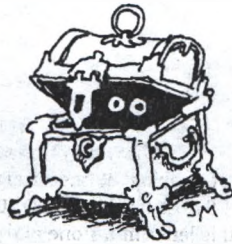


Ansible



Ansible 195 October 2003

From Dave Langford, 94 London Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 5AU. Net: ansible@cix.co.uk, www.ansible.co.uk. ISSN 0265-9816. Logo: Dan Steffan. Cartoon: Joe Mayhew. Available for SAE, xylph senses or raultronic transmitters.

Clarke Horror! A spectre is haunting the Arthur C. Clarke Award, the spectre of cashflow.... Its presentation budget has been cut to the bone by Rocket Publishing. Henceforth there will be no money for parties or hire of facilities—only Sir Arthur's personal £2000-odd for the prize itself. ACCA administrator Paul Kincaid writes: 'Rocket Publishing is the UK representative of Sir Arthur, and has provided all funding for the Award since its inception. I understand that this funding cut is part of wider cutbacks at Rocket Publishing. This news has come out of the blue. I have had no warning that it was even on the cards. However, for the last few months I have been seeking extra funding for the Award and a number of promising options are open to us. These should ensure that the Award continues as before.' If you have any clever ideas to help the ACCA finances, do let Paul know: arthurclarkeaward@yahoo.co.uk.

Lords of the Psychon

Margaret Atwood reached the six-strong Booker Prize shortlist with her undeniably (except by her) sf novel *Oryx and Crake*. She has been nominated five times and won the 2000 prize for *The Blind Assassin*. One major firm of UK bookies listed her as favourite, with odds of 2-1.

Jack Chalker collapsed on 18 September, and hospital tests found evidence of a heart attack, perhaps not a recent one. He returned home some days later. [JS/EW] All best wishes for further recovery.

Robert Heinlein's latest memorial is the \$500,000 Heinlein Prize, to be awarded 'as frequently as annually' for 'practical accomplishments in commercial space activities'. The 29 September release from the trustees of the Robert A. and Virginia Heinlein Prize Trust stresses that 'the award is for effort by an individual—not corporate or government sponsored activities—and that the Heinlein Prize is intended to be world-wide in scope.' Are you listening at the back there, Gerry Webb?

Diana Wynne Jones, I unjustly suspected, must have been exaggerating when she reported from the Edinburgh Festival that 'the feisty photographer from SFX decided that the best and most typical pose for me was halfway down the stairs to the hotel toilets, where she had me leaning against the wall idly toying with a beer bottle. Now what gave her that idea?' Sure enough, though, SFX 110 (Nov) has a full-page pinup photo of Leading Fantasy Author, Toilet Stairs and Beer Bottle.

Stephen King won the US National Book Foundation's 2003 'Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters'. (Past recipients include Ray Bradbury.) According to King, 'This is probably the most exciting thing to happen to me in my career, I'll return the [\$10,000] cash award ... the medal I will keep and treasure for the rest of my life.' Harold Bloom was swift to imply a comparison of King with Dickens: 'He is a man who writes what used to be called penny dreadfuls. That they could believe that there is any literary value there or any aesthetic accomplishment or signs of an inventive human intelligence is simply a testimony to their own idiocy.' (NY Times, 15 Sep) [PDF] Much uproar followed. Perhaps the most restrained comment was Neil Gaiman's measured observation in his weblog: 'Harold Bloom is a twerp.'

Mary Shelley is to be commemorated by a blue English Heritage plaque on the London house where she died—an honour proposed in 1975 but resisted by the vicar who then lived there. He objected to the words 'author of *Frankenstein*', presumably for fear of crowds of peasants with torches, and felt that 'author(ess) and wife of the poet' would suffice. [IoS 14 Sep] The news that EH was going ahead with 'author of *Frankenstein*' brought renewed protest from the Reverend, arguing that the general public would be unable to work out that the honour was for the novel rather than all those horrible, tacky film versions. [21 Sep]

Contorniate

4 Oct • **NewCon2**, 'Roadmender', 1 Ladys Lane, Northampton, NN1 3AH. 11am-6pm. £8 reg (£5 students/unwaged); £9 (or £5) at door. Northampton SF Writers Group, 16 Albany Rd, Northampton, NN1 5LZ.

10-12 Oct • **Grissecon 1** (Wraeththu), Tillington Hall Hotel, Staff-ord. £60 at the door. Contact 8 Rowley Grove, Stafford, ST17 9BJ.

13 Oct • **Reading at Borders**, Oxford St, London. 6:30pm. With

Pat Cadigan, Jay Caselberg, and Graham Joyce.

16 Oct • **Skeptics in the Pub**, Old Kings Head, London Bridge, 7pm for 7:30. With Robert Newman. £2 admission; 'free' snacks.

19 Oct • **14th UK Paperback & Pulp Bookfair**, Park Plaza Hotel, 239 Vauxhall Bridge Rd, London SW1. 10am-4pm. £2.50 admission. Mass sf/fantasy/horror signing in early afternoon.

22 Oct • **BSFA Open Meeting** is CANCELLED: the Rising Sun pub is being redecorated. Work should finish before the 26 Nov meeting.

24-26 Oct • **They Came and Shaved Us** (in the vein of Aliens Stole My Handbag etc), Fairways Hotel, Dundalk, Co. Louth, Ireland. UK £35 reg, to 13a Bridge Rd, Uxbridge, Middlesex, UB8 2QW. Irish/Euro £(I)55/€55, to 123 Carnlough Rd, Cabra West, Dublin 7, Ireland.

31 Oct - 2 Nov • **ArmadaCon 15**, Copthorne Hotel, Plymouth. Now £30 reg; same at door. Day rates: Fri £5, Sat £15, Sun £10. Contact 20 Pinewood Cl, Plymton, nr Plymouth, S.Devon, PL7 2DW; 01752 342818. Plus 'Armadageddon' games event: Sat 10-4, Sun 11-4, £2/day.

31 Oct - 2 Nov • **Dracula Society 30th Anniversary**, Royal Victoria & Bull Hotel, High St, Rochester, Kent. £70 (members £60) inc lunch, dinner, masked ball. Further information 020 8749 2694.

7-9 Nov • **Novacon 33**, Quality Hotel, Walsall. £35 reg to 19 Oct, £40 at door. Contact 379 Myrtle Road, Sheffield, S2 3HQ.

21-23 Nov • **FantasyCon 2003**, Tillington Hall Hotel, Stafford. Now £60 (British Fantasy Society members £55). Contact (SAE) Beech House, Chapel Lane, Moulton, Cheshire, CW9 8PQ.

5-8 Aug 04 • **Eurocon 04**, Plovdiv, Bulgaria. Information awaited at website under construction: <http://www.bgcon.org>.

2-6 Sep 04 • **Noreascon 4** (62nd Worldcon), Boston, MA. Now \$180 reg. Unchanged: children \$105, supporting membership \$35. Contact PO Box 1010, Framingham, MA 01701, USA.

16-17 Oct 04 • **Octocon 2004** (Irish national con), Chief O'Neill's Hotel, Smithfield Village, Dublin 7. Guests TBA. €20/£15 reg until 1 November; €10/£7 supp to 'freeze' total price at €25/£20. Contact Basement Flat, 26 Longford Terrace, Monkstown, Co. Dublin, Ireland.

13-14 Nov 04 • **P-Con 2**, Ashling Hotel, Parkgate St, Dublin. Rates TBA. Contact: Yellow Brick Rd, 8 Bachelors Walk, Dublin 1, Ireland. This moved from the former 16-17 Oct when Octocon 2004 was announced.

Infinitely Improbable

Publishers and Sinners. A top-echelon reshuffle at Orion: Anthony Cheetham, Chief Executive, has been fired and replaced by Peter Roche (both were founders of Orion in 1991), while our very own Malcolm Edwards moves into the brand-new post of Deputy Chief Executive and Publisher, with full powers of high, middle and low justice to 'direct publishing policy across the group'. No alarming changes to the Victor Gollancz sf/fantasy imprint are expected. 'Business very much as usual is the message,' says VG's Jo Fletcher. • Perhaps coincidentally, the Gollancz publicist Nicola Sinclair announced soon afterwards that she would be leaving in January 2004 after choosing her own replacement.

As Others See Us. 'All the technology's based on future science fact as opposed to science fiction. We don't know the details of course, but nanotechnology should theoretically be possible, and we could potentially have something like the SoulCatcher chips. It might not be possible for 100 years, but is theoretically possible. I think it's best described as science conjecture as opposed to Science fiction.' (Publicity interview with developers of rereleased PC game *Hostile Waters*) [DD]

Small Press. *Postscripts* is a new book-format magazine edited by Peter Crowther of PS Publishing. PS editor/assistant Nick Gevers said: 'Our plan is to run a balance of SF, Fantasy, and Horror—the line-up is looking very strong—as well as high-profile guest editorials and in-depth review essays.' £5/\$8 per issue; also a limited, numbered hard-back at (ouch) £50/\$80. Hamilton House, 4 Park Ave, Harrogate, HG2 9BQ. Please note this market is invitation-only for the time being.

Chog's Nationality Masterclass. 'Terry Pratchett is one of America's most entertaining writers,' said the Powell's City of Books website. [PW]

R.I.P. Kir Bulychev (1934-2003) was the sf pseudonym of Russian

author and historian Igor Vsevolodovich Mozheiko, who died on 5 September. [L] Jan Vanek describes him as prolific and 'popular throughout Eastern Europe especially for his *Alice* series of lighthearted children's adventures.' ● *Marilyn E. Marlow*, literary agent (and later, executive VP) at Curtis Brown since 1959, died from cancer on 25 August, aged 75. Her clients included Jane Yolen and Robert Cormier. [AIP] ● *Jules Engel* (1909-2003), Hungarian-born US animator best known for his work on Walt Disney's *Fantasia* (1940), died on 6 September aged 94. [AIP] ● *Gordon Mitchell* (1923-2003), American bodybuilder-turned-actor who starred in numerous, mostly Italian, fantasy, horror and sf movies (*Frankenstein's Castle of Freaks*, *Endgame*, etc) died on 20 September aged 80. [S] ● *Jay Morton* (1911-2003), former writer/artist at the Fleischer animation studios, who scripted many of the 1940s *Superman* cartoons and wrote their well known 'Faster than a speeding bullet...' introduction, died on 6 September; he was 92. [PDF] ● *Donald O'Connor* (1925-2003), US actor who starred or co-starred in the first six 'Francis the Talking Mule' films (1950-55), died on 27 September; he was 78. 'It was wonderful at first. But after three pictures Francis started getting more fan mail than I did and I said "This can't happen."' [DW] ● *Warren Zevon*, (1947-2003) US singer/songwriter famed for the song 'Werewolves of London', died from lung cancer on 7 September; he was 56. Zevon also wrote theme songs and scores for TV's *Tales from the Crypt* and *William Shatner's Tekwar*. [AIP] ● *Belated Update*. A.P. Lukashin reports the deaths of three Russian authors who have *Clute/Nicholls SF Encyclopedia* entries: Vladimir Dudintsev (1918-1998), Viktor Kolupayev (1936-2001), and Lydia Obukhova (1924-1991).

Great Publishing Excuses: collect the set! Randy M. Dannenfelser asked Paper Tiger's Chris Stone why his payment for writing *The Deceiving Eye: The Art of Richard Hescox* was months overdue, and received this classic reply: 'I have just been told by Accounts that the delay is due to the fact we are waiting on a \$ chequebook.' [PB]

Random Fandom. *Chris Bell* is taking Warfarin owing to a deep vein thrombosis in her leg: "They turn one into an artificially-induced case of haemophilia and then give a crash course on how to survive the experience, and some of the advice they give is wonderful. "Try not to cut yourself," said the nurse, deadpan. "Don't we all?" Then there's not pruning roses with your bare hands ... "I generally use secateurs." "Avoid serious dentistry." Well, yes, that is one of my life-long ambitions on a full-time basis, actually.' ● *Tony Cullen* wishes to spare the world aesthetic outrage. Liam Proven is to shave his head for charity at 'They Came and Shaved Us' (above); Tony's response was, 'Horrified, I declared that I would run a counter-fund to raise money to stop Mr Proven from committing any such act.' Pledge your cash the Save Liam's Locks campaign: tc@gummitch.aviators.net. Proceeds to charity, split between the British Epilepsy Foundation and the young people's hospice Douglas House. Meanwhile Doug Spencer is shedding his hair for Cancer Research, and so is Max, who says of her rivals: 'they're blokes and blokes with shaven heads don't get a second glance, do they? So you'd much rather give your money to my charitable fund, wouldn't you?' *Ansible* will pass on any pledges.... ● *Peter Weston* liked the Torcon Hugo trophies, incorporating his 50th-anniversary golden rockets. 'I thought we might do something different next year. In view of my experiences in being snowed-in at two Boskones, how about white Hugos at Boston? And for Glasgow in 2005, of course, the MacDocherty clan colours (might be a bit difficult to get the tartan paint, though).'

Doctor Who is to return to BBC TV after 14 years. Er, that's it.

Not Banned. After hot debate on 23 September, the South Texas Independent School District board voted unanimously not to remove two 'pornographic and offensive' books from the required reading list, being *Brave New World* and *Stranger in a Strange Land*. The first in particular, it seems, may trigger 'inappropriate sexual arousal'.

C.o.A. *Amanda Kear*, Flat 11, Beaufort Court, 1 Beaufort St, Easton, Bristol, BS5 0SQ. *John Richards*, 47 Park Rd, Doncaster, South Yorks, DN1 2QH. *John Teehan*, 31 Doyle Ave, Providence, RI 02906, USA.

Another Historic Dwelling. The last home of Richard Shaver (1907-1975) of Shaver Mystery fame was recently advertised on eBay, with some of his artwork thrown in. Whether the basement of this house in Summit, Arkansas, opens on to a world-spanning network of subterranean caverns inhabited by sinister deros was not specified. [KH]

Outraged Letters. *John Brosnan*, master of double entendre, revisits a van Vogt classic: 'Here are a couple of gems from *The Voyage of the Space Beagle* which I'm rereading for the first time in ages (I have my reasons): "Presently, Morton said, 'I'm going to ask various experts to give their suggestions for fighting pussy.'" And: "Barricades had been flung up and there was the unmistakable odour of ozone. Vibrators

fumed and fussed.' Clearly there was a sub-text to the work that eluded me when I read it as a teenager. ● The spaceship in *Beagle* even has a "stenography section". This is a feature that has long been missing from spaceships in recent years. Even the USS *Enterprise* doesn't have any stenographers on board. The time is ripe to bring back stenography to science fiction! I can see it now: "STENOGRAPHERS IN SPACE! They fight, they type and they're very good at shorthand!" (Sean Williams notes hopefully that his new sf novel includes steganographers: will that do?) ● *Joe J.* of Waterstone's in Edinburgh took wicked liberties with *Oryx and Crake*: 'Guess who sold a pile of them from his sf table? Interestingly, several of our regulars picked up Atwood and Gibson's *Pattern Recognition* at the same time. So a "literary" author who, of course, doesn't write sf and an sf author who has just turned out a book which is not actually sf.... God moves in mysterious ways, but books move at right angles to god. Next month we had *Jennifer Government* on our front shelves ... not treated or categorized as sf, despite being *The Space Merchants* for the *No Logo* generation. Sold a few, but not many. I read it, put a capsule review on it and displayed it on our SF Recommends stand. Well, golly, it went and sold far more than it did when it was at the front of the store, prominently displayed in new fiction. Know your audience as a bookseller, even when the publisher doesn't.'

Group Gropes. *Hereford SF Group*, 1st Mon monthly, Kings Fee pub, Commercial Rd, 8pm. This is an attempt to start a new meeting: after November, call 01432 275497 to confirm that it's still going. ● *London First Thursdays.* Robert Newman remains as gloomy as ever about the Barley Mow pub: 'Usually runs out of real ale before closing time. Usually short of staff leading to long waiting to be served. It is being redecorated at the moment but is still open. No idea how that will affect Thursday but numbers are down to around 60 fans for last couple of months so probably won't be a problem....' [30 Sep]

Time Warp. British SF Association members experienced an eerie sense of *déjà vu* when the *Matrix* newsletter in their September mailing proved to be a faithful reproduction of July's issue. This was all the fault of printer/distributor PDC Copyprint, whose staff contritely printed and mailed, free of charge, what one might call *Matrix Reloaded*.

As Others See Us, Again. Hal Niedzviecki of Canada's *Globe and Mail* saw us all too clearly at Torcon: 'If the weird and dangerous ideas are out there, I couldn't find them amid the earnest, genteel, middle-class fans bustling through the convention in search of their pals. But that doesn't mean I'm prepared to write off sci-fi ...' [JM]

If Only. Mark Millar's revelation (on the Comic Book Resources website) that Orson Welles planned a *Batman* film in 1946—and got as far as production designs and a partial script—is, alas, a spoof.

The Dead Past. *Thirty Years Ago*, Malcolm Edwards prophetically wrote: 'Well, I'm in the middle of an empire-building period just now ...' ('Son of Egomaniac' in *Magic Pudding* #1 ed. M. Edwards, 1973)

A194 Updates. Rhyslings: 'Matlacihuatl's Gift' by Sonya Taaffe (*Dreams and Nightmares*, 9/02) tied for Long Poem. [MA] ● Jack Cole created Plastic Man; William Woolfolk merely scripted some episodes. ● Torcon presentations squeezed out of A194 included the Heinlein Award for hard-sf excellence, won by Michael Flynn, and the Cordwainer Smith Rediscovery Award, given to the late Edgar Pangborn.

Thog's Masterclass. *Dept of Inventions Suppressed by Oil Companies.* 'He and the other Farm driver, an old man by the name of Jenkins, had meticulously revamped most of the cars here, and had converted the engines so that they ran on oxygen; they had solved the age-old problem of running out of petrol, and as long as they kept the engines clean, the cars could theoretically run forever for nothing.' (Paul F. Savage, *The Man Who Saw The Future*, 2002) [DC] ● *Eyeballs in the Sky Dept.* 'Her jolly brown eyes made a complete circuit round my head, instead of looking at me straight when she answered.' (E.F. Benson, 'Home, Sweet Home', 1927) [DL] ● *Paper Cuts Scissors Dept.* 'Can you wrap this letter in a stone and drop it in front of the farmhouse where people will see it?' (Terry Pratchett, *The Wee Free Men*, 2003) [LC] ● *Dept of Pained Looks.* 'My eye snagged on Nettle again as she drifted through the festive throng.' (Robin Hobb, *Fool's Fate*, 2003) ● *Visual Imagery Dept.* 'O'Malley had a face like an inflated punctuation mark.' (Joel Goldman, *Motion to Kill*, 2002) [PB]

Ansible 195 © Dave Langford, 2003. Thanks to Mike Allen, Paul Barnett, Derek Clarke, Lawrence Conquest, David Damerell, Fictionmags, Paul Di Filippo, Kim Huett, Independent on Sunday, Denny Lien, Andrew I. Porter, Joyce Scrivner, Simo, Dave Wood, Eva Whitley, Paul Wrigley, and Hero Distributors: Rog Peyton (Brum Group News), Janice Murray (North America), SCIS, and Alan Stewart (Thyme/Australia). Hazel adds personal thanks to all the fans who sent messages of sympathy for the loss of her mother. 1 Oct 03