

Ansible



Ansible 180 July 2002

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: **Sue Mason**. Available for SAE, cold cider, or a functional ban-dan-bladder-stiddle.

PLOKTA.CON 2.0. 'So what is there to do in Basingtoke, then?' 'We were afraid you would ask us that.' This Q&A from the *Plokta* flyer gained extra piquancy from news reports of a dismembered corpse in the park adjacent to the con hotel. Further relentless entertainment included Buffy Evening (mercifully, before I arrived), School Sports Day (I hid in the bar after watching hapless contestants running backwards to, around and away from an ever-retreating Sue Mason), and Bolly-wood Evening (reminding me that the local 'Raj' Indian restaurant's most notable menu item was 'feces of barbecued chicken or lamb'). On Monday the hotel offered fans cut-price admission to its Jubilee party, where the main sideshow 'Hit The Target And Drop The Hotel Manager Into The Water Tank' became strangely more popular after the twice-doused, disgruntled manager walked out and was bravely replaced by *plokta.con*'s very own Alison Scott. Many, many photographs exist. All good sadistic fun, with a gratifying number of visiting American fans.

The Secret Masters

'**Jude Fisher**', whose debut fantasy blockbuster *Sorcery Rising* was heavily promoted by Earthlight in June, turns out to be editor Jane Johnson of HarperCollins UK. Insiders wondered whether her Earthlight editor John Jarrold might soon receive a hefty advance for a pseudonymous debut fantasy to be published by HarperCollins...

John Jarrold, however, leaves Simon & Schuster UK in August. 'I have had a wonderful five years here, and launching the Earthlight imprint in April 1998 was one of the great achievements of my career. However, there are always times when moving on becomes one's best option, and that is what I am now doing.' Mike Moorcock: 'I am not prepared to deal with another editor, so I too will be leaving Simon and Schuster. All the staff who were there when I first joined are now gone ...' Other authors in the Jarrold stable are likewise filled with gloom.

Diana Wynne Jones 'had another Hospital Horror in June,' writes Chris Bell, 'when a surgeon told her she had a large tumour he thought had a 95% probability of being malignant. After a mere week of waiting, a operation [26 June] successfully removed the tumour but left the rest of Our Heroine pretty much intact; and after another anxious week the biopsy results came. They said it wasn't malignant after all, and by the time you read this she will be back home, with no more treatment in prospect, a very sore mid-section (just don't make her laugh, it's really cruel at the moment) and a bottle of Moët et Chandon in the fridge. I know the last for a fact, I've just put it there.'

Sam J. Lundwall is deeply charmed: 'I have finally been accepted by the cultural establishment of Sweden—I have received a "Garanterad författarpennning", which is a guaranteed income for certain selected authors. A sum sufficient to survive on (but not too much more). The idea is that a few authors should be able to write without having to worry about money or sales or whatever. No strings attached. This means in effect the government is paying me a salary for doing whatever I like. This will go on until I turn 70, after which a special author's pension will kick in for support. • Not bad. Who could ever have thought that a science fiction writer should get a salary from the cultural establishment to write this Buck Rogers stuff? The British government, as Terry Pratchett and J.K. Rowling know, prefers to hand out state honours with no sordid money attached.'

Mike Moorcock is feeling frivolous: 'For fun, I've written to Del Rey about the new David Gemmell books—the title of the first of three is *The White Wolf*. Since he's already done *Ravenheart* ('Ravenbrand' was the title of the last Elic in *Interzone*) and *Stormrider*, I suggested that the as yet untitled books in his series be called *Bin of the Black Sword* and *Weed of the White Wolf*.... He might as well go all the way.'

Alan Moore's graphic novel *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* may not be entirely recognizable in the planned live-action film. Screenwriter James Robinson grumbles that this alternate-Victorian *X-Men* team comprises two psychopaths (Jekyll/Hyde, the Invisible Man), a drug addict (Allan Quatermain), and 'a sort of sexually ambivalent vampire girl' (Mina Harker from *Dracula*), leaving only Captain Nemo

(who seemed fairly psychopathic to me) to engage our sympathies. Therefore, that nice all-American boy Tom Sawyer must be added ... while of course the arch-villain Dr Fu Manchu gets the chop as a 'potentially volatile racial stereotype.' [BB] Any bets on the replacement bad guy being—in defiance of all previous Hollywood stereotyping—British?

Peter Nicholls is heading for media fame, thanks to the hour-long TV documentary *The What If Man: The Science Fictional Life of Peter Nicholls*. Premiere 19 July in Melbourne; more screenings at Melbourne Film Festival (July/Aug) and on Aussie national TV (SBS Network). [YR]

Conuzee

8 Jul • **Reading at Borders**, Oxford St, London: CANCELLED, this month only. Apologies to anyone who turned up for the 10 June event, which (after *Ansible 179* had appeared) was postponed to 17 June.

24 Jul • **BSFA Open Meeting**, Rising Sun, Cloth Fair, London, EC1. 7pm on, fans present from 5pm. Guest speaker: no word as yet.

9-11 Aug • **ConteXXt** (Unicon 20), University of Gloucestershire. Joint event with **HarmUni 2** (filk relaxacon). £30 reg, £15 concessions, small children £1. Contact 17 Cow Lane, Didcot, Oxon, OX11 7SZ.

16-19 Aug • **2002: A Discworld Odyssey** (DWcon 3), Hanover International Hotel, Hinckley, Leics. Usual guests. *Reduced rates* since 1 April: £45 reg, £30 concessions, £10 supp—reverting to £50/£35/£15 at end of July. Contact (SAE) 23 Medora Rd, Romford, Essex, RM7 7EP.

29 Aug - 2 Sep • **ConJosé** (60th Worldcon), San José, California. Still \$180/£125 reg until advance booking closes on 31 July; \$200 at the door (\$180 on Sat 31 Aug). Contact PO Box 61363, Sunnyvale, CA 94088-1363, USA; UK agents 52 Westbourne Tce, Reading, RG30 2RP.

2-6 Sep 04 • **Noreascon 4** (62nd Worldcon), Boston, MA. GoH T. Pratchett, W.Tenn, J.Speer, P.Weston. \$120 reg, children \$85, increasing to \$140 and \$105 on 1 Aug 02. Still \$35 supp. Mastercard and Visa accepted. Contact PO Box 1010, Framingham, MA 01701, USA.

Rumblings. • **Japan in 2007**. This Worldcon bid is now accepting pre-supporting memberships: £14, \$20 or €24. UK agent A.A.Adams, 23 Ivydyne Rd, Reading, RG30 1HT; Europe, Vince Docherty, Brugstraat 17B, Groningen 9712AA, Netherlands; NA, Elayne Pelz, 15931 Kalisher St, Granada Hills, CA 91344-3951, USA. Cheques to 'Nippon 2007'.

Infinitely Improbable

As Others See Us. *The New Yorker* (17 June) ran a merry article on the hobby of its retired editor Gardner Botsford, who collects books so specialized that 'they have an audience of three.' These amusingly bizarre titles include *Haikus for Jews*, *Creative Insomnia*, *Successful Fund Raising Sermons*, *Knitting With Dog Hair* (see A75) and, alas, *The Best of Stanley G.Weinbaum*. [RL/MMW] • A film press pack plays the traditional 'not sf' card: 'Minority Report is not Science Fiction, it's Future Reality!' [GW] • *The Daily Mail* (21 June) knows which damning point about a convicted murderer needs to be mentioned first: 'Science fiction fanatic Christopher Hunnisett drowned the Rev Ronald Glazebrook in his bath before dismembering his body with an axe and saw.' [JB]

Group Gropes. At the first-Thursday London fan meeting on 6 June, the landlord of the Florence Nightingale pub lost patience with fandom's tiresome habits of spending money on food (none available, not even despised 'bar snacks') and wanting full legal pints of beer (one chap who asked for a top-up had his glass filled with stale dregs from the drip-tray). After arguments and 'incidents' too tedious to relate, all future first-Thursday upstairs room bookings were cancelled. The nearby Jubilee in York Rd welcomed a temporary move there, from the 4 July meeting onward, until a larger pub is located. Research by Simon Bradshaw and others suggests the Silver Cross in Whitehall as a promising choice. • *Black Lodge* (Brum) meetings move to *2nd Tuesday* each month as of 9 July. 8:30pm; The Hogshead, Newhall St, Birmingham.

R.I.P. Herman Cohen (1927-2002), US producer of such cult films as *I Was a Teenage Werewolf*, *Blood of Dracula* and *I Was a Teenage Frankenstein* (all 1957), died from throat cancer on 2 June. [BB/PB] Other sources give birth year 1925, or 1928. Alas, he never plumbed

the ultimate horror of *I Was a Teenage SF Fan*. • **Florence Russell**, old-time Los Angeles fan long resident in Reading, England, and fondly remembered for her Christmas Eve parties, died on 1 July. [KF] She was the widow of Samuel J. Russell, an active US fanzine fan in the 1940s. • **Bernard Wilkie** (1920-2002), pioneer of TV special effects and co-founder of the Visual Effects Workshop at the BBC (where he worked from 1948 to 1978), died on 2 May aged 82. His sf projects included *1984* (1954), *Quatermass II* (1955), *Quatermass and the Pit* (1958-9), and *Dr Who*—not to mention *Monty Python* and *The Goodies*. [BB/SG] • **DarkTales Publications**, the horror outfit, is 'closing operations'. [PB]

Science Corner. 'Hollywood has breathed new life into HG Wells's innovative sci-fi novel *The Time Machine*. [...] While physicians continue to find ways to time travel, others claim to have done so unintentionally.' (Jem Maidment, 'Is Time Travel Possible?', ITV1 Teletext) [DH]

Fanfundery. **TAFF.** Tobes 'Drunken Fuckwit' Valois won the vote on both sides of the Atlantic, and will travel to ConJosé as European TAFF delegate. Commiserations to rival candidate Chris O'Shea. Voting: Chris, 17 N.American votes + 37 European = 54; Tobes, 21+70=91; Hold Over Funds, 3+2=5; No Pref, 9+14=23. Totals 50+123=173 ballots. [SM] • **DUFF.** Julian Warner won and will represent Australasian fandom at ConJosé. Voting: Julian 117, David Cake & Sarah Xu 34, write-in 2, HoF 4, No Pref 18. Total 175: 80 Aus, 95 N.Am. [NF]

Random Fandom. **Harry Andruschak**, through no fault of his own, is filing for US Chapter 13 bankruptcy and expects to move home shortly. • **KIM Campbell** had an unwelcome return of cancer in May. As Geri Sullivan says, 'She is determined to remain her exceptional self by beating it again and thanks fandom for the early get-well wishes.' • **Avedon Carol** is namechecked in a *London Review of Books* personal ad: a dentist 'seeks mercurial amalgam of Dinah Washington, Lucille Bogan, Audrey Hepburn, Avedon Carol and Wendy Kaminer to revive heart shot full of Novocaine with impacted wisdom and regular soft tissue examinations ...' • **Eileen Gunn** confides: 'I've been off climbing into volcanic caldera with Carol Ermswiller. Not a metaphor.' • **Sheila Lightsey** announced at the 6 June London pub meeting that she and Victor Gonzalez are now engaged. 'Showed us the ring and everything.' [RH] • **Simo** reports from the Douglas Adams biographical workbench: 'Have just finished first draft of *Hitchhiker* and it's a mere 48,000 words over my contracted wordcount. I believe I can reduce this to an acceptable level by deleting "actually" and "sort of" from all the Adams quotes.' • **Justina Robson** and her husband Richard announced the birth of their son Daniel on 26 June. • **Marcus Rowland** was overjoyed by the opportunity to pay the post office 86p for his UK in 2005 Progress Report -1, mailed without stamps. • **D.M.Sherwood** creatively reported that Andromeda Bookshop (see C.o.A.) is moving to Warsaw. • **Lucy Sussex** has a souvenir: 'Just back from NZ sf convention (where I was a secondary GoH). Ended up with a replica of Frodo's sword, paper-knife-size. Unfortunately it does not glow blue in the presence of bills.'

C.o.A. **Andromeda Bookshop**, 2 Selborne St, Walsall, WS1 2JN; 01922 620000. (Temporary move to warehouse unit, 4 July, for 'at least a couple of months'.) **At the Sign of the Dragon**, St Ninians, New Road, Wigtown, Scotland, DG8 9JL (from 22 July; London bookshop closed 29 June). **Gary Farber**, 2278 Nicholl St East, Boulder, CO 80304, USA. **Ulrika & Hal O'Brien**, PO Box 1646, Bellevue, WA 98009-1646, USA.

Are They Sure? From a *Guardian* tourism supplement: 'Many of New Zealand's species of wildlife are unique to this planet.' [NS]

Strange Web Stuff. **Richard Calder** was disconcerted to find that the free extract from his *Lord Soho* on the Earthlight website bore no resemblance to anything he recalled writing. Who was 'Tristan Talisker—Thane of Soulis Mor'? *Ansible* traced the offending text to the prologue of a very different (and very Scots) fantasy, Miller Lau's *Dark Thane*. • **Greg Egan** has a vital correction to his novel *Diaspora*, whose 17th chapter laughably refers to 'Poincaré's rotational "pole"—the two-dimensional sphere on the hypersurface that stayed fixed in space as the star rotated.' The author's website warns that this is in fact an unlikely situation in 5-dimensional space, and that it's more probable that there would be 'two single-point rotational poles, as in 3 dimensions.' [DR] Thog's Higher Mathematical Masterclass is deprived of its prey. • **David Pringle** of *Interzone* would be rather more flattered by the discovery that early issues from 1982 are now priced at £85 sterling, if the on-line vendor didn't describe his pride and joy as a 'Short lived English horror and fantasy magazine.' • **Wildside Press's** website blurb for the Langford/Grant horror spoof *Guts* featured this paragraph (since deleted): 'RIDDLE STORIES is the American volume, and it includes Ambrose Bierce, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Edgar Allan Poe, Washington Irving, Charles Brockden Brown, F. Marion Crawford, and many others.' As

we sadly told Wildside, anyone who buys *Guts* expecting to find these authors included—even as well-digested slurry—will be disappointed.

More Awards. **Bram Stoker** (horror): **NOVEL American Gods**, Neil Gaiman; **FIRST NOVEL Deadliest of the Species**, Michael Oliveri; **LONG FICTION In These Final Days of Sales**, Steve Rasnic Tem; **SHORT 'Reconstructing Amy'**, Tim Lebbon; **COLLECTION The Man with the Barbed-Wire Fists**, Norman Partridge; **ANTHOLOGY Extremes 2** ed. Brian A. Hopkins; **NONFICTION Jobs in Hell** ed. Brian Keene; **ILLUSTRATED** No Award; **SCREENPLAY Memento**, Christopher & Jonathan Nolan; **FOR YOUNG READERS The Willow Files 2**, Yvonne Navarro; **POETRY COLLECTION Consumed, Reduced to Beautiful Grey Ashes**, Linda Addison; **ALTERNATIVE FORMS Dark Dreamers**, Beth Gwinn & Stanley Wiater; **LIFE ACHIEVEMENT** John Farris.

We Are Everywhere. Gordon Van Gelder hears that 'in his memoir *You Can't Be Serious*, tennis star John McEnroe mentions that his son has a rare and serious disease called Heinrich Schonlein purpura. However, McEnroe calls the disease "Heinlein purpura". This error occurred in the bound galley, I don't know if it's in the final book ...'

The James White Award for short stories (2-4000 words) by new writers is in its third year, with deadline 20 August 2002. Submissions and info requests: 211 Blackhorse Ave, Dublin 7, Ireland. Winner to be announced at Novacon 32 (Quality Hotel, Walsall) on 3 November. [DS]

Outraged Letters. **Chris Bell** is annoyed with Helicon's recommended Jersey travel agency, not merely for insisting (although told otherwise) that she must be male: 'In spite of my having been absolutely firm that I wanted no bump of any kind from them or anyone else, and that my details were not to be held on a database, guess what? I am now getting junkmail from firms in the Channel Islands selling everything from holiday cottages to stairlifts and double-glazing—or rather, I'm not, but "Mr. C. Bell" is. Ratfinks.' • **Sir Arthur C. Clarke** confesses that his A174 Thog submission ("You cad!" she hissed.) 'was home-brewed—I had it around for years and was happy to find a home for it.' [IZ] For shame! • **Simon R. Green** was slighted in some space-opera feature that I haven't seen but apparently wrote: 'I read the entire *SFX* Deep Space special, and Not One Word about the best-selling Deathstalker books! I shall take umbrage. Twice daily, in water.' • **Paul Melko** tells me cheerily, 'You'll probably be tickled to know that *Ansible* 179 did not reach anyone at sff.net who had their spam filters activated. The combination of three phrases within 179 ("i am" & "m*llion" & "tr*nsfer") activated our deflector screens. I wouldn't have noticed if I didn't store my spam for later perusal.' I've inserted asterisks in hope that this letter won't brand A180 as Nigerian-swindle spam and deny its glories to innumerable (well, 18) sff.net subscribers.

The Dead Past. **20 Years Ago.** Chris Morgan on Mythcon 1982: 'The art show was small but full of quality—watch out for talented newcomer Sue Mason, who won a prize for best amateur artist.' Brian Aldiss suffered the rewards of hubris when his *Telegraph* mag competition for 'mini-sagas' (stories of exactly 50 words) required him to judge 33,000 entries. One, about phantom horses, came from Princess Margaret and failed through being only 49 words long. (*Ansible* 27, July 1982)

Small Press. Ben Jeapes had a sense-of-wonder moment on 27 June 'in King's Lynn, home of Biddles the printers, where I watched the pages of *Maps: The Uncollected John Sladek* being run off. Very exciting. • The process is apparently called light fusion magnetography—the magnetography is what makes the toner stick to the rollers and hence the pages, and the light fusion is what seals it and stops it running. The rep who explained it got a bit confused and called it cold fusion magnetography, which made it sound a lot more clever than it was.'

Thog's Masterclass. **Dept of Microbiology.** "... Did men have goals in common, in your day, save to keep on breathing, eating and reproducing?" / I grunted. "Goals shared with the lowest bacillus." (Stephen Baxter, *The Time Ships*, 1995) [BR] • 'Her brother's twitching eyes and bared buck teeth gave him the look of a gopher on pure crystal meth, capable of anything, one way or the other.' (S.M. Stirling, *Island in the Sea of Time*, 1998) [O] • 'When he spoke again he could barely suppress a yodel of irritation.' (Ian McEwan, *The Innocent*, 1990) [PB] • **Dept of Logic, Pure:** 'After all, Roamers had disproved the impossible time and again.' **Applied:** 'In the vacuum of space no one could see beautiful lines or shiny hulls anyway.' (both Kevin J. Anderson, *Hidden Empire*, 2002)

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