

# Ansible



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**TAFF TALK.** The 1995 TAFF race is on, to choose which fabulous US fan will adorn *The Scottish Convention* in this special delegate rôle ... and, while not saying a word against the other splendid candidates (acclaimed throughout Britain as 'Joe who?' and 'You're sure the "b" isn't a typo?'), I encourage *Ansible* groupies to vote for that fine artist and fun-lover Dan Steffan. Yes, there is an ulterior motive. Dan drew the *Ansible* logo (above left) for a 1986 issue. It's since been recycled in a significant 42 further *Ansibles*—and if we bring the bugger over here then maybe at last I can have him do a replacement.

## Night of the Jabberwock

**Richard Evans**, mighty Gollancz sf boss, is past his hospital crisis (pneumonia plus liver failure) and now embarking on a lengthy, teetotal convalescence. All sympathies....

**L.Ron Hubbard** continues to pile up posthumous glories, this time the Ig Nobel Prize presented by *Annals of Improbable Research* magazine to those whose achievements 'cannot or should not be reproduced.' The Literature trophy inevitably went to L.Ron 'for his crackling Good Book, *Dianetics*, which is highly profitable to mankind or to a portion thereof.' [PJM]

**Paul Kincaid**, in-depth sf critic, is noted for awesome, penetrating insights ... so I carefully wrote down his entire commentary on the 1994 Hugo award results: 'FUCK ME! THAT FUCKING AWFUL CONNIE WILLIS STORY WON THE FUCKING HUGO!'

**Jerry Pournelle's** secret career in sports writing is revealed on the blurb page of Poul Anderson's *Harvest of Stars*, which names Pournelle as co-author of *Football*. I have yet to trace his collaborative venture on off-track betting, *The Tote in God's Eye*.

**Chris Priest** muses on incipient fame: '*Fugue, Glamour and Wessex* are already optioned for feature films. Today [28 Oct] *The Quiet Woman* has joined the list. If three out of four projects fail, don't you think I might at last be in with a chance? All four are low-budget art-house movies, though. I do wish they would Think Schwarzenegger when they read my books! They did once with Phil Dick....'

**Karl Edward Wagner** died of liver failure on 15 October. He was only 48. Besides his own horror novels and stories, he is fondly remembered for editing *The Year's Best Horror* annually since 1980. This series often drew on the British small press: Karl was highly sympathetic to 'borderline' work, though he liked to pull the authors' legs by saying the story was too tame and that 'I added a final paragraph with zombies and chainsaws, since this was an obvious oversight on your part.'

**Ian Watson**, modest as ever, 'reports on the launch of his *Warhammer 40,000: Harlequin* in the Birmingham National Indoor Arena on 23 Oct, amidst a horde of 5,000 Warhammerers. Boxtree venturesomely trucked 300 copies of the £16 hardback Collector's Edition to Brum. Half an hour before the signing session all 300 had already sold out. A stunned Boxtree editor fended off public clamour for more. IW's suggestion to GW that next time 500 copies could be on sale brought the plea: "Ian, the kids only bring so much money along—we want to sell the games." STOP PRESS: all Boxtree 'Warhammer' and 'Dark Future' titles by Craig, Ferring, and Yeovil (Stableford, Garnett, Newman) sighted in London remainder shop!

**Janny Wurts** was disconcerted at the recent UK Fantasycon when, giving a reading of her work which had been carefully advertised as a reading of her work, she was interrupted by an

audience member vigorously denouncing all readings as unhelpful, uninformative and a total waste of time. *Interzone's* very own tact master Chris Gilmore had struck again!

## Conidium

4-6 Nov • **Novacon 24**, Royal Angus Hotel, Brum. GoH Graham Joyce. £30 at door if the hotel isn't chock full.

5-6 Nov • **Armadacon VI**, Astor Hotel, Elliott St, The Hoe, Plymouth. GoH Mary Gentle and others. £20 reg.

11-13 Nov • **Unification** (media), Grand Hotel, Brum. Contact Clifton Ho, 27 Clifton Pla, Wakefield, WF1 3JH.

11-14 Nov • **Cult TV Weekend**, Seacroft Holiday Village, Hemsby, Norfolk. SAE to PO Box 1701, Peterborough, PE1 1EX.

12 Nov • **First Contact** (one-day 'multimedia' thingy), Hilton Students' Union, Aberdeen. 9am onward. £4 reg (£5 at door). Contact 47 Gairn Terrace, Aberdeen, AB1 6AY.

23 Nov • **BSFA London Meet**, Jubilee Tavern, York Rd, nr Waterloo. Upstairs room, 7pm. Hear GoH Rob Holdstock's primal, mythic invocation to ancient forestland: 'Mine's a pint.'

25 Nov • **Tom Holt** reads/speaks at Sheen Lane Centre, London, SW14, 8pm. £4 reg. Contact 081 940 9125.

26 Nov • **Signing of Point 'young adult' f&sf** by Molly Brown *et al*, London, 1pm: in a frenzy of YA correctness this is in Forbidden Planet itself and not, as normal, the nearby pub....

5-8 Apr 96 • **Evolution** (Eastercon): spurned by the Brighton Metropole, this has moved to the Radisson Edwardian Hotel near Heathrow. Room rates £30/person in doubles/twins, £28 in triple rooms, £50 'single occupancy of double room' (implying no actual singles). Refunds offered to anyone unable to contemplate the bleak horror of an Eastercon outside Brighton ... but those blenching at the word 'Heathrow' are assured this is *not* the Skycon '78 hotel, and that it's survived its baptism of fire at a 1994 Trek con. £20 reg, to 18 Apr 95. Contact 13 Lindfield Gdns, Hampstead, London, NW3 6PX.

**Rumblings** • **Bridget Wilkinson** found Conadian's core event differently enjoyable: 'I spent some time at the WSFS business meeting. Ouch! What a bunch of rules fetishists! I thought the Trotskyites were bad 'til I met that lot.... I now have a much better idea of where the Worldcon brain rot comes from. They spent six hours disposing of business ESFS would have dealt with in a bit over half an hour, and people complain about the length of our meetings.... The meeting appears to have become an end in itself, driving away those who want to get things done rather than revel in the minutiae of the rules. Haven't they got anything better to do?' • **Phoenicians**: sf group meeting 2nd Thur monthly at Phoenix pub, Lower Hythe St, Dartford, 8:30pm onward, wishes to make friends and influence people (adv't). • **Confrancisco Share-Out**: the 1993 Worldcon found itself some \$24,000 in profit and gave \$4,000 (partly in kind: hotel suite costs etc) to each of the next three Worldcons, including *The Scottish Convention*. Further loot was disbursed as grants, including \$400 to Fans Across the World.

## Infinitely Improbable

**Weird Science.** You thought Kim Stanley Robinson's *Green Mars* was hard sf? Not so, implies the write-up in *Fire and Water* (the HarperCollins newsletter), explaining how to reach this particular Mars: 'Cross the astral belt....'

**Disney's Language Lessons: Swahili.** One watcher of the movie *The Lion King* found a smattering of Swahili useful to translate the names (*Simba*=lion, *Shenzi*=barbarian)—but had to resort to a dictionary for the warthog *Pumba*: 'excretion from

under the foreskin'. [*Guardian*, 31 Oct] 'It's not in my Swahili dictionary,' says Hazel suspiciously....

**Lies, Lies.** The 'Liar's Panel on How To Get Published' was a popular Worldcon event. *Gene Wolfe*: 'What is the quickest way to get a response from an editor?' *Dave Hartwell*: 'Use different fonts in the text.' *Wil McCarthy*: 'Use upper and lower case in the middle of a word.' *Joe Haldeman*: 'I JUST USE ALL CAPS.' *DH*: 'Perfume your MS so that it is easy to distinguish from others in the stack. [...] Send your MS to the company president. He can then assign it to an editor.' [All F770:106]

**British Fantasy Awards.** The August Derleth Award for best fantasy novel was presented this year to Ramsey Campbell for *The Long Lost*; it must be getting time to change the name to the Ramsey Again Award. Other glittering whatsits went to Dennis Etchison's 'The Dog Park' (short), *Dark Voices 5* (collection), Les Edwards (artist), Poppy Z.Brite (newcomer), etc.

**C.o.A.** A.A.Adams, 45 Fife Park, St Andrews, KY16 9UE. *Dave Hicks*, 8 Dyfrig St, Pontcanna, Cardiff, CF1 9LR (a belated mention).

**BSFA Fun.** Feisty *Dave Hodson* demonstrated for the second time his utter inability to produce the BSFA newsletter *Matrix*, allowing BSFA supremo *Maureen Speller* to fulfil a lifelong dream: 'I've always wanted to sack someone. I really enjoyed sacking Hodson....' Into the breach steps *Chris Terran* (who has heard all the Earthling jokes already), eager for *Matrix* news and views: send him something, anything, at 9 Beechwood Ct, Back Beechwood Grove, Burley, Leeds, LS4 2HS. 0532 782388.

**Random Fandom.** *Sandra Bond* is the name, not Harriet. • *Chuck Connor* bewails being thrown off computer net areas for using the smutty taglines he puts on fanzine envelopes: 'Her hopes fell when she found an 8" WANG was a disk drive', or 'PROBLEM CLOSING LEVI.ZIP—REPLACE FLOPPY AND RETRY?'

**Who, Me?** *R.I.Barycz*, one-time *Ansible* media columnist, rises mouldering from his celluloid grave: 'I bought a copy of your *Irrational Numbers* [Necronomicon Press, plug, plug] from New Worlds.... I also watched an episode of the new Yankee TV series *The X-Files* around the same time. This one involved a mutated human who hibernates for 30 years, wakes up, rips the livers out of 5 men for nourishment and turns in for another 30 years. What struck a chord was the plot device: the mutant can elongate & flatten his body and so creep into locked rooms to perform his amateur surgery. Not a million miles from your story "The Lions in the Desert", no? Happy litigation.' Er um....

**Too Good To Check.** Seen the ads for 'Venus Classics of Historical Erotica'—a Victorian/Edwardian porn book club? Or its sleazier modern bedmate 'Venus Editions Collection of Erotica'? Both come from New Era Press. It would be almost too beautiful for the human mind to contemplate if this were the same New Era that handles L.Ron Hubbard in the UK.... 'When first published these books were FORBIDDEN!'—it does sound like the grubby ad copy for *Dianetics*, you know.

**Plug Requests.** *Mab Sêr*, 'Magazine of Welsh Speculative Writers Foundation' but apparently in English, £1.90: contact 16 Queenwood Clo, Cyncoed, Cardiff, CF3 7JH. • *Maelstrom* 'sf/fantasy/horror/mystery', 54pp A5, £1.50 from Sol Publications, 58 Malvern, Coleman St, Southend, SS2 5AD. • *Clive Barker: Mythmaker for the Millenium* by Suzanne J.Barbieri, British Fantasy Soc, 64pp pb, £4.99—I admit giving up on this hagiography after some early New Age dribble about Barker being deeply relevant to the coming year 2000 and the 'Age of Aquarius' (not that again), when 'dreams bleed into waking life, and thought is made solid' and all existing mythology except Barker's reaches its sell-by date. Was that the ugly noise of a Langford mind slamming shut?

**Staying Ahead.** From 'The Sky Is Burning' by Harlan Ellison, (1958): '... the Moon, which we had reached in 1963, or Mars that we had circumnavigated in 1966 ...' (*Ellison Wonderland*, 1962) Alternatively: '... the Moon, which we had reached in 1969, or Mars, on which we had landed in 1976....' (*The Essential Ellison*, 1987). • Mr Ellison is a best-selling author and expert advisor on meeting single people, explains the letterhead of the US 'Great Expectations' dating agency.

**Irish Fandom Plunged Into War.** *Joe McNally* boasts

that he, Eugene Doherty and Tommy Ferguson were naughty boys at this year's Octocon in Ireland—publishing a scurrilous newsletter that made mock of sacred things like 'Trekies, Peter Morwood and Diane Duane'—and that the committee reacted with an unheralded closing-ceremony announcement that the wicked trio were banned from all Octocons forever, with other cons being passed their addresses and a recommendation that they be refused admission. Can you spell 'over-reaction'?

**Everything You Know Is Wrong!** So you thought Doc Smith's Kim Kinnison and the First Lensman were different characters in different books? That the slip in Aldiss's *Non-Stop* was emphatically not travelling to the stars? That Silverberg's *Nightfall* was an expansion of, rather than a sequel to, the Asimov story? That it was the Hugo presentation and not the opening ceremony of Conspiracy at which Budrys made his famous L.Ron Hubbard speech? That the legendary fanzine *Hyphen* was jointly edited and had a revival issue in 1987? That you knew how to spell 'despized' and 'irized'? These and other common fallacies are exploded in Edward James's definitive *Science Fiction in the 20th Century*, published by Oxford University Press....

**Thanks** to all who responded cheerily to last issue's *Morbid Introspection* column. The clear winner was *D.M.Sherwood*: 'I know what Helen Whatsername meant by calling *Ansible* scullless but it's a good scullless (rather in the way of early Larry Niven stories).' This may even be a compliment.

**Ten Years Ago** at Novacon 14, GoH Rob Holdstock turned a greyer shade of pale when (following his jocular request for bebies of naked dancing girls) the closing ceremony presented him in public with a jiggling 'strippergram' ... leading to a storm of audience complaints about innocent sf fans, some of them mere babes in arms, being exposed to the alien terror of the female breast. [*Ansible* 41, 1984]

## The Milford Report • Jane Killick

[Once upon a time *Ansible* traditionally ran a scarifying account of each Milford UK writers' week. Now ... *Milford—The New Generation!* DRL]

Legend tells of an annual writers' workshop outcast from the wilds of Hampshire by the evils of commerce (or a change in hotel management). Long had it searched through grotty Margate guest houses for somewhere akin to those legendary days. Now 1994 may go down in history as the year Milford found a new home in Rothbury.

The pilgrims began their studies soon after arrival, reading the works of those assembled in the morning, and discussing them in the afternoon. Authors hid behind giant writing pads as their toils were exhumed in the company of their fellow writers. But what joy as problems were uncovered, solutions proposed and learning stimulated! How on Earth, wondered the newcomers, had The Great Old Ones managed with a group almost twice the size? We preferred the smaller circle which allowed us to scrutinize two works by each author.

New blood outnumbered the experienced fellows by five to four, but tradition managed to hang on by its fingernails. The evening's silly games were enhanced greatly by a box of Trivial Pursuit found under a bench near the bar. With it I was able to enhance my intellectual stature by demonstrating intimate knowledge of *Noggin The Nog*. Some tried alternative entertainment in the local ale house, but after a couple of visits the comfortable hotel surroundings seemed far more attractive.

By the end of the week, the group had actually grown—there were still the same number of people, but we had all eaten too much. The inn itself was set in picturesque countryside minutes from the village shops where we discovered somewhere to enjoy the ancient art of photocopying. Over the week, the examination of every topic from TV plays to tales of interstellar travel and stone shamans had brought people closer together. On the final day there was a pilgrimage to a couple of nearby castles before bidding fond farewells and pledging to return next year. [*Wot, no carnage and blood-soaked manuscripts? Didn't used to be like this in the old days, when even mild-mannered Richard Cowper would stalk the hotel corridors muttering 'Kill! Kill!'—Ed.*]

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