

Ansible



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From Dave Langford, 94 London Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 5AU. Fax 0734 669914. ISSN 0265-9816. Logo by Dan Steffan. This US edition comes to you from the very wonderful Janice Murray, PO Box 75684, Seattle, WA 98125-0684.

THE CURSE OF COLIN GREENLAND. Last issue told of a peeved Colin being deluged with sf ideas from many differently named (and addressed) correspondents all with the same handwriting and York postmark. This identical blight has now spread to me. Where will it all end? See *Brian Stableford*, below....

Them!

Barry Bayley has completed a very short synopsis for a new Jasperodius the Robot novel—said his agent, legendary London bon-viveur Gamma, before being thrown out of a Conservatory signing owing to being barred from the pub. 'It'll be *really good*,' he added soon after, and was thrown out again.

Arthur C. Clarke is exposed in this telling sentence from a Gollancz press release, reprinted COMPLETE and UN CUT as an *Ansible* public service: 'He is unquestionably the greatest living science, as well as the best-known and bestselling.' [DVB] Greater than biochemistry, greater than physics... Arthurology.

William Gibson was pilloried by the *Washington Post* (18 Oct) for his dress sense: 'The shirts that hang off his 45-year-old frame look as if he bought them in a feed store. He's always said he figured that if nobody liked the stories he'd written he'd have wound up working in a secondhand bookstore. He still dresses as if that's his idea of success.' [MMW]

Ron Holmes, editor of the first UK sf news fanzine *Science Fantasy Review* (which as *SFR War Digest* gave Vinç Clarke his first fanzine appearance in 1940), died on 21 Sept. [SG/RH]

Terry Pratchett's £26½m fortune (a figment of *Business World* magazine) still plagues him despite last issue's squib about its illusory nature—in fact some of my readers can't be too bright, as the great man complains that 'The *Ansible* piece is now being quoted to me as evidence that I have got £26m.'

Vincent Price died on 25 October aged 82, one published comment being that he'd had plenty of practice....

Nicholas Royle, rising horror megastar etc, is interviewed in the Nov *Intersone*: 'Interviewer Chris Kenworthy refers to Royle's new novel *Counterparts* as "interesting and exciting". This was presumably why Kenworthy's own Barrington Books published it, a link curiously omitted from his essay.' [SG]

Geoff Ryman, according to delighted but cruelly unattributable rumours, is writing a *Star Trek* novel. (What next? Salman Rushdie signs up to do Judge Dredd tie-ins?)

Brian Stableford takes up the tale: 'I was interested to read (in A75) of Colin Greenland's annoyance regarding his correspondence with a person I take to be Siobahn [*sic*] Munster, *alias* Amanda Haertel, *alias* Rachel Oliver, etc, etc, of Norton-in-Derwent. It really isn't that annoying, and my experience suggests that as it will never actually stop (no matter how many letters "she" sends announcing that the correspondence is closed) one might as well derive whatever amusement one can from it. "Her" latest letter to me begins, cheerily, "Me again ..." even though it is signed with a name "she" has not used previously, and shows "her" customary blithe disregard for anachronism ("she" has been ten for several years now) and consistency of symptoms ("she" is always unwell, and often in hospital, but never has the same malady twice running). In spite of *Ansible's* churlish description of "her" story plots as "trite" they are not noticeably worse than many which sell, and I have not yet lost hope that "she" may one day send me one worth using. I admit that it isn't clear to me why a mature

(probably) male (almost certainly) who seems to read *New Scientist* and *Interzone* with a fair degree of comprehension should feel the need to disguise himself as an ailing female child, but it's a free country. If Colin finds the whole thing too burdensome, he could always spread the load by sending "her" the addresses of a few more famous sf writers—unless, of course, "she" has them all already....'

Jonathan Swift's immortal but depressed and amnesiac Struldbruggs might have been inspired by his own possible slide into Alzheimer's disease—according to a doctor's speculative letter in the *Lancet*. [JN] Similarly, the Yahoos in Book IV of *Gulliver's Travels* were early, tragic victims of what modern medicine now knows as Football Fan Syndrome.

Conenchyma

5-7 Nov • **Novacon 23**, Royal Angus Hotel, Birmingham. GoH Stephen Baxter. £30 at the door. Buy me a drink.

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

19-21 Nov • **Midcon** (games), Royal Angus Hotel, Brum. National Diplomacy Championships etc. £10 reg. Contact 30 Rydding Lane, Millfields Estate, West Brownh, B71 2HA.

20 Nov • **Latcon** (*Trek*), U of London Union, Malet St, WC1. Videos, dealers and tribble hunt. £8 reg.

28-30 Jan 94 • **Starbase** (*Trek*), Hilton Hotel, Leeds. GoH George Takei. £35 reg; no memberships at the door. Contact 152 Otley Rd, Headingley, Leeds, LS16 5JX.

5-6 Mar 94 • **Microcon**, Exeter University. Now has a contact address: 6 Clifton Hill, Exeter, EX1 2DL.

1-4 Apr 94 • **Sou'Wester** (Eastercon), Liverpool. £25 reg rising to £27 on 1 Dec 93. No postal memberships after 14 Mar. Contact 3 West Shrubbery, Redland, Bristol, BS6 6SZ.

Rumblings • **BSFA** meetings remain in limbo. • **Evolution** is a bid for the 1996 Eastercon ('I wanted it called Vivisection,' said one disappointed committee member) starring 'Rhodri James and several polite euphemisms for people with little experience of running 3 day cons' (so it's going to be a *short* Easter weekend). Venue: 'SE England'. Presupporting membership £1 to 13 Lindfield Gdns, Hampstead, NW3 6PX. [MC] • **Intersection's** second progress report arrived from Washington DC (that little-known suburb of Glasgow) and is better laid out than the hasty PR1 ... except for a piece by some guy called Langford, who absurdly claims that re-editing 14 paragraphs into two extremely long ones did not assist readability.

Infinitely Improbable

Fin de Siècle. Deborah 'SF Editor With Legs' Beale has left Millennium (with some tiny possibility of a continuing consultancy rôle); her sidèkick Charon Wood was reportedly offered the job but, unimpressed by the way DB was treated, forcefully resigned. Publishing gossip claims that DB's marriage to her fave author Tad ('what is that short for?' asked our informant: 'Tadpole?') Williams made her financially independent and that Millennium boss A.Cheetham got strangely nervous/hostile/unpleasant about this. Officially, she has resigned.

Simile of the Month. 'Just to the south of them, the new Socket was like a titanic concrete bunker, the new elevator cable rising out of it like an elevator cable ...' (Kim Stanley Robinson, *Green Mars*) [DW]

Editor of the Living Dead. DC's graphic novel of *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* is advertised in *Locus* as being adapted 'by acclaimed british SF writer and editor John Carnell (*New Worlds*).'—all *sic*. The current *New Worlds* editor David Garnett is deeply baffled, and so is his predecessor Mike Moorcock; as all true fans know and regret, *NW*'s founding editor John Carnell died in 1972.... [DG]

C.o.A. Peter Cohen (late—I mislaid it), 80 Sherland Rd, Twickenham, TW1 4HD. Mike Cule, 4 Baines House, Abbey Barn Rd, High Wycombe, HP11 1RJ. Paul Hamilton, as Microcon. Krsto Mažuranić, Slavenska 1, 41430 Samobor, CROATIA (same flat, new country). Ben Schilling, 2615 Madrid (Apt 1), Madison, WI 53713, USA.

Publishing Bits. Virgin have contracted with Fleetway for a further 3 Judge Dredd novels. Future plans are for one book per quarter rather than one a month. The bookshops are proving leery—"We can't sell graphic novels, even ones with pictures"—but those who are stocking 'em are selling out fast. Sort of the opposite of the Thatcher Memoirs, I hope. [U] • Philip K. Dick: *A Day in the Afterlife* is being made for the BBC by Arena Productions for broadcast next Spring. Producer Nicola Roberts insisted that all interviewees wear identical t-shirts with Dick's face on ... data from *Radio Free PKD*, \$16/year from Noel Productions, 27068 S. La Paz, Aliso Viejo, CA 92656, USA. [BC] • *Flexiback Books* is a somewhat indeterminate new enterprise that plans 64pp A4 magazine-format books (40-55,000 words) in various genres including sf/fantasy, but is still muttering about raising 'the needed capital'. Paul Barnett will be sf/f editor (no submissions yet, please).

Introgenic. Diana Wynne Jones's fearful back pains persist despite her operation last Dec. Her fan club wishes to interview the doctor who, having poked her crushed vertebra hard enough to make her scream and black out, explained that there was nothing whatever wrong and that if sitting down to write was a problem she should jolly well get a job where she could work standing up. Another learned doctor advised her to drink lots of milk and, informed of her allergy to all milk products, amended this to 'eat lots of cheese'.... [CB] Nevertheless a new DWJ book is out: *Hexwood*, available at all good etc etc.

Stop the Presses! Warner Books cancelled their 200,000-copy first US printing of the 'Jack the Ripper Diary' for a bizarre reason almost unprecedented in publishing ... their expert reported that the document could not be authentic. [SFC] • Ashgate Publishing have likewise delayed UK publication of the Scolar Press *The Best in SF: Winners and Nominees of the Major Awards in SF* (by Canadian fan Aurel Guillemette) after many errors and typos were gleefully pointed out. The BSFA and Clarke awards are hopelessly confused (some would call that fair comment) and in one year are said to have been respectively won by G. Ryman's *The Child Garden* and *Children of the Garden*; a later winner is that homely cookbook *Take Bake Plenty*. 'They're freezing publication until they've sorted it out somehow—they're horribly embarrassed by it—their word was "horrified".' [DVB]

Overheard. Loren McGregor confused Shirley Jackson with Shirley MacLaine, causing Debbie Notkin to recoil with horror from him. "We have always lived in this body," he offered as his defence. [WP] • Catherine Barnett: 'But if Paul [Kincaid] works in London, how come he and Maureen [Speller] live in Folkestone?' Jane Barnett: 'They were very, very bad in their previous lives.'

ConFrancisco Continued

Worldcon post-mortems go on and on. The curse of fame hit your editor in October, with the arrival of ConFrancisco's 'follow these easy instructions to complete your Hugo' kit—little pewter plaques to be stuck around the base, depicting dead sf notables from Mary Shelley to Isaac Asimov (glue not supplied). Less unworldly fans might have written GIFT—NO COMMERCIAL VALUE on the customs chit ... instead I was

amusingly landed with over £15 in duty, VAT and UPS penalty charges for collecting same. *The Plain People of Fandom*: 'Ha bloody ha!'

Taras Wolansky sends his report on the con's Harlan Ellison Revival Meeting; once again the great man mingled with sf fans in order to announce, 'I try to stay as far away from sf fandom as I possibly can. I mean, one can only take so much horseshit before one has the need to kill. At the moment, I have the need to kill the people at NESFA....'

What frightful thing had the New England SF Association done? TW explains: 'At 1am that morning, it seems, Ellison had been leafing through the convention souvenir book when he came upon an advertisement for *The Rediscovery of Man: The Complete Short SF of Cordwainer Smith*, published by NESFA Press (Box 809, Framingham, MA 01701-0203; 671pp, \$24.95). His first thought was, yes, complete but for the story "Smith's" widow had given him for *The Last Dangerous Visions*. But then he read these fatal words: "Appearing for the first time in print in English [is] 'Himself in Anachron' (originally written for *Last Dangerous Visions* and previously available only in French)."

'A bit of history.... Cordwainer Smith, a.k.a. Paul W. Linebarger, died in 1966. According to Christopher Priest in *The Last Deadloss Visions*, Ellison first announced having a Smith story for his never-published anthology in February, 1974! Yes, Ellison sat on the story for twenty years, so long that it is now of interest primarily to scholars and antiquarians. Discussing *TLDV* in 1984 (!), Harry Harrison remarked, "The stories are grey with age, any value they might have had for the authors has long since been diminished to the vanishing point."

'Under these circumstances, any ordinary person would be humbly grateful to NESFA for undoing a little of the harm he has done. But Ellison is made of sterner stuff: "They've got the story in the fucking book, and it kills the story for *The Last Dangerous Visions*!" [TW: full text of this report to appear in *Fosfax*]

HE's publicly announced message to NESFA at this same session was: 'Pull the goddam book off sale now, pulp the son of a bitch, republish without that story, or I'm going to sue you, NESFA, and every one of you into oblivion!' (*Applause.*) This is a weighty threat which NESFA should take seriously, every bit as seriously as the weighty Ellison promises of imminent *TLDV* delivery/publication made in 1973, 1976, 1977, 1979, 1980, 1984, etc.

(Wicked Bias declared: your editor has a booklet in print with NESFA and is discussing terms for an expanded trade-paperback edition which may or may not be titled *Let's Hear It Again For The Deaf Man*. He does not have a story in *The Last Dangerous Visions*. Phew.)

Don Herron (of Dashiell Hammett Tour fame) remembers: 'Thursday night of the con I spent driving cab. Picked up S.P. Somtow and, later, Sam Moskowitz. I knew them but they didn't know me, so I drove S.P. just a little bit fast for fun, and asked SaM after the panel we were on how the food had been at Johnny Kan's. SaM was delighted by this circumstance, and told me that once in New York he and John W. Campbell hopped into a cab, and the driver instantly started arguing with Campbell over his editorial policies.

'Er, Abi would have seen more of San Francisco if she hadn't fallen asleep during much of the touring about we did. I figured, hell, the rigours of the trip, the stress of ConFiasco (it was brutal), I'll take this as a compliment to my smooth driving (vs. a horrid insult to my abilities as a tour guide). I was going to give up, just park someplace and let her catch some zzzzzs, but decided to try the view from Twin Peaks as a last shot. The panorama, combined with a brisk and icy wind ("... knot up my skirt before the rest of *this fucking city* has a look at my knickers"—something like that, I have trouble with Oxfordian cadences) snapped her back to life....

'The 51st Annual will always stand as the Charlie Brown Downfall Convention. You could almost feel sorry that CB didn't nab a 17th Hugo, if you weren't so overwhelmed with pure glee....' [DH]

Ben Yalow liked 'the Hugo program book. It has some amazing errors, including crediting Dean Wesley Smith with being Damon Knight, or at least with doing everything Damon did. Normally I would assume that just meant that they stripped the wrong text in below the headline, but somehow they got Dean's name into the text, as well....'

Martin Hoare corrects Abigail: 'I found the bar in the Moscone Centre!' Ansible suspects that Martin could find the bar in a mosque.

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