

# Ansible



## Ansible 141 April 1999

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**A FOOTNOTE** to Iain Banks's #5 placing in the BBC 'Millennium's Top Writers' poll: 'Compare the popular vote in the poll Random House took at their website as an adjunct to their juried list of 100 Best 20th-Century Novels in English. Ayn Rand has 4 of the top ten, L.Ron Hubbard has 3, and Charles de Lint features prominently.' (Richard Brandt)

### The Unstrung Harp

**Michael Bishop** was alarmed by A140 ... 'Connie Willis may want to destroy the last surviving copies of *Worlds of Fantasy* (No. 3, 1970-71) containing her first story "Santa Titicaca", but that same issue features an early sale of mine, "If a Flower Could Eclipse", and I'd appreciate it if readers would send tear sheets of this novelette to me before accepting Connie's offer of a large fee to destroy the issue in front of her.'

**John Clute** explains the philosophy of the Richard Evans Award, to be presented for the first time at Eastercon ... 'The Richard Evans Award is given to a writer who has published several notable works of fiction over an extended period, but who has enjoyed significantly more critical than commercial success for this accomplishment. The Award is meant to bring attention to that gap—between critical acclaim and commercial reward—which marks the careers of many of the finest authors in the English language. Although it is given only to writers whose lives and careers have confirmed the gap, the Richard Evans Award is not meant as a lifetime-achievement award. It is given to writers in the full prime of their careers, writers who are actively continuing the lifework that critics and other readers have admired and loved.'

**Mary Gentle** was briefly rumoured (on the net) to be died. Having left herself carefully all over, she believes this is incorrect.

**Josh Kirby**, interrogated about certain 1960s cover paintings credited to 'Ron Kirby', broke down and confessed to having been born Ronald William Kirby. Whence the nickname? 'When I was at Art School, some wag thought I painted like Sir Joshua Reynolds!'

**Teresa Nielsen Hayden** quoted a sure-fire covering letter designed with great skill to penetrate the editorial defences at Tor: 'I think you'll find this a cut above the usual crap Tor publishes.' [BD]

**Terry Pratchett** has nervously stopped reading or contributing to alt.fan.pratchett: 'There was so much speculation about future plots and story points, some of which had actually collided with stuff I was planning or, in some cases, had actually written, that it was getting problematical. There had been one or two "suggestions" that I used stuff from afp or, to put it another way, that what I actually wrote coincided with a guess made by one of hundreds all people *all trying* to guess or suggest what I'd write next, that I could see problems ahead—not legal ones, just a lot of wretched arguing. I think fanfic and speculation is an integral part of fandom and of a newsgroup like this. It's just not a good idea for the author to be there while it's happening.'

**Fay Weldon**, introducing that recent reprint of *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*, reckons that Philip K.Dick somehow makes more sense today than he ever did in his own time to mere sf fans: 'His fans are not the brightest, but now he has an intellectual following.' [SC]

### Conny-co

1 Apr • **Shock Horror Lapse!** For the first time since Sept 91, the traditional first-Thursday London meeting has no *Ansible* distribution. 'Chris Bell shouldn't have put Easter so early in the month,' complained the haggard, ashen-faced (etc) editor as he left for Reconvene.

10 Apr • **Ananke** (magick/Golden Dawn), Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq, Holborn, London. 2pm-9pm. GoH Alan Moore, others. £15 at door.

30 Apr - 3 May • **Supernova** (Trek), Jarvis Piccadilly Hotel, Manchester. £45 reg. Contact (SAE) 4 Burford Corner, Westhumble St, Dorking, Surrey, RH5 6BS.

9 May • **Fantasy Fair**, Cresset Exhibition Centre, Peterborough. 10:30am-4pm. Contact Bruce King, 01480 216372.

20-24 May • **Trinity** (Eurocon), Dortmund, Germany. £33 reg, cheques to 'German Conventions'. Contact UK agent Mike Cheater at 42 Elm Grove, Southsea, Hants, PO5 1JG.

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

4-6 Jun • **Avalon** (Trek), Meadowside Centre, Burton upon Trent. New dates, new venue, new guest list. £50 reg or £20/day. Contact (SAE) 28 Yew Tree Rd, Hatton, Derby, DE65 5EX.

7-9 Jul 00 • **Nexus 2000** (media), Hilton National Hotel, Bristol. GoH Walter Koenig et. Contact (SAE) 1 Lullington Rd, Knowle, Bristol, BS4 2LH. 0117 983 9603.

27-9 Jul 00 • **Construction** (conrunning), probably Bristol, Cardiff or Blackpool. Contact 32 Theobald Rd, Cardiff, CF5 1LP.

28-31 Jul 00 • **Discworld Convention '02**, Radisson Edwardian, Heathrow (provisionally). GoH: usual. Darkly announces that the main DWcon 98 organizers 'will not be permitted' to work on DWcon3. New contact address: PO Box 189, Patchway, Bristol, BS32 8YE. [TWK]

**Rumblings • San Francisco in '02** ... this Worldcon bid is hedging its bets with a second bid (same committee) for a site in San Jose, California, since their San Francisco venue has begun to demand unacceptable conditions and concessions. Shades of *Slan* or *The Man Who Was Thursday*, with 'opposing' factions run by the same Secret Masters.

### Infinitely Improbable

**Publishers and Sinners.** It's probably unsafe for me to so much as mention a certain on-line bookshop for which I review sf: contributors must now sign a non-disclosure agreement rather more terrifying than the Official Secrets Act. This document's legalese is impenetrable, but has been helpfully translated for me by [HugeSouthAmericanRiver.co.uk](http://HugeSouthAmericanRiver.co.uk): 'As a reviewer you cannot disclose any information about which titles you are reviewing for us, anyone you are interviewing for us, any features you know we are going to be running, how many books you review for us or how much you get paid for doing so.' Gorblyme.

**Random Fandom.** *John Bangsund* entered hospital on 4 Mar with serious problems (fluid in lungs) caused by heart disease: he had been barely able to phone Sally Yeoland, who arranged the ambulance that probably saved his life. He was discharged after nine days, and is out of immediate danger. • *KIM Campbell* had surgery for cancer of the oesophagus on 23 Mar. The operation was successful and the outlook is good: 'This growth has been caught before it started to cause trouble of its own, it is self contained and I am getting Gold Standard service.' May all continue well. • *Tommy Ferguson* is now UK agent for the Toronto '03 Worldcon bid, and wants your money at Eastercon. There are rumours abounding that I will host a bid party, dressed up in my bar person's outfit from Allen's Bar and Restaurant in Toronto (where I used to work) and doing proper bar person stuff—mixing drinks, making cocktails, getting pissed etc. If you've ever wondered what the Freemasons look like behind closed doors, my uniform "pinny" will reveal all. Flee for the hills! • *Steve Holland's* 'Production Hell' column of film news 'is homeless for the first time in its life. *SFX 50* has its last appearance. Originally published in *Comic World*, the column transferred to *SFX*, where it ran from issue 1.' Steve hopes to hear from enterprising, wealthy publishers: 01206 560802. • *Roz Kaveny* underwent a gall-bladder operation in London Hospital on 16 Mar, and was soon convalescing at home. 'How the absence of a gall bladder affects the Kaveny reviewing style remains to be seen,' mused Alex Stewart. Pat Cadigan answered this one after her own op: 'I still have limitless supplies of gall. I'm just not keeping it in a bladder any more. You dog.'

**Thog's Durlon Science Masterclass.** Jeffrey Willerth, former Associate Producer of *Babylon 5*, enthuses (in the official *BS* magazine) about special effects in a space battle: 'I'm particularly amazed by the audio, being able to hear a laser blast originate at one end of the screen and travel across to blow something up on the other.' [MH]

**R.I.P. Lee Falk** (1905-1999), creator of the comic strips *The Phantom* and *Mandrake the Magician*, died in Manhattan on 13 March. [SH] • **Stanley Kubrick** (1928-1999) died unexpectedly on 8 March, aged 70. It's hard to add much to mass-media coverage of the reclusive celebrity director who gave us *Dr Strangelove*, 2001, *A Clockwork Orange* and *The*



*Shining*. Presumably it is now unlikely that we'll ever see *AI*, his future robots-and-global-warming film project distantly based on Brian Aldiss's 'Super-Toys Last All Summer Long'—on whose screenplay Aldiss, the late Bob Shaw and Ian Watson had all worked and suffered varying degrees of unquotable frustration. (Spies tell me that Ian has now sold an article full of these reminiscences to *The New Yorker*.)

**As Others See Us.** 'The decline in American pride, patriotism, and piety can be directly attributed to the extensive reading of so-called "science fiction" by our young people. This poisonous rot about creatures not of God's making, societies of "aliens" without a good Christian among them, and raw sex between unhuman beings with three heads and God alone knows what sort of reproductive apparatus keeps our young people from realizing the true will of God.' (Jerry Falwell, 'Can Our Young People Find God in the Pages of Trashy Magazines? No, Of Course Not', *Reader's Digest* Aug 85) [MJW]

**Gory Awards.** *International Horror Guild Awards* ... NOVEL Thomas Tessier, *Fog Heart*. FIRST NOVEL Caitlin Kiernan, *Silk*; Michael Marano, *Dawn Song*. COLLECTION John Shirley, *Black Butterflies: A Flack on the Dark Side*. ANTHOLOGY Stephen Jones & David Sutton, *Dark Terrors 4*. LONG FORM Peter Straub, 'Mr Club and Mr Cuff'. SHORT FORM Lucy Taylor, 'Dead Blue'. NONFICTION David Pringle (ed.), *St James Guide to Horror, Ghost, & Gothic Writers*. GRAPHIC *Transmetropolitan: Back on the Street*. PUBLICATION Hellnotes. ARTIST Edward Gorey. MOVIE *Gods and Monsters*. TELEVISION *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. Additionally, Ray Bradbury was officially declared to be a 'Living Legend'.

**Outraged Letters** ... *The Arthritis Research Campaign* sent thanks for the 'very kind gesture' of £220 donated by various fans through me (I converted the dollars, that's all) in memory of Vince Clarke. ● *Paul DiFilippo* has an *Interzone* Language Lesson: 'Recently, reading Hodgson's *Carnacki the Ghost-Finder*, I came across this phrase in the story "The Horse of the Invisible": "... my body extraordinarily rigid and pringling ..." Intrigued, I turned to my unabridged *OED*: "pringle, verb intransitive, to have a prickly and tingling sensation." Not sure of the exact relevance of all this, but thought that inquiring minds ought to know.' ● *Simon R.Green*: 'Nice to see Whitley Strieber is still pushing UFO awareness. I think part of it is pique. They came thousands of light years to play protologist, and after he let them have their way with his ass ... they never write, they never phone ...' ● *Mike Scott Rohan* offers measured egoboo: 'I keep *The Silence of the Langford* in the upstairs loo—I almost said in the hope that some of the genius might rub off, but perhaps in the circumstances ...' ● *Keith Walker* says his revived *Fanzine Fanatique* will maintain expected standards: 'Just to reassure yourself and your readers who might fear that *FF* reviews just might become readable (terrifying thought) that I am at random able to turn almost legible English into some kind of Greek script. I've not quite mastered the knack yet but am still working on perfecting the technique.'

**Fanfandery.** *Vijay Bowen*, US TAFF delegate, reached England on 27 Mar; after Liverpool she's visiting Birmingham and Cambridge. 'I understand that the Cambridge fans intend to attempt to drown me, in some arcane ritual called "punting"—is this usual?' ● **GUFF** was boosted by Claire Brialey's and Mark Plummer's *A GUFF Spotter's Handbook*, subjecting candidates Steve Davies, Julian Headlong and Paul Kincaid to fans' probing questions about their candidacies: 'How many roads must a man walk down? Free for SAE, though a GUFF donation probably wouldn't come amiss: 26 Northampton Rd, Croydon, Surrey, CR0 7HA. ● *Morgan Gallagher* gloats: 'As the accounts for The Wrap Party are finalised, we are handing six thousand pounds over to Water-Aid, who think this is rather cool. We think it's rather cool too.'

**Small Press.** The unofficial Pratchett fanzine *The Wizard's Knob* grumbles that after bookshops' complaints (of noise, etc), Transworld have 'banned' fan outfits from selling stuff to queues at TP signings.

**Hazel's Language Lessons:** Cumberland Dialect. *Thoom bumper*, one who, closing his fist firmly, but with the thumb sticking out, fiercely drives it against the buttocks of another. *Popple*, agricultural term applied to the final stage in defecation when the terminal section of the rectum is forcibly contracted by the action of the levator ani and other perineal muscles. *Wucks!* meaningless exclamation. All in E.W.Prevost, *Supplement to the Glossary of the Dialect of Cumberland*, 1905 [KH] ... a volume which also provided our con list heading: *Conny-co*, see *Hee bo leep*. I can't bear to spoil the latter by actually looking it up.

**C.o.A.** *Paul Barnett* (from 15 Apr), c/o Pam Scoville, 330 West 45th St, Suite 9D, New York, NY 10036, USA. *David V.Barrett*, 61 Kingsland Rd, Plaistow, London, E13 9NX. *Damien Broderick*, 2 King St, Coburg, Victoria 3058, Australia. *Keith Brooke/Infinity Plus*, 46 Sydney St, Brighthelmsea, Essex CO7 0BE. *Lise Eisenberg*, Bowling Green Station, PO

Box 1886, New York, NY 10274, USA. *Alexandr & Helen Vasytkivsky*, PO Box 189, Kiev 252025, Ukraine.

**Varley Sale.** *John Varley* is feeling the pinch and hopes to raise a few dollars by selling his duplicates and foreign editions at bargain prices. Including some exotic: 'I have a lovely hardcover called *Hvystti, Robinson Crusoe*, in Finnish. It's odd, because I don't remember selling Finnish rights to anything.' Details (SAE/IRC): John Varley, 1018 SE Belmont, Portland, Oregon 97214, USA; e-mail JOHNVARLEY@aol.com.

**Group Gropes.** *Mark Young* hopes that Mon-night Reading sf meetings will move from The Hope Pub with its lousy service and miserable staff: 'A member of the bar staff loughed with a customer last night, so naturally she will be sacked by next week.' Decisions eagerly awaited.

**25 Years Ago.** Tynecon, the 1974 British Eastercon in Newcastle, broke all past UK records with a stupefying 415 fans in attendance. (London Worldcon figures had been about 250 in 1957, 350 in 1965.)

**Culture Corner.** The '1st European Biannual of Cultural Journals' (8-13 Jun) wants 2 copies of this *Ansible* plus 2 back issues that 'exemplify its cultural slant'. Other cultured fanzines may be rushed to Ditta Masini srl, Via Albertazzi 18, Genova 16149, Italy ... deadline 15 May.

**Þþag's Masterclass.** *Dept of We All Get Mornings Like This*: 'Enoch came weeping down the stair, great wracking sobs that shook the banisters and resounded all the way into the breakfast nook, where Carter, Hope, and Chant, still morose at the locking of the Green Door, ate a meal of despair around the claw-footed table, in the form of marmalade, toast, and scrambled eggs.' (James Stoddard, *The High House*, 1998) [MHJ] ● *Dept of Hard Science*, or how the hero can walk over a Bridge of Light: 'Through some subterranean passageway, the hissing, bellowing gas travelled to the chasm; the rocks there were filled with the radio-active ore; the gas was ionized, and as it spouted across the abyss, the molecules, the atoms that had been liquid became electrified ions, solids—countless billions of infinitesimal bits of metal or mineral, moving, to be sure, streaming across the chasm, but under such pressure, so closely packed, that they formed a span as strong and unyielding as solid metal!' (A.Hyatt Verrill, *The Bridge of Light*, 1950) [BA]

## The Social Whirl

*Tommy Ferguson* recorded Mecon 2 (Dublin, 13-14 Mar) highlights ... 'Dave's Lall's Saturday night room party, where there was no booze and no music and 3 people (including Dave) turned up. ● The fact that Mecon has the most sexist committee member on the planet in the form of Julia Ritchie, whose short skirts and knee length boots make up for her incessant advocacy of the Action MS charity. ● The Disco on Sat night: "Truly appalling," said one GoH whose name is not Ian McDonald. "Arrgh...!" said another, whose name is not Michael Marshall Smith. One attendee, whose name is not Tommy Ferguson, said "Fer fucksake people..." This event illustrated, once and for all, that fans can't dance. ● Surprising amounts of Real Ale and Guinness were drunk throughout the weekend and but for the fact that Sunday was Mother's Day a lot more would have been drunk. A good con all round: a large Dublin crowd turned up, numbers were over 100 and I'd look out for this one next year—11-12 Mar. Well done that committee.' [TF]

*Maureen Kincaid Speller* was startled to find that despite ever-watchful feline guardians, a secret 40th-birthday party had been smuggled into her very home on Sat 20 Mar. Certain sinister elements of Croydon fandom had arranged that she would return from her morning treat—a balloon flight with Paul Kincaid—to a house overflowing with booze, fans and the fabulous Fishlifter Buffet. 'You bastards!' she rapturously cried. Winner of the traditional Longest Journey to Party prize: Moshe Feder from New York. Toasts and many of the guests were drunk.

*Pam Scoville & Paul Barnett* were married in Edinburgh on 27 Mar. At the reception, semi-official photographer N.Lee Wood was distracted from bride and groom by the fascinating spectacle of Barnett relatives in kilts, and took 5,271,009 shots of these. Animator Sue Perrotto improved on mere photography with cartoons of a kilted and Paul-like Elmer Fudd clutching a Pam-like Bugs Bunny in bridal dress. Various Barnett family members unnervered me by asking—after reading the co-winner's name from the *Fantasy Encyclopedia* award trophies tastefully strewn around—'Are you John Clute?' By way of honeymoon, the happy pair are selflessly doing Reconvene's daily newsletter (though Pam declines to be 'Handmaiden of Þþag'). It is a far, far better thing ...

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