

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 Steffan. Cartoon: Joe Mayhew. RIP. Available for SAE or a strategy suit with a jelly pocket.

ALIENS STOLE MY HANDBAG ... was, you had to admit, an utterly memorable convention name. Much silliness occurred. John Whitbourn and I realized we were forever branded as boring old farts as we cowered, whimpering, in the bar during the main programme's jam-packed body piercing demo. By and by, celebrated sot Tobes Valois emerged somewhat shakily to show off the dressing over his newly transfixed nipple. 'Don't ever ever ever ever ever have that done to you,' he encouragingly advised. • In the traditional fannish Family Fortunes survey, the #1 answer to 'Name a book by Robert Rankin' (the G+H) was *The Colour of Magic*, followed by *The Antipope*, *Gormenghast* and 'Robert who?' It was perhaps churlish of MC Rob Newman to put such dramatic force into his comment on the 'favourite con' question: 'Incredibly, one person voted for 2Kon!!!' • Less traditional was the military convoy that set off early Sunday morning to H.G.Wells's alien landing site near Woking, led by R.Rankin in a fetching generalissimo uniform. Alas, this macho show of force somehow shrank to one bone-rattling lorry with a few ordinary cars trailing embarrassedly behind, and—having neglected to ask permission for their loud rocket bombardment—the con's chief handbaggers James Bacon and Stefan Lancaster came excitingly close to being arrested. • My failure to inspect pictures shown on a laptop in Liam Proven's Anal Probe Panel was reportedly a wise move. 'Even Whitley Strieber would have blanched,' they said. • I was in the bar missing all the wild tattooed pierced disco sex, and don't remember any more. Except the con name. Definitely memorable.

Groaning Hinges of the World

Stephen Goldin, with courageous timing, has set up a website in the late Marion Zimmer Bradley's name which seeks to implicate her in claimed child abuse of Goldin's stepson by her ex-husband, convicted paedophile Walter Breen (died 1993). If you unwarily select this site's harmless-seeming 'Tell a friend' option it generates e-mail, apparently written by yourself, with the subject line 'Marion Zimmer Bradley and Child Sexual Abuse' and text 'Hi, this is [your name here]. I found this site that talks about Marion Zimmer Bradley's involvement with child molestation, and I felt you should see it.' Rather a dirty trick, eh what?

Harry Harrison gloats that after sixteen years in the toils of being optioned, a Stainless Steel Rat movie deal is on, with Jan de Bonta directing for Fox. More astonishing to sf fans is the *Variety* news story's remark that Harry is a 'reclusive author'. Maybe *Variety* just assumes that anyone 'best known for *Soylent Green*' must prefer to be reclusive.

Ken MacLeod on the plokta.con auction: 'Guy Dawson paid £45 for the privilege of giving his name to a political or religious faction in one of my novels. The Dawson Heresy, an effigy of whose gruesomely-martyred founder and prophet is still ceremonially burned every winter on a certain imaginary planet, may well have been born right there.'

Terry Pratchett reacts to e-mailed claims that the new Harry P*tter novel features a magic book called the Octavo: 'Mwhahahaha ...'

J.K.Rowling, as the whole world knows by now, received an OBE in the Queen's birthday honours last month. (Also honoured was Josette Simon of Shakespearean thespian fame and *Blake's Seven* infamy.)

Geoff Ryman enlivened a conference at King's College, London, with a talk on UK government web strategies—given on his knees, since he was too tall and got in the way of the projector. His non-PC remark: 'I've always wondered what it was like to be Robin Cook.' [KB]

Cone-Gamba

14 Jul - 11 Aug, **SF/Fantasy Art Exhibition**, Foyles, Charing Cross Rd. 10:30-17:30 except Sundays. Info 0207 440 3249 (office hours).

14-16 Jul • **Crime Scene 2000** film/book festival, NFT, London. £50 full pass or £19.50/day, plus screening charges. 020 7928 3232.

28-30 Jul • **Clarecraft Event**, Warren Farm, Wetherden, Suffolk, replacing the cancelled 3rd Discworld con (same weekend). GoH: usual suspects. £5 reg, in advance only. Contact The Collectors' Guild, Unit 1a, Woolpit Business Park, Woolpit, Suffolk, IP30 9UP. 01359 244462.

2-6 Aug • **Tricity** (combining Eurocon, Polcon and Baltcon),

Gdynia, Gdansk, Sopot, Poland. Currently £20 reg; £23 at the door. Contact (Europe) Gdanski Klub Fantastyki, PO Box 76, 80-325 Gdansk 37, Poland; (USA) L.Oszko, 6176 Edsall Rd #73, Alexandria, VA 22304; (UK) B.Wilkinson, c/o 15 Manor Dr, Southgate, London, N14 5JH.

12-13 Aug • **Caption 2000** (small-press comics), Oxford Union. £8 reg (£5 students/unwaged), £10 at door. Contact 71 Hugh Allen Crescent, Marston, Oxford, OX3 0HL. Fax 0870 174 0622.

18-20 Aug • **Lexicon** (Unicon 2000), Exeter College, Oxford. GoH Philip Pullman. £28 reg, £15 student/unwaged, £18/day. Single rooms £29.38; booking deadline extended from 15 Jun to mid- or late Jul. Contact 18 Letchworth Ave, Bedfont, Middlesex, TW14 9RY.

8-10 Sep • **Fantasycon 24**, Britannia Hotel, Birmingham. £50 reg (BFS members £40); £55 from 1 Aug; £30/day at door. Rooms £30 pppn. Contact (SAE) Beech House, Chapel Lane, Moulton, CW9 8PQ.

9 Sep • **Clacton Sci-fi Convention**, Princes Theatre, Clacton. Dave Prowse event. Tickets £5 in advance, £6 at door. 01255 253220.

21-22 Oct • **Octocon 2000**, Royal Dublin Hotel, O'Connell St, Dublin 1. GoH Michael Marshall Smith. Current rates £20(!) adult or £16(!) junior to 42 Capel Court, Dublin 1, Ireland; sterling £17 or £14 to Dave Lally No. 2 A/C, 64 Richborne Tce, London, SW8 1AX.

27-9 Oct 00 • **Bats 2000** (multimedia/horror/sf), Radisson Edwardian Hotel, Heathrow. Now £50 reg or £30/day; under-18s £35 or £25/day. Contact (SAE) 47 Bennetts Court, Bristol, BS37 4XH.

10-12 Nov • **ArmadaCon 2000**, Copthorne Hotel, Plymouth. GoH Michael 'Ubiquitous' Sheard, Robert Llewellyn, more. £27 reg; concessions and day rates available. Contact 165 Eggbuckland Rd, Higher Compton, Plymouth, PL3 6QB. Phone 01752 257635.

Rumblings • ConStructure, the UK conrunning convention planned for July 2001, has been put on hold until (probably) 2003.

Infinitely Improbable

Publishers and Sinners. E-publishing and print-on-demand outfits proliferate. Thumbs up to Fictionwise.com, offering actual advances for e-book reissues of shorts by established sf authors, including me. Narrowed eyes for Richard Curtis's E-reads.com (see A150), supposedly launching months ago with a huge fiction list but now showing only 'This site is in test' where there used to be a catalogue of e-books by Bear, Ellison and others. John Betancourt's Wildside Press aims to have 1,000 p-o-d titles available by 2001. • **Ian Watson** shows his mastery of the third person: 'After learning that among the top 5 most-sought-for books on at least one Internet search service are his Warhammer 40,000 novels *Harlequin* and *Chaos Child*, Ian Watson was still slightly gobsmacked to receive yet another desperate e-mail enquiry among the steady stream from America, England, Germany, Denmark etc, this time offering fifty quid each, ten times the cover price, for copies of the paperback editions. After a few seconds' hesitation, he accepted. Games Workshop stoutly declare no intention of reprinting because they "are concentrating on their up and coming NEW novels." Terms like 'dumbing down' and 'aiming for children only' must be sternly avoided.

Topg's Critical Masterclass. The punch of a mind light years swifter than most requires space in which to expand and express the starbursts of ideas ...' (Anne Born reviewing poetry, *Acumen*, May 2000) [SS] • 'As an asteroid (a kind of giant starship) flies through the stars ...' (*Publishers' Weekly* on Poul Anderson's *Tales of the Flying Mountains*)

R.I.P. **David R.Bunch** (1925-2000), sf author best known for his vivid, quirky 'Moderan' cyborg fables, died of a heart attack in early June. • **Ray Gibberd** of Andromeda Bookshop, who had undergone two operations during a long struggle with brain tumours, died on 28 May. Funds raised by fandom for his chemotherapy (see A154) will now go to cancer charities and the hospice that looked after him to the end. • **Joe Mayhew** (1942-2000), artist, author and long-time fan famed for deft, witty fanzine cartoons, died on 10 June from Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease after a month's hospitalization. He was 57. Joe's cartoons appeared in *Asimov's* and *Analog* besides countless fanzines including *Ansible*; he received the 1997 Fan Artist Hugo and was a mainstay of

the Washington SF Association. He will be very much missed. There was a substantial fan presence at the well-attended funeral on 17 June.

Sidewise Awards shortlist for alternate-history sf: LONG Brendan DuBois, *Resurrection Day*. (Yes, just one nominee; the judges could still choose No Award.) SHORT Alain Bergeron, 'The Eighth Register' (*North-ern Suns*); Jan Lars Jensen, 'Secret History of the Ornithopter', (*F&SF* 6/99), Robert Silverberg, 'Getting to Know the Dragon' (*Far Horizons*) and 'A Hero of the Empire' (*F&SF* 10/99). SPECIAL/LIFE Randall Garrett.

Random Fandom. John Bangsund's 1 July flat-warming party fell through when the great man was rushed to hospital on 30 June and operated on for a strangulated hernia. All went well; he was discharged after a few days and is recovering at home. [SY] • Bob Devney found a Quote of the Month from William Gibson, now doing ads for Anderson Consulting: 'The future is here already. It's just unevenly distributed.' • Anthony Hilbert on A155 coverage of his arrest: 'It's even worse than you gathered. In the first place, the raid was carried out under the aegis of the Child Protection Unit, thus confirming the long established rule that anyone whose sexuality is not 100% standard is *ipso facto* a menace to the kiddies. (To their chagrin and dismay, their doctors found my son to be in extremely good physical and mental health, but they still threatened to charge me with emotional abuse of him on the grounds that I have a poster of a bare-breasted woman in my office.) In the second place, it became clear when they finally got around to questioning me that what had caused them to call Battle Stations was the mention, on the same page as the passage that gave them a pretext to arrest me, that I am a Pagan. [...] I wasn't actually charged with anything in the end, and my solicitor says he will be amazed if it comes to court, but of course they don't have to charge me with anything to punish me: quite apart from a day in solitary, I have lost both my computers, all my disk files—personal, business, and a couple of novels I've been writing on and off for years—and half my toys, and with a little creative form-filling they can hang on to them indefinitely.' • Caroline Mullan & Brian Ameringen announce the birth of Meriol Jessie van Ameringen on 23 June. 'We are all well, though (because?) she hasn't made a pun yet....' • Mike 'Simo' Simpson is 'now editing the daily news on the SFX website so all Ansible readers are invited to send me juicy rumours, interesting scoops or flagrant self-promotion. Literary news especially appreciated.' 405 Saffron Lane, Leicester, LE2 6UF. • Martin Morse Wooster brags that his Australian craft breweries article in *All About Beer* (July) makes him the only fan to have financed his trip to Aussiecon 3 'by getting paid to drink free beer.'

Potterism. I think we may say that Harry Potter fever is getting out of hand when the *Washington Post* devotes 39 column inches, including two pictures, to the astonishing story that some kid managed to buy this year's manifestation before the release date. [MMW] But even respectable journals like *Ansible* can succumb.... • Nancy Stouffer's plagiarism charges, including a claim to have invented the term Muggles, conflict somewhat with the *Oxford English Dictionary*—which lists 'muggle' as 1205 Kentish dialect for 'tail' and, better still, 20th-century slang for marihuana. Children's Author In Covert Drugs Advocacy Scandal! Louis Armstrong cut a 1926 record called *Muggles*, and Raymond Chandler's 1949 *The Little Sister* refers to muggle-smoking (doubtless the next outrage to be committed by J.K. Rowling's bad guys). • Yvonne Rousseau's textual analysis suggests a case of child impersonation: 'if Harry Potter inhabits our world and continues to survive, he celebrates his 20th birthday on 31 July 2000 (the day is fixed by the newspaper report of the attempted robbery of Gringotts Wizarding Bank on Harry's eleventh birthday; the year of birth, 1980, is known because Sir Nicholas de Mimsy-Porpington died on 31 October 1492 and celebrated his 500th deathday in the year Harry turned twelve).' Coo er gosh.

Gaylactic Spectrum Awards shortlist: NOVEL *The Annunciate* by Severna Park, *The Granite Shield* by Fiona Patton, *The Gumshoe*, *The Witch & The Virtual Corpse* by Keith Hartman, *The Quartered Sea* by Tanya Huff, *Traitor's Moon* by Lynn Flewelling, *The Wild Swans* by Peg Kerr. SHORT 'Chanoyu' by Esther Friesner (*Asimov's* 3/99), 'Dapple' by Eleanor Arnason (*Asimov's* 9/99), 'The Thorn Boy' by Storm Constantine. OTHER *Being John Malkovich* (film), *South Park: Bigger, Longer, Uncut* (film), *Supergirl #39—On Ice* (comic). Presentation in October.

Outraged Letters. Brian Aldiss nitpicks: 'What's this? You do report that I became a Grand Master in New York, yet fail to mention that after the ceremony I danced with Alice Turner.' • Josh Kirby bewails: 'Calamity piled on Calamity ... the gods have twisted the screw that bit more ... The last twist of the screw I guess is always the worst ... This is just a cry from the black hole of despond ...' In short, his cover portrait of Mr Discworld on the SF Foundation's *Terry Pratchett*:

Guilty of Literature was printed mirror-reversed, a thing that Josh cannot be doing with. (Terry: 'I occasionally prod the *Guilty of Literature?* tome. I just don't think it's going to be healthy for me to read it.') • Tony Lewis mentions that NESFA Press startled Hal Clement when preparing an omnibus of his Mesklin stories (introduction by one D. Langford, plug plug): 'We asked Harry whether we should use the *Astounding* or the Ballantine text. "You mean they're different!" After reading a sample chapter with differences marked, he opted for the book version.' • Tanaqui Weaver reports with relief that *Cryptonomicon's* mass-market UK paperback fixes that much-treasured Thog line about 'factoring large prime numbers', by substituting 'composite'. Meanwhile, a little bit of synchronicity from knowledgeable Bill Gates's seminal sf work *The Road Ahead*: 'The obvious mathematical breakthrough would be development of an easy way to factor large prime numbers.'

Mythopoeic Awards fantasy novel shortlist: ADULT *Elementals* by A.S. Byatt, *Tamsin* by Peter S. Beagle, *Dark Cities Underground* by Lisa Goldstein, *The Wild Swans* by Peg Kerr, *The Book of Knights* by Yves Meynard. CHILDREN'S *Skellig* by David Almond, *The Folk Keeper* by Franny Billingsley, *The Circle of Magic* series by Tamora Pierce, *Harry Potter and the Publicist of Azkaban* by whatsername, *Kingdom* series by Cynthia Voigt. [SFC] Oddly, half the Inklings Scholarship shortlist is fiction by Tolkien himself, nominated for its latest editors' efforts.

C.O.A. *Brum Group News* is again being edited by Martin Tudor, 24 Ravensbourne Grove, Willenhall, WV13 1HX. *William Breiding*, 150 Grattan St #4, San Francisco, CA 94117-4238, USA. *Debbi Kerr*, 365 Upper Town St, Bramley, Leeds, LS13 3JX. *Phil Nicholls*, 70 Stanborough Close, Hampton, Middlesex, TW12 3YQ.

Froth and Bubble. SF author Pat Murphy, wearing her other hat as publications director at the San Francisco Exploratorium, was able to make the solemn public statement: 'There's no way you could injure yourself with a bubble bomb.' This bit of fun for the kiddies (vinegar and baking soda in a plastic bag—*whoosh!*) is believed to be why the Exploratorium website 'has been ruled off limits to soldiers at Peterson Air Force Base near Colorado Springs.' (*San José Mercury News*) [DB]

Bram Stoker Awards for horror: NOVEL *Mr.X* by Peter Straub, FIRST NOVEL *Wither* by J.G. Passarella, LONG FICTION (tie) 'Five Days in April' by Brian A. Hopkins and 'Mad Dog Summer' by Joe R. Lansdale, SHORT FICTION 'Aftershock' by F. Paul Wilson, COLLECTION *The Nightmare Chronicles* by Douglas Clegg, ANTHOLOGY 999 ed. Al Sarrantonio, NON-FICTION *DarkEcho*, ILLUSTRATED *Sandman: The Dream Hunters* by Neil Gaiman, SCREENPLAY *Sixth Sense* by M. Night Shyamalan, YOUNG READERS *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Hype* by oh God it's her again, OTHER MEDIA *I Have No Mouth and I Must Scream* (audio) by Harlan Ellison, SPECIALTY PRESS Ash-Tree Press—Christopher & Barbara Roden. [D]

20 Years Ago. *Ansible's* editor escaped regular employment and was welcomed to the freelance life by his then agent Maggie Noach: 'The book trade is in the worst depression it has known for a great many years....' (*Ansible* 11, 1980) Some things never change, do they?

Group Gropes. *The Black Lodge*, Birmingham's horror/dark fantasy pub meet, is now at the Hoghead, Newhall St, 8:30+, 1st Tue monthly.

Thog's Masterclass. *Dept of Suggestive Motor Launches.* 'Discords of remote activity rose above the more intimate throbbing of our screw.' (Sax Rohmer, *The Mystery of Dr Fu Manchu*, 1913) [HF] • *Dept of Scientific Method.* 'For one, Hackett found a way to find a way to discover how the broadcast-power receivers worked.' (Murray Leinster, *The Greks Bring Gifts*, 1964) [SHS] • *Dept of Eyestrain.* 'Her black eyes snapped angrily.' (Carolyn G. Hart, *Summer Ghost*, 1992) [JG] • *Dept of Non-Fiction.* 'Quotation marks of worry cleaved the aging man's forehead.' (Dan Baum, *Citizen Coors*, 2000) 'Which illuminates again the nerd underbelly that is an inclination towards the human-transcending and the synthetic-universe preferring.' (Paulina Borsook, *Cyberselfish*, 2000) [MMW] • 'Sodium is what stars are made of.' (Adam Roberts, *Salt*, 2000) • 'In a cloth sling she carried a crimson torus that leaked gore like a wounded sausage.' (David Brin, *Heaven's Reach*, 1998) [PN] • *Dept of Seeing the Funny Side* (after an arrow in the eyeball): 'He clapped a hand over the puckered socket, and tossed the gore-tipped shaft aside. The deflated eye still clung to it like a rotted vegetable on a shish kebab skewer. Humorous fluid dripped down his cheek ...' (Kevin B. Eastman & Stan Timmons, *FAKK2*, 1999)

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