

Ansible



CRUSHED. Rob Hansen was handing out *Then 4*, his history of UK fandom's every gathering, publication and bowel movement in the 1970s. (Grovel to him at 144 Plasket Grove, East Ham, E6 1AB.) 'I'm dreading doing the 80s,' he confided. 'And someone else can do the 90s. Jesus, the 90s don't even have a fan newsletter of record.' Here I coughed rather significantly. 'Ansible,' he retorted, 'is *sercon*.' Collapse of deaf party.

The Marching Morons

John Clute was swept north in a whirlwind: 'About 4,000 books were donated recently to Friends of Foundation for the SF Foundation library, now settled into the University of Liverpool. Roger Robinson and I drove them up in a van and saw the library precincts: which was like seeing Oz after half a lifetime blinded by the institutional torpor and (in recent years) active hostility of the lugubrious University of East London (Kansas [failed]). There is now space for books, and administrator Andy Sawyer has a brief to catalogue and restore the collection; and the University has hopes for its MA in SF Studies. I kept looking for a Wizard behind an arras, but in the event I never had to wake. For the moment, the dream holds.'

William Gibson's *Virtual Light* UK roadshow ('I've been signing this fucking thing for weeks') was marked by an *Independent on Sunday* review beginning: 'The American writer Ian Gibson has been a name to watch in science fiction for the past decade....' (Meanwhile, *Neuromancer* popped up in the list of set books for the University of Salford's English course. [JN])

Colin Greenland reveals where he gets his crazy ideas for weird sf sciencel. On receiving some (fairly trite) suggestions purportedly from a 10-year-old schoolgirl with leukaemia, he wrote a nice letter back and was not best pleased when further instalments arrived from a 'physics student' and then an 'engineering student', all with different female names and (invalid?) addresses but the same handwriting and York postmark. 'It's getting a little annoying, not to say insulting,' sniffed Colin.

George Hay has an alternative view, as usual: 'It's hard to get anywhere with the SF Foundation, because they really think sf is all about Lit Crit. I don't know if you have seen *Foundation 58*, but it is filled almost entirely with material on the influence of X on Y, or that so-and-so's arguments are completely fallacious—the kind of petty squabbling that made me drop my subs to the BSFA aeons ago, only now conducted by grown men with tenure and good salaries, men whose grasp on the real world seems faint in the extreme....'

Ken Lake, peripatetic Casanova, is laying waste the women of Fiji: 'Having extricated himself from the embraces of 280-lb *Duri* in Nadi ("we should be together for ever and ever") and escaped from *Christine* ("you mek mi cre-zee") at the Rainmaker Hotel in Pago Pago, roving *palangi* Ken Lake succumbed to the charms of *Leu* in Apia (and lost \$300 from his wallet to her nimble fingers) before chickening out on the marriage offer of *Cristina* in Vava'u, only to be inveigled by lying *Tema* of Nuku'alofa ("I can't marry you now, I'm going to be a missionary") into a proposal of marriage to delightful 16-year-old *Tala*, her sister. He is currently recuperating in Suva....' [And goes on to bandy several more ladies' names. Tut tut—Ed.]

Peter Nicholls, rumours say, is now trying to flog his own alternative *Fantasy Encyclopaedia* in the USA on the basis that this is the Real Thing, as opposed to Little, Brown's pathetic

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imitation edited by upstarts like that man Clute and everyone else on the new *SF Encyclopaedia's* title page (except Peter)....

Chad Oliver, pioneer of anthropological sf, died of cancer on 9 August aged 65. [SFC]

Terry Pratchett was bemused by a *Business Age* magazine survey ranking him 451st of the 500 richest individuals in Britain, with a personal fortune of £26½ million. Having looked under the bed and failed to locate this wad of cash, he learned that 'It's all *potential*—like value of existing copyrights over time, value of other stuff like film rights, value of books I haven't written yet, value of body mass of family and pets if rendered for soap and so on, plus wild guesses at how much I must have made already.... Just when I think I understand the kind of Discworld logic by which they arrived at it my brain sags. Apparently my annual income is seen by them as a kind of dividend paid by a conceptual Terry Pratchett PLC. The Society of Authors treasurer chuckled benignly and told me, "You can get tax relief on guard dogs...."

Bob Shaw, after publishing *How To Write Science Fiction* with Allison & Busby, has become the editorial consultant for A&B's new sf list. 'It feels a bit funny sitting on the other side of the editorial fence, and already I have been subjected to the cliché which replaced Adam and Eve stepping out of a spaceship—the life-or-death space battle which turns out to have been a video game.' We trust A&B have altered their legendary 'Royalties? What do you mean, royalties?' policy, so well known to past victims like Barry Bayley.

Condiction

30-31 Oct • **Ghost Story Society** convention (their first), Chester Euromill Hotel. With Ramsey Campbell *et al.* Contact 'Ashcroft', 2 Abbottsford Dr, Penyfford, Chester, CH4 0JG.

30-31 Oct • **Octocon** (Irish national con), Royal Marine Hotel, Dun Laoghaire. GoH Storm Constantine, Steve Dillon. £15 reg. Contact 20 Newgrove Ave, Sandymount, Dublin 4.

1 Nov • **Readings** at Wealdstone Library (Grant Road) by Molly 'Oh God, I shouldn't have asked you to mention this. I know you'll say something awful and get me into trouble' Brown, Stella Hargreaves & Jessica Palmer, 6-8pm. Free.

5-7 Nov • **Novacon 23**, Royal Angus, Birmingham. GoH Stephen Baxter. Too late to join by mail: £30 at the door. Hotel bookings to 121 Cape Hill, Smethwick, Warley, B66 4SH.

12-14 Nov • **Armadacon V**, Astor Hotel, Plymouth. £20 reg. Contact 4 Gleneagle Ave, Plymouth, PL3 5HL.

5-6 Mar 94 • **Microcon**, Exeter University. GoH 'er, to be announced.' [PB] Contact Paul Hamilton, 0392 55839.

1-4 Apr 94 • **Sou'Wester** (Eastercon), Adelphi Hotel, Liverpool. £25 reg (may well rise after Novacon, so watch it). Contact 3 West Shrubbery, Redland, Bristol, BS6 6SZ.

14-17 Apr 95 • **Confabulation** (Eastercon), Britannia International Hotel, London Docklands. £15 reg to end 1993. PR1 is out. Contact 3 York St, Altrincham, Cheshire, WA15 9QH.

24-8 Aug 95 • **Intersection**, 53rd Worldcon, Glasgow. New address: Admail 336, Glasgow, G2 1BR. Registration now £60. They can be faxed c/o John Stewart, 081 669 8079.

Rumblings • **Bernie Evans**, mistress of registrations for innumerable UK cons, is taking voluntary redundancy in order to enjoy *even more time* typing addresses, printing labels, and campaigning for compulsory truncation of fans with names like

Neale Anthony Mittenshaw-Hodge. 'Asked how she'll be spending her time in future, the grandmother of six informed incredulous friends that she intended to start cooking and doing housework, and would like to become more involved in fandom. Husband Mick was unavailable for comment owing to prolonged fits of hysterical laughter.' [MT]

Infinitely Improbable

World Fantasy Awards. Novel shortlist: *Anno Dracula*, Kim Newman; *Last Call*, Tim Powers; *Was*, Geoff Ryman; *Photographing Fairies*, Steve Szilagyi; *Briar Rose*, Jane Yolen. James Blaylock's *Lord Kelvin's Machine* reads like a fix-up novel to me, but is mysteriously shortlisted under Best Collection. [SFC]

Metaphor of the Month. 'Her very existence made his forebrain swell until it threatened to leak out his sinuses.' (Nancy A. Collins, *Sunglasses After Dark*, 1989.)

C.o.A. John Clute, 221b Camden High St, London, NW1 7BU. ('The change from 221 to 221b represents nothing more than an attempt to keep our post from being delivered to the shop below us.') Ken Lake, Poste Restante, General Post Office, Suva, Fiji.

Hazel's Language Lessons: Klingon. 'No,' said Hazel. 'I don't care how many clippings Martin Morse Wooster sends you about Klingon language camps in Minnesota. I refuse to authorize a fake language lesson.' Me: 'Can't I even interest you in the etymology of 'iw, Klingon for blood—from the noise the audience made in the big *Star Trek VI* bloodshed scene, "eeeeewwwwwww!"?' Hazel: 'Certainly not.'

Martian Splurge. HarperCollins spent a fortune on a full-page *Guardian* ad for Kim Stanley Robinson's *Red Mars*—though with a slightly unlikely caption. 'Are they promoting this as a comedy? "Welcome to Mars ... Please Drive Carefully" sounds very much like the cover of *Red Dwarf*: "Infinity Welcomes Careful Drivers". What will Gollancz do for the paperback of *Red Dust*: "Take Care: Ride on the Left"?' [DG]

Xanthagrams. Horny Sapient, Shiny Protean, Noisy Panther, Insane Trophy, A Spiny Throne, A Thorny Penis ... I'm trying to decide which is most appropriate. And is another author mentioned above really of a Non-Lilac Gender? [N&AS]

Encyclopaedia. That legendary CD-ROM edition is scheduled for pressing at the end of October and will include all the major updates and corrections noted by late September. Price will be £35 plus VAT. After criticizing shortcomings of the proposed access/display software—'Er, wouldn't it be useful if searching for a title actually took you to the title rather than dumping you at the start of what might be a very long author or theme entry?'—your editor has insinuated an Ansible Information™ program which improves matters somewhat, and feels dead smug about this. Meanwhile CD publishers Nimbus are right now rushing to sort out the audio tracks of the CD-ROM, with sound-bites from a representative selection of the millions of sf authors available for interview in or near London before publication day....

Hair of the Dog. The great David Hartwell sends a true interoffice memo from St Martin's Press. 'We will be publishing in March of 1995 a new trade paperback title called *Knitting With Dog Hair*. The two authors [...] are busily making DOG HAIR BOOKMARKS, which will be used by colleagues in subrights and in publicity, but demand for the bookmarks has been so great that we are now facing a serious shortage of dog hair. This is no joke! No, no, perish the thought. All employees are duly exhorted to 'place dog hair in a zip-locked plastic bag', labelled with the breed ('Mutts are fine'), but not on any account to raid the vacuum cleaner ('This is not bona fide dog hair, since it has been combined with other dirt'), and to bring all bags to the Official St Martin's Dog Hair Depository. It'll be even more fun when they publish *1001 Uses for Dog Turds*.

Barry Pulls It Off! More epoch-making news from Barry R. Levin's catalogue of sf at awesome prices: the British BCA book club version of Asimov's *Forward the Foundation* is the world first edition, by about three weeks. I do not know how the feeble human intellect is able to contain such excitement.

Token Gossip for Hansen. Comets were sighted, two-headed

calves were born, the sheeted dead did squeak and gibber in the Roman streets, and Greg Pickersgill published a fanzine last month.

Hazel's Language Lessons: Tongan. fetukitoka'aki, to strike out at each other while lying down; kisukava, to make an enigmatic statement after drinking kava; fakamōmoatea, to act as if one had a presentiment of something that will shortly happen, or has already happened but is not yet known. [KL]

Our Spies At ConFrancisco

'It was boring,' said ever-ecstatic Abigail Frost of this year's Worldcon in San Francisco—except you WON'T FUCKING BELIEVE who won Best Semiprozine! 'The best part,' added Martin Hoare, 'was when the techies tapped the hotel's three porn movie channels and patched them into the lobby information screens.' 'Many had trouble telling the sf fans from the homeless on the streets,' confided Teddy Harvia.

Hugo Awards went to most of the usual suspects. BEST NOVEL was a tie: Vernor Vinge's *A Fire Upon the Deep* and Connie Willis's *Doomsday Book*. ('Amazing,' said Rog Peyton. 'I'll have to order extra copies. I'm astonished *Red Mars* didn't win.' Me: 'You thought that was the best book?' He: 'Well, I haven't actually read it. As such.') NOVELLA: Lucius Shepherd, *Barnacle Bill the Spacer*. NOVELETTE: Janet Kagan, 'The Nutcracker Coup'. SHORT: Connie Willis, 'Even the Queen'. NONFICTION: Harry Warner, *A Wealth of Fable*. DRAMATIC: *The Inner Light*, an ST:TNG episode. EDITOR: Gardner Dozois of *Asimov's*. ARTIST: Don Maitz. ORIGINAL ART: James Gurney, *Dinotopia*. SEMIPROZINE: Andy Porter's *Science Fiction Chronicle* (stunner of the weekend; it beat *Locus* by one vote, following recounts. Andy got a standing ovation, while the great Charles N. Brown was soon conducting a merciless Spanish Inquisition among *Locus* staff who failed to vote: 'Gee, Charlie, I was so busy working for the con, I never got round to—aargh!' Fandom waits with bated breath to learn whether Andy's next *SFC* editorial will record victory with the same grace with which he has accepted past defeats). FANZINE: *Mimosa*. FAN WRITER: me (fervent thanks to all voters—your cheques are in the mail. Martin Hoare: 'Abi gave me the Hugo and then kissed me. She needn't have said YUK afterwards...'). FAN ARTIST: Peggy Ranson. ● JOHN W. CAMPBELL award for best new writer: Laura Resnick. [GS] ● Los Angeles won the 1996 Worldcon voting against a challenging lack of opposition. ● 'It was an interesting convention. Most of the ceremonies started late but, to compensate for that, they ran long. Standing in line seemed to be the theme—there were long lines at registration, then another long one if you were a programme participant, then another to pick up your souvenir book, etc. Some of the con was well done, and the city is beautiful, but....' [BY]

The Frost Report continues: 'The con lacked centre, and the sort of spontaneous Great Moment we expect of big cons didn't really have a chance. No bloody bar in the Moscone Centre, for a start. (Not even a Harvey Milk Bar, ho ho.) 8000 people there, yet one rarely saw more than 20 of them in the same place doing the same thing. Grew heartily sick of seeing friends going up the escalator as I was coming down. If only Banks had been there to climb the Parc 55 hotel. (But if he had, as a filthy pro he'd have climbed the ANA, which I only really penetrated for the Tor Books party.) *Ansible* helped, since one could always stop someone in their tracks by thrusting it at them. Smoking, oddly, helped too, because I rapidly got the habit of snatching a quick ciggie whenever and wherever I could, and talked to whoever (be they Valkyrie, mediaeval peasant or Fred Pohl) was doing the same thing.

'Tell Martin I'm sorry I said YUK after kissing him on stage at the Hugos. Had meant to fall on ground gagging horribly, of course. Also, didn't have the heart to preface announcing you with "What's the Welsh for boring?" as planned. Felt I let the side down, rather. At the Hugo rehearsal, we were very firmly told not to say "And the winner is...." Winner implies losers, you see. So the PC thing to do afterwards from now on is the People To Whom The Hugos Did Not Go Party. Charlie Brown did not go to it (or at least not while I was there).

'San Francisco was triff. Didn't get to see nearly enough of it. Favourite bit: the ruins of Sutro Baths, and the rocky beachlet (mussels and bloody great fleshy starfish—takes yer back to the Cornwall of childhood) just below....' [AJF]

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