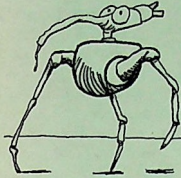


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Ansible 270 January 2010

From Dave Langford, 94 London Road, Reading, Berks, RG1 5AU, UK. Web news.ansible.co.uk. ISSN 0265-9816 (print); 1740-942X (e). Logo: Dan Steffan. Cartoon: Bruce Townley. Available for SAE, samnites, smitherens or proscenium.

A NOVEL INSIGHT. '2010? Shouldn't we all be wearing silver jump suits with jet packs?' (first line of *Coronation Street*, 1 January) [DG]

The Storms of January

Lyn Brown, Labour MP for West Ham, brought some of relevance into the media frenzy about UK MPs' expenses with a modest £37.85 claim for 'Hire of Tardis and catering'. If only she'd used its time-travel facility to warn herself of the coming expenses leak.... (*Guardian*) [MPJ]

Frank Frazetta's son Alfonso was caught red-handed removing \$20m worth of parental paintings from the Frazetta museum in Pennsylvania, after an accomplice ripped off its door with a mechanical excavator (or backhoe, as they say over there). He explained that his father told him to; but Frazetta Senior says he didn't. (BBC) [JS]

Joe Haldeman will be honoured by SFWA as their Damon Knight Grand Master for 2010. The decision was made before Joe's serious illness and recovery in late 2009. *Latest*: he's out of hospital, again. [GH]

Peter Jackson of *Lord of the Rings* film fame was made a knight in New Zealand (a title abolished there in 2000 but now reinstated).

Diana Wynne Jones fell and broke her hip on 2 December. The hip joint was replaced in an operation next day, and Diana returned home on 11 December. She's reportedly in good spirits. [CB/DD]

Ursula K. Le Guin published an open letter to the US Authors Guild of which she'd been a member since 1972), resigning in protest at the Guild's part in the Google Book Settlement. 'You decided to deal with the devil, as it were, and have presented your arguments for doing so. I wish I could accept them. I can't. There are principles involved, above all the whole concept of copyright; and these you have seen fit to abandon to a corporation, on their terms, without a struggle.' (18 December) She pointedly adds that she's remaining in SFWA and the National Writers Union, which both opposed the settlement.

Patrick Stewart was knighted in the UK New Year honours list, for services to drama. Actress Maud Tyzak (genre credits include *2001* and the 1979 *Quatermass*) has a CBE. Awards for literature were few but included an OBE for prolific children's author Dick King-Smith, whose animal fantasy *The Sheep-Pig* (1983) became the film *Babe*.

Peter Watts, noted Canadian sf author, was beaten, arrested, held overnight and charged with assault by US border police after trying to re-enter Canada on 8 December. No one who knows Watts can believe the 'assault'; it seems that some touchy officer(s) objected to his asking why they were searching his car on exit. The case continues and was referred to a US circuit court on 22 December. Watts feels that day's hearing 'went well—so well, in fact, that I actually wondered if the whole thing might end then and there, despite having been told that it never does. [...] And the prosecution chose not to show any surveillance footage of the alleged offence. Draw your own conclusions.' (blog, 24 December) • Independent defence fund site: www.freethesquid.org.

Contumulation

16-17 Jan • **ConRunner 2**, Mercure St Paul's Hotel, Sheffield. Now £45 reg; same price at the door. Day £25. Contact 56 Jackmans Place, Letchworth GC, Herts, SG6 1RH.

27 Jan • **BSEA Open Meeting**, The Antelope, 22 Eaton Tce, London, SW1W 8EZ. 5pm for 6pm. With Jim Burns.

30 Jan • **BFS Open Night**, York Brewery, York. Time TBC.

5-6 Feb • **SFX Weekender**, Pontin's Holiday Park, Camber Sands, East Sussex. Charged by accommodation; shared chalets only; no single rooms. See www.sfxweekender.com for details. Contact 08700 110034.

5-7 Feb • **Van der Filk** (filk), Ramada Hotel, Grantham, NG31 7XT. £32/\$46/€36reg; £16/\$23/€18 child/unwaged; under-6s £1/\$1/€1. At the door: £35, £17 and £1. Day: £10 Fri, £20 Sat, £15 Sun. Contact 1379 Lincoln Rd, Werrington, Peterborough, PE4 6LT.

27 Feb • **Picocon 27**, Imperial College Union, London. 10am-7/8pm. £10 (probably) at door only; £8 concessions; £5 ICSF members. Contact ICSF, Beit Quad, Prince Consort Road, London, SW7 2BB.

19-21 March • **Corflu Cobalt**, Winchester Hotel, Winchester.

£45/\$65 reg, rising to £50/\$75 on 17 January. £10/\$15 supp. Rates £80/night twin/double. Advance booking closes 13 March. Day rates £10 Fri, £25 Sat, £20 Sun (not including brunch banquet). Sterling to 45 Kimberley Gardens, London, N4 1LD. USS: Robert Lichtman, 11037 Broadway Tce, Oakland, CA 94611-1948, USA.

25-28 Mar • **World Horror Convention**, Royal Albion Hotel, Brighton. £75 reg, rising to £100 on 31 January. No at-the-door or day memberships. Contact PO Box 64317, London, NW6 9LL.

2-5 Apr • **Odyssey 2010** (Eastercon), Radisson Edwardian Hotel, Heathrow, London. £65 reg, £55 unwaged, £30 supporting or under-17s (£60 reg and £50 unwaged for BSA members); £75, £65 and £30 at the door. £5 child (<11), £1 infant (<5). Contact: Fiona Marshall c/o Cotton House, Conference Centre, Rugby, CV23 0AA.

13-15 Aug • **Festival in the Shire** (Tolkien), Y Plas, Machynlleth, Wales. Now £35 reg; day £20 Fri or Sun, £25 Sat (discount for PayPal). 'Collector's Exposition' £130; conference £190 until May; VIP pass (i.e. everything) £260. Contact info at FestivalintheShire dot com.

26-29 Aug • **Tricon** (Eurocon), Cieszyn/Cesky Tesin, Polish/Czech border. €15 reg, rising to €17.50 on 1 February; €20 on 1 April; €22.50 on 1 June; €25 on 1 August. Guest list, online registration and other details at <http://tricon.info/>.

17-19 Jun 2011 • **Eurocon 2011**, Stockholm. GoH Elizabeth Bear, Ian McDonald, Jukka Halme (fan). £30/€35/SEK350 reg, rising after Easter 2010 to £35/€40/SEK400. Payment info: www.eurocon2011.se.

Rumblings • *Aussiecon 4* Hugo nominations opened on 1 January. For ballot forms, see www.aussiecon4.org.au. PINs for online voting were emailed on 4 January. Though I joined only once, I received two!

Infinitely Improbable

As Others See Us. 'At least beer geeks get to drink beer, which is a step up from most other forms of geekery. Plus, you don't have to wear pocket protectors or make Star Trek costumes, and sometimes you actually get to meet women.' (Nicholas Pashley, *Cheers! An Intemperate History of Beer in Canada*, 2009) [MMW] • PCmag.com's 'Top 100 Web Sites of 2009' selection showered faint praise on io9: 'Hey, nerds! How about a nerd blog for your nerd interests? io9 covers everything science fiction and otherwise less-than-hip.' [via ML]

Awards. Fflur Dafydd's semi-satirical sociopolitical thriller *Y Llyfrgell*—set in 2020—won the £5000 Daniel Owen Memorial Prize at the 2009 National Eisteddfod. *David Redd* observes: 'Truly, sf concepts are now mainstream. As they were before Uncle Hugo set up shop....'

Talking Squid Redux. 'Your campaign is working!' writes Ric Cooper: 'On BBC Radio 4's *Today* programme at 08:41 on 28 December the presenter Evan Davis, interviewing Brian Aldiss and "science-fiction writer Ian Stewart" (Prof. Ian Stewart FRS), without prompting excoriated mainstream writers for belittling SF as being about "talking squid in space". / Aldiss was in fine elder statesman form, refusing to be cut off by the young whippersnapper, feigning to forget the name of the "crime lady" who perpetrated such very sincere flattery of his *Greybeard* (P.D. James with *The Children of Men*) and even coining a new name for SF—"metaphorical realism". / The respect shown to SF just might have had something to do with the fact that the programme's "guest editor" was a certain Martin Rees—that's Prof. Lord Rees, Astronomer Royal to you, sonny! He added his two penn'orth to the discussion, saying that he habitually told his students it was better to read first-rate SF than second-rate science writing.'

R.I.P. Christopher Anvil (Harry C. Crosby, Jr, 1925-2009), US author of many magazine stories—mostly in John W. Campbell's *Astounding* and *Analog*—died on 30 November aged 84. The first of his eight novels was *The Day the Machines Stopped* (1964). • *Charlie (Chas.) Balun* (1948-2009), influential horror/splatter film critic in *Fangoria*, *Gorezone* and several nonfiction books, died on 18 December aged 61. • *Gene Barry* (1919-2009), US actor who was Dr. Clayton Forrester in *George Pal's War of the Worlds* (1953) and had a bit part in the 2005 remake, died on 9 December; he was 90. [SD] • *Don Congdon* (1918-2009), US

literary agent and anthologist who was Ray Bradbury's agent for over 50 years from 1947, died on 30 November. He was 91. (NY Times) ● **Roy Edward Disney** (1930-2009), Walt's nephew, whose 1980s revolt against company policy restored Disney animation strengths and led to the Pixar partnership, died on 16 December aged 79. [DKMK] ● **Janet Fox** (1940-2009), US author of short stories—also, as Alex McDonough, five of the six 1990s 'Scorpio' sf novels—died on 21 October aged 68. She was best known for her writers' market report *Scavenger's Newsletter* (1984-2003). [LP] ● **Buddy Martinez**, co-founding editor of *Iniquities* magazine, sometime co-publisher at Gauntlet Press, and author of short horror stories, hanged himself on 30 November. [JF] ● **Britany Murphy** (1977-2009), US actress who had parts in *SeaQuest DSV*, *Sin City* and *Futurama* (voice), died on 20 December aged 32. [DKMK] ● **Paul Naschy** (1934-2009), Spanish director, screenwriter and actor notorious for his more than 100 horror films, died on 30 November aged 75. (NY Times) [AIP] ● **Dan O'Bannon** (1946-2009), noted US sf screenwriter whose credits include *Dark Star* (in several capacities; he played Sgt Pinback), *Star Wars* (effects), *Alien*, *Return of the Living Dead*, *Lifeforce*, *Total Recall*, *Screamers* and several more, died on 17 December. He was 63. [SR] ● **Mark Owings** (1945-2009), US bibliographer (often in collaboration with Jack Chalker), editor and small-press publisher, died on 30 December; he was 64. [GVG] ● **David C. Smith**, US scholar in several disciplines including the life and times of H.G. Wells—of whom his *Desperately Mortal* (1986) is a notable biography—died on 7 November. [JC/PP] ● **Richard Todd** (1909-2009), Dublin-born actor of *Dam Busters* fame, whose genre credits included the 4-episode Doctor Who sequence *Kinda* (1982), died on 3 December; he was 90. [MPJ]

As Others See Some Of Us. 'Self-described geeks and horror fans are especially upset at how the [Twilight] series introduces the conventions of the romance novel—that most stereotypically feminine, most scorned of literary forms—into their far more highbrow and culturally relevant monster stories.' (Sady Doyle, *The American Prospect*, 19 November) [MMW] Were there fan riots when Anne McCaffrey polluted our highbrow, culturally relevant dragon stories with romance?

Outraged Letters. **Stephen Gallagher** on his nub in the *TLS* review of *The Oxford Companion to English Literature* (A269): 'Slightly surprised to be singled out for a kicking—I haven't looked up the review but I did check on the reviewer [Henry Hitchings], in case I may have offended him or jilted his mother. But I never heard of him before today. So I suppose a mature response would be Yah boo, at least I'm in the book, and unlike some people I didn't have to write my own Wikipedia page.' ● **Simon R. Green** offers a New Year treat: 'a certain D. Langford makes a strong appearance in the fourth Secret Histories book, *From Hell with Love* ... Though you do, as usual, die horribly, you're a much more sympathetic character this time. I may be mellowing.' Or perhaps I am. ● **Martyn P. Jackson** 'attended the Dimensions Doctor Who Con in Newcastle [November] where one of the guests was Gillian Brown. Gillian appeared as Orica in the 1976 *Doctor Who* story "The Brain of Morbius". You may also know her as the producer of Ken Campbell's one-man shows. She related how Ken introduced her to the work of Philip K Dick: Ken rang Gillian at 2am and said, "I want you to go to your local bookshop in the morning and ask the young man behind the desk to put all of his Dick on the counter.'" ● **Dan Kimmel** goes critical: 'The Boston Society of Film Critics met Sunday [13 December] and included three genre films among their honorees. South African director Neill Blomkamp was named best new filmmaker for his *District 9*. [...] Pixar's *Up* was cited as best animated film. The big surprise was in the award for best ensemble cast where the gritty drama *Precious* shared the prize with the rebooted *Star Trek*'.

Court Circular. George Lucas lost his UK Court of Appeal lawsuit against Andrew Ainsworth, the designer of *Star Wars* stormtrooper helmets and armour who's been selling replicas made from his original mould. The ruling was that the models are not fine-art sculptures (lifetime plus 70 years copyright) but 'utilitarian' industrial designs which can be protected for only 15 years. Naturally Lucas plans to escalate this to the new UK Supreme Court. (Times, 17 December) [MPJ]

The Weakest Link. **Anne Robinson:** 'What is the name of the London club that marks the start/finish point in Jules Verne's *Around the World in 80 Days*?' **Contestant**, a woman described as a teacher of English and music: 'Ronnie Scott's.' (BBC1, 14 December) [MPJ] ● **George Bowie**, Radio Clyde presenter: 'Which famous detective features in the Agatha Christie [sic] novel *The Hound of the Baskervilles*?' **Contestant:** 'Is it Harry Potter?' (The Bookseller) [JCo]

In Memoriam. Many recollections of Rob Holdstock (1948-2009) appear in this issue's supplement: news.ansible.co.uk/a270supp.html.

Magazine Scene. *The Internet Review of SF* will cease with the February 2010 issue. [GVG] ● **Kirkus Reviews**, 'the hard-to-please pre-publication blurb machine' (*New York Observer*), and **Editor & Publisher** were both axed in December by their owner, Nielsen Business Media. [ML]

Random Fandom. **Dr David V. Barrett** gloats over having become, as of 20 December, 'the person formerly known as Mr David V. Barrett.' ● **FAAn Awards:** the 2010 ballot is available at the Corflu website. See corflu.org/pdfs/2010faanballot.pdf. A new category has been introduced this year: Lifetime Achievement Award for 30 or more years of fan activity. What next—Pan Emeritus? ● **Rob Hansen** revealed that 20 December 2009 was the 80th anniversary of the first meeting of the first US sf fan group, the Sciencers, and that the UK equivalent will be 27 October 2010—eighty years from the inaugural meeting of the Ilford Science Literary Circle in 1930. ● **David Levine**, US fan and author, was picked for a January 'expedition' at the Mars Desert Research Station in Utah, operated by the Mars Society. The volunteer crew spends two weeks at 'real research on geology, astronomy, and medicine in a simulated Mars environment (complete with space suits).' [GS]

Change & Decay. Borders UK branches closed for the last time on 22 December. The final frantic book sale was complicated by successful legal action from Hachette (Gollancz, Headline, Hodder, Little Brown, Octopus, Orbit, Orion, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, etc), forbidding the administrators, MCR, to flog off books supplied on the usual sale-or-return basis. (Bookseller) At Borders in Islington, for example, bargain-hunters who'd grabbed Hachette publishers' sf/fantasy titles at 70% off learned only at checkout that the books weren't for sale. [ME/AK]

Fanfunder. *Transatlantic Fan Fund:* 96 ballots were cast, 83 actually expressing a preference. Results announced on 23 December: Anne KG Murphy & Brian Gray, standing jointly, won by a first-round majority with 50 votes (40 NA; 10 Euro/rest of world), trailed by Frank Wu with 30 (18; 12) and Hold Over Funds with 3 (2; 1). Anne & Brian will thus travel to Odysse, the 2010 Eastercon at Heathrow. More at taff.org.uk. UK admin: Steve Green, 33 Scott Road, Solihull, B92 7LQ.

As Others See Avatar. "This film really was a huge risk for 20th Century Fox. They took a movie that has no real stars and one with an ostensibly limited appeal. Sci-fi is typically a geeky genre so for them to make such a success out of a film that is about big blue aliens is very impressive." (*Heat* magazine film editor in *Independent*, 2 January) [MPJ]

C.o.A. **Tony Cullen** (from 14 January), 21 Clareville Road, Caterham, Surrey, CR3 6LA. **Mike & Deb Rohan** (as well as former address), 16/2 Learmonth Terrace, West End, Edinburgh EH4 1PG. **Ina Shorrack**, 14 Shalem Court, Teehey Lane, Higher Bebington, CH63 2JB. (Phone unchanged. 'Passing fans always welcome.') **M.J. 'Simo' Simpson**, 108 Grace Road, Leicester LE2 8AZ (phone and email unchanged).

The Dead Past. *Fifty Years Ago:* UK fans were urged to Leicester Square to see the newly released *On the Beach*. But 'Author Nevil Shute is reported as having refused to see the film and a friend of his was quoted in The News Chronicle as saying, "The love interest is overplayed and the ending coarsened.'" (*Skyrack* 11, 1 January 1960)

Thog's Masterclass. *Simile Dept.* *Continued.* "They were lifted off the ground like salmon plucked out of the Kushiro River as they headed upstream to spawn in the mountains of Hokkaido." (Alexander Besher, *Rim*, 1994) [AK] 'Explosive shurikens flew like punctuation marks above Tomo's head.' (*Ibid*) 'Like dying spiders his fingers crawled over the control panel, smearing it with blood.' (Frank Schätzing, *The Swarm*, 2004; trans Sally-Anne Spencer, 2006) [AR] ● *Dept of Terrifying Imagery.* 'He allowed a pregnant pause. "You see, Dr Roche, if tiny insects launched a concerted attack on your nostrils, your finely tuned, highly complex body would be in danger of collapse.'" (*Ibid*) ● *Very Like A Whale Dept.* 'Watching the oil-spattered Dean laugh and jump around reminded him of sitting on his grandfather's knee.' (*Ibid*) ● *Dept of Higher Mathematics.* "This is a ninety percent male society ... we outnumber our women two hundred to one." (Jacquelyn Frank, *Hunting Julian*, January 2010) [RF] ● *Said-Bookism Dept.* "'I was,' he emanated darkly ..." (*Ibid*) ● *Dept of Mathematics II.* "... there are twenty-one of us, including myself and the signal officer who is on the roof watching for the signal, which, being four squads of four, is exactly the number we ought to have ..." (Steven Brant, *Sethra Lavode*, 2004) [BA]

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