

Ansible



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From **Dave Langford**, 94 London Road, Reading, Berks, RG1 5AU. Web news.ansible.co.uk. Fax 0705 080 1534. ISSN 0265-9816 (print) 1740-942X (e). Logo: **Dan Steffan**. Cartoon: **Sue Mason**. Available for SAE or the casebook of Bulent Hellbag.

The Names of the Ponds

Douglas Adams has inspired a US fan campaign to rename 42nd Avenue in Portland, Oregon, as Douglas Adams Boulevard. (*The Register*)

Arthur C. Clarke celebrated his 90th birthday on 16 December. He announced three birthday wishes: for world adoption of cleaner energy sources, evidence of alien life, and lasting peace in Sri Lanka. One week later the *New York Times* magazine ran a full-page ad for something called the TurboChef Speedcook Oven, with a headline beginning: 'It's been said, "Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic." ...' This timely quotation was not credited. [JDB]

Harlan Ellison's wrath—at net rumours that the new *Star Trek* film will use characters he invented for 'City at the Edge of Forever'—was misplaced. (See *Ansible* 245.) He's been reassured, and others have confirmed, that the story is false. Our correspondent Una Tribble has a theory of its origin: 'My sources tell me the Guardian of Forever prop seen on the Paramount lot is not in fact for the new film but the new *Star Trek* tour that's recently been press-released over on Startrek.com.'

Simon R. Green's latest novel had to be changed: 'It was originally called *Just Another Damned Hero*, but the publishers said it couldn't be called that, because none of the book chains in the US would accept a book title that had the word "damned" in it. Really. In this day and age. So, the book now has a new title: *Just Another Judgement Day*.' Perhaps this is why Tim LaHaye's 'Left Behind' series wasn't rapturously entitled 'You're All Damned, Ha Ha, Except For Some Of My Buddies.'

Doris Lessing was quizzed again about her sf, and mentioned hearing from Some Of Us since the Nobel win: 'I had a wonderful letter from the science fiction people, which was absolutely charming of them, because I've always been just a little bit difficult for them. They said ... so glad your novels have won: we don't know if you're ahead of us or we're ahead of you, or words to this effect, and that was very sweet.' (Mark Lawson interview, BBC Radio 4 *Front Row*, 10 December) [RC] I wonder who those mystery well-wishers could have been....

Ian McKellen had top billing in the UK New Year honours, as a Companion of Honour. The 97-page list included only five goodies for services to literature. Children's author Jacqueline Wilson, who has published at least one supernatural novel, was upgraded from OBE to Dame CBE; and historical novelist Peter Vansittart, whose early utopian novels earned him an *SF Encyclopedia* entry, received the OBE.

Terry Pratchett sent an email circular: 'I would have liked to keep this one quiet for a little while, but because of upcoming conventions and of course the need to keep my publishers informed, it seems to me unfair to withhold the news. I have been diagnosed with a very rare form of early onset Alzheimer's, which lay behind this year's phantom "stroke". / We are taking it fairly philosophically down here and possibly with a mild optimism. [...] All other things being equal, I expect to meet most current and, as far as possible, future commitments but will discuss things with the various organisers. Frankly, I would prefer it if people kept things cheerful, because I think there's time for at least a few more books yet :o). / PS: I would just like to draw attention to everyone reading the above that this should be interpreted as "I am not dead". I will, of course, be dead at some future point, as will everybody else. For me, this [is] maybe further off than you think—it's too soon to tell. I know it's a very human thing to say "Is there anything I can do", but in this case I would only entertain offers from very high end experts in brain chemistry.' [11 December] Fingers fervently crossed, mate. Later: 'Well, that was a weird few weeks. Not unpleasant, but kind of odd, like being a guest at one's own wake. We couldn't ring out on the phones and the mail boxes just went crazy; Rob thinks there were around 40,000 contacts all told. Lots of helpful advice and informed suggestions, though; a strategy is unfolding.' [29 December]

Brandon Sanderson, the US fantasy novelist, has been chosen by the late Robert Jordan's wife and editor Harriet Popham Rigney to complete the final novel in the stupefyingly popular 'Wheel of Time' fantasy series. Jordan's own title for this is *A Memory of Light*. [SFWA]

Constipe

23 Jan • **BSFA Open Meeting**, The Star pub, West Halkin Mews, London, SW1. 6pm on; fans present from 5pm. With Robert Holdstock.

26 Jan • **British Fantasy Society Open Night** with ghost story readings, York Brewery, York. See www.britishfantasysociety.org.

2-3 Feb • **Hi-Ex** (comics), Eden Court, Bishop's Road, Inverness, IV3 5SA. £10 weekend, £6 day; child £5/£3. Box office: 01463 234 234.

8-10 Feb • **SFBall** (media), Carrington House Hotel, Bournemouth. £90 weekend (very few such tickets left), £29 day; child £29/\$15. More expensive options: 'gold ticket' £175, 'dining' £105; child £88/£53. Contact Flat 3, Blighwood, 57 Surrey Rd, Poole, BH12 1HF.

23 Feb • **Picocon 24**, Imperial College Union, London. 10am-7pm/8pm. £8 reg, £6 concessions, £4 ICFS members. Contact ICFS, Beit Quad, Prince Consort Road, London, SW7 2BB.

21-24 Mar • **Orbital** (Eastercon), Radisson Edwardian Hotel, Heathrow, London. £55 reg; £20 supp or junior (12-17), £5 child (5-11), £1 infant. Contact 8 Windmill Close, Epsom, Surrey, KT17 3AL. Credit card bookings: www.orbital2008.org.

15-18 May • **Eurocon/RosCon**, Lesnye Dali Hotel, Gorki-10, Moscow West, Russia. (Date change from the original 3-7 May.) *Now \$100 reg (same at the door)*; Euro20 supp; all-inclusive membership Euro250 with 3 nights' accommodation and 3 meals/day—this must be booked in advance. See booking form at www.eurocon2008.ru.

26-29 Jun • **ConRunner 2008** (conrunning), Britannia Hotel, Wolverhampton. *Now £35 reg. £50 at door. Day rate £25.* Contact 56 Jackmans Place, Letchworth G.C., Herts, SG6 1RH.

6-10 Aug • **Denvention 3** (66th Worldcon), Denver, CO, USA. Denvention, PO Box 1349, Denver, CO 80201, USA. *New rates from 1 January to 10 July: \$200 reg, \$50 child or supporting.* Contact Denvention, PO Box 1349, Denver, CO 80201, USA.

22-25 Aug • **Discworld Convention 2008**, Hilton Metropole, Birmingham (NEC). *Now £55 reg; £36 junior/concessions.* Online booking (www.dwcon.org) closes 1 Aug or earlier if the membership limit is reached. Contact PO Box 4101, Shepton Mallet, Somerset, BA4 5XD.

19-21 Sep • **Fantasycon 2008**, Britannia Hotel, 1 St James St, Nottingham. GoH Christopher Golden (more TBA?). *Now £45 reg* (BFS members £40) to 31 Jun 08; then £55 (£50). Supp or day rate £25. Contact 3 Tamworth Close, Lower Earley, Reading, RG6 4EQ.

18-19 Oct • **Octocon**, Royal Dublin Hotel, O'Connell St, Dublin. Euro30 reg; students Euro12; under 18s/supp Euro10. Octocon 2008 c/o Electric Dragon, 19a Main St, Blackrock, Co. Dublin, Ireland.

26-29 Jun 09 • **Sectus 2009** (Harry Potter), Bodelwyddan Castle, North Wales. £290 inc 3 nights' accommodation with breakfast/dinner, rising to £300 on 1 Nov 08, £310 on 1 Feb 09. (Instalment plan available.) Contact 114 Bassnag Rd, Halesowen, W. Midlands, B63 4HF.

Infinitely Improbable

Conspiracy Corner. Boris Johnson proposed the most plausible explanation to date of the 'mystery' surrounding Princess Diana's death: 'I will reveal how the Duke of Edinburgh secretly trained the Loch Ness Monster to swim up the Seine until it reached the Pont d'Alma and then I will explain how Philip then gave a kind of ghillie's whistle and Nessie reared out of the water and so startled Henri Paul that he swerved into the path of Elvis Presley in the white Fiat Uno, at which point Prince Charles—hovering overhead in a Luftwaffe helicopter—switched on the supermagnet installed by MI6 in the concrete pillar of the tunnel and sucked the Merc to its doom.' (BBC *What the Papers Say*, 22 Dec) [JL]

As We See Ourselves. Glen Erickson on the 30th-anniversary 'Ultimate Edition' DVD release of *Close Encounters*: 'When Neary goes on his cross-country quest, he's already been reduced to a total loser in the grip of an infantile obsession—an insecurity that science-fiction addicts surely identify with.' (DVDtalk.com, 8 December) [GD]

Another Top 50. *The Times* ran its list of 'The 50 greatest British writers since 1945' (5 January). Philip Larkin came first, and many

authors of genre interest followed: 2 George Orwell, 3 William Golding, 5 Doris Lessing, 6 J.R.R. Tolkien, 9 Kingsley Amis, 10 Angela Carter, 11 C.S. Lewis, 13 Salman Rushdie, 14 Ian Fleming, 16 Roald Dahl, 17 Anthony Burgess, 18 Mervyn Peake, 19 Martin Amis, 27 J.G. Ballard, 28 Alan Garner, 29 Alasdair Gray, 38 Iain Banks, 42 J.K. Rowling, 43 Philip Pullman, 50 Michael Moorcock. • Further 'names on our longlist that didn't make the cut' include Peter Ackroyd, Robert Conquest, Lawrence Durrell, Penelope Lively, David Mitchell, Brian Moore, Christopher Priest, Iain Sinclair, Fay Weldon, Angus Wilson, and Jeanette Winter-son. The first website comments complained bitterly about the absence of Terry Pratchett from both lists. No actual research went into this momentous compilation—just the opinions of assorted *Times* hacks.

R.I.P. Marit Allen (1941-2007), UK-born film costume designer, died on 26 November aged 66. Genre work includes *Don't Look Now*, *Hulk*, the upcoming *Justice League of America*, and the *Little Shop of Horrors* musical. [CH] • **Frank Capra Jr** (1934-2007), US film producer/director and son of the more famous Capra, died on 19 December; he was 73. Genre work includes his first film *Marooned*, three *Planet of the Apes* sequels, and *Firestarter*. [SFS] • **J Lawrence 'Larry' Cassingham** (1918-2007), US inventor, journalist and actor, died on 23 December—the day after his 89th birthday. In the 1940s, Cassingham developed the first practical portable Geiger counter. His scientific background and California location led him to being technical advisor on many 1950s-60s 'atomic' movies and tv shows, including *Zombies of the Stratosphere* (1952), *The Magnetic Monster* (1953) and *The Atomic Kid* (1954). He recalled arguing with directors: 'They often wanted more drama, and I wanted more technical accuracy. I usually lost!' [SG] • **Roger Eldridge** (1944-2007), UK author and photo-journalist whose sf novels were *The Shadow of the Gloom-World* (1977) and *The Fishers of Darksea* (1982), died on 4 November. He was 63. [JC] • **George MacDonald Fraser** (1925-2007), UK author of the very popular 'Flashman' historical or alternate-historical adventures (1969-2005), died on 2 January. He was 82. Fraser wrote the screenplay for *Octopussy* (1983) and received an OBE in 1999. • **Bill Idelson** (1930-2007), US screenwriter/actor who began by scripting *The Flintstones* in the 1960s, died on 31 December aged 87. He also wrote for *The Twilight Zone*, *Bewitched* and *The Ghost and Mrs Muir*. [SFS] • **Tony Tenser** (1920-2007), UK film producer who founded Tigon Films in 1966, died on 5 December aged 87. His releases included *Witchfinder General* (1968), *Blood on Satan's Claw* (1971) and the 1972 *Doomwatch* film. [SG] • **Marion Van Der Voort**, who with her husband Richard ran the well-known UK sf bookshop At The Sign of the Dragon for 35 years, died at home on 26 December. She was hospitalized with double pneumonia from early October to Christmas Eve, and had seemed to be recovering. All sympathy to Richard.

As Others See Us. 'Connie Willis is known as a science-fiction writer, but Laura Miller of Salon.com doesn't want to give people the idea that these stories are going to be about spaceships or robots or aliens. They're an unusual mixture of subject matters that might be dealt with in literary short stories [...] Connie Willis is not very well known because she's not a conventional science-fiction writer, and she's not really known in literary circles.' (NPR.org, 21 December) [MW]

Fanfundery. *TAFF*: Chris Garcia's *TAFF* win, reported last issue, was 'on the first ballot with 62.7% of the total combined NA/Europe votes. No other candidate received 20% of this combined vote.' [ST] Detailed figures delayed by administrators' attacks of Real Life.... • *DUFF*: 2008 southbound race announced in late December with a 31 January voting deadline. Candidates are Steve & Sue Francis (jointly) and Murray Moore. Ballot form at www.fanac.org/DUFF2008.pdf.

Outraged Letters. *Brian Aldiss* is all breathless: 'I can't help it but I am having my portrait painted in oils. In fact, this is quite an exciting week. On Tuesday I have my feet examined, Wednesday my head—no, sorry—Wednesday a lecture on "Science and Civilization" at the ScienceOxford venue (to be filmed). On Thursday, a lady with the exciting name of Sue Fox comes to interview me for "The Worst of Times, The Best of Times". On the seventh day I rested. Then chaps come to lunch with me and discuss the possibility of a movie of *Non-Stop*. (Pretty quick off the mark, since it appeared only half a century ago.)' [2 December] • *Mike Glicksohn* passes on a Sidney Coleman story: 'Sid was late for a panel at a physics conference but as he walked in one of the panelists said, "I'm afraid I don't know the answer to that question." Sid replied: "I do. What was the question?" You had to love the man.' • *Diana Wynne Jones* wonders if it ever happened: 'Er ... is there a particular reason why you left me out of the [A245] World Fantasy awards list? I ask because I could have dreamt that I and another woman whose name I don't know shared lifetime achievement

things. I think I dreamt that I sent a speech of acceptance to my proxy in America, which arrived as total gibberish, and that they in return promised me a Thing by post, which was put in a rowing boat that got swamped halfway across the Atlantic so that they lost the Thing over-board. No, no, it was all a mad dream. Forget that I asked you.' My paltry excuse is that the WFA life awards to Diana and to Betty Ballantine were announced, or leaked, months before the other results and reported in *Ansible* 242 (September 2007). • *Martin Morse Wooster* knows Terry Pratchett's social calendar better than the man himself: "Terry Pratchett did NOT attend "the Washington Literary Festival." He was at the National Book Festival.'

Hugo Stuff. Hugo nominations opened on 1 January with a 31 March deadline. Possible future rule changes: Jay Lake's proposal of a Lifetime Achievement Hugo has had a somewhat mixed reception so far, while a straw poll at Sfawardswatch.com showed an overwhelming majority in favour of scrapping the Semiprozine category. Wait and see....

As Near Relations See Us. Petrea Mitchell writes: 'My favorite radio show, *Whad'Ya Know?*, is right now rerunning a show I previously missed. This turns out to have been from during the 2005 World Fantasy Convention. Parts of the show involve the host chatting with random members of the audience. He was talking to someone who was in Madison primarily for the WFC.... *Host*, in what I stress was a friendly manner: Do you dress up funny there? *Audience member*, horrified: No, no, that's science fiction, not fantasy and horror. *Host*: Do you go to those conventions too? *Audience member*: As little as possible.'

Random Fandom. *Garth Spencer* announces that his fanzine *The Royal Swiss Navy Gazette* will henceforth appear only online.

The Rewards of Virtue. Simon R. Green enjoyed an end-of-year gloat over his *Romantic Times* Career Achievement Award nomination, in the urban fantasy category. 'For the Nightside series. And all this without a single sex scene. Mother would be so proud.'

C.o.A. *Tommy Ferguson*, 125 Haypark Ave, Belfast, BT7 3FG.

Publishers and Sinners. Musical chairs at Little, Brown UK: George Walkley moves from being Orbit Business Manager to Marketing Director and also Director of Digital Strategy for L.B. Samantha Smith is now Orbit Marketing Executive, dealing with publicity etc.

The Dead Past. Some author centenaries this year: Nigel Balchin, Nelson S. Bond, Howard Browne, Cleve Cartmill, John Creasey, Simone de Beauvoir, John Russell Fearn, Ian Fleming, Pamela Frankau, Gertrude Friedberg, Carl Jacobi, Olof Johannesson, George Langelaan, Angus MacVicar, Robert Merle, George Pal, Paul Tabori, Stephen Tall, Mervyn Wall, Donald Wandrei, Jack Williamson. The first issue of Hugo Gernsback's *Modern Electrics* also appeared in 1908.

Group Gropes. *Hackney Libraries SF/Fantasy Reading Group*: first meeting 15 Jan at CLR James Library, 24-30 Dalston Rd, London, E8 3AZ. 6.30pm. Contact ReadScienceFiction@hackney.gov.uk.

Amazon.com paid £1,950,000 at auction for one of 7 handwritten copies of J.K. Rowling's *Tales of Beedle the Bard*—proceeds to charity. Being unable actually to publish these 5 fairy tales, Amazon described their plots in a longish review at www.amazon.com/beedlebard/. [PM] A handwritten advance copy of *Ansible* 246 was withdrawn from the Sotheby's auction when bidding failed to reach the reserve of 50p.

Aeon Award 2008. For unpublished stories <8,000 words; usual MS format, Euro7 entrance fee, first prize Euro1000. Send to 8 Bachelor's Walk, Dublin 1, Ireland; enquiries bohn@yellowbrickroad.ie.

Thog's Masterclass. *Visual Effects Dept.* "The night sky was like a piece of soggy velvet, wrung out by giant invisible hands.' (Shaun Hutson, *The Terminator* novelization, 1984) [AR] 'In the blackness, his left eye glowed like a pool of boiling blood.' (*Ibid*) • *Dept of Status Symbols.* 'From an expedition case she pulled a small metallic cube, slightly smaller than the fuzzy dice classy people hang from rear view mirrors.' (Walt Becker, *Link*, 1998) [AK] • *Pathetic Fallacy Dept, or The Rapture of the Sentient C-4.* "The jumpy molecules of explosives felt the shock waves hit the large room. Barely able to contain themselves, they waited two hundredths of a second longer before they too saw God.' (*Ibid*) • *Psychosomatic Dept.* "Sometimes, when he slept, he would awaken screaming and with the feeling of evil scraping at his mind like a cold lump of conviction resting heavily in his stomach.' (Lee Harding, 'Dragonfly' in *New Worlds* 117, April 1962) [JB]

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