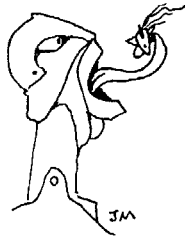


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From **Dave Langford**, 94 London Road, Reading, Berks, RG1 5AU. <http://news.ansible.co.uk>. Fax 0705 080 1534. ISSN 0265-9816 (print) 1740-942X (e). Logo: **Dan Steffan**. Cartoon: **Joe Mayhew**. Available for SAE, or job spec for Chief Dextroroper.

The Mark of the Beast

Peter Attaway withdrew his horror story 'The Hunting Ground' from the Infinity Plus website owing to rumours in his local community that the content—vampires posing as children to entrap child molesters—showed he was a paedophile. Therefore he is unfit to coach his son's football team: 'The club to which I belonged formally investigated the complaint against me, and came to the conclusion that there was "no case to answer", but—somewhat bizarrely—decided that I could no longer continue as a coach with the club as I had "lost the confidence of the parents".' Next, a letter from the Football Association 'stating that they "had received evidence that my conduct gave rise to a reasonable belief that I posed a risk of harm to a child", and that I was to be suspended from all football and football related activities.' In January 2007 the hapless author learned from the FA that 'I may be prosecuted for misconduct, due to the existence of "The Hunting Ground", even though the story was written *seven years* before I became a coach and therefore officially involved with children.' How to fight this madness?

Iain Banks's new book, delayed by the break-up of his marriage, is variously described. An invitation to the related 'The Herald Sunday Herald Book Series' event calls it 'his first literary novel in almost five years'—as distinct from illiterary novels like *The Algebraist* (2004). [JS] *Private Eye*'s phrasing is 'Banks's first "proper" novel (as opposed to the sci-fi stuff he turns out under the name of Iain M. Banks) for five years.' And *Radio 4's Saturday Review*, after acknowledging this author's habit of alternating the 'terrestrial' and the 'intergalactic', went on to say: '*The Steep Approach to Garbadale* is his first novel for five years ...' [TK]

Garry Kilworth took John Brosnan's ashes home, to '... a vineyard outside the community of Sulky, between the large towns of Ballarat and Castlemaine in Victoria, Australia. There we scattered the remainder of John's ashes on the vines, with the words, "Ashes to ashes, dust to dust, wine to the vine." We chose the vineyard of "Dulcinea" wines because of the literary connection—Dulcinea being "the sweet and beautiful one" in *Don Quixote* as I'm sure you all know. It was a sunny day, not too hot (though the countryside here is in the 11th year of a drought) with a wonderful view from the vineyard which swept down to open fields, over what we would call a dew pond (here they call it a dam) to hazy blue mountains beyond. There was a stiff breeze which caught the ashes and spread them down one of the lanes of vines. I had also chosen a verse from an Australian poem called "The Old Australian Ways" by Banjo Patterson, who wrote "Waltzing Matilda". We drove to the bottom of the vineyard where I read it out loud, feeling the owners might wonder what the heck was going on. *So throw the weary pen aside / And let the papers rest, / For [you] must saddle up and ride / Towards the blue hill's breast; / And [you] must travel far and fast / Across their rugged maze, / To find the Spring of Youth at last, / And call back from the buried past / The old Australian ways.*' [via RH]

Patrick Moore still knows, to a close approximation, where his towel is. Asked in the *Radio Times* (3-9 Feb), 'What's the answer to life, the universe and everything?', he replied: 'It's 43, isn't it?' [JD]

Chris Priest on a listed-building proposal by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport: 'Before Tessa Jowell gives Grade I listing to 221b Baker Street, she really ought to consider Hogwarts Academy and the House at Pooh Corner.' (*Guardian* letters, 14 Feb) [JY] Two days later they also published Rob Holdstock's letter on 'Tessa Jowell's wonderful piece of "tongue-in-cheekery" about Grade I-listing 221b Baker Street', in which Rob asserted that 'Britain is not a theme park.' But the *Guardian* cut his quip about how 'if not careful we'll be Grade A listing a tree against which Thomas Hardy once relieved himself ...'

Matthew Warchus, director of that West End stage musical of *The Lord of the Rings*, went to Tolkien's grave in Wolvercote Cemetery to say Sorry in advance: 'I visited his grave a few months ago to kind of apologise and get his seal of approval. It was a magical moment.' (*Oxford Mail*, 13 February.) [TM] Perhaps the magic consisted of a hollow, spectral voice that intoned: '*Please credit my input to Alan Smithee.*'

John C. Wright explains which subgenre his fantasy isn't in: 'Nor is this book anywhere nearly gross enough to qualify for YA status. To win awards in YA fiction, one needs to describe rapist elfs sodomizing boys with thorn bushes, or a father having sex with the ghost of his little son he murdered. Incestohomopedonecrophilia, we might call that: One needs special names to describe the new perversions. I wish I were making those examples up.' (*Sci Fi Weekly* interview, 15 February) [DB]

Jane Yolen on the Flappies, a new award for book jacket copy: 'When I was a young editorial assistant (back in the Cretaceous) I wrote the flap copy for *Charlie & The Chocolate Factory* and for many years it was the writing of mine that was in print the longest.' [POM]

Condomine

3-4 Mar • **Microcon**, Devonshire House, Exeter University. GoH: Jasper Pforde, others. £7 at door; students £5; EU sf soc members free.

10-11 Mar • **P-Con 4**, Wynn's Hotel, Dublin. 25/£20 reg. Contact c/o Yellow Brick Rd, 8 Bachelor's Walk, Dublin 8, Ireland; UK c/o Dave Lally, 64 Richborne Terrace, London, SW8 1AX.

28 Mar • **BSFA Open Meeting**, The Star pub, West Halkin Mews, London, SW1. 6pm on; fans present from 5pm. With Hal Duncan.

6-9 Apr • **Contemplation** (Eastercon), Crowne Plaza Hotel, Trinity St, Chester, CH1 2BD. £45 reg, £30 unwaged, £20 supp/junior (13-17), £5 child (5-12). *Booking closes 22 March*. Few hotel rooms left: phone 01244 899988, quoting reference 'con'. Overflow (Holiday Inn) 0870 400 9670. Contact 18 Letchworth Ave, Feltham, Middlesex, TW14 9RY.

28 Apr • **Alt.Fiction 2007**, Assembly Rooms & Guildhall Theatre, Market Place, Derby, DE1 3AH. 11am-9pm. Darwin Suite events £20, concessions £15. Box office 01332 255800 or boxoffice@derby.gov.uk.

16 Jun • **PKD-Day** (celebrating Philip K. Dick), John Clare Lecture Theatre, Clifton Campus, Clifton Lane, Nottingham. 10am-5pm. Free, but by ticket only. Contact John Goodridge, English Division, Nottingham Trent University, Clifton Lane, Nottingham, NG11 8NS.

Rumblings. Eastercon 2009. The LXcon bid has announced its venue as the Cedar Court Hotel, Bradford—which according to its own website has 131 bedrooms, so overflow hotels will be essential. The rival bid, Concordia, still plans to use the Birmingham (NEC) Metropole Hotel. See www.LX2009.com and www.conbids.org/concordia for more.

Infinitely Improbable

As Others See Doctor Who. Graham Sleight reports: 'ITV1 have a new Saturday night primetime series, called *Primeval*, about the threat to present-day London from, uh, dinosaurs and giant spiders. *Metro* (8 Feb) ran a feature on the show by Larushka Ivan-Zadeh, which raised the obvious point that it's an attempt to compete with *Doctor Who*. Various cast and crew members deny this, including Christian Manz, special effects supervisor: "*Dr Who* is a fantasy show where they go to other planets. *Primeval* is based on science—what species might actually evolve and take over the planet." Leaving aside the point that the new *Who* has visited alien planets only twice in 28 episodes, I must have missed the CNN and *New Scientist* coverage of how dinosaurs are about to reappear and gobble us up. But that's not "fantasy", no way....'

Nebula Awards. 2007 novel shortlist: Ellen Kushner, *The Privilege of the Sword*; Jack McDevitt, *Seeker*; Jeffrey Ford, *The Girl in the Glass*; Jo Walton, *Farthing*; Richard Bowes, *From the Files of the Time Rangers*; Wil McCarthy, *To Crush the Moon*. Winner to be announced in May.

R.I.P. Ivar Berggren (1937-2007), long-time Swedish fan known as 'Banjan', died on 20 January aged 69. Sam J. Lundwall writes: 'He was active in essef fandom from the late 50s, publishing a fanzine, *Sviraren* (The Reveller), and organizing for some 40 years the Swedish annual Champagne Shootings where people shot champagne corks at targets and each other. A good man, we'll miss him.' • **George Collyn** (Colin Pilkington, 1937-2002), whose ten short sf stories appeared 1964-1967 in *New Worlds* and (once) *F&SF*, died on 21 April 2002. This went unreported in sf circles, since for professional reasons he kept his real name dark; some sf bibliographies wrongly list Collyn as a pseudonym

of Michael Moorcock. ● *Myrtle Devenish* (1913-2007), UK actress seen in Terry Gilliam's *Time Bandits*, *Brazil* and *The Meaning of Life* ('Crimson Permanent Assurance'), died on 21 January aged 93. [AIP] ● *Patrice Duvic* (1946-2007), French author, editor and sf anthologist who was a valued member of the 1980s Milford UK workshops, died on 25 February; he was 61. [MJE] ● *Walker Edmiston* (1926-2007), US actor who voiced many roles in tv cartoons and the original *Star Trek*, died on 15 February at age 81. [PDF] ● *Peter Ellenshaw* (1913-2007), London-born matte artist whose visual effects appeared in genre films from *Things To Come* (1936) to *The Black Hole* (1979) and *Superman IV* (1987), died on 12 February aged 93. [PDF] ● *Charles L. Fontenay* (1917-2007), US author of dozens of magazine stories and three sf novels published 1954-1964, and of 20 more books including a children's series after his 1987 retirement, died on 27 January; he was 89. [SFWA] ● *Lee Hoffman* (1932-2007), US author of four sf novels—though better known for her Westerns—and long-time fan who was a major figure of 1950s 'Sixth Fandom', died from a heart attack on 6 February. She was 74. [GS] Her fifties fanzine *Quandry* was central to that era, while *Science Fiction Five-Yearly* maintained its ambitious schedule from a 1951 launch—with publishing help from friends in later years—to the final issue #12 in November 2006. I'm proud to have contributed. Lee ('LeeH'), who was fan guest of honour at the 1982 Worldcon, will be missed by very many of us. ● *Ian Richardson* (1934-2007), UK actor honoured with the CBE, died on 9 February aged 72. Genre appearances included *Brazil* (1985), *The Canterville Ghost* (1997), *Dark City* (1998), *Gormenghast* (2000), *Strange* (2002-3), and *Hogfather* (2006, as the voice of Death). [SG] ● *Fred Mustard Stewart* (1932-2007), popular US author whose genre ventures included his first novel *The Mephisto Waltz* (1969, filmed 1971), died on 7 February; he was 74. [PDF]

As Others Poach Us. The MLA has a term for it: 'Genre-Poaching in Literary Fiction [...] a proposed special session at MLA 2007 (Chicago, 27-30 December) addressing contemporary American "literary fiction" that co-opts elements of popular genres. [...] This panel will address works that have been shelved, reviewed, and studied in the realm of literary fiction but whose authors use tropes, themes, and ideas explicitly drawn from genres such as science fiction, detective fiction, romance novels, tv, and superhero comics. Is such co-optation destined to be condescending, reactionary, or nostalgic; or is it potentially generative of new literary forms and approaches? [...] What do the authors have to say about the reprobate status of the forms they're drawing from?' Some poaching suspects are named, including Jonathan Lethem ('superheroes') and Cormac McCarthy ('science fiction'). [GC]

Publishers and Sinners. Mike Resnick is the new Executive Editor of *Jim Baen's Universe*, and Ann VanderMeer—wife of Jeff—is the new fiction editor at *Weird Tales*. (Both announced February 2007.)

FAAns. Fanzine Activity Achievement Awards for 2006 work: FANZINE *Banana Wings*; FAN WRITER Claire Brialey; FAN ARTIST Dan Steffan; LETTERHACK Lloyd Penney; NEW FANZINE FAN Teresa Cochran.

Another Bloody Poll. A World Book Day poll asked 2,000 readers which books they couldn't live without. Top ten choices included *The Lord of the Rings* (2), the Harry Potter series (4), 1984 (=8) and 'His Dark Materials' (=8). Further titles of genre interest in the full list: *The Hobbit* (16), *The Time Traveller's Wife* (19), *Hitch-Hiker* (25), *Alice* (29), *The Wind in the Willows* (30), the Narnia books (33, with *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* getting its own slot at 36), *Winnie-the-Pooh* (40), *Animal Farm* (41), *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (43), *The Handmaid's Tale* (48), *Lord of the Flies* (49), *Dune* (52), *Cold Comfort Farm* (53), *Brave New World* (58), *The Lovely Bones* (64), *Midnight's Children* (69), *Dracula* (72), *The Secret Garden* (73), *A Christmas Carol* (81), *Cloud Atlas* (82), *Charlotte's Web* (87), *The Little Prince* (92), *The Wasp Factory* (93), *Watership Down* (94), and *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (99). Number one, by the way, was *Pride and Prejudice*. [JY]

Outraged Letters. *Garry Kilworth* (in Australia for 6 months—see above) muses: 'When you have a long list of names, egotistic authors (like myself) instantly scan it for their own, and are irritated to find they are not mentioned, until of course they realise they're reading the obituary column.' ● *Ursula Le Guin* on A235: 'Michael Chabon doesn't belong in your "As Others See Us" box. Enough with the paranoia, this guy's on our side. His discussion (in *The New York Review of Books*, re Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*) of prejudice against sf among critics and why the post-apocalyptic novel may escape "the science-fictional taint" is subtle, funny, and accurate. He ends the review by classifying McCarthy's over-the-top mode not as sf at all, but as horror: an observation that is also subtle, funny, and accurate.' (*Langford feebly protests: I too thought Chabon was wickedly accurate about the 'taint' of sf, which*

is why I prefaced that quote with 'No mockery but just the sad truth ...')

● *Mike Scott Rohan* on Magnus Magnusson (see A235): 'I can testify that he certainly was not a one-off SF reader; he may not have been a fan per se, but he was well read in imaginative lit, fantasy included—Tolkien, for one, which was just as well with so many Mastermind contestants focussing on him. He was a voracious reader generally, frequently encountered in Edinburgh bookshops in the days when we had any. Al Scott went round Iceland with him many years back, a remarkably liquid experience by all accounts, and, since he was given to lambasting the mythical Viking horned helmets, made him the hero of Magnus Thrihyrning's Saga, ie *three* horns. Despite this Magnus very kindly wrote the foreword to our first collaborative book, and was generous with his time and advice. A great bloke, sadly missed.'

More Award Shortlists. *Bram Stoker* (horror): Tom Piccirilli, *Headstone City*; Stephen King, *Lisey's Story*; Jonathan Maberry, *Ghost Road Blues*; Jeff Strand, *Pressure*; Gary A. Braunbeck, *Prodigal Blues*. Winners in this and other categories are to be announced at WHC on 31 March. ● *Prometheus* (libertarian): Orson Scott Card, *Empire*; David D. Friedman, *Harald*; Robert A. Heinlein and Spider Robinson, *Variable Star*; Elizabeth Moon, *Engaging the Enemy*; John Scalzi, *The Ghost Brigades*; Charles Stross, *The Clan Corporate*; John Varley, *Red Lightning*; Vernor Vinge, *Rainbows End*. Mr Stross, remembering the usual listing of past winner Ken MacLeod, has suggested that the name should be changed to the Scottish Socialist SF Writers' Award. [JG] ● *Royal TV Society*: the three-strong drama shortlist includes *Hogfather*.

As Others See Us II. Wendy Smith on a new Jonathan Raban novel set in 2010: 'Yet *Surveillance* is not an exercise in dystopian fiction—or at least the kind that sends stick figures wandering through a post-apocalypse landscape.' (*Washington Post*, 1 March) [MMW]

Random Fandom. *1/2 Cruttenden* warns: 'Next Eastercon I will be ridding myself of a clump of facial shrubbery—to wit—a set of mutton-chop whiskers.' Sponsors are sought for this hideous public spectacle, in aid of the fan funds. ● *Bruce Gillespie* celebrated his 60th birthday with a dinner for 50 sf fans in Melbourne on 17 February. ● *Peter Roberts* (Master of Mycology) on his tv appearance: 'I understand that I attracted an audience of 2.9 million viewers for the first episode of *A New Year at Kew* on BBC2, but the bastards have still not contacted me about doing my own series ...' Countless Roberts fans tuned in to see the fungus collection being moved on 27 Feb, but *Pat Charnock* reports: 'Although Peter Roberts did appear in the Kew programme, it was only in passing. This time, he didn't star. He did some good box-carrying, though.' ● *Maureen Kincaid Speller* stands proud: 'I notice that my brother-in-arms, Mike Cobley, is standing for the Lib-Dems in Govan. I'm now confirmed as the Lib-Dems' candidate in Foord ward in Folkestone, for both Town and District elections in May.'

C.o.A. *Howard Waldrop*, 12608 Wittmer Dr, Austin, TX 78729-7787.

Fanfundery. *Trip Report Bounties.* FANAC's reward for completed TAFF or DUFF trip reports has risen to \$500, and this amount has been sent to TAFF to mark the publication of Steve Stiles's 1968 report *Harrison County*. Joe Siclari of FANAC writes: 'We hope this encourages any outstanding report writers to get started (including me).'

Thog's Masterclass. *Flautent Simile Dept.* 'They gathered pace as they walked. The passageway grew narrow and low, causing them to crouch as they stumbled on. The sound of water grew louder, and the gusting of the wind was like the eerie farting of a giant animal.' (G.P. Taylor, *The Curse of Salamander Street*, 2006) [KD] ● *Well I Never! Dept.* 'With summer, evening was very long—it lasted until twilight.' (Anne McCaffrey & Elizabeth Ann Scarborough, *Changelings*, 2005) [LS] ● *Falsies Dept.* 'He gently removed her glasses, and his hard chest rubbed against her breasts as he leaned over to put them on the table next to his gun.' (Julie Garwood, *Shadow Dance*, 2006) [NR] ● *Dept of Anatomy.* "'Out of my way, boy,'" the stranger snarled, with a face like a dented hatchet.' 'The eyes narrowed, then widened again, and a greasy smirk slid forth.' 'His head twisted back to address her, but stopped halfway, his eyes on the floor.' 'It found its focus in the hypnotic swish of the woman's hair, the supple sway of her rounded hips, and the seductive twitch of her heart-shaped buttocks—which traded kisses with every confident stride.' (all Eldon Thompson, *The Obsidian Key*, 2006) [PM]

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