

# Ansible



Ansible 58 May 1992

From Dave Langford, 94 London Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 5AU. Fax 0734 669914. ISSN 0265-9816. Logo: Dan Steffan. Available at random fan gatherings, by whim or for stamped addressed envelopes—sorry, no paid subscriptions.

## A Procession of the Damned

Nick Austin is now the all-potent paperback supremo at Orion.

John Brosnan, having written at length about (alleged) amazing and legally interesting resemblances between his novel *Carnosaur* and Michael Crichton's later *Jurassic Park*, subsequently begged me not to quote him (supposedly for fear of mucking up a deal whereby Roger Corman was to film *Carnosaur* on a budget of £2.37 before Spielberg could finish filming *JP*), and then broke the story in a letter to a mere Sunday newspaper. Poot. Upbraided in the Illumination bar, Mr Brosnan explained unrepentantly: 'I changed my mind.'

Martin Hoare sent his traditional mini-report from Freucon in Germany: 'A great Eurocon—17 nations represented so far, including China. Just heard Malcolm Edwards still owes Con-fiction £1100 [Dutch], and Charlie Brown owes £400!' [25 Apr]

Joseph Nicholas has been trapped by raging floods up in desolate Harlech! 'I only tried to turn on the water in your bloody flat, Langford,' he said in an exclusive postcard.

Mike Rohan fears he's developed a fatal telepathic link with Tim Powers: they keep writing books on similar themes, with the Powers usually appearing about a week sooner.... [HM]

D. West reports: 'Bradford 50s fan Tom White (co-editor of *BEM* with M.Ashworth) died recently. Leeds group meetings have been intermittent.... Jan Orys is minding the baby. Linda Strickler keeps falling over and breaking legs. Dave Mooring and Sarah Dibb are moving to the historic former abode of Dave Pringle and Simon Ounsley, site of many a wicked elitist World Domination plot. Nigel Richardson appears on the nights everyone else has stayed home, being too devoted to the principle of spontaneous non-organized fandom ever to lower himself to phone and check. Charles Stross, of course, is now too distant and hugely famous ever to favour us with his words of wisdom again. The new Isaac Astral. Win some, lose some.'

## The Illuminoids

*Illumination, Blackpool, Easter '92*: the Norbreck Castle Hotel promoted fannish health with facilities spread over miles of bracing corridors, and a rigorous breakfast curfew to discourage cholesterol intake. ('The breakfasts are actually very good,' said one wide-eyed committee member, 'especially the mushrooms.' Those not at the secret upstairs committee breakfasts got no mushrooms, and riot was narrowly averted.) So-so hotel food apart, it seemed a pretty good venue, as vast sprawling castellated places three miles from city centres go.

'I was booked into the same room as Geoff Ryman,' said ashen-faced GoH Paul McAuley. 'I had to explain the guest relationship isn't quite that close.' PM also reeled in horror at being tagged as a reincarnation of [ideologically suspect author omitted] in the deeply naff opening-ceremony script, and hastily substituted Philip K.Dick. • Each registration pack came with a free fortune cookie containing a plug for **Chung Kuo—the epic**. A large box of spares was later hurled into a party, and vicious cookie-fights ensued: I looked in vain for certain reviewers muttering, 'As I thought, this sick and obscene work inevitably engenders violence.' • Who could possibly speak authoritatively for an hour-long Isaac Asimov retrospective, organized at the last possible minute? The usual suspects made themselves scarce and three pundits who shall be nameless were forcibly conscripted. Con chair Rhodri

James remarked, with measured care, 'It was interesting ... people thought you must have been retrospectively in the bar for a long while beforehand.' • Chris 'Someone bit me last night but I don't know who' Bell deplored the folding of the *Contact* Eastercon bid: 'We were planning to stand up at the bidding session and say, "Actually, Sou'Wester is a spoof bid," and watch Nic Farey's face.' • Dave Ellis could not be stopped from describing his hotel room, whose fitted carpet gave way to an expanse of concrete adorned by a bin to catch drips from the ceiling leak.... • Roz Kaveney: 'What about the *Villains* signing?' Dick Jude, *Forbidden Planet*id: 'Oh, Penguin didn't send the books.' RK: 'WHAT? I've been here two days and you didn't tell me?' DJ: 'Oh, I didn't think to.' RK, in bar: 'How much does that man get paid to run a bookshop and sell books? So I went to ask if the package had arrived early and been put in a hotel storeroom, and came back with the books, fully determined to deliver them to Dick Jude rectally—' • 'Everything is wonderful,' said Kev McVeigh to the massed ranks of the BSFA. 'Er, our only qualified accountant has resigned, and so have numerous editors, and we'll probably have to merge some of the magazines, and put the subscription up, but overall....' I had to be elsewhere and missed the rest of this Panglossian enthusiasm. • Steve Lawson said of his wife, 'Will you do it to Alice?'—sadly just a *Villains* autograph request. More awkward was Jim Burns's demand that, besides an inscription, authors add some 'personal stain'. • Publishing parties involved secretive cash floats at the Dealers' Room bar; by the time of Gollancz's, fans had caught on and the queue was parsecs long when, quite soon, the money ran out. • 'Programme streams named Flopsy, Mopsy and Cottontail are bad enough,' I puked gently, 'but do I really have to talk in a room called Peter Fan?' 'Shut up,' explained Anne Page. • David Bell reeled back from a bar trivia game, quavering: 'This machine has just asked me which religion L.Ron Hubbard founded.' • Ever-political Abigail Frost did the con newsletter a story on the Revolutionary Communist Party's weird mystery-tour convention that same weekend: editor Chris O'Shea altered the name ('Revolving Communal Party') as he 'thought there was a real organization called that.' AJF: 'THAT'S THE FUCKING POINT!' CO'S: 'Well, I had to make it funny or it wouldn't mean anything to fandom.' • David Pringle presided over an *Interszone* ten-year retrospective, surrounded by less successful small-press publishers. 'Now I'll ask Chris Reed of *BBR* to tell us how he tried for national distribution like mine but failed miserably,' he said, or words to that effect, and presently expounded on his new flyer campaign: 'We've printed 120,000 of these and they'll be going out with *Granta*, *Literary Review*, *London Review of Books*, *New Scientist* [see 9 May issue], *New Statesman*, the *TLS* ... The *LRB* editor says to expect 0.4% response, that's 480 subscriptions, taking us up to around 2,500 ... and it's all jam because the Arts Council incentive grant is paying for the flyers! Gnashing teeth resounded on every side. • Chris Evans kept wincing as penniless friends and Rog Peyton queued to say, 'Your new book *Chimeras* is no doubt triff but Grafton must be insane—I'm not paying £5.99 for a slim 173pp paperback.' • Late at night Gamma confided loudly, 'I'm going to sit at that table with the woman with the breasts, and give her my Aleister Crowley look.' • Fireworks: huge concussions



setting off car-alarms all over the hotel car park, terrified policemen dodging showers of hot embers, fire engines hurtling coincidentally past, general oohs and ahhs, and behind me the small, sad voice of James White saying (after one particularly fearful detonation), 'They're trying to make me feel at home.' • A 5" piece of ordnance was found left over and MUFF, the Mortar Under a Fan Fund, was instantly mooted. • 'Why,' asked Abigail in habitual alarm, 'did Dermot Dobson just put his arm around me and say "Hello, my little nest of vipers"?' • Gazing from the safe side of the hotel's glass-walled 'Health & Fitness Club' at the quivering forms within, fans clutching pints of beer were reminded of the bit in St. Augustine or somewhere about heaven's joys being enhanced by looking over the edge at the torments of the damned. • 'Favourite overheard line: *Anxious fan*—"I told Ramsey Campbell I had this great story idea for him, and he *did* say he'd be in this bar around now...."' [PB] • One nearby Italian restaurant offered *Pate Tricolore alla Don Antonio*—"A fan of three patés. Who was this fan? Did we know him? • After cracking some mild jokes about Storm Constantine in my own talk I was accosted by her supporters' club, Vikki Lee France, who said rather sharply: 'You obviously know nothing about sex and have never experienced an orgasm.' Oh. • At the end-of-con grump session Mike Molloy started to explain how no one needed these uppity 'tech' people, at which point his mike mysteriously went dead. ('We took him at his word'—Pat Silver.) • Mild-mannered Andrew Stephenson was overheard saying, 'Whitley Strieber is completely batty. He writes crap. He's always written crap. All his books are crap. He's never going to write anything but crap....' • At Geoff Ryman's party, aspiring capitalist Rog Peyton did a triumphalist rant about the Tory election victory: 'And when they finally destroy the National Health Service forever, I'll be *really happy!*' 'I can't listen to this,' gasped Mike Ford, backing away as though from Chernobyl. 'It's too awful....' • Erstwhile spaceman Gerry Webb waxed maudlin about recessions, debts and his toddler son's appalling prospects in a country dominated by, well, Rog Peyton. • J.Nicholas's strangely clinging leggings attracted comment; tight-lipped Judith Hanna said, 'I don't censor Joseph's clothes.' • Luring its audience with free T-shirts, David Wingrove's *Chung Kuo* revivalist meeting won the respect of CK-hating David V.Barrett but not of John Richards: 'We writers are the heirs of *Ariadne*, he said, following the thread through the labyrinth with our torches held high and the wide-eyed readers following behind.... It was the most pretentious gibberish I've ever heard.' One has heard worse, mate.

Of course there were awards. For my sins I had to present the BSFA's, with the added fun of trying to reconstruct their mislaid nominations list *even as Ramsey Campbell was introducing me.* NOVEL *The Fall of Hyperion*/Dan Simmons, SHORT 'Bad Timing'/Molly Brown, ART *IZ48* cover/Mark Harrison, DRAMATIC *Terminator 2*. Eastercon 'fun' awards: LONG TEXT *Take Back Plenty*/Colin Greenland, SHORT 'Quantum Chocodynamics'/Sean Ellis *et al*, GRAPHIC 'Milton Keynes' T-shirt/Smitty, DRAMATIC *Red Dwarf V*. Colin Greenland writes thanking 'the dozens and dozens of people who sent that beautiful Get Well card ... also for voting me an Eastercon Award. Nevertheless, I do feel I ought to point out that *Take Back Plenty* now has three awards (the worthy one, the official one, and now one just for fun) ... there are plenty of other books out there, some of which haven't got any awards at all—so I think you ought to start voting for some of them now. In case you're wondering, I've got M.E. (or post-viral fatigue syndrome, for short), which is absolutely bloody exhausting—I am getting better slowly....' Avowedly silly awards were also presented, to much acclaim: *Most promising newcomer* D.West, *Most active fan* Bernie Evans, *Most inactive* Brian Davis, *Most fanciable* Teddy, *Most talented* Dave Mooring, *Most untalented* Steve Green ('Wait for the *Critical Wave* headline, 'Wave Editor Wins Major Award' [AJF]), *Most boring*

Nigel E.Richardson, *Most exciting* David Lally, *Most excitable* Pam Wells, *Most likely to succeed* Bernie Evans, *Most likely to fail* Tony Berry, *Most chauvinistic* Nic Farey (invariably seen introducing himself to some lady so, er, thrustingly that within 30 secs she would be pointedly mentioning a large husband or boyfriend), *Best bum in fandom* Dave Mooring. Let us not discuss all the obvious fixes.... Oh, and Roger Robinson got the Doc Weir 'good guy' award.

The '94 bidding session, rumour forewarned us, was to be an ordeal by fire for the 'unopposed' Sou'Wester committee. After an invisible slide-show in the not very darkened hall, they did indeed cringe a bit at savage questions like 'Have you got a hotel contract?' (no, just a letter of agreement) and 'Is it true that what you're paying for function space is such as to stupefy the imagination?' (yes, apparently). MC John Richards had half-expected a 'Hold Over Decision' vote, later observing that 'Ian Sorensen woffled interminably from the floor and lost "Hold Over" an awful lot of votes by arguing for it.' A first show of hands was decisive: Bristol it is. In theory.... Terry Pratchett was on the far side of the world for Easter, but has since remarked: 'I know something about Bristol's hotels and for the life of me I can't imagine a con in any of them.'

By Monday I felt old and tired and pathetically grateful for a lift home. Not as old and tired as senescent Martin 'Oh God I'm 40 this weekend' Hoare ... but my turn comes next Easter.

## Constupration: Yet More Updates

22-25 May • **Inconsequential**, Aston Court Hotel, Derby. GoH Robert Rankin. £21 reg; rooms £30/single, £52/double. Contact 12 Crich Avenue, Littleover, Derby, DE3 6ES.

8-9 Aug • **FAB 1**, Thunderbirds con, Wolverhampton Civic Hall. Contact 15 Fullers Ct, Exeter, Devon, EX2 4DZ.

17-24 Aug • **Mythcon XXIII**, Tolkien centenary special, presumably in Oxford. £25 reg. Contact 16 Gibsons Green, Heelands, Milton Keynes, MK13 7NH.

28 Aug - 1 Sep • **Rec-Con**, thirtysomethingth UK *Star Trek* con, Piccadilly Hotel, Manchester. £25 reg. Contact 65 Park Rd, Dartford, Kent, DA1 1ST.

27-29 Nov • **Hillcon III**, Beneluxcon, Atlanta Hotel, Rotterdam. f40 reg (f52.50 from 1 Jun). Contact Ruud van de Kruisweg, Bijltespad 52, 1018 KH Amsterdam, Netherlands.

1-4 Apr 94 • **Sou'Wester**, 45th Eastercon, Bristol. GoHs Diane Duane, Neil Gaiman, Barbara Hambly, Peter Morwood. £20 reg—£18 to paid-up presupporters. Contact 3 West Shrubbery, Redland, Bristol, BS6 6SZ.

**Rumblings** • **Bacon** is a 1994 Unicon bid being assembled by Helen Steele in the sinister fastnesses of Cambridge. [GR]

## Infinitely Improbable

'**Shock Horror Ashley TAFF Candidate.** No kidding—H.Ashworth having declined nomination ("I am not worthy. Besides, I can't be bothered."), eminent Nova-winning M.Ashley has expressed interest, assuming he can find out where this place is that he's supposed to go. Opinion polls report K.McVeigh and H.Bond 96 points clear, so it should be a walkover. Tell Abi to stand and save them all from themselves.' [DW] Ace US TAFF delegate Jeanne Bowman refused to refuse to comment.

**Little, Brown** (who plan to replace MacDonald's Sphere and Futura imprints with 'Warner' as in the USA, and to cut back from 20 to 12 titles/month [SFC]) now seem keen on an *Encyclopaedia of Fantasy* to follow the second *SF Encyclopaedia*.

**COA.** *Mary Long* ('but not Sam'), Box 17143, Rochester, NY 14617, USA; *Lilian Edwards/Tommy McClellan*, 39 (1F2) Viewforth, Bruntsfield, Edinburgh, EH10 4JE; *Sarah Dibb/Dave Mooring*, 21 The Village St, Leeds, LS4 2PR; *Simon Owsley*, 28 Beckwith Cres, Harrogate, HG2 0BQ; *Tara*, 245 Dunn Ave, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, M6K 1S6. •