

# Ansible



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**H'MM.** *Ansible* has failed to ask either David Pringle or the estate of William Burroughs to comment on the 21 June Internet-Draft entitled 'The Interzone Routing Protocol (IERP) for Ad Hoc Networks'. [LW]

## The Fish-Frying Academy

Douglas Adams's death led to 'a rather nasty affair' reported by *Simo*: 'The *Sunday Times* ran an article by its Media Editor, Nicholas Hellen, asserting that Adams had only written eight pages of *The Salmon of Doubt*, his final novel, in the nine years since it was commissioned, and that his widow might have to pay back the £2 million advance. Little facts like *TSOD* not having been commissioned nine years ago, and there being no £2 million advance, were ignored in an article without a single attributed quote and which could charitably be described as "poorly researched". I e-mailed NH (cc to Ed Victor Ltd, Adams' agents) pointing out his errors, and was threatened with possible legal action if I didn't retract. However, I swiftly discovered that Ed Victor had also written, as had DNA's ex-colleague Richard Harris. NH has now gone strangely quiet. I can boast a legal threat from a major newspaper....'

**Iain M.Banks** scaled new heights of product placement when his *Excession* was read aloud in the *Big Brother* TV household. Moreover, the reader (since evicted) didn't get bored for a whole ten minutes. [GW]

**Arthur C.Clarke**, phoning the US National Air & Space Museum's annual Wernher von Braun Lecture event, said he's now (somehow) working with a Slovakian crew that uses a Russian 'vomit comet' plane for zero-g ballet performances lasting just 30 seconds, 'as long as a ballet should be.' A US space activist group had offered to raise money to send Clarke to the International Space Station, but Sir Arf declined since 'these days, I'm barely able to get to the Colombo airport.' [MMW]

**Diana Wynne Jones** denies—'not roundly, but with Spikes. And grace notes, most of them obscene'—that she has any intention whatever of writing, now or ever, anything even slightly resembling an eighth Narnia book, no matter what it may say in *The Independent*. The fuss about HarperCollins/Lewis Estate plans for de-Christianized Narnia spinoffs began with a leaked HC memo: 'We'll need to be able to give emphatic assurances that no attempt will be made to correlate the stories to Christian imagery/theology.' *Private Eye* (15 June) gleefully revealed that C.S.Lewis's stepson and executor Douglas Gresham wrote very firmly in 1998: 'The policy [of the Lewis estate] is that no sequels or new Narnian chronicle stories will be permitted to be published. There are many reasons for this, but the most important is that Jack [Lewis] himself told me that there should be no more of them. [...] He said that all that should be said about Narnia had been said and there was an end of it.' Presumably a secret codicil to Lewis's will overrides these wishes should huge enough pots of money become involved.

**Christopher Lee** became a CBE (Commander of the British Empire) in the Queen's Birthday Honours last month, and the *Guardian* helpfully added: 'Lee, 79, is in the forthcoming film of C.S.Lewis' trilogy, *Lord of the Rings*.' [HP] Also, it's now Gerry Anderson MBE.

**J.R.R.Tolkien** has at last been recognized in Oxford as famous for something or other: a blue plaque is to mark his former (1930-1947) house at 20 Northmoor Rd, courtesy of the Oxford Blue Plaques Board.

## Contadino

6-8 Jul • **Nexus 2001** (*media*), Jarvis International Hotel, Bristol. £51 full, £45 Fri+Sat, £46 Sat+Sun, £30 Fri, £32 Sat, £31 Sun.

14-15 Jul • **Finncon-Baltcon '01**, Jyväskylä University main building, Jyväskylä, Finland. With Jonathan Carroll and (the subtle key to sneaking an overseas con into *Ansible*) me. Admission fees for masquerade/party and AI seminar/Stelarc performance, otherwise free.

16 Jul • **Reading with La Diva Loca**, Borders Books (2nd floor), Oxford St, London. From 6:30pm. Pat Cadigan-hosted sf reading and discussion group, to be held thereafter on the 2nd Mon each month.

20-22 Jul • **RococoCon** (role-playing games), New Hall, Cambridge. GoH Robin D.Laws, Phil Masters. £20 reg; B&B £43/night single, £64/night twin. Contact 19 Uphall Rd, Cambridge, CB1 3HX.

21 Jul • **Constantinople**, informal one-day sf gathering, Duke of Wellington pub, Bugle St, Southampton. Noon to 6pm. *No charge*.

25 Jul • **BSFA Open Meeting**, The Rising Sun pub, Cloth Fair, London EC1. 7pm on, fans present from 5pm.

28 Jul • **UK 2005 Worldcon Bid Open Meeting**, City Inn, Glasgow. 2pm onward, with SECC site visit and late party. Rooms £51/double (no breakfast); mention bid when booking. Those interested should contact [uk2005@hotmail.com](mailto:uk2005@hotmail.com) 'so we have an idea of numbers.'

11-27 Aug • **Edinburgh International Book Festival**, Charlotte Square Gdns, Edinburgh, including sf/fantasy events. *11th*: Brian Aldiss & Helen Lederer 10am, Simon Clark noon, Stephen Baxter & Aldiss 3.30pm, John Clute & China Miéville 7pm. *12th*: Rob Grant noon, Iain M Banks & Ken MacLeod 3.30pm, Doris Lessing & Aldiss 5pm, sf quiz 8pm. *14th*: Terry Pratchett 5pm. *18th*: Ricardo Pinto 11.30am, Alastair Reynolds & Paul McAuley 1.45pm. Box office 0131 624 5050.

1-4 Jun 02 • **plokta.con 2.0**, venue and guest(s) TBA. £25 reg. Cheques to *Plokta* at the usual (Walthamstow) address, which the Cabal doesn't want published in nasty web-archived fanzines like *Ansible*.

## Infinitely Improbable

**As Others See Us.** At last, respect! The *Financial Times* magazine (2 June) explained creative brainstorming: 'Don't be a snob. Bring in someone who knows how to build things. Invite a customer service rep with field experience. Find someone who reads science fiction ...' [RJ]

**Slaves of Publishing.** The July *SF Chronicle* report about Palm Inc acquiring e-publisher Peanutpress.com contains the chilling line: 'The sale includes all 17 peanutpress.com employees ...' [KM]

**R.I.P. Tove Jansson** (1914-2001), Finnish author and illustrator best known for the Moomin children's fantasies, died on 27 June aged 86. [JA] Her stories, written in Swedish, were much loved in English translation; their sunny, whimsical humour contrasted with Carrollian touches of threatening nonsense and inexplicable creatures. • **David Potter** (1947-2001), knowledgeable and opinionated US sf fan who posted copiously on Usenet as Gharlane of Eddore, died of a heart attack (apparently in his sleep) on 10 June. E.E.Smith himself had approved his use of that pseudonym from the *Lensman* books.

**Digital Threadfall.** Anne McCaffrey is deeply embarrassed that the dread W95/Magistr virus infected her computer and e-mailed a variety of dodgy .EXE files to people in her address book, including Terry Pratchett and even myself. Decontamination was under way on 1 July. Beware of mysterious attachments even from the great and good of sf....

**Outraged Letters.** *Jon Cowie* ponders the selling power of blurb copy on a *Dr Who* book given away with *SFX* (June): 'Jo Grant had no inkling of the ship that revolved in orbit like a discreet, preposterous thought in the mind of someone serene but bonkers.' • **Todd Mason** remembers: 'In 1994, I met Douglas Adams in the bookstore in which I then worked, and in the process of hellos, I asked him if he'd read John Sladek. Answering in the negative, he asked what Sladek wrote. "Humorous sf and snal humor, mostly," I responded insufficiently. "Ah, that's precisely the kind of thing I avoid reading," he responded.' • **Andy Sawyer** provides all the UK General Election coverage we need: 'Clarke-award winning China Miéville kept the flag flying as Socialist Alliance candidate for the safe Labour seat of Regent's Park and Kensington North constituency, London, and got 459 votes (1.2% of the vote), beating the UK Independence Party.' • **Jane Yolen** broods on eternal verities: 'I lost the *American Book Seller's* BookSense Award to a book about a pig, and will undoubtedly lose the Mythopoeic Award to something equally risible. But all the awards I have won over the years sit on the shelf and stare at me dolefully, murmuring "Dust me, dust me." Why can't I earn Big Money Awards? I would dust those!'

**Small Press.** Molly Brown was dismayed when, the very day that copies of her collection *Bad Timing* reached her, Amazon.co.uk told all the eager purchasers that their orders were cancelled. Amazon claimed to have checked with the publisher and confirmed the book was 'no longer available'—a surprise for Ben Jeapes of Big Engine, who was not

contacted. Informants suspect another cock-up by the distributors Ingrams, whose Lightning Source print-on-demand service has delayed several Big Engine titles thanks to, in Ben's words, 'their penchant for repeatedly printing the book the wrong size, which they did very energetically.' Spies tell us that Lightning Source problems are a major pain for other publishers like Richard Curtis's E-Reads. Meanwhile, Molly plaintively insists: 'My book is actually available. (It's just that you have to pass a special initiation test first, by stubbornly refusing to accept Amazon.co.uk's cancellation of your order. Remember, it's a test!)

**Random Fandom.** Tony Alleyne, a Star Trek fan, got into national UK newspapers for spending £8,000 on decorating his flat as the USS *Enterprise*, with porthole windows, command console, transporter-like vertical lighting and a ceiling that 'looks as if you're peering out into space.' Perhaps the most macabre aspect, for fan insiders, is that he lives in Hinckley.... [JW] • Chris Bell was startled by a visiting lecturer who 'handed out rough paper for us to write our names on large so she would know what to call us. Being Eng Lit students to the core, we all turned over these bits of rough paper to see what was on the other side, and discovered that it was page 350 *et seq* of a novel called *Stalking Tender Prey* by one Storm Constantine, typescript A4. One girl started to collect them at the end of the first lecture.... As a result, at least three people decided to buy it just to find out what on earth (or wherever else) was going on.' • Nic Farey bragged at Corflu about his scarifying 8-day sentence for drunken driving: 'I'm the fucker in the room who's done the most time. Unless Ted White is here.' [BD] • Mark Plummer reports a magic moment in June: 'The BSFA committee piled out into the Billingers' back garden to witness the passage of the International Space Station. See how we confidently discard those old clichés about BSFA organizational ability: true, the view was more than a little obscured by trees and Paul Hood managed to tread in the cats' drinking water, but we were at least fully equipped—thanks to Tony Cullen and the Internet—with a detailed chart giving comprehensive information about angles of elevation and optimum visibility times for this skiffy-esque marvel. And we had only been staring at an empty sky for about ten minutes before Tony thought to double-check those times and noticed the significant letters "GMT"....' Keep watching the skies.

**C.o.A.** Victor Gonzalez, 263 Elm St, Cambridge, MA 02139, USA. Dave & Vicky Locke, 2933 Colonial Ridge Court, Cincinnati, Ohio 45212-1903, USA. Neal Tringham, 224 Barns Rd, Oxford, OX4 3RQ. Steven H Silver, 707 Sapling Lane, Deerfield, IL 60015-3969, USA.

**2001: A Celebration of British SF.** Maureen Kincaid Speller was there: 'Gosh, it's Liverpool and we're not at the Adelphi. With its eye-watering 1970s decor and the occasional lack of door knobs on which to hang one's Do Not Disturb notice, the Gladstone Hotel tried to make up for this, but failed because the staff were cheerful and far more helpful than we've come to expect. The University of Liverpool's Foresight Centre was even more welcoming, with excellent conference facilities and seemingly inexhaustible refreshments. • Billed as a celebration of British SF, the conference proved to be just that with around a hundred authors, critics and fans gathering to listen to papers and participate in discussions, while the intervals were filled with more conversation and a staggering amount of cross-pollination of ideas, all of which of course carried on in the bar in the evenings. More than one academic was heard to remark that this was unlike any other academic conference in their experience, while for me it was like a high-octane version of Wiscon or Podatch. • High points? There are so many ... I'll note the incredible enthusiasm about British SF old and new, with papers on everyone from John Wyndham to Ken MacLeod and Gwyneth Jones, and touching all decades in between. Low points were few, though the memory alights briefly on Friday night problems when exhausted delegates, expecting to eat around 7:30pm, found that they were in for a long wait since one of the guests was also exhausted and wanted to give her after-dinner speech first. There was no amplification for the ensuing lesbian polemic from Nicola Griffith, who spoke very quietly and did not argue her case with any reference to the last fifteen-twenty years in sf. Stephen Baxter got to his feet immediately afterwards and began his speech, an entertaining presentation about some murky connection between Liverpool Football Club and science fiction; it seemed that all three guests were going to speak first and take questions too. Brian Aldiss's noble offer to speak after dinner was thus particularly welcomed. This was possibly as well since his speech began with a slide in which, as Brian explained, a woman was about to undergo a hysterectomy. "Next slide, please," he said, leaving us all wondering what on earth we would see next (actually it wasn't that bad). • All in all, it was an excellent conference, and I know I'm not

the only one to come away with a mass of ideas fermenting, waiting to be explored. The organizers are warmly congratulated.' [MKS] • John Clute concurs, and adds: 'I did a keynote address choked full, natch, of the most astonishing pith. I pithed all over everybody.'

**Tiptree Leftovers.** Oops: a thank-you from the Tiptree Award mob for mid-90s UK sales of their fundraising cookbooks *The Bakery Men Don't See* and *Her Smoke Rose Up From Supper* reminded me that I have a few left. Nicely produced, comb-bound with card wraps, full of recipes from sf notables like Ursula Le Guin, and still only £8 each—post free.

**Twenty Years Ago.** Citizens of Clute, Texas, voted not to change the town's name despite local worries that 'It's a single syllable word and it seems to have some sort of evil connotations to it' and 'Maybe "Clute" just sounds backward.' Joseph Nicholas wrote: 'My GUFF report should (assuming nothing goes wrong) be published within the next couple of months ...' Karl Hansen's *War Games* (1980) offered a **Chog Romance Moment**: 'Even through two layers of combat armor, I felt her nipples brush against my back ...' (all *Ansible* 19, July 1981)

**New Worlds Alpha and Omega.** Brian Aldiss: 'Could you spare a little space in your comic to mention the death of Prof. Kathleen Tillotson? She died on 3rd June, well into her nineties. • In a campaign to obtain a subsidy from the British Arts Council for Mike Moorcock's revamped *New Worlds*, I rounded up the usual suspects; Robert Conquest, Edmund Crispin, Kingsley Amis, and Angus Wilson. I also approached the celebrated academic, Prof. Tillotson. I had read her splendid book of criticism, *Novels of the Eighteen-Forties*. You might think that such a lady would be a bit stuffy about a popular magazine which had no critical standing at the time. Not a bit of it! She heartily supported us, and wrote to Lord Goodman on our behalf. "How much do you want?" he asked. And we were there. Thanks, I have always thought, in large part to Kathleen Tillotson. The rest—and you can quote me—is literary history!' • Mike Moorcock: 'Just a point of pride. The Arts Council didn't discontinue its [*New Worlds*] grant by its own volition. I told it that since we were going into paperback we didn't need it any more. Also, since we were often in profit before the W.H. Smith attack (and it was an aggressive decision to accept the boxes and then not distribute them, which was their sneaky way of backing off from the bad publicity they were getting—in those days newspapers reported what happened to *New Worlds* ...) I had asked the AC how to give them the money back we didn't use. They were totally baffled. They didn't have any machinery for taking money in.'

**HOMer Awards** (voted by CompuServe sf/fantasy forums) novel shortlist: Robert Sawyer, *Calculating God*; David Gerrold, *Jumping Off the Planet*; Ken MacLeod, *The Sky Road*. And gorbliney, the short story nominations include 'Different Kinds of Darkness' by D.Langford. [GVG]

**Fanfundery.** DUFF: NA administration now handed over to Patrick Molloy & Naomi Fisher, PO Box 9135, Huntsville, AL 35812-0135, USA.

• GUFF means to raise its profile by running annual races. Nominations are now open for the next Europe-to-Australasia race. Candidates need to post a £10 bond, provide a 100-word platform, and find 3 European and 2 antipodean nominators: paperwork by 30 Sep to Paul Kincaid, 60 Bournemouth Rd, Folkestone, Kent, CT19 5AZ. Voting will close after Easter '02. • YMFF: there's a one-off fund to bring Vladivostok fan Prof. Yuri Mironets of Far Eastern University to the 2001 Philadelphia worldcon. Donations to Catherine Mintz, 1810 South Rittenhouse Sq, 1708 Philadelphia, PA 19109-5837, USA; sterling c/o Dave Langford.

**Chog's Masterclass.** Dept of Neat Tricks. 'Kothar leaped, leaving his booted feet and diving a yard above the floor ...' (Gardner F.Fox, *Kothar—Barbarian Swordsman*, 1969) [BA] • Dept of Vegetable Love. 'He did not resist the temptation. He mounted that big old tree with primitive joy.' (Piers Anthony, *Split Infinity*, 1980) • Dept of Eyeballs in the Sky. 'Trying to pull the chiefs' eyeballs down onto himself rather than onto each other, Tiny Acorn danced ...' (Dominic Green, 'Grass', *Interzone* 168, June 2001) [RJ] • Dept of the Pathetic Fallacy. 'We join the terminally-ill protagonist as he sets out across inhospitable, empty vastnesses covered in scabby, suppurating sores ...' (Peter Crowther introducing Tim Lebbon, *Faith in the Flesh*, 1998) [DH] • Dept of Magical Metaphor. 'The all-over narrative is stuffed with nasty sweetmeats of ugly behavior that eventually turn on a dime and are leavened by a redeeming sprinkle of grace notes.' (Edward Bryant, *Locus* 6/01) [MMW]

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