

# Ansible



## Ansible 166 May 2001

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**PARAGON.** Despite advance worries about a hotel on a remote motorway junction surrounded by foot-and-mouth quarantine, the 2001 UK Eastercon seemed rather successful. The sheer weirdness of the Hanover Hotel helped, with its window displays of extraordinary kitsch ('Have you seen the garrotted baby, the sperm balloons, the Marilyn Monroe with a rooster on her head?'—Cheryl Morgan) and oddities like the mirror-ceilinged lobby with a statue of Poseidon to whose mighty trident fans surreptitiously affixed a giant slice of toast. (We name no names, but Chris Bell looked as if she knew something.) David B.Wake confirms that the programme's highlight was the dramatic extravaganza 20:01—*A Sunday Odyssey*, written by and starring David B.Wake, and cruelly renamed 20:25 after a few technical hitches; the mind reeled at dancing monoliths and a final dystopian vision of the actor-manager himself clad only in a vast nappy. *Arsible* spent too much time in the bar but also enjoyed the fan room, masterminded by a singularly genial Greg Pickersgill and deeply littered with arcane fannish memorabilia. One amusing vignette was D.West's stern refusal even to smile as others roared at the slide show of hideous past embarrassments presented by fan guests Claire Brialey and Mark Plummer. To the alarm of GoH Stephen M.Baxter, a debate about how future fan rooms might be presented led to my memory-challenged suggestion that they should be dedicated to 'The Stephen R.Baxter Appreciation Society', with us devoted 'Baxies' wearing glowing blue rings of exotic matter on our foreheads. Steve later reported from this parallel continuum: 'I was moved to be present at the birth of the Stephen R.Baxter Appreciation Society. Speaking to me through his exotic-matter-encrusted ringpiece, the great man wishes to commend his followers for their obeisance, notes that the universe he inhabits remains a warm and fluffy place, assures us that the stump is healing nicely, thank you, and urges us always to remember: In Case Of Emergency, Break Laws Of Physics.' Other guests Mike Scott Rohan and Lianne Norman somehow managed to escape hideous Langford gaffes; Mike deliriously babbled, 'They gave me an executive suite—two loos, a PC in the living room and three rubber ducks in the bath. Suddenly I understood Howard Hughes a little better....' • **The Usual Awards** were presented. **BSFA**: NOVEL Mary Gentle, *Ash: A Secret History*; SHORT Peter F.Hamilton, 'The Suspect Genome' (*Interzone* 156); ARTWORK Dominic Harman, *Hideaway* (*IZ* 157). *Doc Weir*: Noel Collyer, ingeniously lured from the bar by claims that police wanted to interrogate him. *Richard Evans Memorial Award* for writers whose critical acclaim drowns out the feeble tinkling of the cash register: Gwyneth Jones. *Paper Tiger* art show award: Jay Hurst. • Best personal egoboo: signing my first copies of the reissued *The Leaky Establishment* (Introduction By Terry Pratchett), rushed to Paragon by splendid Ben Jeapes of Big Engine. Best forgotten: four days of the identical hotel cheap-food menu, cheap beyond all possible cheapness, and tasting that way too. • Total body count: 814 at last report. Lots of thanks to Paragon's hard-working committee. Something tells me the Eastercon may return one day to the Hanover Hotel.

### Secret Places and Mean Men

**Peter F.Hamilton** was rapidly informed of his BSFA award: 'Eric Brown who kindly picked it up for me thought this was important enough for me to be told without delay. My apologies to Eric for sounding less than gracious when the phone went at 11:30 that night, while I was still on my honeymoon.'

**Michael Moorecock**, as always, provided Astral Knowledge and True Facts: 'Re Finnish mosquitoes. Many years ago if you had been crossing the Arctic tundra up where Finland and Sweden meet, you would have seen a man who appeared to be made entirely of mosquitoes. I, too, Langford, made light of the Finnish mosquito. It is the only part of the world where they sell mosquito guns. They are two gauges up from elephant guns. I climbed Portafjellet, the highest local mountain, simply in order to get away from the mosquitoes. This is true. The last mosquito tried to make it up to the altitude to follow me—and failed. I had the considerable pleasure of sitting two thirds of

the way up a glacier, creaking with water running under it, and watching the last mosquito make a brave attempt to reach me. It fell back. And then all I had to worry about was getting home to London.'

**Philip Pullman** 'was named the British Booksellers Association's Author of the Year, prevailing over J.K.Rowling, Jamie Oliver, Ian Rankin, Joanne Harris, and Jacqueline Wilson.' (*Bookseller*) [PL]

**Anthony Roberts** is suing Turner Prize nominee Glenn Brown for basing *The Loves of Shepherds 2000* on AR's 1974 cover art for *Double Star*. Chris Foss has a similar complaint about Brown 'appropriating' his cover design for *Diary of a Spaceperson* (1990). A Tate spokesman had compared Brown's approach to 'Constable looking at a piece of summer landscape' (i.e., sf book-jacket illustrations are environment, not Art).

### Confest

To 3 June • **Dan Dare Display**, Croydon Clocktower, with spaceship models and replica of Frank Hampson's studio. Info 0208 253 1030.

6 May • **Fantasy Fair 11**, Cresset Exhibition Centre, Bretton, Peterborough. Contact 5 Arran Close, Holmes Chapel, Crewe, CW4 7QP.

19 May • **2001: A Space Odyssey Event**, Science Museum. Organized by Pat Cadigan. A day of wall-to-wall Pat (plus trace elements of ACC) ending with the invitation-only Clarke Award presentation.

23 May • **BSFA Open Meeting**, The Rising Sun pub, Cloth Fair, London EC2. 7pm on, fans present from 5pm. With Alastair Reynolds.

25-7 May • **Eclectic 21** (multimedia), Holiday Inn, Leicester. £50 reg, £35 under-18s; day rates £30 and £25. Cheques to Bats 2000 Ltd. Contact 47 Bennetts Ct, Bristol, BS37 4XH.

25-27 May • **Second** (Secon 2): De Vere Hotel, Swindon. £25 reg to extended date 15 May; £30 at door or £12/day (£6 after 6pm). Cheques to 'Secon', 19 Hill Court, Cheltenham, Glos, GL52 3JJ.

14-16 Sep • **Cavalcade** (costuming), Whitby Spa Pavilion, Whitby, N.Yorks. £27.50 reg; £30 from 31 May; £35 at door. Contact Chandlers House, Green Lane, Whitby, N.Yorks, YO22 4EU. 01947 821711.

23 Sep • **British Fantasy Society 30th Birthday Bash** (instead of Fantasycon), Champagne Charlies, 17 The Arches, Villiers St, London, WC2N 4NN. 9am-late. GoH Hugh Lamb, Simon Clark. £15 reg, £10 for BFS members booking in advance: cheques to Fantasycon. Contact Beech House, Chapel Lane, Moulton, Cheshire, CW9 8PQ.

5-7 Oct • **Animecon UK**, Adelphi Hotel, Liverpool. GoH Gilles Poitras, Helen McCarthy. £30 reg to 30 Jun, £35 to 30 Sep, £40 at door. Contact PO Box 30564, London, SW16 1WZ.

9-11 Nov, **Armadacon**, Cophthorne Hotel, Plymouth. GoH Tom Holt; more TBA. £27 reg to 1 Sep; £18 Sat only, £12 Sun. Contact 4 Gleneagle Ave, Mannamead, Plymouth, PL3 5HL. 01752 252827.

9-11 Nov, **Novacon**, Quality Hotel, Bentley, Walsall. GoH Gwyneth Jones. Now £35 reg to 27 Oct, £40 at door. Contact 379 Myrtle Road, Sheffield, S2 3HQ.

8-10 Mar 02 • **McCon V**, Senior Common Room, Queen's University of Belfast. Guests TBA. Contact 30 Bendigo St, Belfast BT6 8GD.

29 Mar - 1 Apr 02 • **Helicon 2** (Eastercon), Hotel de France, Jersey. Now £35 reg, £18 supp/junior. Contact 33 Meyrick Drive, Wash Common, Newbury, Berks, RG14 6SY.

18-21 Apr 03 • **Seacon '03** (Eastercon), somewhere: Harrogate, Scarborough and Birmingham are reportedly under investigation. £25 reg (£15 supp) to 1 Nov. Official postal address still awaited.

**Rumblings. UK in 2005.** The bid newsletter at Paragon reported 960 paid-up supporters, 690 of them North American and 96 UK...

### Infinitely Improbable

**As Others See Us.** 'Science fiction is a part of the Communist plan to dominate Western culture. Queen Elizabeth herself has been known to pen "sci-fi" under a pseudonym.'—Lyndon LaRouche (*ES* 6 Apr). [MB]

**R.I.P. Harry Secombe** (1921-2001), the inimitable Neddy Seagoon of BBC Radio's much-loved *The Goon Show*, died on 11 April. [HO] He was 79. • **Beatrice Straight** (1916-2001), US character actress who played the paranormal investigator in *Poltergeist* (1982), has died aged

86. [DK] • *Pierre Versins* (1923-2000), French sf author and scholar, died on 19 April aged 78. Pierre-Paul Durastanti writes: "Writer, fan-died, critic, and author of the *Encyclopedie des Voyages Extraordinaires, de l'Utopie et de la Science Fiction* (special Worldcon award, 1973), he died peacefully in his sleep in Avignon, France—his home town, to which he'd returned after living long years in Switzerland, where he founded the SF museum La Maison d'Ailleurs." • 'Judy Watson, wife of Ian Watson, died at home on Easter Saturday morning of heart failure due to a sudden overwhelming infectious exacerbation of emphysema from which she suffered progressively for the past few years. She bequeathed her body to the Department of Human Anatomy of the University of Oxford.' (Ian Watson, to whom all sympathy.)

**More Awards.** *Nebulas*: NOVEL *Darwin's Radio*, Greg Bear. NOVELLA 'Goddesses', Linda Nagata. NOVELETTE 'Daddy's World', Walter Jon Williams. SHORT 'macs', Terry Bisson. SCRIPT *Galaxy Quest*. Already announced: GRAND MASTER Philip José Farmer. AUTHOR EMERITUS (i.e. 'retired', a flagrant lie) Robert Sheckley. • *Philip K. Dick Award*: Michael Marshall Smith's *Only Forward* (1994) won as best original sf paperback published in the USA in 2000. • *The Cordwainer Smith Rediscovery Award* is to be an 'annual literary award for forgotten SF classics', chosen by a jury which can also honour worthy contemporary writers.

**Outraged Letters.** Everyone pointed out that SFWA's 'Author Emeritus' was instituted in 1995, not 2000; doctors blame *Ansible* editorial brain death. *Lawrence Watt-Evans* (not officially speaking for SFWA) clarified: 'It isn't an award. Or at least it wasn't meant to be. The idea was to find someone who had been prominent in the field once but is no longer, and let him know that he isn't forgotten. It wasn't meant to be a second-string award for people not good enough to be Grand Masters; I think most of us would consider that tacky, to say the least. • Robert Sheckley is absolutely and unquestionably a completely inappropriate choice. Many of us in SFWA know this and are severely unhappy at his selection.' • *Guy Haley* of *SFX* is used to the title being read as *SEX* (an error often artfully encouraged by cover design): 'Now things have taken a more sinister turn. The real world is impinging on our sci-fi paradise. Over the last 3 months we have had half a dozen letters from Ghanaian men and women wishing to advertise themselves for sex/marriage. These people are clearly desperate—one woman wrote that she is using some awful cream to make her white and listed her number one hobby as "lovemaking".' • *Mike Woods* of *Frontiers* (Waterstone's sf webzine) reassures: 'Don't believe what you may read in the *Bookseller* or *Times* business pages about us disappearing.'

**Hugo Nominations.** NOVEL (381 ballots) *A Storm of Swords* by George R.R. Martin, *Calculating God* by Robert J. Sawyer, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* by J.K. Rowling, *Midnight Robber* by Nalo Hopkinson, *The Sky Road* by Ken MacLeod. • NOVELLA (229, 6 nominees owing to tie) 'A Roll of the Dice' by Catherine Asaro (*Analog* 7/00), 'Oracle' by Greg Egan (*Asimov's* 7/00), 'Radiant Green Star' by Lucius Shepard (*Asimov's* 8/00), 'Seventy-Two Letters' by Ted Chiang (*Vanishing Acts*), 'The Retrieval Artist' by Kristine Kathryn Rusch (*Analog* 6/00), 'The Ultimate Earth' by Jack Williamson (*Analog* 12/00). • NOVELETTE (237) 'Agape Among the Robots' by Allen Steele (*Analog* 5/00), 'Generation Gap' by Stanley Schmidt (*Artemis* Spring 00), 'Millennium Babies' by Kristine Kathryn Rusch (*Asimov's* 1/00), 'On the Orion Line' by Stephen Baxter (*Asimov's* 10/00), 'Redchapel' by Mike Resnick (*Asimov's* 12/00). • SHORT (295) 'Different Kinds of Darkness' by David Langford (*F&SF* 1/00), 'Kaddish for the Last Survivor' by Michael A. Burstein (*Analog* 11/00), 'Moon Dogs' by Michael Swanwick (*Moon Dogs*), 'The Elephants on Neptune' by Mike Resnick (*Asimov's* 5/00), 'The Gravity Mine' by Stephen Baxter (*Asimov's* 4/00). (Gosh wow!) • RELATED BOOK (213) *Concordance to Cordwainer Smith, 3rd Ed* by Anthony R. Lewis, *Greetings from Earth: The Art of Bob Eggleton* by Bob Eggleton & Nigel Suckling, *Putting It Together: Turning Sow's Ear Drafts Into Silk Purse Stories* by Mike Resnick, *Robert A. Heinlein: A Reader's Companion* by James Gifford, *Terry Pratchett: Guilty of Literature* ed. Andrew M. Butler, Edward James & Farah Mendlesohn. • DRAMATIC (279) *Chicken Run*; *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*; *Frank Herbert's Dune*; *Frequency*; *X-Men*. • PRO EDITOR (288) Ellen Datlow, Gardner Dozois, David G. Hartwell, Stanley Schmidt, Gordon Van Gelder. • PRO ARTIST (246) Jim Burns, Bob Eggleton, Frank Kelly Freas, Donato Giancola, Michael Whelan. • SEMIPRO-ZINE (241) *Interzone*, *Locust*, *New York Review of SF*, *SF Chronicle*, *Speculations*. • FANZINE (194) *Challenger*, *File 770*, *Mimosa*, *Plotka*, *Stet*. (Haha! *Ansible* escapes the karmic wheel at last.) • FAN WRITER (201) Bob Devney, Mike Glycer, Dave Langford, Evelyn C. Leeper, Steven H Silver. • FAN ARTIST (127) Sheryl Birkhead, Brad Foster, Teddy Harvia, Sue Mason, Taral Wayne. • JOHN W. CAMPBELL AWARD (201) James L.

Cambias, Thomas Harlan, Douglas Smith, Kristine Smith, Jo Walton. • PS: The 1999 *The Sky Road* appears thanks to an experimental rule change allowing an extra year's eligibility to works published outside the USA. Steven Silver asked whether anyone had previously had a fiction and fan nomination in the same year: Terry Carr just missed this, but I traced someone who did it in 1970. My soul mate. Piers Anthony.

**Happy Media.** Terry Pratchett's 'Bromeliad' Trilogy (*Truckers*, *Diggers* and *Wings*) has been sold to DreamWorks for a computer-generated feature film from Andrew Adamson and Joe Stillman. [PL]

**Random Fandom.** Tom Anderson spotted an sf moment in *Bridget Jones's Diary* (the movie): a phone call in which BJ insightfully describes Kafka's work as 'positively Vonnegutesque'. • *Andy Croft & Sue Miller* were married on 17 March in Portsmouth Registry Office. Andy: 'It was a light hearted event being the day after Red Nose Day and for some strange reason the groom kept being seen in one ...' • *Cuddles* thanks Paragon for noble support of Electrical Eggs UK disabled-access efforts. • *John Foyster*, working far from home in Kuala Lumpur, was alarmed on his 60th birthday (13 April) by the arrival of the awesome 72pp 'Foystschrif' festzine prepared for this momentous occasion by Yvonne Rousseau with the aid of some 40 contributors. • *Chris Hill* has escaped the curse of BSFA awards administration, which now passes to Tanya Brown. • *The Artist Formerly Known As Karen Pender-Gunn* writes: 'My new first name is KRin (note the capitalized second initial).' • *Lee Smoore*, utterly famous former US fan, was in the Australian 'The Weakest Link' on 19 April: 'Her bio read 51, Health and Nutrition Consultant from East Perth. She got one of her two questions right in the first round; the one she missed was "What does fax stand for?" She was then voted off by six votes out of the nine.' [AS/ASFB]

**Retro Hugo** nominations for 1950 work are too voluminous to list, but here are the novels: *The Dying Earth* by Jack Vance, *Farmer in the Sky* by Robert A. Heinlein, *First Lensman* by E.E. Smith, *Pebble in the Sky* by Isaac Asimov, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* by C.S. Lewis.

**Fanfunderly.** Janice Gelb's 1999 DUFF trip report is available in the UK from Mark Plummer, 14 Northway Rd, Croydon, Surrey, CR0 6JE. 40pp A4; £3.50 inc p&p. Cheques to Mark; all proceeds to DUFF.

**Small Press.** *Sirius Fiction* critical chapbooks: *Snake's-hands*, essays on John Crowley, 63pp, \$6 USA, \$8 abroad; *Cicerone Sinister*, on Gene Wolfe's *Fifth Head of Cerberus*, and *Peace Indexicon*, on Wolfe's *Peace*, each 32pp, \$5.50/\$6.50. PO Box 628, Albany, CA 94706-0248, USA.

**In Typo Veritas.** Paper Tiger's 2001 catalogue lists Ron Miller, co-editor of their Chesley Bonestell book, as author of 'the Hugo-nominated *The Grand Trout*'. 'A whole new genre within SF', burbles *Chris Murphy*, 'although fishing stories are traditionally classified as fantasy.'

**C.o.A.** *Mike Cheater*, 11 Walmer Rd, Fratton, Portsmouth, Hants, PO1 5AS. *Kim Huett*, 29/63 Pearson St, Holder, ACT 2611, Australia. *Paul Treadaway*, 22 York St, Cambridge, CB1 2PY. *Peggy White* has moved to sheltered accommodation in Belfast and is sending personal COA letters to her correspondents.

**Hunt the Mutant!** OED researcher Sue Surova seeks early uses of the words 'mutant' and 'mutation' in the sf sense (abnormal features/abilities) rather than the scientific one. Earliest so far found: 'mutation in "The Man Who Evolved", Edmond Hamilton, 1931; mutant in "Niedbalski's Mutant", Spencer Lane, *Astounding*, 5/38.' If you can do better, rush the fruits of your erudition to bohinka@riconnect.com.

**Group Gropes.** New sf pub meeting now launched in Nottingham: White Hart, 29 Gregory St, Lenton; 8pm on first Wed each month.

**Thug's Mastertlass.** *Dept of Longevity*. "Peters, we are over a million years old!" he announced quietly. "When we were caught up in that double-sun explosion, we must have been carried along in its giddy orbit for over a million years! We were kept alive simply because we were in an air-locked compartment and did not do anything but sleep for most of the time, thus conserving our energy and our bodies to allow us to behave now as if we were normal men." (Terence Haile, *Galaxies Ahead*, 1963) [via BA] • *Dept of Geophysics*. 'I was now aware of the detailed history of Mu, from its beginnings as a continent sucked from under the sea by a moon that hovered over it, (revolving at the same speed as the earth's rotation, so that it appeared stationary) ...' (Colin Wilson, *The Philosopher's Stone*, 1969) • *Dept of Nebula Winners*. 'Kaye could hardly stand sitting.' (Greg Bear, *Darwin's Radio*, 1999) [PV]

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