

Ansible



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From Dave Langford, 94 London Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 5AU. ISSN 0265-9816. E-mail ansible@cix.co.uk. Fax 0705 080 1534. Logo: Dan Steffan. Cartoon: Atom. Available for SAE, dergs, gampers, grailers, leeps, feegs or melgerizers.

AS OTHERS SEE US. 'I bought Aldous Huxley's *Brave [New] World* thing, but simply can't read it. What a bore these stories of the future are.' (P.G. Wodehouse, 1932 letter in *Performing Flea*, 1953)

The Golden Years Return

Arthur C. Clarke's *Rendezvous with Rama* 'prediction' of disaster on 11 September wasn't the first, writes Debbie Notkin: 'Peter O'Donnell pre-dates Clarke. In *Sabre-Tooth* (1966), Modesty Blaise and Willie Garvin thwart a massive plot to take over Kuwait for profit. The day designated for the plot, had it not been thwarted, was Saturday 11 September.'

Ken Follett's much publicized Discworld appearance (at a cost of £2,200 for charity) is as the sinisterly scheming Doctor Follett, head of the Assassins' Guild in Terry Pratchett's just-completed *Night Watch*.

Stephen King says he's retiring after five more books. A collection and a novel this year, three more Dark Tower novels in 2003, and then: 'That's it. I'm done. Done writing books. [...] I don't want to finish up like Harold Robbins. That's my nightmare.' (*LA Times*, 27 January)

A.A. Milne, according to Public Lending Right figures, would have earned the top £6,000 from UK library borrowings in 2000-1 if not disqualified by being dead. Runners-up in the same situation were Beatrix Potter (£4,122), Shakespeare (£3,279), and Jane Austen (£3,031).

Mike Moorcock's rude words about *The Lord of the Rings* may have attracted an elvish curse. On 14 January he entered hospital 'for some sort of emergency exploration and possible bypass surgery (not heart—artery crap—heart's strong as anything, but clots seem to be result of previous surgery, so it goes). Brought low by an intrusive clot and I didn't even have to attend an sf convention.' Happily, he was soon out again and e-mailing further appreciations of J.R.R. Tolkien....

Philip Pullman won the £25,000 Whitbread Book of the Year prize on 22 January for *The Amber Spyglass*—the first 'children's' book to bag the award. Reportedly the judges took just two minutes to pick the 'overwhelming' winner: 'We did worry about giving such a literary prize to a children's book, but then we thought of C.S. Lewis and that was that,' said the chairman. There'd been heavy betting on *Spyglass* for the Whitbread despite its failure to make the Booker Prize shortlist; the bookies William Hill had nervously stopped accepting bets on the 18th. *Terry Pratchett* adds: 'Have you noticed that Mr Pullman—a nice chap, by the way—has certainly grasped one requisite for being a successful fantasy writer? He says he doesn't write fantasy, but "stark realism".'

Confliction

9 Feb • **Picocon 19**, Imperial College Union, Prince Consort Rd, London, SW7 2BB. £8 reg, students £5, ICSF £2. Too late now....

9 Feb • **Reminiscon Fifty**, Hanover Hotel, Schooner Way, Cardiff. Celebrating Lionel Fanthorpe's 50 years in print. Too late now....

11 Feb • **Reading at Borders**, Oxford St, London. Pat Cadigan, Ray Hammond, Rob Holdstock. (The 11 March guests will be Kim Stanley Robinson and Peter Straub, says La Diva Loca. 'You dog.')

20 Feb • **Skeptics in the Pub**, Florence Nightingale pub, 7:30.

27 Feb • **BSFA Open Meeting**, Rising Sun pub, Cloth Fair, London, EC1. 7pm on, fans present from 5pm. Guest speaker: er, dunno.

2-3 Mar • **Microcon**, Devonshire House, Exeter U. GoH Gwyneth Jones. Contact 79 Alphington Rd, Exeter EX2 8JE. Phone 07744023320.

8-10 Mar • **MeCoN V**, Queen's University of Belfast. £15 reg to 7 Mar 02, then £17. Contact 30 Bendigo St, Belfast BT6 8GD.

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

13 Apr • **Signs of Life**, Friends House, Euston Rd, London. Free event 10am-5pm. GoH M. John Harrison, Gwyneth Jones. Including the thrilling BSFA AGM (pre-lunch) and SF Foundation AGM (end of day), which have to be held on the UK mainland when Eastercon isn't. *Me*: 'Is that a pub?' *BSFA Person*: 'Nope—that's Friends as in Quakers....'

25-28 Oct • **Cult TV 2002** (9th annual festival), Southport Theatre and Floral Hall Complex, Merseyside, UK. Various guests, including

Terry Jones. Contact PO Box 1701, Peterborough, PE7 1ER.

18 May • **Arthur C. Clarke Award**, Science Museum, by invitation, from 6:30pm. Also panels etc arranged by Pat Cadigan, 2pm-6pm, admission free: 'As in gratis, no charge, in for nowt, nada, nil.'

Rumblings • Concourse: Eastercon 2004 bid. Choice of venues to be voted at Helicon (if another bid doesn't emerge and win): Blackpool Wintergardens, with no central con hotel, or the well-known Radisson Edwardian at Heathrow. Contact concourse@ntlworld.com.

Infinitely Improbable

Andromeda Bookshop in Birmingham, Britain's and indeed the world's oldest sf specialist shop, has closed after more than 30 years. All sympathy to Rog Peyton, Andromeda's founder and leading light—a centre of good cheer at UK convention dealers' rooms and bars for longer than I can remember. The official creditors' meeting is scheduled for 13 February in Walsall. Rog writes: 'We closed on Saturday evening, Jan 28th, after the worst two weeks trading I can ever remember.... Since the 28th we've had the shutters down and the doors locked, only allowing in anyone who knocks on the door or rings the bell. We can then serve them. Last week we took more than the previous two weeks added together!!! Crazy! Cash sales only but big discounts, I hear.'

Awards. *Arthur C. Clarke Award* shortlist for UK-published sf of 2001: *Pashazade* by Jon Courtenay Grimwood, *Fallen Dragon* by Peter F. Hamilton, *Bold as Love* by Gwyneth Jones, *The Secret of Life* by Paul McAuley, *Mappa Mundi* by Justina Robson, *Passage* by Connie Willis. The winner of the £2,002 prize (subtly linked to the year) will be announced at the Science Museum on 18 May: see events list. [PK] • *Philip K. Dick Award* nominees for best US sf paperback original of 2001: *Ship of Fools* by Richard Paul Russo, *Compass Reach* by Mark W. Tiedemann, *Divine Intervention* by Ken Wharton, *In the Company of Others* by Julie E. Czerneda, *The Ghost Sister* by Liz Williams, *Meet Me in the Moon Room* by Ray Vukcevic. Winner to be announced on 30 March. [GVG] • *BSFA Awards 2001* shortlist: *NOVEL American Gods* by Neil Gaiman, *Pashazade* by Jon Courtenay Grimwood, *Bold as Love* by Gwyneth Jones, *The Secret of Life* by Paul McAuley, *Chasm City* by Alastair Reynolds, *Lust* by Geoff Ryman. **SHORT** (all *Interzone* except as noted) 'Under the Saffron Tree' by Cherith Baldry, 'First to the Moon' (*Spectrum SF 6*) by Stephen Baxter & Simon Bradshaw, 'Children of Winter' by Eric Brown, 'Myxomatosis' by Simon Ings, 'Wind Angels' by Leigh Kennedy, 'Isabel of the Fall' by Ian MacLeod. **ARTWORK** 'Roach Motel' (*JZ166* cover) by Dominic Harman, *Omegatropic* cover by Colin Odell, *Gridlocked* cover by Steve Rawlings, *Heart of Empire* CD-Rom by Bryan Talbot, *Pashazade* cover by The Whole Hog. **NON-FICTION** *Omegatropic* by Stephen Baxter, *Terry Pratchett* by Andrew M. Butler, *Tim Burton* by Michelle LeBlanc & Colin Odell, 'Storming the Bastille' by Justina Robson, 'The Best Introduction to the Mountains' by Gene Wolfe. [TB]

Thog's Technology Masterclass. *Dept of In Space No One Can ...* 'Hidden among the brightly pigmented coatings used on the hulls were a field generator that could create the illusion of invisibility and a radiation absorption matrix, or RAM. The two would, between them, defeat sonar, radar, infra-red, and all other traditional detection methods used to trace the location of a spacecraft.' (Anne McCaffrey and Elizabeth Scarborough, *Acorna's World*, 2000) [AB]

R.I.P. *John Buscema* (1927-2002), US comics artist best known for over 25 years of drawing Conan the Barbarian, died from stomach cancer on 10 January; he was 74. • *Keith Allen Daniels* (1956-2001), US sf poet, anthologist, and founder of Anamnesis Press, died of colon cancer on 18 December. He was 45. [SS] • *Cele Goldsmith Lalli* (1933-2002), influential sf magazine editor under her unmarried name Cele Goldsmith, died in a car accident on 14 January; she was 68. As 1958-1965 editor of *Amazing* and *Fantastic* (for which she won a special 1962 Hugo), she bought first stories by Thomas Disch, Ursula Le Guin, Roger Zelazny, and other luminaries. Subsequently she spent 32 years editing *Modern Bride*, the last 20 as editor-in-chief, before retiring in 1998. [PNH] • *Astrid Lindgren* (1907-2002), Sweden's best-loved writer

of children's fiction and fantasy, died on 28 January aged 94. Landmark titles included *Pippi Longstocking* (1945) and its sequels, with their controversially nonconformist young heroine, and such high fantasies as *The Brothers Lionheart* (1973). Lindgren was by far the most widely translated and read Swedish author of the 20th century; for the Swedes, this is comparable to losing Tolkien. [JHM]

Small Press. *3SF* is to be the promised new UK sf magazine from Big Engine, edited by Liz Holliday—first issue scheduled October 2002.

• *The Small Press Guide 2002* is out, with a descriptive page for each of 348 little magazines. £9.99 (post free in UK) from Writers Bookshop, Remus House, Coltsfoot Dr, Woodston, Peterborough, PE2 9JX.

Court Circular. On 31 Jan a US court gave the Tolkien estate a preliminary injunction that blocks publication of Michael W. Perry's *Lord Of The Rings Diary: A Chronology of J.R.R. Tolkien's Best-selling Epic*, on grounds of copyright infringement. The book does sound awfully like 'Appendix B Writ Large'. [PL] • Neil Gaiman sued comics publisher Todd McFarlane on 24 Jan, claiming fraud, copyright violation, and non-payment of royalties. Allegedly McFarlane continues to use Gaiman-created *Spawn* comic characters without authorization and to make a 'wrongful claim' to Alan Moore's and Neil's *Miracleman* graphic novels, long kept out of print by related disputes. [D] • Harlan Ellison's campaign against net piracy of his work made progress last month via a legal settlement with RemarQ/Critical Path, which had continued to carry the newsgroup alt.binaries.e-book (where the pirated stories were posted) in defiance of Ellisonian complaints. [PL] His case against AOL continues.

Lesser-Known Award. Reg Burnley, a retired mechanic living in Oxford, won the local Headington Poetry Competition 2001—a fact of awesome sf significance since the runner-up, who had submitted three poems, was Brian Aldiss. [DD] 'I've been a writer for more than 50 years and you can't win them all,' twinkled the multiple Hugo winner.

Random Fandom: Sick List. *Jan Bambro*, following his colonectomy and ileostomy, takes some comfort in the fact that, despite what others may think, he can no longer be described as a complete arse-hole.' [via HB] Ian should be out of hospital by now. • Richard E. Geis e-mailed the 76th issue of *The Geis Letter* on 1 February, describing his recovery from a bout of spinal surgery on 23 January. • John Foyster has been undergoing radiotherapy for a small brain tumour found after his stroke-like experience last September. • Steven H. Silver had a successful operation for a damaged disc in mid-Jan: 'My wife claims I herniated the disk moving boxes of books back in July, but I think it happened through sympathy with my wife's labor at the end of August.'

Publishers and Sinners. US distributors Sterling sent out a new catalogue of sf titles, including the John Grant/Paper Tiger book of sf artist interviews from *The Paper Snarl*. The publicist's cover note singles out a few of these major artists: Frank Kelly Freas, Anne Sudworth, Ron Walotsky and ... Alfred E. Neuman. (The book blurb mentions that Freas painted one version of the *Mad* kid; you can imagine the rest.)

Outraged Letters. Bruce Jensen on the Foundation/Al-Qaeda saga: 'the Aum cult, the one that orchestrated the nerve gas attack in the Tokyo underground, used the Foundation series as "the blueprint for the cult's long-term plans". This comes from an interview with Hideo Murai, chief scientist of the cult, quoted in *The Cult at the End of the World* by David E. Kaplan & Andrew Marshall (1996):' • Mike Moorcock: 'Very, very sorry to hear of Sid Birchby's death. He was a very nice bloke indeed. For as long as I knew him he was a generous writer. Last time I saw him in the late 70s or early 80s he passed on a tip about somebody who was still buying Westerns. Seventy five quid a go. Which is a lot better than the fifty they used to pay. He was one of the most affable, least egocentric writers I've ever known and I'm sorry I won't be seeing him around again. Yes, reprinting that Tolkien interview (very nice of him, I thought) has sort of baffled visitors to the *Fantastic Metropolis* site—I do tend to feel a bit like the wicked witch in Hansel and Gretel, with the interview a sort of gingerbread house. In skip the little hobbitophiles and then they see they are surrounded by nasty looking blokes with baseball bats...' • Steve Sneyd nitpicks: 'Ellison's serial from '56 longest running sf one? Pish, pshaw, etc, *Rupert the Bear* started in 1936.' • Everyone took issue with Moorcock on *LOTR*, though Brian Aldiss has it both ways: 'Heartily agree with Mike Moorcock. *Lord of the Rings* may have virtues as a film (particularly for those hard of hearing), but its basis is absolute crap ... the story blunders and thunders onwards, annihilating all minds in the audience.... I enjoyed it.'

C.O.A. Dave Clements, Flat 52, Keeling House, Claredale St, Bethnal Green, London, E2 6PG. Chris Donaldson & Paul Oldroyd, Guernsey Farmhouse, Haydon End Lane, Haydon Wick, Swindon, SN25 1JF. Nick Shears, 203 Sugars Rd, Anstead, QLD 4070, Australia.

Fanfundery. TAFF nominations are about to open; anyone wanting to join Chris O'Shea and Tobes Valois as candidates for the 2002 westbound trip to ConJosé should provide signed nominations from 3 European and 2 N.American fans, £10 bond, and the traditional promise to make the trip if they win. Send paperwork to Sue Mason, 3 York St, Altrincham, Cheshire, WA15 9QH, by the closing date: 28 February.

Requiem for iPublish. William Sanders offers his eulogy: 'You mention the recently defunct (and largely unmourned) iPublish as Time Warner's "e-books division". In fact iPublish also put out a number of trade paperbacks, including several fantasy and SF titles—one of which, for my sins, was my own latest. Their present status is a bit vague; they can still be purchased, but for how long no one seems to know. • You can hardly be blamed for not knowing that iPublish also produced real books; Time Warner guarded the secret better than the CIA has ever managed to keep any of theirs. In fact it was only after a great deal of shouting and gesticulating by some of the editors and writers—including my humble self—that they agreed, very reluctantly, to mention the existence of the paperbacks on the iPublish website. • Their primary interest seemed to be in attracting neophytes to their "new writers" program, and getting them to sign a perfectly iniquitous contract. If they ever made any serious effort actually to sell the books—whether e or paper—it must have been done quite furtively.'

FAAns. Fanzine Activity Achievement award voting for 2001 activity closes soon. Send your top three choices, in order, for best fanzine, fan writer, fan artist, letterhack and new (since 1 Jan 97) fan, to reach Victor Gonzalez at vmgonzalez@hotmail.com by midnight on 16 Feb.

When The Going Gets Weird. Around 10 Jan, fans consulting the *Fortean Times* website were startled to find in huge red letters: 'fuck USA Government / fuck PoizonBOx / contact:sysadmcn@yahoo.com.cn'. Not a daring political statement from *FT*: their web server had been infected by the Unix 'SadMind' worm, which does this kind of thing.

The Ether Vibrates. Elizabeth Billinger listens in: 'Being a habitual Radio 4 listener, I've become used to hearing emails from Dr Farah Mendlesohn read on *PM*, but I was somewhat startled to hear "Maureen Speller of Folkestone" on *Feedback* this lunchtime, taking to task Roger Wright of Radio 3. • I'd just about recovered from the shock when I heard that the next letter was from one China Miéville. The indisputably female voice of "China Miéville" confirmed my suspicions that I had accidentally taken refuge in an alternative universe ...' [25 Jan]

We Are Everywhere. Mike Moorcock (that man again) found he'd made it into the *New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* with a citation for the verb *fire* ('To fire me with a sense of wonder at the marvels of science and technology.'). This is as good as being on the front remainder table at Hatchards! I will still talk to certain old friends.'

Group Gropes. The City Illiterates, London fans who meet every Friday evening, moved from the increasingly noisy, crowded Florence Nightingale pub (under new management) to the Jubilee in York Road. [BA] Traditional first-Thursdays meetings in the FN are so far unaffected.

Ansible 174 Corrections. Wendy Graham, not former *Interzone* TV critic Wendy Bradley, edits the *FTL* website. • Simo's forthcoming biography of Douglas Adams isn't 'official'. • Gary Wilkinson acknowledged the BSFA award slip in his first issue of *Matrix*: 'the nomination for Andrew M. Butler's *Terry Pratchett* (Pocket Essentials) got mangled into *Terry Pratchett: Guilty of Literature* by Andrew M. Butler et al.'

The Dead Past. 25 Years Ago: 'CHANNELCON BID FOLDS [...] the Brighton bid for the 1978 Eastercon has faded away. The main culprit is the hotel which is now asking painfully high rates (£22 for a double, for example) ...' (Peter Roberts, *Checkpoint* 79, February 1977)

Thog's Masterclass. 'Somehow, the mackerel paté of memory had escaped its wrapper, skipped its kitchen dish, and turned into a flickering silver shoal, darting and twisting in terror against an empty darkness.' ('Gabriel King', *The Wild Road*, 1997) [BA] • *Dept of Maths* (*Three Orders Of Magnitude* subdivision). 'A man could be made to slash his throat in a quarter of a minute. An exec, killing, killing, killing without pause, could destroy his own two million enemies in an eight-hour day.' (Frederik Pohl, *A Plague of Pythons*, 1965 ... corrected, to be fair, in the 1984 revision) [BA] • *Dept of Climbing Plants*. 'There were clumps of forest filled with strange, intertwined trees and brachiating fungi.' (Alan Dean Foster, *Star Wars: The Approaching Storm*, 2002)

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