

Ansible



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From Dave Langford, 94 London Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 5AU, UK. Fax 0118 966 9914. ISSN 0265-9816. E-mail ansible@ciix.co.uk. Logo: Dan Steffan. Cartoon: Joanna Hillen. Available for SAE or Ah Pook's secrets of fear and death.

HO BLOODY HQ. A Philip K. Dick sense of warped reality was evoked by this surprise letter from some Yorkshire food packagers: 'Dear Mr Longford, We would refer you to your telephone conversation with my Colleague today, when you advised that your girl friend had found a feather in a recent purchase of Dalepak Turkey Grills.' What? Could the Anonymous Yorkshire Twit who pesters sf writers be at it again? Anyway, the mystery caller and mythical feather brought me some exciting vouchers for discounts on Dalepak Reformed Turkey Organ Nibbles....

Profiles in String

Ken Bulmer is 'out of hospital, into a nursing home. His right side was affected and his speech is slurred, but mentally he seems OK, tho' he reckons he forgets things more easily.' [VC] Fans' good wishes helped.

Arthur C. Clarke gains credit for another major sf prophecy! 8 Mar 1965 diary entry in *The Lost Worlds of 2001*: 'Fighting hard to stop Stan [Kubrick] from bringing Dr Poole back from the dead. I'm afraid his obsession with immortality has overcome his artistic instincts.' [RC] Cut to 1997 and Clarke's 3001, in which the dead astronaut Frank Poole...

Paul J. McAuley enjoys another gloat: 'Just back from Kansas (with a click of my ruby heels, natch) with the Campbell Award for *Fairyland*. This makes it three times in a row for *Interzone*-associated writers (Egan in '95; Baxter in '96)—can it possibly mean something? As Steve Baxter noted last year, there was no alcohol at the functions, and although this wasn't much of a trial for me as I actually like iced tea, I was relieved when Nancy Kress, winner of the Sturgeon Award, asked loudly, "Where can you get a real drink around here?" Jim Gunn, as urbane a host as you could wish, had provided beer and wine at the informal post-award party, but this was busted by the 18 year old campus police, surely too young to know anything about Prohibition, who told us to pour away the booze. After that, we drank root beer. There was also a cheerleading summer course going on at the same time, a weird mix of an aerobics class and a Nuremberg rally. America continues to be one of the strangest places on Earth while professing total normality.'

Charles Platt, weary of New York hostility, is (while retaining his NY address) experimenting with rustic life in Jerome, Arizona—where the Big Apple's life-threatening street aggression and road rage have been replaced by such simple delights as black crickets, black widows, centipede hatchlings in the bed, venomous bark scorpions underfoot, and the famous flying Wallapei Tiger or Cone-Headed Bug whose bloodsucking attentions can hurl the unwary into anaphylactic shock....

Frederik Pohl was asked by a London TV producer to feature in a 'science' program for the BBC and US Discovery Channel. Subject: the scientific basis for ESP/psi. When I said I didn't think there was much, she asked if I was a skeptic. When I admitted I was, she withdrew the invitation. • I used to think of the BBC and the Discovery Channel as ornaments to television broadcasting—but that was quite a while ago.' [S?] Possibly a matter of balance? But according to our sceptical expert Wendy Grossman, uncritical believers are much easier to round up.

Chris Priest, scheduled to appear this month at the Edinburgh Book Festival, began to worry slightly: 'I'm on a panel with two black women writers, discussing that subject to which I give so much thought and time: *Is the SAGA prize for Black British Authors racist?*' Despite hot denials, it seems increasingly likely that someone paid undue attention to Chris's 1996 win (for *The Prestige*) of the Black Memorial Prize, the one given every year by James Tait....

Conapt

9-10 Aug • **Clarecraft Open Day**, Bury St Edmunds. Terry Pratchett signings, Clarecraft Discworld figures for sale, beer & barbecue, etc. Contact Clarecraft, Woolpit Bus Park, Bury St Edmunds, IP30 9UP.

22-25 Aug • **Terok Nor (Trek)**, Radisson Edwardian Hotel, Heathrow. Contact (SAE) 43 Eastern Ave, Polegate, East Sussex, BN26 6HG.

27 Aug • **BSEA** London meeting, Jubilee, York Rd, nr Waterloo. 7pm on (fans lurking in the bar by 5pm). Special guest: Tad Williams.

28 Aug - 2 Sep • **LoneStarCon** (55th Worldcon), San Antonio,

Texas. Pre-registration closed 31 Jul; now \$150 reg at the door. Contact PO Box 27277, Austin, TX 78755-2277, USA.

5-7 Sep • **Festival of Fantastic Films**, Sacha's Hotel, Manchester. £55 reg. Contact 5 S. Mesnesfield Rd, Salford, Manchester, M7 3QP.

5-7 Sep • **South Trek 97** (media), Southend Pier. Open air, £1.85 pier rail fare daily; 10am onward. 01494 715933 or 01702 305876.

25-27 Oct • **Octecon/Eurocon '97**, Dublin Castle. GoH Robert Jordan; several others. Now £30/£301 reg. Contact (SAE/IRC) Eurocon, PO Box 5130, Dublin 4, Eire. Sterling cheques to new English agent D.J. Lally 'No 2 a/c', 64 Richborne Tce, London, SW8 1AX; 0171 735 3819.

29 Oct • **Jubilee** (as BSFA): unofficial pre-World Fantasy Con evening. In London for WFC? Make merry with impoverished non-attendees.

30 Oct - 2 Nov • **World Fantasy Convention**, The International Hotel, Marsh Wall, London. £100/\$165 reg; day rates £50 Sat, £30 Fri or Sun. Contact PO Box 31, Whitby, North Yorks, YO22 4YL.

14-16 Nov • **Novacon 27**, De Vere Abbey Hotel, Great Malvern. £30 reg, rising 1 Sep. Contact 14 Park St, Lye, Stourbridge, West Midlands, DY9 8SS. The hotel isn't full, as rumoured, but is nearly so: no singles or doubles, but twins, triples, family rooms etc remain.

28 Feb - 1 Mar 98 • **Microcon 18**, Devonshire Ho, Stocker Rd, Exeter. £5 reg; students £2.50. Contact 25 Victoria St, Exeter, EX4 6JA.

10-13 Apr 98 • **Intuition** (Eastercon), Jarvis Piccadilly Hotel, Manchester. £30 reg, £15 supp, to Spring 98. Contact 1 Waverly Way, Carshalton Beeches, Surrey, SM5 3LQ. That ill-distributed PR2 has been reprinted and mailed to members who didn't get it; the mailing to Evolution and Intervention members is still delayed since 'both previous Eastercons have had post-con difficulties with membership records ... we have not been able to get access to this information.' [CB]

Rumbings • Eastercon 2000. The inchoate Jersey bid (currently wrestling with a new Hotel de France general manager who seems less than keen on significant room-rate discounts) is likely to be opposed by a Pam Wells counterbid using the 'new, improved' Radisson Edwardian Hotel at Heathrow. More at Novacon. • **Wincon V** was adopted as Unicorn 17, Summer '99, with John Richards in the chair: 'We are going to look at whether King Alfred's in Winchester can be reclaimed but since this would involve the wholesale elimination of the college administration we are open to suggestions for other suitable sites anywhere.'

Infinitely Improbable

Random House UK is pulling entirely out of sf/fantasy (with a few blockbuster exceptions like Michael Crichton), and selling off the Legend imprint to Little, Brown. Authors with Legend contracts have mixed feelings: being published by L,B is fine, but being flogged off without any consultation as part of the Legend fixtures and fittings has irritated a few people. *Stan Nicholls*: 'I have three books with them myself and I never heard nothing about it.... Argument may well centre on whether the sale breaks the 'assignment' clause in contracts.' *Paul Barnett/John Grant*: 'As far as I'm concerned, this is damn' good news.'

Wrong Address. *Kurt Vonnegut* was reported all over Internet as having delivered a characteristically doty MIT commencement address, beginning: 'Wear sunscreen. / If I could offer you only one tip for the future, sunscreen would be it.' Chasing this folksy wisdom came the information that the text was in fact from a *Chicago Tribune* column by one Mary Schimich, who hadn't even intended a Vonnegut pastiche. No one knows who attached KV's name and hoaxed countless net users. As with the 'Kilgore Trout' *Venus on the Half Shell*, KV himself can look forward to being asked about his MIT Address for the rest of his life.

Thog's Drama Masterclass. Dave Thompson, sacked as the man inside Tinky Winky of the BBC's kid-fantasy *Teletubbies*, issued a poignant farewell statement: 'I am proud of my work for them. I was always the one to test out the limitations of the costume. I was the first to fall off my chair and roll over. I took all the risks.' (*Independent on Sunday*)

TAFF. Candidates for the Transatlantic Fan Fund trip from NA to Intuition next Easter are Victor Gonzalez, Ulrika O'Brien (plug, plug), Vicki Rosenzweig and Tom Sadler. Ballot forms are now available from

Ansible. Voting deadline: 13 Dec. • Nominations are already open for the next race (John to Bucconeer, 1998 worldcon), closing on 1 Nov.

Awards. *John W.Campbell Memorial*: Paul J.McAuley, *Fairyland* (1995, but 1996 in USA). • *Sturgeon* (short fiction): Nancy Kress, 'The Flowers of Aulit Prison' (*Asimov's*). • *Locus Awards* included one for John Clute's *Look at the Evidence*, collected by its designer John D.Berry.

As They See Us. Michael Dibdin reviews a W.C.Fields biography: "To make matters worse, [Simon] Louvish's style is a mixture of archly familiar joshing and leaden clichés reminiscent of some science fiction fanzine or the liner notes from a 1960s jazz LP.' (*Sunday Times*) [DMS]

Random Fandom. *Ian Gunn* was diagnosed in July as suffering from 'Metastatic,Undifferentiated Carcinoma, which basically means that they've got no idea where the hell it came from. Just sheer luck that my DNA went awry. Stupid bloody design flaw....' He began chemotherapy almost at once; fannish fingers are crossed worldwide. This week: 'Dr Joe the oncologist [...] was very pleased with my progress. Said the lumps on my neck had shrunk to half their size and my liver felt all soft and cuddly. So it looks like I'm in the lucky 60% who respond to treatment.' • *Marcia Kelly McCoy & Tim Illingworth* marry on 23 Aug in Chattanooga, Tennessee. • *Marc Ortlieb* boggled me by revealing fannish plans for the 'Auld Lang Fun', aimed at bringing me to Aussiecon 3 in '99. Gosh, wow, blugh. • *Helen Tsatsos & Jon Langford* brutally made me into an uncle on 7 July. Jon: 'His name is James Constantine Langford but that's Jimmy to the likes of you and me.'

SF Haiku Competition ... for untitled haiku, 'maximum 4 lines [sic]. Cash prizes. Bad news: £1/haiku fee, and it's called 'SciFaiiku Contest'. Closes 30 Nov. Contact (SAE) 12 Grovehall Ave, Leeds, LS11 7EX.

C.o.A. *Brian Ameringen* no longer has a work phone number. *Catherine McAuley*, 18 Charfield Court, Hamilton Rd, Reading, Berks, RG1 5RF (for 6 months min.). *Fay Sampson*, Christie Cottage, Tedburn St Mary, Exeter, EX6 6AZ. *Bob Webber*, 9 Regent Rd, Malden, MA 02158, USA. *Pam Wells* moves to York in Oct to do a 4-year BA in English.

Light Fingers. Con-goers accustomed to larceny in the Adelphi Hotel, Liverpool, were unsurprised to hear of the local miscreant caught dragging home an item of booty 'bought for £30 from a man in a pub' ... one of the hotel's colossal crystal chandeliers, valued at £15,000.

C.S.Lewis Walks Again. Oxford's CSL Society is raising £4,000 for a plaque in Addison's Walk (Magdalen, Oxford) to mark Lewis's birth centenary next year. Donations to 'C.S.Lewis Centenary Stone', Oxford University C.S.Lewis Soc, c/o The Kilns, Lewis Close, Oxford, OX3 8JD.

Group Gropes. The Royal Oak pub in Pinllico has closed for renovation, causing its Fri-evening fan meeting to move to ... the Jubilee. [RR]

Radioactive. Mark Lawson's *A Brief History of the Future* (Radio 4, 19 July) had a nice turn of phrase: 'Fiction that looks ahead has generally been most popular at times when the future seemed uncertain. H.G. Wells had capitalized on turn-of-the-century nervousness. From the 1950s, the form was invigorated by an invention which might prevent the next century from turning: *David Pringle*: (... Who, in a slight anticlimax, then came on the air to talk about atom bombs.) [CT]

Small Press Stuff. Another handy guide: the quarterly (I think) *Zene* offers reviews and regularly updated submission guidelines. Contact (SAE) TTA Press, 5 Martins Lane, Witcham, Ely, Cambs, CB6 2LB.

Crushed Again! In *Interszone 122*, reader Robert Lettman asks if *IZZ's* 'Ansible Link' column (a simplified version of *Ansible*) is meant to be humorous, adding that half of it defies comprehension. I can only inkily tinky pobblebockle ablesquas? Flosky! Beebul trimble flosky!

Thog's Masterclass. *Neat Tricks Dept*: 'Steve sat up on his elbows.' (Patrick Tilley, *The Amtrak Wars*, 1983) 'That was before the sixth gate of his body opened, and the strong eye siphoned the energy from his throat into his skull, leaving behind a wake of laughter.' (A.A.Attanasio, *The Dragon and the Unicorn*, 1996) [JM] • *Natural Rhythm Dept*: 'But his heart was pounding and his thoughts seemed to echo the troubled rhythm: "What now?" (Marion Zimmer Bradley, *The Forbidden Tower*, 1977) [JGe] • *Fantasy Blockbuster Cornucopia Special!* 'Since she has died, her fragrance is everywhere.' ... 'She moved toward him, but he stopped her with a gnashed hiss.' ... 'The duke teetered between a chasm of grief and a whirlwind of rage. To control himself, he closed his eyes and turned inward. He silenced his anger by opening himself to an ocean of emptiness wider than planets.' ... 'The square block of her head gave a fateful nod.' ... 'But others delighted in his horror, especially his family's enemies, the enigmatically beautiful witch queen Thylla from the Malpais Highlands and the wrinkled empty skin that hung from a stick and spoke with a blue tongue of flame in a shrivelled face of green fungus, the warlock Ralli-Faj.' ... 'Less than a day remained before dawn ...' (all A.A.Attanasio, *The Dark Shore*, 1996)

R.I.P.

Nancy Collins on William Seward Burroughs (1914-1997) ...

The last original Beat Generation writer died on 2 Aug in Lawrence, Kansas, after suffering a heart attack. He was 83. Born in St Louis, Missouri, Burroughs was the grandson of the inventor of the adding machine, a Harvard graduate, a homosexual, a junkie, and one of the most influential literary voices of postwar America. • While a heroin addict in 1940s Manhattan, Burroughs was mentor to Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg, and following his withdrawal, he wrote the groundbreaking *Naked Lunch* (1959), a nightmarish melange of SF, horror, crime noir, gay porn, and black humour which signalled many of the coming decade's social & cultural changes. Over the years Burroughs proved highly influential on 'underground' culture, and both the New Wave and the original cyberpunks were inspired by him. Burroughs' transformation into a pop culture icon was completed when *Naked Lunch* (1991) was filmed by director David Cronenberg. • Burroughs is preceded in death by his common-law wife, Joan, whom he accidentally killed in 1951, and his son, Bill Jr., who died in 1981. His many works include *Junky* (1953), *The Soft Machine* (1961), *The Ticket That Exploded* (1962), *Nova Express* (1964), *The Wild Boys* (1971), *Cities of the Red Night* (1981), and *The Place Of Dead Roads* (1984).

••• *Steve Baxter remembers Eugene Shoemaker (1928-1997) ...*

Planetary scientist Gene Shoemaker was killed in a car accident near Alice Springs, Australia on July 18. • Shoemaker is probably best known for his co-discovery of the comet which impacted on Jupiter in 1994. But Gene Shoemaker's key achievement, in the eyes of sf fans and space buffs, must be his contribution to the human exploration of the Moon. • Shoemaker, trained as a geologist, made his mark with the first comprehensive analysis of Meteor Crater in Arizona. But, following the nascent space program post-World War 2, and realising that the Moon was shaped by impact events like the one that created Meteor, he built his career on becoming the first geologist on the Moon. And he might have made it; he was only a couple of years older than Neil Armstrong. But in 1963, with the Apollo effort already under way, Shoemaker was diagnosed with Addison's disease. • By then, however, he had set up an astrogeology branch of the US Geological Survey, he had essentially founded modern lunar geology by putting together the first detailed geological maps and timescales of the Moon—and in 1964 he recruited Harrison Schmitt, who would become, in Shoemaker's place, the first (and only) scientist on the Moon. • After Apollo, in addition to his work on comets, Shoemaker chaired working groups on near-Earth objects, and participated in the Clementine low-cost space probes intended for the Moon and asteroids. • Gene Shoemaker never got to the Moon. But without him, neither would Harrison Schmitt—and our understanding of our sister planet would be immeasurably less.

••• *David Warbeck*, star of many sf/horror movies (inc. *The Beyond* and *Twins of Evil*) died on 24 July after a long battle with cancer. [SG] ••• *Long-time fan Tom Perry* died on 8 July. *Gary Farber* writes ...

Tom was a leading fan before I was born. In the early Sixties, his fanzines *Logorrhea* and *Quark* were deservedly leading zines; he carried Walt Willis's celebrated 'The Harp that Once or Twice' column after the most famous zines of the times stopped publication. Tom's zines were like his writing: always thoughtful, carefully done, fannish, yet substantive and of import. He combined the fannish touch of a Hoffwoman or a Tucker, with the care and weight of a Boggs. He was a fan always to be taken seriously, yet who rarely, if ever, fell into taking himself too seriously or indulging in pomposity. He was, simply, one of the greats.

Ted White adds: I'm shocked and saddened to hear of the death of Tom Perry, whom I have regarded as a friend for around 40 years. [...] In FAPA he often struck me as a junior Redd Boggs: he had the same tone and approach although in time he developed his own style. Not a bad place to start. • In the 70s Tom contributed two pieces which I published in *Amazing*. These research-based articles debunked myths Hugo Gernsback had circulated concerning his departure from and loss of *Amazing* in 1929. They were generally well received by sf historians, with one glaring exception—Sam Moskowitz. I imagine Sam felt a great emotional investment in the stories Hugo had told him and which he had retold countless times since. Sam threatened lawsuits in the name of Gernsback's estate, but none occurred. [...] I'm going to miss Tom.

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