumpkin Books in April 2000.)

World Fantasy Awards, presented 7 Nov: NOVEL *Louise Erdrich*, *The Antelope Wife*. NOVELLA *Ian R. MacLeod*, 'The Summer Isles' (*Asimov's* 11/98). SHORT *Kelly Link*, 'The Specialist's Hat' (*Event Horizon* 11/98). COLLECTION *Karen Joy Fowler*, *Black Glass*. ANTHOLOGY *Jack Dann & Janeen Webb*, *Dreaming Down-Under*. ARTIST *Charles Vess*. SPECIAL PROFESSIONAL *Jim Turner*, Golden Gryphon Press. SPECIAL NON-PRO *Richard Chizmar*, Cemetery Dance Publications. Life Achievement: *Hugh B. Cave*.

As Others See Us. *New York* magazine (8 Nov) ran a '50 Ways to Meet Your Lover' feature, whose fourth option was: 'Meet A Mate At A Science-Fiction-Fan Convention?' The claimed benefits are that 'in exchange for listening to some Kirk-vs.-Picard drivel now and then, you'll beam up a partner who will be pathetically grateful for every bit of attention you give him; won't be spending money on Prada anything; and is unlikely to cheat on you, unless you count Jedi mind tricks. Besides, those computer-programmer types are privy to those three magic words: Microsoft stock options.' [PO/BD] If only.

C.o.A. *Sue Jones*, Flat 5, 32/33 Castle St, Shrewsbury, SY1 2BQ. *Andy Lane & Helen Stirling*, 56 Wyke Ave, Ash, Hampshire, GU12 6EA. *Jackie McRobert*, 3f4 21 Torphichen Place, Haymarket, Edinburgh, EH3 8DY. *Patrick & Teresa Nielsen Hayden*, 604 Carroll St #1, Brooklyn, NY 11215, USA. *Pam Scoville & Paul Barnett* (after agonizing delays), 1554 Greenwood Lake Turnpike, Hewitt, NJ 07421, USA.

Chog's Critical Masterclass. *D.H. Lawrence* on 'The Fall of the House of Usher' by *Edgar Allan Poe*: 'The exquisitely sensitive Roger [sic], vibrating without resistance with his sister *Madeline*, more and more exquisitely, and gradually devouring her, sucking her life like a vampire in his anguish of extreme love. And she asking to be sucked.' [VR]

Outraged Letters. *Steve Baxter* enjoyed being GoH at *Armadacon*, 'but I was confronted by some bizarre rumours: that I have a phobia about book signings (neither entertaining nor plausible) and that I'm married to a Doctor Who assistant (entertaining but ...). Nobody

seemed to know where these notions came from; maybe there are alien beings who make them up, like the jokes in that old story of Asimov's.' ● *Paul Simpson of DreamWatch* responds to Greg Egan's complaint in *Ansible 148* 'that the interview with him in *DreamWatch 61* was nothing of the sort; that he had turned down a request for an interview; and that the writer had taken material from Egan's website, passed it off as the writer's own work and the magazine had printed it as an interview with him.' ● Understandably, this raised some considerable alarm, and regrettably it appears that the incidents referred to did in fact occur. Dave Hughes, the writer in question, has as a result resigned as contributing editor to *DreamWatch* and will no longer be writing for the magazine. A clarification is going in the forthcoming issue of *DreamWatch*, and an apology will be going to Greg Egan.'

Fanfundery. TAFF final reminder: nominations for the westbound race to Chicago in 2000 close 6 Dec. Candidates Tommy Ferguson and Sue Mason are joined by the allegedly once sober Tobes Valois, for whom Dave Hicks suggests the campaign slogan 'A Desperate Candidate for Desperate Times'. [MP] ● GUFF: nominations for the northbound race to the 2001 UK Eastercon must be in by 14 Apr 00. Candidates' requirements: 3 Aussie and 2 Euro nominators, \$20A 'bond', 100-word platform. Send to Karen Pender-Gunn, PO Box 567, Blackburn, Victoria 3130, Australia, or Paul Kincaid, 60 Bournemouth Road, Folkestone, Kent, CT19 5AZ, UK. Eric Lindsay and Jean Weber plan to stand jointly.

Pardon? 'The Quick Look notice for 24th-28th May should have read "Working with deaf people", not "Working with dead people".' (Royal College of Speech & Language Therapists *Bulletin*, 6/99) [DPI]

Trip Reports. *New Routes in America*, Peter Roberts's 1977 TAFF report, is out at last in a 30,000-word collected edition, with five newly written chapters and many cartoons. A4 softbound, 32pp + prelims and cover, £6 post free from *Ansible* or \$10 from Ulrika O'Brien, 123 Melody Ln #C, Costa Mesa, CA 92627, USA. All proceeds to TAFF. Peter on the 1977 Worldcon's decadent hotel: '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.' ● FANAC, the fan history organization, is giving \$100 to TAFF for each published report (in addition to SCIFI's famous \$500). ● *A Brighton Belle Meets Skippy* is Eve Harvey's collected 1985 GUFF trip report: A4, 30pp, £3.40 from Eve at 8 The Orchard, Tonwell, Herts, SG12 0HR. (Other rates: UK 1st class £3.52; Aus \$A13.50 or \$A13.50 air; USA \$7 or \$8.50 air.) All proceeds to GUFF.

20 Years Ago. *D. West* mused on fannish Names of Power: 'Did you know that there is a wrestler called Pete Roberts? Also a country & western group called the Dave Pringle Band?' (*Ansible 5*, Dec 79)

Random Fandom. *Jane Gelderbloem & Mike Ford* announce the birth of their daughter Grace on 25 November. (NB: this British Mike Ford should not be confused with Mike 'John M.' Ford.) An authentic soundbite was provided: 'gurgle, gurgle, ick!'

Small Press. *The Small Press Guide 2000* devotes a page to each of 365 publications/presses in the UK or having a UK address, with contact details and editorial requirements. 377pp: £9.99 from Writers' Bookshop, Remus House, Coltsfoot Dr, Woodston, Peterborough, PE2 9JX.

Chog's Masterclass. '... then he felt the hand without the black bandage dive like a blind shellfish into the algae of his anxiety.' (Gabriel Garcia Marquez, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, trans Gregory Rabassa 1970) [SJ] ● *Dept of Anatomy*: 'As the extension of female hips and buttocks declined, leg-o'-mutton sleeves of enormous proportions rose to take their place.' (Alexandra Joel, *Parade: The story of fashion in Australia*, 1998) [YR] ● *Dept of Historical Weights and Measures (Rome, 44 BC)*: '... feeling somewhat as if he'd been hit hard between the eyes with a two-by-four.' (Alice Borchardt, *Night of the Wolf*, 1999) ● "Captain Vandermeer, if you will please initiate a three-hundred-and-sixty-degree turn of the *Washington*, we'll begin the long journey home." (Anne McCaffrey, *The Tower and the Hive*, 1999) ● *Dept of V:vil Fortresses and Thrusting Symbolism*: 'The towering obelisk was an architectural marvel, a joint masterpiece of man and of nature. Thousands of tons of basalt base and obsidian shaft reached up into the darkness that surrounded its well-hidden cavern in the High Reaches, Serendair's forbidding northern mountain range. The actual spire of the mammoth fortress a mile below the ground, the shadowy monolith pierced the racing clouds, thrusting skyward proudly, almost insolently, tapering to a point in which was carved the image of a single eye. As the chant began, the scraps of vaporous mist that hovered in the humid air around the Spire dissipated instantly; the eye was clearing, reading

itself.' (Elizabeth Haydon, *Rhapsody*, 1999) [EW] ● 'Static reality had a nasty trick of paying back with a vengeance those who toyed with it with impunity.' (Robert Weinberg, *The Road to Hell*, 1997) [MC]

R.I.P.

HOWARD BROWNE (1908-1999), author and 1940s managing editor of *Amazing Stories* and *Fantastic Adventures*, died on 28 October. [DPR]

ED CONNOR, editor of the remarkable 1970s fanzine *SF Echo* (formerly *Möbius Trip*) that was bound like a paperback, died early in November after being hit by a pickup truck while crossing the road against lights in Peoria. He was 77. [LZS]

QUENTIN CRISP (1908-1999), aphorist, performer, and famous in his own words as a stately homo of England, died unexpectedly in Manchester on 21 November; he was 90. [AC] His contribution to fantastic literature was the determinedly horrid Gothic fable *Chog* (1979).

CHARLES D. HORNIG (1916-1999), who on the strength of a 1993 fanzine editorial took over Hugo Gernsback's *Wonder Stories* at age 17 and went on to edit other pulps, died on 11 October. [DPR]

GENE LEVITT, the TV writer, producer and director who wrote the screenplay for the 1977 *Fantasy Island* TV movie that spawned a popular series, died of prostate cancer on 15 November. He was 79. [PB]

CLARISSA LUARD (1948-1999), formerly Clarissa Rushdie (she was once married to Salman Rushdie), died from a sudden recurrence of cancer on 4 November. She was only 50. As Assistant and—a very recent promotion—Senior Literature Officer for the Arts Council, she'd been responsible for their dealings with *Interzone* over several years ('always very simpatico'—David Pringle). Clarissa previously worked at A.P. Watt as literary agent for several sf authors, including myself.

NORMAN SHORROCK (1929-1999), long-time Liverpool fan, died on 9 November at age 70. [KF/AS] *Ken Slater* writes: 'Those of us who can still recall the high fannish years of the very late forties and the fifties will be aware that Norman had considerable influence on British fandom's development. He and Ina, his wife, were founder members of the Liverpool SF Society in 1951; Norman it was who talked the society into buying a tape recorder, and making sound tape productions filled with fannish puns and fun. Later in the same decade he was instrumental in getting British fan film production started. Norman was also a fanzine publisher, a Knight of St Fantony from the order's inception, and one of the card-school group who got coffee and drinks delivered to a bathroom in (I think) the Bull Hotel in Peterborough. At the same time, he was quiet and friendly, and helpful when help was needed. A fan's fan. He will be missed by many con-goers.'

WALT WILLIS (1919-1999) died from a heart attack in mid-October after more than a year in hospital. He was 79, and would have reached 80 on 30 October. [GS] Walt was probably the most influential fan writer of all time, one of those who established fanzine prose as something that could be excellent in itself, not just some despised stepping stone to prodrom. His publications are fan legends: the painfully hand-typeset *Slant* ('My grandfather was a printer and I simply reverted to type'), produced with James White 1948-53; the classic *Hyphen* (1952-65; revived 1987), edited with Chuck Harris and others, a 1957 and 1959 fanzine Hugo finalist; fandom's own home-grown sense-of-wonder myth *The Enchanted Duplicator* (1954), with Bob Shaw; many instalments of his wandering fanzine column 'The Harp that Once or Twice'; exhaustive, comic and wise US trip diaries that set the pattern for TAFF reports (while TAFF itself grew from fandom's huge effort to bring the acclaimed Willis to America); the assembly of most of this writing in Richard Bergeron's monumental 614-page hardback fanzine *Warhoon 28*.... As Greg Pickersgill and others have remarked, Walt well knew and appreciated how much he was loved by fandom—a late accolade being his Fan Guest of Honour role at Magicon, the 1992 Worldcon. Nothing can take that away, and the writing remains with us. Find it and read it. Those wishing to make a donation in Walt's memory might like to follow Geri Sullivan's example and give to TAFF.

Atom's cover for *Hyphen 37*—celebrating 40 years of Irish Fandom in 1987—showed Madeleine Willis, Chuck Harris, James White, Bob Shaw, Walt Willis, Vince Clarke and Atom himself. Now they're all gone except Madeleine, who's still in care owing to the long stress of Walt's illness. Farewell to the Wheels of IF: it truly is the end of an era.

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