



Ansible 113½ Xmas 1996

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ANOTHER MINGY XMAS-CARD SUBSTITUTE. Yes, it's time for the annual round-up of events in the Langford family. Dave was a little deflated to receive only the two Nobel Prizes in 1996, but the life peerage (for services to deafness) and £6,000,000 lottery win did slightly mitigate his disappointment. Hazel too was modestly pleased with her success in achieving universal penal reform, and is aiming for a utopian world state by mid-February. Meanwhile our nationally famous trained woodlice have taken several major prizes at pet shows, the Reading Council citation for Best Front Garden (Crisp Packets & Beer Cans Division) was a pleasant surprise, and Dave Langford does not think he can keep this up for much longer. Will someone please buy me a drink and take this paragraph away from me? Many thanks indeed, and we wish you the usual merry this and a happy that.

Infinitely Improbable

R.I.P. William Rushton (1937-1996), who died on 11 December, was another sad loss: a co-founder of *Private Eye*, a genially funny man, a funny writer and an excellent cartoonist. His chief contribution to sf was the extravagantly silly self-illustrated alternate-world novel *W.G. Grace's Last Case, or, The War of the Worlds—Part Two* (1984); his *The Geranium of Flüt* (1975) is a slightly postmodern cartoon fantasy.

Marley's Chains. A spate of multiply copied net mail urges us to contact Houghton Mifflin Co, who promised one free Xmas book to hospitalized US kids for every 25 e-mails received. Futilely chasing this is a follow-up begging everyone to stop, since the 50,000 maximum was passed on 11 Dec and 2,000 books (plus 500 extra) duly donated....

TAFF Race Cancelled. Dan Steffan, NA administrator of the TransAtlantic Fan Fund, announces that there will be no 1997 TAFF race to the UK Eastercon (Intervention, which had arranged a free room and membership for the TAFF delegate). Luke McGuff had been the only candidate to get in his nominations and other paperwork; another fan, Ian Hagemann, offered to stand in order to ensure there would be a race ... but seems to have been rapidly talked out of it, before the 2 Dec nominations deadline. Many fans who worked hard to restore TAFF's fortunes in the wake of the recent UK disaster feel let down by this cancellation. Nor is there any suggestion of when the next eastward trip might be. Can TAFF catch up by running two races in 1998?

Condom. 24-6 Dec: Yulecon (Brum) cancelled. • 2 Jan: the usual London (Wellington) sf meeting. • 11 Jan: 'Hart Country' exhibition of superbly collectable paintings/etchings by Jon Langford at Llantarnam Grange Arts Cent, St Davids Rd, Cwmbran. For 6 weeks. 01633 483321.

• All sympathy to Perry Middlemiss, now elected Chair of Aussiecon 3.

Ansible Xmas Extras. *Filk Supplement.* Please see next column. Huge prizes are not offered for identifying the sf celebrity whose fame is being sung. ('1 across: Critic upsets Eastern cult [5].') • **Featured Graphic Novel.** Earlier this year, Ron Tiner was invited by the Oxford University Press to create a graphic adaptation of *A Christmas Carol* in one page. Very soon OUP corrected themselves—they'd actually meant just one scene—but not before (with some early caption help from Paul Barnett) Ron had drafted the version appearing overleaf....

Thog's Masterclass. 'Waldhari could feel his heart clenching and loosening like a fist in his chest, its drumbeat battering hard and slow against his ears.' • 'Each step, each whisper of his soles against the stone floor seemed to echo within his skull, murmuring again the thought that had chafed at him since the first day he had looked into a silver Roman mirror and seen the sharp angles of his face, the harsh mask that would not show any of the thoughts that raged within his small ribs.' • 'Gundahari and Gundrun shouted their thoughts with their faces.' (all Stephan Grundy, *Attila's Treasure*, 1996)

Wild Canadian Boy, The

There was a wild Canadian boy; I dare not tell his name
For fear that on the printed page he'll give me doubtful fame.
But science fiction, fantasy and such was all his joy;
There never was a scholar like the wild Canadian boy.

He studied hard by night and day until his brain was packed
With constipated wisdom and a solid wedge of fact.
And though his brain was bigger than the state of Illinois,
It left no room for thinking for the wild Canadian boy.

And when the headache grew so bad he could endure no more
He sadly left his native land and made for Albion's shore.
And oh! his heart was gladdened when they shouted 'Land ahoy!'
'At last I am in England,' said the wild Canadian boy.

In nineteen hundred and sixty-nine he started his wild career,
A critic some would come to love and others grow to fear.
And every book with furrowed brow like finest corduroy
He'd scrutinize and comment on, that wild Canadian boy.

And when his taste and judgement were acclaimed throughout the land
He said 'To write my masterpiece the time is now at hand;
A vast encyclopaedia—half a ton, avoidupois—
Will be a fitting project for the wild Canadian boy.'

By Sol's effulgent splendour and by Luna's silver beams
He tabulated wonder and anatomized our dreams.
By phyle and genus and such types that botanists employ
He pressed and dried them in his book, that wild Canadian boy.

And when the work was over and the mighty task was done
He looked around him, yawned and said 'I'll write another one.'
And on his quest he pottered forth, like Ulysses from Troy;
He never had a moment's rest, that wild Canadian boy.

And great stupendous words he used to frame his thoughts serene,
Though there were times he wasn't sure exactly what they mean.
Some writers he would fawn upon, and others he'd destroy,
But nothing was omitted by the wild Canadian boy.

imperious his language is, and complex is his style,
But mostly you can work it out, although it takes a while.
And wild and woolly paragraphs that puzzle and annoy
Are frequently the trademark of the wild Canadian boy.

So now the second volume goes galumphing through the press:
It may not be quite perfect but it's awesome nonetheless.
And some may mutter 'Oh my God,' but most shout 'Attaboy!'
If only 'cos they daren't offend the wild Canadian boy.

Tom Holt

(*Ansible's* special correspondent Yvonne Rousseau admired this greatly, but pointed out that—unlike the original—it seemed to lack a chorus. Thus, without the slightest consultation with Tom ...)

Chorus: Come, my co-editors, the deadlines they are nigh,
Together we'll cross-reference, but never say 'sci-fi'.
We'll thunder through the verbiage, like mighty Sherman tanks,
And we'll scorn to lean on textbooks that were written by the Yanks!

Ansible 113½ © Dave Langford, 1996. Merrie thanks to Paul Barnett, Chris Bell, Hazel, Tom Holt, Yvonne Rousseau, Ron Tiner and our Hero Distributors: Janice Murray (NA), SQS, Alan Stewart (Oz), and Martin Tudor (Brum Group). Xmas 96

