



ANSIBLE 264 JULY 2009

From Dave Langford, 94 London Road, Reading, Berks, RG1 5AU. Web news.ansible.co.uk. Fax 0705 080 1534. ISSN 0265-9816 (print) 1740-942X (e). Logo: Dan Steffan. Cartoon: Brad Foster. Available for SAE or the stone-fruits of Gondolin.

The July Ghost

Iain M. Banks will be awarded a PhD by Middlesex University on 10 July. Naturally I asked: 'For services to literature, whisky, climbing, or talking squid in outer space?' *Farah Mendlesohn*: 'Aha! You have given me the hook for my intro (I'm the Orator for the occasion).'

John W. Campbell's most famous sf prophecy has not been forgotten, even if the real thing is only a micro-organism: 'American scientists, showing the reckless disregard for the warnings implicit in quality science fiction that is so regrettably common in the boffiny community, have revived an ancient lifeform which has been slumbering beneath the Arctic ice pack for 120,000 years. To add insult to injury, the scientists believe that their laboratory revenant may be related to indestructible super-aliens yet to be discovered on extra-terrestrial iceworlds.' (Lewis Page, *The Register*, 15 June) [JD] But let's hear no Lovecraftian talk about very small shoggoths until they find another in the Antarctic region known as Kadath in the Cold Waste....

Peter Dickinson, author of much class sf and fantasy, received the OBE for services to literature in the UK Queen's Birthday Honours.

Christopher Lee, who needs no gory introduction, was knighted for services to drama and charity in the Queen's Birthday Honours. Another honoured actor was Alan Cumming—OBE for services to film, theatre and the arts, plus his work as a gay rights campaigner—who played Nightcrawler in *X2* and has a part in the coming *Riverworld*.

Terry Pratchett, who's finding novel-writing much easier now he's moved from keyboards to dictation, reveals: 'Something for the Very Strange department, the BBC contacted us about doing a prime time series based on the Guards books. Things seemed to go well, although it appeared to me that up to that point only one person involved had read a Discworld book. Then we gradually moved into Fairy Land.... What caused me to crack was the question of the Bible. I am not going to let something like this happen without some input, if only to stop Nobby Nobbs becoming female. Much discussion ensued, and my movie agent suggested that the BBC and us create the Guards Bible—these style guides are quite common in the business. / It looked, therefore, like it would be all systems go until the BBC came back and said that while they would be happy to collaborate on the Bible, they would because of their charter have to have the final say, which means in effect: "everything will be set in stone, but we are allowed to have a sledgehammer." So the BBC is not getting *Guards! Guards!* As my movie agent (who has dealt with some of the most voracious companies in the States) said to me, "How does anyone ever deal with the BBC?"'

Alastair Reynolds's million-pound Gollancz deal to write ten sf books over the next ten years was widely reported and widely envied.

J.K. Rowling allegedly plagiarized an obscure 1987 children's book called *Willy the Wizard* in *Harry Potter* and *The Goblet of Fire*. Its author Adrian Jacobs died in 1997; his estate (or rather its trustee Paul Allen) announced that it's suing Bloomsbury and also wants a court order to interrogate Rowling in 'pre-action disclosure'. Her gigantic borrowings from Jacobs's 36-page text are said to include 'a wizard contest' and 'the idea of wizards traveling on trains'. (Reuters, 15 June) I'm sure no one had ever imagined a wizard contest before, but did Jacobs nick the train concept from Susan Cooper's *Silver on the Tree* (1977)? Yawn.

Contune

3 Jul • **British Fantasy Society Open Night**, The George, Fleet Street (pedantically, 213 Strand), London, WC2R 1AP. 6-10pm. Free.

3-5 Jul • **Diana Wynne Jones** conference. Day rates, including food: Fri £30 (students £22), Sat £70 (£55), Sun £50 (£37). Contact 23 Ranelagh Rd, London, N17 6XY; farah dot sf at gmail dot com.

18 Jul • **Bristol Beer & Blake's 7** open meeting, Knight's Templar, Unit 1, Temple Square, Temple Quay, BS1 6DG. 12:15pm-7pm.

22 Jul • **BSFA Open Meeting**, The Antelope, 22 Eaton Terrace, London, SW1W 8EZ. 5/6pm onward. With Andrew McKie.

25-26 Jul • **Satellite 2**, Crowne Plaza Hotel, Glasgow. £45 reg.

Advance booking closes 17 July: £50 at the door. Day: £25 at the door only. Contact 33b Hardridge Rd, Cokerhill, Glasgow, G52 1RH.

31 Jul - 2 Aug • **Constitution** (sf, fantasy, RPG, Unicorn) hosting **HarmUni 4** (filk), Murray Edwards College, Cambridge. Now £30 reg; under-18s £10; under-11s £5; under-5s free. Contact 207 Campkin Rd, Cambridge, CB4 2LE; info at constitution-con.org.uk.

6-10 Aug • **Anticipation** (67th Worldcon), Palais des congrès de Montréal, Montréal, Canada. Membership rates until 15 July: \$Can240/\$US210/£135/€150/Yen20,000 reg; upgrade supporting to full membership, \$Can185/\$US160/€105/€115/Yen15,000; supporting \$Can55/\$US50/€30/€35/Yen5,000. *Hugo voting (online or mail) closes 3 July*. Contact PO Box 105, Station NDG, Montréal, QC, H4A 3P4, Canada.

15-16 Aug • **Caption** (small-press comics), East Oxford Community Centre, corner of Princes St & Cowley Rd. £10 reg; £5 day.

18-20 Sep • **Fantasycon**, Britannia Hotel, 1 St James St, Nottingham. Now £70 reg (BFS members £60); £30 Sat only; banquet £35. Contact Beech House, Chapel Lane, Moulton, Cheshire CW9 8PQ.

26 Sep • **Browncoat Ceilidh** (*Firefly*), Mercure Holland House Hotel, Redcliffe Hill, Bristol, BS1 6SQ. General sf mini-con 2:30-5:30pm; music, dances etc 5:30pm-1am. Tickets £20 to Kumara Conventions, c/o 5 Manor House Rd, Glastonbury, Somerset, BA6 9DE.

16-18 Oct • **Festival of Fantastic Films**, Day's Hotel, Sackville St, Manchester. £70/\$140 reg; under-17s £30; under-13s £20. £30/\$60 day+supp. Contact 95 Meadowgate Rd, Salford, Manchester, M6 8EN.

24 Oct • **Gamesfest** (gaming/sf/fantasy), Watford Colosseum, Watford, WD17 3EX. Tickets £5.50 from www.gamesfest.co.uk only.

31 Oct - 1 Nov • **ArmadaCon 21**, Royal Fleet Hotel, Plymouth. GoH Lionel Fanthorpe. £35 reg; £30 concessions. Contact 20 Pinewood Close, Plympton, Plymouth, Devon, PL7 2DW.

18-22 Nov • **Terry Pratchett's Unseen Academicals** (play), adapted by Stephen Briggs, Unicorn Theatre, Thames St, Abingdon, Oxon. 7.30pm (+2.30pm on 22 Nov). Tickets probably available from 1 Sep. Contact Studio Theatre Club, PO Box 1486, Oxford, OX4 9DQ.

26 Feb - 1 Mar 10 • **AKFT 15** (*Trek*), Tintagel Castle Hotel, Cornwall—not yet confirmed. Registration is expected to cost £25, with £5 increases on 1 Sep and 1 Dec. Contact address TBA.

Rumblings • *Nippon 2017* is a new Japanese Worldcon bid.

Infinitely Improbable

As Others Group Us. 'Like paedophiles and science fiction fans, the far right were quick to wise up to the internet...' (Hari Kunzru, *Guardian*, 30 May) [SS] • 'Sci-fi conventions such as San Diego's Comic-Con are under-the-radar hook-up havens. No, really.' (*Penthouse*, June) [MB]

Magazine Scene. *Sci-Fi* magazine, which has not yet changed its name to *Syfy*, found another way to annoy librarians and bibliographers. Normally it's bimonthly, but the publisher Sovereign Media is skipping from volume 15 number 2 (April 2009) to volume 15 no 4 (August 2009). [GRM] The phantom June issue will be a great rarity.

Awards. *Boston Globe*—*Horn Book* (children's fiction category): Terry Pratchett, *Nation*. • *Campbell Memorial*: Cory Doctorow, *Little Brother*, and Ian R. MacLeod, *Song of Time* (tie). • *David Gemmell Legend* (fantasy): Andrzej Sapkowski, *Blood of Elves*. • *Sturgeon* (short fiction): James Alan Gardner, 'The Ray Gun: A Love Story' (*Asimov's*).

R.I.P. *Mort Abrahams* (1916-2009), US tv and film producer whose career began in 1950 with *Tom Corbett, Space Cadet*, died on 28 May; he was 93. Further genre credits include seven episodes of *Tales of Tomorrow* (1951-1953), nine of *The Man From U.N.C.L.E.* (1965-1966), *Doctor Dolittle* (1967), and the first two *Planet of the Apes* films (1968, 1970). [AJP] • *David Carradine* (1936-2009), US actor best remembered for the mystic martial arts of tv's *Kung Fu* (1972-1975) and its spinoffs, died on 3 June aged 72. Other genre work included *Death Race 2000* (1975) and *Q: The Winged Serpent* (1982). [ISG] • *Robert A. Collins* (1929-2009), US sf scholar who edited various notable critical journals and anthologies and in 1980 founded the International Conference for the Fantastic in the Arts, died on 27 June. [FM] • *David Eddings* (1931-

2009), best-selling author of the Belgariad sequence—beginning with *Pawn of Prophecy* (1982)—and other hugely popular fantasy series, died on 2 June; he was 77. Most of his 27 novels were written in collaboration with his wife Leigh, who died in 2007. [O] • **Farah Fawcett** (1947-2009), US actress whose sf credits included *The Six Million Dollar Man* (tv), *Logan's Run* (1976) and *Saturn 3* (1980), died on 25 June aged 62. [BB] • **H(arry) B. Gilmour** (1939-2009), US publisher (Bantam, Scholastic) and author whose genre work for children included the novelization *Godzilla* (1998) and the twice-filmed *T*Witches* fantasy series (2001-2004), died on 21 June aged 69. [PDF] • **Simon Oates** (1932-2009), UK actor whose best-known sf part was as scientist Dr John Ridge in *Doomwatch* (1970-1972), died on 20 May aged 77. [JL] • **Paul O. Williams** (1935-2009), US author, academic and haiku poet most noted in sf for the seven-book *Pelbar Cycle* (1981-1985), died on 2 June. He won the Campbell Award for best new sf writer in 1983. [L]

Them As Can, Does. Presenter: 'Who wrote the story of Peter Pan? A.A. Milne, J.M. Barrie or T.S. Eliot?' **Contestant (a teacher):** 'Okay, I've read the story. I've saw the films I've not saw the panto. I'm pretty sure it's T.S. Eliot.' (Sly One, *Are You Smarter Than A Ten-Year-Old?*) [PE]

If You Can't Say Something Nice ... Andy Remic and others launched a blog site devoted to positive (only) sf/fantasy reviews. The title, *Science Fiction and Fantasy Ethics*, annoyed some with its implication that any negative remark must be unethical. Andy explained: 'I chose the name "Ethics" not because I wanted to explore the ethical contexts of novels or films, but because I wanted to make an ethical stand against the motherfuckers who, to my mind, are systematically ruining the SF/FH genres.' The identities of these naughty persons never became clear, though Adam Roberts hoped he might be one, and so did Paul Kincaid. After a poll at SFPE it was decided that 'Ethics' should become 'Enthusiasts', a rebranding which duly occurred. *Ansible* still wonders why the original photo-logo of this Positive Responses Only site showed a long row of titles by someone who in his reviewing days was never averse to putting the boot in good and hard: Harlan Ellison.

British Fantasy Award. Select shortlists: NOVEL 'William Heaney', *Memoirs of a Master Forger*; Simon Clark, *Midnight Man*; Gary McMahon, *Rain Dogs*; Neil Gaiman, *The Graveyard Book*; Christopher Fowler, *The Victoria Vanishes*; Ramsey Campbell, *Thieving Fear*. • NONFICTION Basil Copper, ed. Stephen Jones, *Basil Copper: A Life in Books*; Russell T. Davies & Benjamin Cook, *Doctor Who: The Writer's Tale*; Neil Gaiman, *Journal.neilgaiman.com*; Nick Lowe, 'Mutant Popcorn' (*Interzone*); Paul Kincaid, *What Is It We Do When We Read Science Fiction*. • MAGAZINE *Black Static*, *Interzone*, *Midnight Street*, *Postscripts*, *SFX*. • TV *Batlestar Galactica*, *Dead Set*, *Dexter*, *Doctor Who*, *Supernatural*. • FILM *Cloverfield*, *Iron Man*, *The Dark Knight*, *The Mist*, *The Orphanage*.

Outraged Letters. *Jordin Kare* on sf grant proposals (A263): 'For the decade or so during which I was a freelance rocket scientist ("Will design satellites for food") I would often appear on SF convention panels surrounded by authors. When asked to introduce myself, I would explain that I, too, wrote both science fiction and fantasy, with the science fiction generally being titled "Technical Proposal" and the fantasy titled "Budget Proposal".' • **David Pringle:** 'I was surprised and saddened to hear of the death of Abigail Frost (1951-2009). I'd like to remind everyone that she was *Interzone's* designer and paster-upper for a couple of years (1983-1985). I well remember handing over all the material to her each quarter, for her to assemble ready for the printer—primitive days, before we had any form of DTP! Abi liked to stick her oar in, sometimes writing little notes of her own in the magazine, at paste-up stage...' • **David Wake** on Fred Lerner in A263: 'Oh, oh... if you follow the logic of the definition-by-provenance that SF must be produced from within the SF community, then how can Brian Aldiss say that *Frankenstein* was the first SF novel? It wasn't written within the SF community because it didn't exist. The argument follows for any first SF book and an SF community can't start until the first novel is produced. From our bootstraps, it's all undone. The only way to create SF is by writing an SF book from within an SF community and then sending it back in time. Or for the SF community to travel back in time to Switzerland and bang on the door saying "Mary, where's our book?"'

C.o.A. Nic Farey, 3345 Cape Cod Drive, Las Vegas, NV 89122, USA. **John Teehan**, 70 Lenox Ave, West Warwick, RI 02893, USA. **R-Laurraine Tutuahi & Mike Weasner**, PO Box 5323, Oracle, AZ 85623, USA.

Locus Awards. SF NOVEL: Neal Stephenson, *Anthem*. FANTASY NOVEL: Ursula K. Le Guin, *Lavinia*. FIRST NOVEL: Paul Melick, *Singularity's Ring*. YA: Neil Gaiman, *The Graveyard Book*. NOVELLA: Kelly Link, 'Pretty Monsters' (*Pretty Monsters*). NOVELLETTE: Paolo Bacigalupi, 'Pump Six' (*Pump Six*). SHORT: Ted Chiang, 'Exhalation' (*Eclipse Two*). ANTHOLOGY:

Gardner Dozois, ed., *The Year's Best SF: Twenty-Fifth Annual Collection*. COLLECTION: Paolo Bacigalupi, *Pump Six* and *Other Stories*. NON-PICTION/ART: P. Craig Russell & Neil Gaiman, *Coraline: The Graphic Novel*. EDITOR: Ellen Datlow. ARTIST: Michael Whelan. MAGAZINE & F&SF: PUBLISHER: Tor.

Who Was That Masked Man? June saw familiar fun and games at Amazon.com as a posse of anonymous reviewers with strangely similar styles ambushed fantasy author Patrick Rothfuss—and his much-praised, bestselling debut novel—with copious one-star reviews, a 'rothfuss is a fraud' discussion thread, and claims that all of the five-star feedback came from the author plus friends and family. Recalling *Ansible* 219 et al, our informant expected follow-up recommendations of really good fantasy by George R.R. Martin, Robert Jordan, and Robert Stanek ... but no. Interestingly, though, one of Rothfuss's attackers ('Andrew') had a reviewing history confined to exactly three authors: he also rubbished books by David Louis Edelman and Jim C. Hines, who by sheer coincidence had both blogged conspicuously about the self-promotion of Robert Stanek. Then various Rothfuss attackers started to plug a particular writer by 'tagging' him in their Amazon profiles, and (although these tags quickly vanished when someone blew the whistle), the lucky author proved to be none other than Robert Stanek. [AW]

Cost of Living. SFWA is bumping up its annual fees, with Active membership rising from \$70 to \$80 and Affiliate from \$55 to \$60.

Random Fandom. *Brian Ameringer* reports: 'Fantasy Centre have now sold all of their stock ... R.I.P. At the Final Party, Erik & Ted were presented with photocopies of the first FC Catalogue from 1971.' • **Heath Row** (real name) is constructing a directory of sf and fantasy clubs. Add yours using the form at <http://sf-clubs-form.netolting.com>.

Nothing Falls Like Success. *Pruneval*, ITV's prehistoric-beasties sf drama, was cancelled after 'three very successful series' and average audiences of 5 million in 2009—down from 6 million in series 1 and 2. Apparently the CGI effects cost too much. (BBC News, 15 June) [BB]

As Others Meta-See Us. Frank Ahrens on 'Virtuality', an unsold Fox tv pilot: 'So you may well ask yourself, "Why should I spend two hours of a summer Friday night watching a sci-fi show if there's no guarantee I'll ever know the outcome or see the characters again?" / Ummm ... / Because it's raining outside? Because, like this author, you'll watch almost anything set in space? (And, no, we're not going to make the dateless Friday-night-sci-fi-geek ... joke. Those wounds are too fresh.)' (*Washington Post*, 26 June) [MMW]

Bram Stoker Awards (horror). NOVEL: Stephen King, *Duma Key*. FIRST NOVEL: Lisa Mannetti, *The Gentling Box*. LONG FICTION: John R. Little, *Miranda*. SHORT: Sarah Langan, *The Lost*. COLLECTION: Stephen King, *Just After Sunset*. ANTHOLOGY: Vince A. Liaguno and Chad Helder, eds., *Unspeakable Horror*. NONFICTION: Lisa Morton, *A Hallowe'en Anthology*. POETRY COLLECTION: Bruce Boston, *The Nightmare Collection*.

Group Gropes. Reading: every Mon, 9pm; early meeting 7pm, 3rd Mon of month; all now in back of Beyond pub, Kings Road, RG1 3BY.

Educational Supplement. Rob Latham of the University of California at Riverside told the SF Research Association that UCR's 'senior-level position in science fiction writing' was cancelled owing to huge state budget cuts—notably in higher education—announced on 19 May by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger. The unnamed appointee, chosen from nearly 50 applicants including 'major Hugo- and Nebula-winning authors', had been offered the tenured position and accepted. [FM]

Thog's Masterclass. *Dept of Pointed Looks*. 'Her eyes were leveled missile batteries, untouched by any human emotion.' (David Weber, *Field of Dishonor*, 1994) [BA] • *Performing Animals Dept*. 'William Henry Vanderbilt, plump and content, wearing a slight smile between the huge sideburns that clung to his cheek like frightened monkeys ...' (T.J. Stiles, *The First Tycoon: The Epic Life Of Cornelius Vanderbilt*, 2009) [MMW] • *Dept of Wobbliness*. 'He stood trembling like a bladder of lard ...' ('Bron Fane', *The Thing From Hood*, 1963) 'It was like going for a ride on the back of an animated haggis.' ('Pel Torro', *Galaxy 666*, 1963) • *Cosmetics Dept*. 'Crumpled and decaying rose petals masquerading as lips smiled back at me.' (Rob Thurman, *Nightlife*, 2006) [LJ] • *Dept of Buxomness*. 'There was a whole family of planets ... and I picked out one that I named Beth, after my girl. She was about five thousand miles in diameter ...' (Clive Trent [Victor Rousseau], 'Human Pyramid', *Spicy-Adventure Stories*, April 1941) [OL]

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