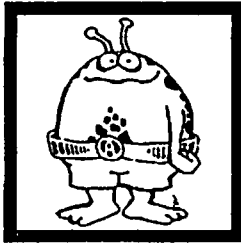


Ansible



Ansible 137 December 1998

From Dave Langford, 94 London Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 5AU, UK. Fax 0118 986 9914. ISSN 0265-9816. E-mail ansible@cix.co.uk. Logo: Dan Steffan. Cartoon: Ian Gunn, *in memoriam*. Available for SAE or the recipe for ten-point steel.

ORYCON 20. *Portland, Oregon, Nov:* after being a GoH in 1989 it was extremely spiffy to be asked back for the 20th anniversary event, and OryCon hospitality was splendid as ever. Not many cons hand all their guests presentation baskets of local plonk and smoked salmon.... The *Libe Thug* ~~Shots~~ met its first west-coast audience, who shuddered and cringed most gratifyingly. Of course inept Langford had to complicate things, this time breaking a front tooth on a rogue Vietnamese water-chestnut just before the con, and thus needing to borrow Kate Yule's dentist for a long session during which I contemplated the healing mantra 'I Am Having Root-Canal Work At US Prices'. Big thanks to John Lorentz and his hero committee, to Paul Wrigley & Debbie Cross for hospitality and permission to inflict further serious damage on my Visa card at Wrigley-Cross Books, to Geri Sullivan for a merciless interview that probed the secrets of Ansible software's Y2K compliance ('On 1 Jan 2000 the *SF Encyclopedia* CD-ROM viewer sprouts an animated paperclip with the face of John Clute ...'), and to others too numerous to list and/or too generous with microbrews to be remembered.

The Negative Ones

Brian Aldiss's autobiography *The Twinkling of an Eye* is a remarkable, devastatingly candid performance. Some names are veiled to protect the guilty: I was intrigued to read of the SF Foundation writer-in-residence contest and 'the envious and egotistical chap who failed, and who, with his pet hornet wife, attacked my good name.' Now who could that be?

George Alec Effinger and **Barbara Hambly** married on 14 Nov.

Lionel Fanthorpe, another OryCon guest whose shadow normally looms large at Badger-baitings and turkey readings, was unable to attend the con owing to TV filming in (wait for it) Turkey.

Ken MacLeod can barely contain his puking: "It is no coincidence," writes Minette Martin (*Sunday Telegraph*, 8 Nov, page 39) "that in *Brave New World* whole departments devoted themselves to erasing history and then rewriting it. It is no coincidence that it was a thoughtcrime to remember even a nursery rhyme [...]" Oppressed fans everywhere, rise up to correct this "politically correct" rewriting of history! And what about all that depraved soma-drinking in 1984, eh?

Sam Moskowitz's vast collection of historical sf will be auctioned by Sotheby's next June; catalogues available in late May. 'I doubt I'll bid,' drools Robert Lichtman, 'but I definitely want the catalogue.'

Robert Sawyer won the 1998 Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya (UPC) million-peseta prize with his novella 'Block Universe'.

George Turner provides a posthumous challenge in *Dreaming Down Under* (ed Jack Dann & Janeen Webb), an anthology of new Aussie sf. HarperCollins in Oz offer fame and publication to whoever writes the best ending for the book's unfinished Turner novella. [VR]

Conbobberation

5 Dec • **British Fantasy Society** open night, Princess Louise pub, High Holborn (upstairs bar). Around 7pm onward.

17 Dec • **London Group Meeting**, Jubilee pub, York Rd, nr Waterloo. Traditional extra pre-Xmas gathering, open to all. 5pm on.

23 Dec • **BSFA Open Meeting** cancelled as usual in December.

5 Jan - 26 Feb 99 • **The Return of the Triffids**: display from John Wyndham archive, Sydney Jones Library, U of Liverpool. Contact Andy Sawyer, U of Liverpool Library, PO Box 123, Liverpool, L69 3DA.

7 Jan 99 • **London Group Meeting**, ending the current Jubilee series since landlord Kevin moves to the Dead Nurse (Florence Nightingale) pub on 9 Jan and fans are following. New location: east side of the roundabout where York Rd joins Westminster Bridge Rd. 5pm on.

13-14 Mar 99 • **Mecon 2**, SCR, Queen's U of Belfast. GoH Michael Marshall Smith. £10/£12l reg, to Queen's U SF Soc c/o Flat 2, 12 Ashley Avenue, Belfast, BT9 7BT.

28-30 May 99 • **Seccon**, Hertfordpark Hotel, Stevenage. Now £23 reg. Contact c/o 92 Lichfield Rd, Cambridge, CB1 3TR.

12 Jun 99 • **Incense & Insensibility**: 'SF, Psychedelia & the 1960s/70s', U of Liverpool. Papers on sf/psychedelic influence on those

decades requested. Contact A.Sawyer as above. (Bring your own dope.)

8-10 Oct 99 • **Octocon 10**, Royal Marine Hotel, Dun Laoghaire, nr Dublin. GoH Robert Rankin. £14 reg, £18 Easter to mid-Sep, £22 at door. Contact (UK) 64 Richborne Tce, London, SW8 1AX.

?? 2000 • **Discworld Convention** returns—who will be GoH third time around? Contact Suite 35, 29 High St, Romford, Essex, RM1 1JL.

Rumblings • **Worldcon 2002**. The Seattle bid has folded owing to mysterious difficulties with Starwood Hotels, owners of needed venues. Despite pleas from the city authorities, the convention centre, and local enterprises hoping for a claimed \$3.8 million of Worldcon business, Starwood's regional manager Yogi Hudson (surely to be enshrined as a fannish hate-figure alongside Bastard Hutchings of the Brighton Metropole) has issued firm instructions that no horrid sf conventions are to pollute his nice hotels. San Francisco in 2002, now unopposed, will convert Seattle presupporting memberships for the \$10.01 price difference. Dollar checks (to SFSFC Inc) or credit card details to San Francisco in 2002, Cross-Grade Membership Offer, PO Box 61363, Sunnyvale CA 94088-1363, USA. Offer holds to 5 Apr 99. • **Paragon** is an Eastercon 2001 bid, using the Norbreck Castle Hotel, Blackpool. The website mentions a £2 presupporting fee, but no postal address....

Infinitely Improbable

Publishers & Sinners. Gollancz SF (that is, the imprint's owner Cassell) was taken over not by Macmillan as threatened but by Orion. *Jo Fletcher* indicates that Gollancz's sf name value is understood: she's 'as yet unsure of how the new regime is going to affect me other than that I know [Orion's] Millennium is being merged into the Gollancz sf list.'

Random Fandom. *Bridget Bradshaw* has a new job: 'a company who provide odd events like paintballing, laser clay pigeon shooting, quad bike racing, and something bizarre called "human sheep" to other companies for hospitality/motivational purposes. And they're all quite mad.' • **SMS** begs a plug for 'Cyberdrome' at Reconvene, whose PR3 deadline he missed: 'To aid the smooth running of the popular robot-battle at the '99 Eastercon, SMS would like specs of contestants posted to Grundlegung, 101 Belfield Lane, Rochdale, Lancs, OL16 2YB. Queries (01706) 653249.' • **Peggy White** underwent brain surgery in Belfast on 2 Nov, and is recovering well after the removal of a golfball-sized benign tumour. Doctors expect no recurrence. As James White said when Peggy was pronounced well enough to return home on 18 Nov, 'I've only got boring, good news to report....' [GFS] • **Walt Willis**, though physically recovered from his minor stroke in Aug, remains frequently confused and unable to operate his computer. Those expecting replies to letters/fanzines are warned that they may perhaps not hear from Walt again. Madeleine Willis hopes to respond when time permits.

C.o.A. Velma (Vijay) Bowen, PO Box 156, Village Station, New York, NY 10014-0156, USA. • What, has no one else moved this time?

Not Hazel's Language Lessons. *Charles Dalglish*, without the least provocation from me, defines the word *sark*: 'Nightie, but Norse.'

Small Press. Fanorama: Walt Willis's 40 fan columns from *Nebula SF* in the 50s (plus 5 more from *Zenith* etc). 100pp inc covers; \$10.00 postpaid to anywhere from Robert Lichtman, PO Box 30, Glen Ellen, CA 95442, USA. • *The Hugo, Nebula and World Fantasy Awards* by Howard DeVore, a long-running listing which includes all award nominations, had its first professional trade pb edition this year. 332pb; \$14 post free (surface); \$22 air to Europe) from Advent, PO Box A3228, Chicago, IL 60690, USA. • *The Small Press Guide 1999* (4th ed; 405pp) is 'The complete guide to poetry & small press magazines', though sf fanzine coverage is erratic. The entry for *The Celtic Pen* lists 'the 6 Celtic languages (Lush, Scots, Gaelic, Manx, Welsh, Breton and Cornish)'. [SS] £9.99 from Writers' Bookshop, 1 Wainman Rd, Woodston, Peterborough, PE2 7BU. • **Tanjen** announcement: 'Due to financial pressures *Tanjen* is no longer able to accept manuscripts.' [MS] Some phrase this as 'gone bust'.

Outraged Letters ... *John D. Berry* carries on the Leigh Couch saga: 'As I recall she'd qualified for firstfandomhood because of a letter written to (and published in) one of the magazines when she was very,

very young. She had no other fannish activity until many years later, but apparently this made her First Fandom material. She found this vastly amusing.' • *The MUP Encyclopaedia of Australian SF and Fantasy*, and A136 coverage of Paul Collins's controversial remarks on Terry Dowling, led to an Unattributable Comment: that PC didn't want to write the Dowling entry but that 6 or 7 others were asked and refused.

The Dead Past. 20 Years Ago: Peter Roberts declared his UK sf newsletter to be 'Glabrous, glaucous, rarely pulverulent or rugulose, never pyriform or amygdaloid ...' (*Checkpoint* 92, Dec 78) *Ansible* has tried hard to live up to these standards. • **5 Years Ago:** Boxtree publicity ascribed the success of their Warhammer game tie-in books to clever cross-pollination. 'We commission the very best writers—authors like Ian Newman and Kim Watson.' (*Ansible* 77, Dec 93)

Group Gropes. *SF Ireland* (successor to the old Irish SFA) was launched at Octocon Lite. £12 annual sub; frequent newsletter *Blank Space*. Contact 43 Eglinton Rd, Dublin 4, Ireland. • *Welsh SF Association* ... vast promotion/co-ordination plans; membership free, at least within Wales. Contact (SAE) GFF, 32 Theobald Rd, Canton, Cardiff, CF5 1LP.

Chog's Masterclass. 'Jocelyn came through the fog wall, muttering, her breasts swaying like two angry red eyes looking for a fight.' (Greg Benford, *Furious Gulf*, 1994) [JCo] • 'The dictator's wild barbaric eyes danced around the room as though amusing themselves, while the brain behind them thought out some new, and more diabolical scheme.' ('Pel Torro', *Formula* 29X, 1963) ... 'The grey voice of the grey Seaforth glided greily on to their ears, like a tide of putrescent grey molasses.' (*Ibid*, 'The Room With the Broken Floor', 1962) [BH] • 'Wellcome slapped his brow and let his celluloid smile glide across the room.' (Esther Friesner, 'How to Make Unicorn Pie', *F&SF* 1/99) [MMW] • *Dept of Feminist Insight*: "'That's a load of doggie muffins and you know it," snorted Rusty. "She's just like any other female. She just acts kinda highbrow sometimes." (S.D.Howe, 'Wrench and Claw', *Analog* 11/98) [KT] • 'His head was a stone sinking up to the ears between his knees.' (Ricardo Pinto, *The Chosen*, 1998) [JC]

Novacon 28

Claire Brialey and Mark Plummer were there: It has been remarked that Novacon is an institution, and that's before anyone's looked at the attendees. A sense of sameness has been a dominant feature of any attempt at reportage since the dawn of time or Novacon 2, whichever came first; the oft-voiced comment has been that you just couldn't seem to tell Novacons apart. Recently, however, change has been the order of the day: this year, with the fourth site change in as many years, it was back to central Birmingham and another fannish venture into a Britannia hotel, whose key cards now tastefully carry photos of all our favourite Adelphi TV stars. While we trekked between the main bar (2nd floor) and main programme (9th floor), some Novacon regulars never even made it to the cunningly remote loading bay—situated in nearby Azerbaijan—and had to be reported missing. The absence of Helen and Stan Eling, Greg Pickersgill, Sarah Dibb and Dave Mooring, Tobes Valois (a temporary export to Las Vegas, albeit not in fannish terms), and transatlantic megastar Dave Langford were all noted. In their place we had exotic foreign imports—Americans Victor Gonzalez, Sheila Lightsey, Jae Leslie Adams and Jack Henneghan in exchange for Dave Langford and Tobes, and a consignment of Swedes who, Lennart Uhlin explained, weren't seeking anything in exchange except some fanzines for deprived Swedish fans. Or perhaps, after the fishliifter fell out of Anders Holmstrom's shiny black plastic trousers, that's *depraved*.

GoH Paul McAuley is notable for many things which now include provoking filthy pro John Meaney to *prove* that he can do the splits suspended between two chairs in the bar. Ian Sorensen staged a musical but alarmingly funny send-up of Croydon Fandom entitled *My Claire Lady*, starring Julia Daly and Chris O'Shea with guest appearances from Pat McMurray and the crowd-pleasing Noel Collyer. Fanzines abounded; so many fanzine renaissances have been heralded in recent years that we must be up to the enlightenment by now. Back in the programme, Julian Headlong cheerfully argued that 'TAFF must die!' 'Oh no it mustn't!' countered returned TAFF delegate Maureen Speller and virtually everybody else. And thus the argument is settled and will never again be raised at a con until, oh, at least next Tuesday. The SF Foundation was relaunched, the British Worldcon bid discussed sites, and the Novas were awarded: Fan Artist—D West (notified by mobile phone since Leeds Fandom haven't yet installed the satellite link); Fan Writer—Maureen Kincaid Speller (notably overcome, invoking Andy Hooper—that oft-neglected contributor to Victor Gonzalez's fanzines—who had accurately predicted the Nova results); Fanzine—

something or other from Croydon [*Banana Wings*—Ed.] (accepted in a flurry of references to the Sorensen musical which, for the benefit of the few remaining fans who haven't asked, we did rather enjoy).

Tune in next year—same place, different weekend—for another exciting instalment, when Maureen Speller aims to insert hot new programme ideas into Pat McMurray's challenging function space. [CB/MP]

R.I.P.

VINCENT CLARKE (1922-1998) died in the early hours of 29 Nov, from pneumonia following a long and frustrating illness against which he'd struggled hard—'Fight, fight, fight!' he wrote to me—with some small victories, like eventually regaining the ability to swallow, but too many defeats. Vince was one of Britain's best-loved fannish elders. He edited the legendary *Science Fantasy News* from 1948; famously shared the ultrafannish 'Epicentre' flat at the heart of London fandom with Ken Bulmer (with whom he collaborated on a couple of 1952 sf novels); and, though unable to make the US trip, was the first winner of TAFF in 1954. As he himself wrote, 'I was active fanning between 1947 and 1960, and during that time I did almost everything in the semi-pro and fan field that it was possible to do.' In 1960 he left fandom, returning in 1982 to record his bemused impressions of the changed fanzine and Eastercon scenes in *Not Science Fantasy News*. My copy of #3 came with a handwritten note on the back: 'I think I've managed to insult everyone in this ish. What do I do next?—Vinc.' For 'insult', read 'gently disagree with'. The 1950s Vince had a reputation for being hot-headed and willing to feud; on his return he was still mischievous but always enormously kind, and did sterling work in introducing newcomers to fandom and the joys of fanzines from his own monumental collection. He slaved away at fannish bibliographies, co-edited the popular fanzine *Pulp*, and worked with Rob Hansen to nail down the facts of British fandom's tangled history. Intersection, the 1995 Glasgow Worldcon, rightly chose him as Fan Guest of Honour. Vince was a wise old fan and a good friend to many of us. He is very much missed.

(Funeral at Eltham Crematorium, Falconwood, at 11am on 7 Dec. No flowers. Suggested alternative: a donation to The Arthritis Research Foundation, Copeman House, St Mary's Court, St. Mary's Gate, Chesterfield, S41 7TD ... which is working on what first afflicted Vince.)

• IAN GUNN is mourned by Karen Pender-Gunn, to whom all sympathy. On 7 Nov she wrote: 'Tonight, at approximately 9.40 pm, in Box Hill Hospital Oncology ward, Ian died peacefully in his sleep. • Yesterday, we were married in the Box Hill Hospital chapel with about 50 friends wishing us the best. Ian lasted out the party until about 1.30 in the afternoon then returned to his room. Later in the night his condition deteriorated and this morning the registrar said we should call in family and friends. Ian was surrounded the entire day by friends and family who I am sure helped him to a peaceful and pain-free death. I had never seen anyone die and I am still in shock. I have sleeping pills to take tonight as I have not slept in three days. I have been supported by friends and family for the past few days and it has been the most enormous help to me in this time of my grief. The tears haven't started for real for me yet. • I will tell you about the wedding in further detail at a later date. Please pray with all your hearts that Ian is safe and well and finally in rest and peace after a long and painful illness.' Farewell to a thoroughly nice guy: a funny writer and a fine cartoonist already honoured by many Ditmar awards and his Fan Artist Hugo nominations in 1996, 1997 and 1998. Lucy Sussex adds that Ian's funeral went just as he had wished it, 'colourful and godless being the best description.' Bright clothes were required all round, and an evening party in Ian's memory released many helium balloons with attached Gunn drawings.

• BOB KANE (1916-1998), comics artist and co-creator in 1939 of Batman, died suddenly at home in Los Angeles on 3 Nov. He was 82.

• PROFESSOR NICHOLAS KURTI (1908-1998) died on 24 Nov. A pioneer in cryogenic physics, he also had a fannish enthusiasm for the application of science to cooking ... and edited (with his wife Giana) *But The Crackling Is Superb*, collecting bizarre recipes and foodie essays by Royal Society members. Sample title: 'Whale's Milk for Breakfast'. Martin Hoare and I remember him fondly from Brasenose, Oxford, in the 70s.

• JOHN MILLARD, long-time Toronto fan, chair of Torcon II (the 1973 Canadian Worldcon) and also chair for a decade of the Friends of the [Judith] Merrill Collection, died in hospital on 28 Nov. He was 82. [YP]

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