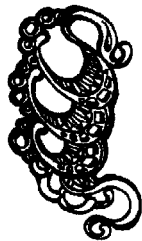


# Ansible



Ansible 191 June 2003

From Dave Langford, 94 London Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 5AU. ISSN 0265-9816. Website: <http://www.ansible.co.uk>. E-mail: [ansible@cix.co.uk](mailto:ansible@cix.co.uk). Fax: 0705 080 1534. Logo: Dan Steffan. Cartoon: Sue Mason. Available for SAE or lendi.

**ACCA.** At another traditionally wine-sodden gathering in the Science Museum on 17 May, the Arthur C. Clarke Award went to Christopher Priest for *The Separation*. The Clarkean numerology that began with a £2001 prize in 2001 led by iron logic to this year's figure of £2003. Chris was much moved and mentioned a key influence of long ago, Sir Arf's *The City and the Stars*: 'That book changed my life.' Other authors from a strong shortlist were present: M. John Harrison (*Light*), China Miéville (*The Scar*) and Elizabeth Moon (*Speed of Dark*). David Brin (*Kil'n People*, apostrophe added for UK publication) and Kim Stanley Robinson (*The Years of Rice and Salt*) couldn't make it. • *The Separation* was miserably marketed by Simon & Schuster UK—as they confessed to CP, the company had 'changed quite a bit since your last novel, and it seems that in this instance we're no longer able to do what we once did well'—and was hard to find in bookshops. Now it's been acquired in an unusual takeover move by Gollancz, with a first hardback edition scheduled for November, and much of the Priest backlist to follow. • Our wonderful British press rarely takes interest in sf honours, but *The Spectator* for 17 May treated us to a gossip-column snippet calling the Clarke 'the Booker Prize of the science-fiction world' as preliminary to pouncing gleefully on the fact that *The Separation* is dedicated to ACCA administrator Paul Kincaid. Deflatingly for scandalmongers, it is not dedicated to the five judges who actually chose the winner.

## The Liberation of Earth

**Charles N. Brown** held court at the BSFA London meeting on 28 May, where he suggested arm-wrestling to decide the fate of this year's semi-prozine Hugo. The result was an obvious fix; and, most unfairly, *Locus* but not *Ansible* had a photographer in attendance....

**Robert Holdstock** brags: 'The Czech Academy of Science Fiction, Fantasy and Horror have just awarded me their prize for the best novel of 2002 (*The Iron Grail*). The award is called "The Newt". Named for Karel Čapek's *War Against the Newts*. The award is ... a newt. But hopefully a pewter newt! I'm very pleased indeed. The translator was Petr Kotrle, who also translates Garry Kilworth and Octavia Butler.'

**Jane Johnson** of Voyager finds editorial work pretty numinous, according to her *Bookseller* interview: 'Words such as "profound" and "awe-inspiring" drop readily from her lips as she talks of authors such as David Eddings, Raymond E. Feist and David Zindell.' [BJ]

**Alan Moore** is changing careers again: 'What I'm trying to do at the moment is finish off all of the mainstream comics work around the end of this year, at which point having retired effectively from mainstream comics, I want to play around with things I've been neglecting.' These include artwork, sculpture, performance work and 'becoming a full-time magician.' (*Ninth Art* interview, April 03) [POM]

**Justina Robson**, already twice nominated for the Clarke Award, thoughtfully provides future gossip-bait for *The Spectator* in her third novel *Natural History*—featuring a vast, lumbering, obsolete and not very novel terraforming engine, called Kincaid.

## Contranatant

6 Jun • **British Fantasy Society** open night, Princess Louise pub, High Holborn, London. 6:30pm on. Also 5 Sep, 5 Dec. All welcome.

6-8 Jun • **Tolkien Society Seminar**, Farnham Museum, Surrey. £13 reg, members £11. Contact 28 Loverock Cres, Rugby, CV21 4AR.

20 Jun • **Irish SF News 1st Anniversary Party**, Back Bar, Exchequer Bar, Exchequer St, Dublin 2. 8pm to closing. All welcome.

25 Jun • **BSFA Open Meeting**, The Rising Sun pub, Cloth Fair, London, EC2. 7pm on; fans usually around from 5pm. Guest TBA.

11-13 Jul • **ConStruction**, Hanover International Hotel, Cardiff Bay, Cardiff. Interaction (2005 Worldcon) staff weekend. Attendance free, but please notify [info@interaction.worldcon.org.uk](mailto:info@interaction.worldcon.org.uk).

28 Aug - 1 Sep • **Torcon 3** (Worldcon), Toronto, Canada. \$275C/\$185US reg; children (or supporting only) \$60C/\$40US. \$295C at door. Contact PO Box 3, (Station A, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, M5W 1A2.

18-21 Sep, **Oxonmoot** (Tolkien Soc), St Hugh's College, Oxford.

£36 reg, members £31. Contact 28 Loverock Cres, Rugby, CV21 4AR.

21-23 Nov • **FantasyCon 2003**, Tillington Hall Hotel, Stafford. GoH Catherine Fisher, Christopher Fowler. £40 (BFS members £35) to 30 Jun, then £50 (£45) to 30 Sep; £60 (£55) thereafter. Book hotel room when joining to get con rates: £45/night single, £35 twin/dbl. Contact Beech House, Chapel Lane, Moulton, Cheshire, CW9 8PQ.

5-7 Mar 04 • **Mecon 7**, Senior Staff Common Rooms, Queen's University, Belfast. GoH Ian McDonald, Paul Holden, more TBA. £16/€25 reg, rising to £18/€28 on 1 Dec; £20/€30 at door; £7/€11 supp. Contact 12 Hopefield Ave, Belfast, BT15 5AP, Northern Ireland.

9-12 Apr 04 • **Concourse** (Eastercon), Blackpool Winter Gardens. £40 reg, £25 unwaged. Note new contact address: 63 Providence Way, Waterbeach, Cambridge, CB5 9QH.

4-8 Aug 05 • **Interaction** (63rd Worldcon), SECC, Glasgow. Now £85/\$135 reg. Contact 379 Myrtle Road, Sheffield, S2 3HQ. In North America: PO Box 58009, Louisville, Kentucky, KY 40268-0009, USA.

11-15 Aug 05 • **The Ring Goes Ever On** (Tolkien Soc): Aston U, Birmingham. £40 reg, members £35. Contact: as Oxonmoot, above.

**Rumblings** • 2014. Tim Illingworth and Pat McMurray, whom the gods evidently wish to destroy, have formed a committee to bid for the 2014 Worldcon. Pat: 'Basically, it's him and me, and a pre-supporter, and a policy to run the 1939 Retro-Hugos. (Note that these would be for works first published in 1938.) Our first pre-supporter is Eddie Cochrane who got the special "we-need-a-pre-supporter" rate of £1. The current pre-supporting rate for everyone else is £14, or \$20, or €20. Offers of money, artwork, agents, dead horses' heads, etc in the usual way. • We haven't really settled on what country it should be in, but we have agreed that somewhere in the EU seems plausible.' Rush all your money to Pat at 28 Plaistow Grove, Bromley, BR1 3PB.

## Infinitely Improbable

**Publishers and Sinners.** *The Bookseller* reported the awesome final message of Orion's departing MD, Trevor Dolby: 'Trevor Dolby Has Left the Building! You may now begin looting the fifth floor and pulling down the statues of Malcolm Edwards.' [RD]

**Sidewise Awards.** Shortlists for this juried alternate-history award: LONG FORM Gary L. Blackwood, *The Year of the Hangman*; Martin J. Gidron, *The Severed Wing*; Christopher Priest, *The Separation*; S.M. Stirling, *The Peshawar Lancers*; Harry Turtledove, *Ruled Britannia*. • SHORT FORM (<60,000 words) Charles Coleman Finlay, 'We Come Not to Praise Washington' (*F&SF* 8/02); John Kessel, 'The Invisible Empire' (*Conjunction*: 39); William Sanders, 'Empire' (*Alternate Generals II*); Robert Silverberg, 'With Caesar in the Underworld' (*Asimov's* 10/02); Walter Jon Williams, 'The Last Ride of German Freddie', *Worlds That Weren't*.

**As Others See Us.** Faint praise for the Wachowski brothers (of *Matrix* fame) in *Salon*: 'Little is known about the media-shy siblings [...] but what details we do have suggest a level of fanaticism and devotion to storytelling that is more usually associated with science fiction fans than Hollywood producers.' [CP-S] • SF authors may be storytellers, but don't count as novelists: 'Contemporary novelists rarely write about science or technology. Margaret Atwood tackles both—and more—in one of the year's most surprising novels.' (*The Economist*, 3-9 May) [TC]

**R.I.P.** *William C. Anderson* (1920-2003), former USAF pilot and author of 20-odd novels, including the sf comedies *Penelope* (1963) and *Adam M-1* (1964), died on 16 May; he was 83. [DeL] • *Dave Mooring* (1961-2003), popular UK fan and artist who won the Nova Award for fanzine art four times (1989 to 1993), died on 21 May from pancreatic cancer. He was only 42. That morning, he and his partner Sarah Dobb were married; they had been engaged for 20 years. [TP] Much sympathy to Sarah. Dave contributed interior artwork to my 1996 NESFA Press collection *The Silence of the Langford*. Maureen, Mick and Sarah Mooring ('Dave's mum dad and wife') write: 'We have read a few of the tributes to Dave via *Plokta*. Would you please say thank you to the friends who sent them—they are greatly appreciated.' • *Robert Stack* (1919-2003), US film actor best known for the TV *The Untouchables*,

died on 14 May. He was 84. [BB] His sf roles were rare: he was a character voice in the dire animation *Transformers: The Movie* (1986) and also in *Butt-Ugly Martians* (TV, 2001). Terrifyingly, I am informed that his real name was Robert Langford Modini. [PM] ● *Roy Tackett* (1925-2003), old-time US fan who rejoiced in the nickname 'Horrible Old Roy Tackett', died on 23 May. He produced more than 100 issues of his fanzine *Dynatron* since 1960, and was the TransAtlantic Fan Fund delegate to the 1976 UK Eastercon. Even when half paralysed by a stroke and living in care, Roy sent much e-mail (typed one-handed on a laptop) from what proved to be his deathbed. On 15 May: 'for a guy who died twice the night before last i'm doing pretty good today. true enough my heart stopped twice tuesday night and i was legally dead. but they started it again so i am still with you. for how much longer i don't know.' On 20 May he dictated to his daughter: 'I have never known it took such a long time to die. This is probably the last mail you will receive from me. I have been in bed for four days, and just wanted to say good-bye to all of you.' Goodbye, RoyTac.

**Science Corner.** 'Mars is awash with radiation. That's why it's red.' (Brian Blessed on *Richard and Judy*, Channel 4, 15 May) [GW]

**Con Report.** Ian Watson writes: 'I've just been a guest at The 2nd International Week of Science Fact and Fiction at Timisoara, Romania (19-25 May), both as myself and as the Ghost of Honour of H.G.Wells, for which purpose the wardrobe department of the local opera house provided an ancient suit with tails, but fortunately no mothballs nor moths. By sheer chance a brass band struck up outside as Bertie Wells manifested himself. ● The week-long event was steered by the *Concatenation* crowd and by local fans with what a newspaper described as German punctuality mixed with British humour—things actually happened when advertised. As well as Romanians and Hungarians, several British fans attended, not least Vince Docherty as Fan GoH hot-foot from Nigeria (but looking very cool, perhaps because of the Fan), there was a Danish Spaniard in the soup, and Italian Roberto Quaglia presided throughout with splendid surrealism. Searing sunshine, requiring much resort to the lovely local beers, alternated with occasional thunder and lightning. Guided tours of Timisoara (gorgeous architecture in need of much heritage fund restoration before it crumbles further) disclosed that it was the first city anywhere to have electric street lighting and that non-Euclidean geometry was first devised there, not to mention that it was a major shipping port although very far from the sea. Romanian TV boggled viewers nationwide with its coverage. More Brits should go to events like this. Such fun. So many new friends.'

**In Typo Veritas.** To the delight of US Pratchett-lovers, Terry's *The Wee Free Men* (US hardback) brags on the back cover that its predecessor was: 'A New York Public Library Book for the Teen Age 2002'. [PF]

**Mythopoeic Awards** fiction shortlists.... ADULT Ellen Kushner & Delia Sherman, *The Fall of the Kings*; Nina Kiriki Hoffman, *A Fistful of Sky*; Patricia A.McKillip, *Ombria in Shadow*; Ted Chiang, *Stories of Your Life and Others*. ● CHILDREN'S Neil Gaiman, *Coraline*; Vivian Vande Velde, *Heir Apparent*; Nancy Farmer, *The House of the Scorpion*; Michael Chabon, *Summerland*; Holly Black, *Tithe: A Modern Faerie Tale*. [D] We invited Diana Wynne Jones, author of *Charmed Life*, to comment on the MA nonfiction nominee *A Charmed Life: The Spirituality of Potterworld* by Francis Bridger. Her response: 'All I can say is ooOOOOOOH!!!!'

**C.o.A. Concourse** (Eastercon 2004): see events list. *Jan Stinson*, PO Box 248, Eastlake, MI 49626-0248, USA. *Tobes Valois*, 20 Baker's Lane, Woodston, Peterborough, PE2 9QW. *Damien Warman & Juliette Woods* (soon), 15 Alan St, Port Noralunga, SA 5167, Australia.

**Language Lesson.** On 22 May, BBC TV repeatedly announced that little-known sf film *Johnny Pneumonic*. [IC] Stephen Gallagher subsequently commented: 'I know pronunciation can be tricky but I think the anus is on them to get it right, don't you?'

**Random Fandom.** *Bernard Earp* married Anne Hayes ('not a Fan') on 10 May; they are now Bernard Hayes-Earp and Anne Earp-Hayes. 'No-one really expects this to last.'—referring to the new surnames, I think, not the marriage. [PDB] ● *Harry Payne* is still busy registering 'Eastercon' as a trademark. The UK TM Registry has accepted the application and will publish it on 13 June. 'There is a three-month period for anyone to raise an objection (this is not a hint) after which the trademark becomes mine, all mine, bwa ha ha—er, sorry about that.' ● *Tobes* confided: 'When I die, I'm going to leave my body to science fiction.'

**Thog Conquers the World.** Wearying of best-novel polls, *The Independent* invited pundits to select the worst. The 'winner', with three nominations, was *The Lord of the Rings*. Sir John Mortimer just loathes 'Anything about Gandalf, and those little things with hair between their toes. I hate that sort of portentous, phoney, medieval-magical way of

writing.' Alain de Botton feels actively threatened by Tolkien: 'It's strange, weird and frightening, and makes me feel like I'm on the sidelines of a joke I don't understand.' Poor dear. Other excoriated fantasies included the Harry Potter saga, *The Tempest*, and *Jonathan Livingstone Seagull*. But J.G.Ballard put in a bad word for *Finnegans Wake*: 'Joyce's incomprehensible novel, which has provided a living for generations of English Literature professors, represents a lamentable tendency in 20th Century fiction: the quest for total obscurity. *Finnegans Wake* is the best example of modernism disappearing up its own fundament.'

**International Horror Guild Awards.** NOVEL Dan Simmons, *A Winter Haunting*. FIRST NOVEL Alexander Irvine, *A Scattering of Jades*. LONG FORM Thomas Ligotti, 'My Work Is Not Yet Done'. INTERMEDIATE Dale Bailey, 'Death and Suffrage'; Elizabeth Hand, 'Pavane for a Prince of the Air' (tie). SHORT Don Tumasonis, 'Prospect Cards'. COLLECTION Chet Williamson, *Figures in Rain*. ANTHOLOGY *Dark Terrors 6* ed. Stephen Jones & David Sutton. NONFICTION Ramsey Campbell, *Ramsey Campbell, Probably*. GRAPHIC NARRATIVE Clive Barker, *Abarat*. PERIODICAL *F&SF*. ART Jason Van Hollander. FILM *Frailty*. TV *Six Feet Under*. [D]

**Outraged Letters.** *Eileen Gunn* reports from Wisconsin: 'Wiscon included these remarkable sights: a kneeling John Kessel being crowned with the Tiptree Tiara by Hiromi Goto, and Ellen Klages impersonating China Miéville impersonating Carol Emshwiller. Uh, maybe you had to be there....' ● *Rob Holdstock* looks back on Eastercon at the Hanover Hotel, Hinkley: 'That was indeed a good weekend. It will be a long time until Sarah and I get over the shock of waking, on the first morning in our wonderful room, and puzzling short-sightedly over the "mural" on the ceiling above the bed. As we struggled to put on our glasses we saw that it was a mural of two people struggling to put on their glasses. Shortly to be followed by a mural of two people leaping out of bed in shock. (Room 352, by the way.)' ● *Yvonne Rousseau* corrects Bruce Gillespie's *A190* obituary of John Foyster, already updated in its website version: the *Australian Science Fiction Review* collective 'was gathered in 1985, and published *ASFR* from 1986 until 1991.' Also, 'it was 1971, not 1972, when DUFF was founded.'

**Fanzine Activity Achievement Awards.** FANZINE *Chunga*. FAN-WRITER Randy Byers. FAN ARTIST Steve Stiles. LETTERHACK Joseph Nicholas. NEW FAN John Teehan. #1 FAN FACE Randy Byers. PAST PRESIDENT OF FWA John Foyster for 1975; Mark Plummer for 2002. [LP]

**Small Press.** Ansible E-ditions is much cheered by the first fruits of our *Cosmos* co-publishing deal: real printed copies of John Sladek's *Wholly Smokes* and David Masson's expanded *The Caltraps of Time*.

**The Dead Past.** *28 Years Ago* (As Others See Us, Retro Division): 'In the same week that his latest *Dr Who* story ends (Saturday BBC1), writer Terry Nation (below, with Daleks) has a new series, *Survivors* (Wednesday BBC1), beginning. "But they're two very different series," insists Nation, who talks to Chris Dunkley in our feature. "*Survivors* has its roots in the future, as it were, but it's not science-fiction. It's going into the realms of the impossible; it's skating very close to possible.'" (*Radio Times*, 12-18 April 1975) [GW]

**Group Gropes.** *London First Thursdays* remain in the Barley Mow, Long Lane, despite (short-lived) dissent and a BSFA *Matrix* listing that indicated a return to the Silver Cross. The BSFA third-Wednesday meeting is still in the Rising Sun although moved by *Matrix* to the Barley Mow: 'I changed the wrong meeting,' groaned a certain *Matrix* editor.

**Thog's Masterclass.** *Dept of What Does He Call It Now?* 'Fate has just laid its freezing hand around that ancient organ he once called his heart, and squeezed it tenderly ...' (Jude Fisher, *Sorcery Rising*, 2002)

● *Space Drive Dept.* 'Reaction rays many times faster than light, pushing back against the cosmic dust of space ...' (Edmond Hamilton, *City At World's End*, 1951) *Dept of Explaining the Big Bang.* 'Einstein's equations proved that if matter moved faster than light, it would expand indefinitely ...' (*Ibid*) [BA] ● *Dept of Striking Features.* 'The headshot was of a fair-haired man with a dazzling smile and dark, piercing eyes above thick, dark eyebrows.' (Selma Eichler, *Murder Can Rain on Your Shower*, 2003) [CBB] ● *Dept of Vacuum Physics.* 'The pilot fired a bright beam from the shuttle's laser. The appalling flare of light and energy snatched the words from his mouth. Even in the silence of space, the shockwave seemed louder than a crack of thunder.' (Brian Herbert & Kevin J. Anderson, *Legends of Dune: The Butlerian Jihad*, 2002) [DaL]

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