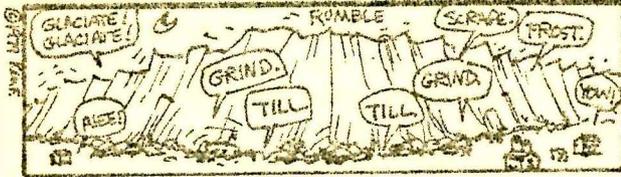


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ANSIBLE 5 still from Dave Langford, 22 Northumberland Avenue, Reading, Berks, RG2 7PW, UK. 4/50p Europe, 3/\$1 NA & Africa, 5/\$1 Aus: credit given for news etc. See mailing label (courtesy of Keith Freeman) for your current status. E-stencils by John Harvey, art by Ken Fletcher, last issue's art by Jim Barker (a fine second choice for TAFF). Also news from lots of people who will doubtless be just as happy to remain anonymous. This issue dated December 1979.

As Much Fun As A Wet Weekend In Birmingham: Paul Kincaid

I got to Novacon 9 a lot earlier than expected. True to form, I then consumed copious amounts of alcohol, only to make the catastrophic discovery that John and Eve [Harvey] had forgotten the Alka Seltzer. Meekly I retired to my revolving bed. Next morning all hell had broken loose... Funny start to a con, more like Saturday than Friday night. But then the whole damn con was a little upside down, low-key after Yorcon and Seacon, and so damn short. Can't remember much of Friday, except the first round of the best quiz I've seen at a con, and Langford¹ demanding this conrep on pain of having to pay a subscription to *Ansible*. Saturday afternoon seemed to consist mostly of explaining why I was drinking Coke.² Then we got Chris Priest's GoH speech, which developed into a well-deserved polemic against the cretinous views that have beset sf for too damn long.³ This was followed by a formal debate on characterization in sf which gave the devil⁴ the best arguments, or at least the funniest. Good God, this con is about $\frac{1}{4}$ the length of Seacon, and I've already been to more programme items than I saw all the time I was in Brighton.

So after a curry and the first drink of the day, it was the traditional disco or try-out of whatever nerve gas Langford is marketing these days. Well, take a look at Gerry Webb's mincing steps, and the wide berth that sane people give Kev Smith when he invades the dance-floor. Still, it provides innocent amusement. The not so innocent amusements come later, at those curious tribal rites known as room parties. Not that this one seemed destined to take place: hosts Dorey and Nicholas had thought better of the idea and took quite a bit of hunting down. When we eventually managed to crowd into their room, Alan Dorey enjoyed playing dictator: "Hey boss, got drink? Then get out." Kev Smith was viciously defensive of his naked upper lip. We performed a carefully considered editorial job upon the Gideon Bible, considerably improving it in the process, for which our hosts were later charged [£3.50!] though a similar improvement of the telephone directory went without comment.

Sunday... I remember Jim Barker trying to subvert justice by providing two teams of limpwrists⁵ for the quiz final. And with deep regret, I remember coughing up for Albacon at last. Then there was the train journey back to Folkestone, which was a horrorstory in its own right; and work the next day, and the day after... and the whole thing sank into the sort of forgetfulness where I'm not sure if any of it actually happened. I'll end the fiction here, and get back

to⁶ trying to sleep it off. (Paul Kincaid)

[FOOTNOTES: 1. Nonsense. I have an alibi. 2. A typical explanation: "Because you haven't bought me a proper drink---mine's a pint." 3. Watch for this in Drilkjis 5, not long to be denied you. 4. Not a kind synonym for "Ian Watson and Dave Langford"... and 'angels' Peter Weston and Pam Bulmer were remiss enough to win, by one lousy, rotten vote... 5. I.e. lifesize Dorey, Nicholas & Maule cutouts, almost as wondrous as Jim's cardboard Peter Weston with animated moustache. However, the real Limpwrists won the quiz. 6. Isn't it odd that all these footnotes relate to the first few words of a line?] [DRL]

THE NOVA AWARD Simone Walsh's *Seamonsters* won decisively, and Simone accepted the trophy with a gracious word or two for the efforts of her former production staff. The vote-counting is of course shrouded in deadly secrecy, so although I can reveal that some 30 ballots were cast I cannot say anything about the points scored by *Seamonsters* [74] or such runners-up as *Dot* [45], *Deadloss* [42] and *Twll-Ddu* [35]. Just as well, otherwise I might be moved to wonder why the Nova and the Checkpoint poll so seldom agree.

10,000 Fanzines From Home: Alan Dorey

Seacon, for those who have already forgotten Brighton's antidote to the Tory Party Conference, was heralded as being the make or break event for many fanzine editors. Yet, curiously, very few new publications were seen; indeed, this year's Novacon saw fewer fanzines than Nelson had eyes. And the trend looks like continuing.

Of course, prior to Seacon, the fannish presses were at fever pitch as desperate editors sought to push out their pent-up words of wisdom. We'll show those 'mericans! was the clarion call, and yet... where were all the US fanzines? US fans outnumbered us 5-1, but apart from *Mota*, *Space Junk* and a few others, there was no competition. That didn't mean that UK fanzines were a prospector's delight. Far from it. Apart from the bright light of innovation shining in the form of John Collic's fine *For A Few Fanzines More*, Simon Ounsley's refreshingly witty article in *Ocelot 2* and Simone Walsh's excellent *Seamonsters 4*, there was little to write home about. Fanzines on display neither excited nor stupefied the often bemused audience, though Swedish and Czech fans eagerly snapped up at least one copy of each issue, eyes revolving at 78rpm in keen anticipation of learning all about British SF. One wonders what they made of the repetitious ruminating on the lack of direction and inventiveness in UK fandom. "Ver ist the Science Fiction?" Good question. No doubt recently released BSFA *Vector* editor Dave Wingrove will provide a comprehensive answer when *Kipple 3* hits the streets.

Seacon prompted dormant editors to splutter back into life like a collection of raindrenched Strombolis---or as Derek and Clive put it, "Life, well it's a kind of existence." Keith Walker and Peter Presford swung back into action, the desperate duo fighting crime with their shields of ineptitude. The problem is that they're quite articulate in real life, but when pubbling their ish all bodily control seems to evaporate. In complete contrast, mild-mannered Dave Langford dons his secret fannish disguise and produces superb issues of *Twll-Ddu*, *Ansible* and *Drilkjis*! Partner-in-crime Kev Smith contributes an amusing spoof of a feminist Seacon: Darroll Pardoe, champion of women's rights, denounces it as a "polemic against the entirely welcome development of women's programming... at recent Worldcons". Take note, Mr Smith, and repent your sins---

or write a LoC to Ian Maule, who seems to have a lively correspondence column. *Nabu 8* materialized as a good, solid issue. Maule, of course, has now returned to the idiosyncratic, witty, low-print-run, fortnightly *Paranoid*. Who said fannish industry was dead, especially when it takes Rob Jackson five whole days to duplicate *Inca 1*?

Some fanzines did mention sf, besides Ounsley and James's marvellous "interview" with Brian Stableford. Geoff Rippington's *Arena SF 9* was solid, interesting, but a little limp. Rob Holdstock (star of an *Arena* interview) and Chris Evans produced a landmark fanzine in *Focus*, sponsored by the ever-thrilling BSFA. Peter Pinto gave the truth behind Hamlyn paperbacks in *Feetnotes 4*, and the special Seacon issue of the BSFA's *Vector* had whole words not reprinted from earlier issues. Still, Seacon must have shocked some people into action, since a few new fanzines were to be seen gathering dust in letterboxes. *Amanita*, from Cyril Simsa, was a fine example of the literate but dull production. Ah well, Novacon was only weeks away---back to fever-pitch went folks desperate to give birth in time for the hallowed Nova Award. Somehow the message didn't get passed down the line, since Novacon produced almost nothing bar a deserved winning of the Nova by Simone Walsh. Anyway, there's always Albacon, where we can show the Scots how to produce fanzines. Or can we, with the BSFA membership voting FOKT "Alltimebestfanzine"?²

Meanwhile I'll go back to *Mad Scientist's Digest 6* from Brian Earl Brown and learn all about the real British fans and fanzines, courtesy of new messiah Ian Williams... (Alan Dorey)

[FEETNOTE: 1. This sentence presumably means that I'm quite articulate in fanzines, but... 2. Since evil Sandy Brown caused the entire FOKT membership to vote on forms already filled in, this isn't surprising: the rest of the BSFA weren't very interested. In answer to queries from Detroit, let me explain that "Friends of Kilgore Trout" is the Glasgow SF group and that their mascot "Bob FOKT Shaw" is so called in this zine in order to distinguish him from the real BOB SHAW. OK?] [DRL]

SWEDISH NOTES Little more on the Scandinavian Worldcon bid, outside what's in their flyer (the one in which they engagingly reveal that the committee is 11 years old and is called Herman. Gug). Anders Bellis notes that pre-supporting membership is over 700 and that the total support of Polish fandom has been pledged. He goes on to tell of the feud between SFSF (Swedish equivalent of the BSFA) and fannish fans... "SFSF has contracted a new (and smaller!) clubhouse, where the members of the society won't be allowed in... it will be just for the board of SFSF. In spite of this they are rising the member-fee by one third, from 20skr to 30 skr (about £3) a year... They also want the board meetings to be closed to members, because 'they have a lot to talk about which is not fit for the members' ears'. The 16th Dec will see our annual meeting with the election of the new board. There is a proposition for a new board and the people in that proposition have said that if we don't elect them, they will economically ruin the society." Don't tell Alan Dorey...

A Letter: Chris Priest (See report on phone hoax in *Ansible 4*)

I have now identified the perpetrator of the hoax. It came as no surprise, but I wanted to be sure and obtained the handwriting from *Time Out*. Although the handwriting shows attempts at disguise, it is too well known to me to leave any doubts. (Anyone who questions this can have a copy of the forms, and see

for themselves.) By the way, I don't reckon it was a very good hoax. The best hoaxes are funny as well as irritating for the victim, and I can't see that the hoaxer in this case could have got much satisfaction from it as the real victims were the innocent people who rang me up.

And there's the matter of the second advertisement. The first was one I accepted in good part, but the second just made things very tedious, and has left me with the desire to redress the balance. I'm making no secret of the fact that in true fannish spirit I am intending to exact a revenge. I have a few ideas of my own, but what I'd really welcome are a few ideas from others. In my view the perfect hoax should above all be funny, as well as embarrassing or irritating to the victim, and should preferably take place in public. Also, it shouldn't cause expense or damage (except perhaps to pride).

If anyone can come up with an ingenious plan for a practical joke that fulfills these conditions, I'd be glad to hear from them. It needn't be wholly original, the best jokes often being the old ones, and it doesn't matter how complicated or elaborate it is. There is absolutely no limit to the trouble or expense I am prepared to go to in order to take satisfaction from revenge. Nor is there any hurry... I might commit the hoax immediately, but then I might hang around for a few years.

So will some Machiavellian genius contact me, please? You can be sure of complete confidence. All I want are ideas, not collaborators.

Incidentally, before things get out of hand and someone feels like taking a pre-emptive strike at me, I'll just say two things. First, why don't you wait to see what I do? I don't particularly want to start a round of hoaxing, and at the moment the revenge is mine. Second, please don't take my phone-number in vain. I don't want to have to do it, but if anyone publicizes my number again, I'll immediately get it changed and go ex-directory. I work hard and value my privacy, and no-one's ever abused it before.

Meanwhile, let's have some funny ideas. (*Chris Priest*)

SERIOUS & CONSTRUCTIVE Another new limited company is Greystoke Mobray Ltd, latest pseudonym of R.L.Fanthorpe: he has now started his own paperback publishing house and apparently intends to reissue all the Badger Books from which he derived his fame. But the first book issued (co-authored with wife Patricia) is a new work, *The Black Lion*. The blurb is evocative indeed: "*Mark Sable, a lonely and alienated ex-convict, encounters an old mystic who gives him a curious medallion. This strange talisman transports Mark from the hostility of Earth to his rightful home on Derl. Here, as the Black Lion, re-incarnate feudal King of Dar, and royal brother to the Golden Tiger, Mark sets out in quest of the great Power Sphere of Kalun... Mark's beautiful young Queen, Amana, is a prisoner in the torture dungeons of Ramos... her defiant courage unbroken by the whips and branding irons of her sadistic enemies, and the threat of lingering death in the arena.*" Gosh, I bet you can't wait to send a quid for an autographed copy, to GM Ltd, 30 Boverton St, Roath Park, Cardiff, CF2 5ES, Wales. // And speaking of power spheres, Ben Bova has been booted upstairs as *Omni's* executive editor, leaving the humble fiction editor post to Robert Sheckley. // Paul Begg is no longer associated with the SFBC: perhaps now we'll get back to the steady diet of Robert Hale books denied us under the fascist Begg administration. // The Virgin Books venture mentioned last issue folded... or nearly so. Dave Pringle's

job didn't materialize, but I learn that Maxim Jakubowski is trapped in a Virgin office doing nobody knows what. No books appear to be scheduled. But Virgin have now produced the Mekons' first LP, *The Quality of Mercy is not Strnen* (with a monkey and a typewriter on the jacket). No red-blooded fan will wish to miss the amazing Dan Dare track, though I shall somehow force myself to do so. // D.West has been reading Jackie Lichtenberg's books for Gollancz. He bounced them as being "nothing but blatant homosexual fantasies". Thus spake the guardian of Bingley's morals... // SPACE-EX '84 was selling those VIP Memberships at Novacon (see last issue): they confided that their planned attendance of 63,000 (9,000 per day) has been frowned upon by the GLC, who only wish to permit 5,000 a day. // Peter Nicholls points out a startling piece of sf in *Reviews of Modern Physics* 51:3 (July 79): an article by Freeman Dyson of spheres fame, which observes among other things that all matter flows like liquid on a timescale of 10^{65} years and is radioactive, decaying (no matter what it is) to iron in 10^{1500} years or so. Later: "Communication of an infinite quantity of information at a finite cost in energy is possible." Who needs Larry Niven---or the post office? // John Foyster has "achieved real scientific immortality---a reference in a hardcover book! On the other hand, I'd probably choose to be remembered by a grateful posterity for something other than 'A Class of Solutions of Einstein's Equations which admit a 3-parameter Group of Isometries'." // *Hitch-Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy* (the Pan book with grotty cover art, no copy-editing and ugly lack of justified margins) topped the best-seller lists; less well known is the fact that another fantasy work, *Fungus the Bogeyman* by Raymond Briggs, was a best-selling children's book (top of the list) at about the same time. Go and buy them both. // Steve McDonald says he has this year's John W Campbell Award sewn up tight. H'mm.

HANSARD Leroy Kettle sends the following bit from 24 October 1979: "FREE MEDICAL AND DENTAL CARE (ALIENS): Mrs Shersby asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if, in order to reduce unnecessary public expenditure, he will terminate the provision of free medical and dental care to aliens under the National Health Service, with the exception of citizens of member states of the EEC providing identical reciprocal treatment." Leroy adds: "This could ruin 20th Century Fox."

LIFTED FROM THE TIMES Dr Immanuel Velikovsky died on November 17 (aged 84) and received a nice obituary in *The Times*. // Someone called Albert Scrope is trying to raise 2 million pounds in the City as half the cost of a Biggles film. "Our story introduces an American girl as love interest, which is essential. We have also changed Biggles' cousin Algy a bit. He has become a sort of aristocratic, psychopathic killer." Watch for Scrope's Wodehouse film, with Bertie Wooster made a dedicated Communist worker...

OUR TITLE Mike Glicksohn: "I looked up 'ansible' in my OED and naturally it isn't there... For the illiterates among us, kindly delineate the reference please." Mike Glycer: "Ansible is a good name for a newszine. In fact I've been booting myself for not finding such a well-known relevant term in my own search for a title..." Brian Earl Brown: "The party in the Ladies' Powder Room at Seacon sounds like a Legendary Event, sort of like Room 770. Maybe Glycer will change the name of his newszine to Ladies' Powder Room. It would be a relief." Chris Priest (who wins the grand prize): "I've just realized it's an anagram of 'lesbian'." (Does Ursula Le Guin know that?)

INFINITELY IMPROBABLE D. West wishes it to be known that it was not as a van driver but as an assistant caretaker that he failed to get a job. He's fallen back on giving talks to the Leeds group: the first cost the university £5 and only 2 people walked out, so D is confident of making a return appearance at £15. // Cyril Simsa, currently serving 8 weeks hard study of seaweed metabolism, reports a college notice about how Professor D. West will be talking on "Are Young Criminals Abnormal"? // D. responds: "Did you know that there is a wrestler called Pete Roberts? Also a country&western group called the Dave Pringle Band?" // Harry Bell confirms that Kevin Williams is chairman of Silicon 4 and will shortly be issuing a flyer. // I have been re-proved for the comments on Seacon's Fancy Dress (issue 2/3): Coral Jackson notes that the overcrowding was caused by last-minute entries and therefore could not have been foreseen, so that to comment on it is unjustifiable. // "The only sf film society in the country" is the Creative Psychology Film Soc, 39-41 Manestys Lane, Paradise St, Liverpool L1: SAE for details. // Harry Andruschak would like a volunteer to run *South of the Moon* (a 20-24 page apa listing) in some UK fanzine. Address: 6933 Rosemead Blvd #31, San Gabriel, CA 91775, USA. // It is I suppose inevitable that a Hitch-Hikers' Fandom should have sprung up, and there is a club called "Hitchhikers Anonymous" which will be pleased to somehow co-ordinate your liking for the book/series/record. I've lost the flyer and the only detail I can remember is that the rules of the club demand you send 50p to Joy Hibbert, Knouchley, West Bank, Winster, Matlock, Derbyshire, DE4 2DQ. // Lovers of sf will be pleased to learn that the October *IASF* was largely destroyed by a warehouse fire (unfortunately it was reprinted). *F&SF* also suffered slightly---only back numbers, though. // New fan would like zines: Rochelle Reynolds, PO Box 1133, 23 Washington Ave, Hyannis, MA 02601, USA. // Please cancel Simone Walsh's COA and write to her c/o Greg for now. //

TAFF NOMINATIONS 1980 Prospective candidates for TAFF (Eurofan to Boston in 1980) have until 31 Dec 1979 to file nominations with Peter Roberts. Required: (1) 3 European & two NA nominators; (2) platform of 100 words or so; (3) bond of \$5 (£2.50); (4) written undertaking to attend the 1980 Worldcon if elected (barring acts of god). Contact Peter at Starcross 553 before the end of the year for further information (or write, of course).

Great Moments of SF Prose:

"Dimly they/it perceived the final annihilation of a minuscule agglutination of refined masses..." (Alan Dead Foster, in THE BLACK HOLE.)

*Remember, you read it in
ANSIBLE 5*

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