

Ansible



Ansible 273 April 2010

From David 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: Brad W. Foster. Available for SAE or the libretto of *Earwigs over the Mountains*.

Corflu UK. This March fanzine event was great fun. Official guest of honour was Mary Kay Kare, whose name emerged from the traditional hat; unofficial guest Earl Kemp (1961 Hugo winner for *Who Killed Science Fiction?*) was brought over by the informal Corflu Fifty fan fund. Group photos taken included a unique assembly of 15 TAFF winners from 13 races, 1968 (Steve Stiles) to 2010. • **FAAn Awards.** Fanzine: *Banana Wings*. Fan Writer: Claire Brialey. Fan Artist: Steve Stiles. Letterhack: Robert Lichtman. Website: eFanzines.com. New Fanzine Fan: Jacqueline Monahan. Life Achievement: Ted White. #1 Fan Face: Robert Lichtman. The coveted past presidency of the Fan Writers of America was voted *nem. con.* to D. West. Further nameless rites and ceremonies were too alcohol-ridden to be revealed, and luckily we have no room for Graham Charnock's keynote speech about impacted faeces.

The Rains of April

Stephen Baxter remembers Michael Foot (see R.I.P.): 'As far as I know he was the only person I ever met who actually knew H.G. Wells. They met in London in the 40s; Foot would have been around 30 and Wells in his late 70s, "a hero of my youth," said Foot. Later, among his other accomplishments, Foot became a great Wellsian, and produced a good biography in 1995. That year, the centenary of *The Time Machine*, the Wells Society held a conference on the book. I gave a talk on sequels by other hands (including my own *Time Ships*). And there was Foot, then about 82 I suppose, front and centre. He sat through most of the papers and made kind comments, including a remark on mine that Wells had always been pressured to produce sequels of his classic works, but was always drawn to the new. Good man.'

Sir Ian McKellen weighed into the current British Airways strike with the following helpful insight on Absolute Radio, announcing: "Nice well-behaved hobbits don't join unions." (*Independent*, 23 March) *Lord of the Rings* readers will recall that nice well-behaved hobbits were easy meat for Saruman until the rough aggressive ones got home. [MPJ]

Steven Moffat explains the inner non-sfness of his show: 'For me, Doctor Who literally is a fairy tale. It's not really science fiction. It's not set in space, it's set under your bed. It's at its best when it's related to you, no matter what planet it's set on.' (*Guardian*, 22 March) [JM]

Norman Spinrad writes: 'My primary stomach cancer is not now operable, due to spread to some lymph nodes. I'm starting chemo on [29 March], and if it works, a month or two from now at least, it may then be operable. I'm now convinced that I'm in the hands of the best there is, and the doctor, himself rather bald, says that with what's being tried now at least, I'll keep my hair. So as an article of faith, I've just gotten a haircut.' (Facebook, 25 March) Wishing him all possible luck....

Bruce Sterling has discovered that *Hacking in the Computer World* by 'Sandeep Gupta', published in 2004, is in fact a pirate repackaging of his very own *The Hacker Crackdown* (1992). 'Great re-skinning job there! Digging the new cover!' (*Wired* blog, 17 March) [LP]

Lalie Walker, the crime novelist who sets her stories in Paris, is being sued by the owners of the Marché St Pierre fabric store—who claim that to commit even fictional murder and abduction on their august premises is a shocking defamation. (Imagine what litigious fun the Oxford colleges could have along those lines ... apart from hard-to-locate ones like Jordan, Judas, Shrewsbury and Warlock.) Walker is horrified by the notion that 'every time you want to write a fiction you have to ask the permission of the owners of the place', and sees a still more dire prospect looming: 'She added, gloomily: "We will all have to end up writing science fiction instead."' (*Guardian*, 17 March) [DG]

Peter Watts, Canadian sf author beaten up and pepper-sprayed by a US border guard in December (see A270), was convicted on 19 March for 'failure to comply with a lawful order'. Apparently it's a felony to be even slightly groggy and hesitant when told to lie down on the ground by someone who has just punched you repeatedly in the face for asking a question. Sentencing should follow in late April. As they phrased it at Making Light: 'Peter Watts has been found guilty of being assaulted by a border guard.' Another notable victory in the War Against Tourism.

Conquisition

All Apr • **Dublin: One City, One Book** events. The 2010 book is *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. See www.dublinonecityonebook.ie.

2-5 Apr • **Odyssey 2010** (Eastercon), Radisson Edwardian Hotel, Heathrow, London. At the door: £75 reg, £65 unwaged, £30 under-17s. £5 child (<11), £1 infant (<5). *Hugo shortlist (based on a record 864 nominations) to be announced here on Sun 4 April*. Watch this space.

21 Apr • **BSFA Open Meeting**, The Antelope, 22 Eaton Tce, London, SW1W 8EZ. 5pm for 6pm. With Kari Sperring.

28 Apr • **Clarke Award** ceremony, London—by invitation.

28 Apr - 3 May • **Sci-Fi London** (film), Apollo Piccadilly Cinema, 19 Regent St, London, SW1Y 4LY. Enquiries 020 3239 9277.

2 May • **Vortex II** (Doctor Who), Europa Hotel, Belfast. Tickets £10; £50 for group of 6. Online (+£2 fee): www.utevents.com.uk. Contact UT Events, 23 Tudor Park, Carrickfergus, Co. Antrim, BT38 9TP.

8 May • **Write Fantastic** event, Jacqueline Du Pré Bldg, St Hilda's Coll, Oxford. £15 reg; students £12. Contact/cheques: Write Fantastic c/o Newcon Press, 41 Wheatshaf Rd, Alconbury Weston, PE28 4LF.

5-15 Jul • **Fantastic London**, Middlesex U course. £300 UK/EU; £840 international. With Farah Mendlesohn. Contact Summer School office, Middlesex U, Trent Park Campus, Bramley Rd, London, N14 4YZ.

27-30 Aug • **Discworld Convention**: SOLD OUT. There is a waiting list for possible cancellations: membership at dwccon dot org.

17-19 Sep • **Fantasycon**, Britannia Hotel, 1 St James St, Nottingham. Now £65 reg (BFS members £10 less); £45 for Saturday only. Online booking only, it seems: www.fantasycon.org.uk. Contact fcon at britishfantasycon dot org.

9-10 Oct • **NewCon 5**, The Fishmarket, Northampton. Hotel: Park Inn. £40 reg, rising to £45 after 9 April; under-16s £30; £25 day. Contact 41 Wheatshaf Rd, Alconbury Weston, Cambs, PE28 4LF.

17-21 Aug 11 • **Renovation** (69th Worldcon), Reno-Sparks Convention Center, Reno, NV, USA. \$140 reg, rising to \$160 on 1 May. Unchanged: \$50 supp; \$100 under-21s; \$75 under-17s; under-7s free. *Presupporter discounts expire 1 May*: see www.renovationsf.org. Contact PO Box 13278, Portland, OR 97213-0278, USA.

Rumblings • *Worldcon 2012*: The Chicago bid filed its paperwork by the required deadline. Too late now for any rival bid to emerge.

Infinitely Improbable

As Others See Us. Two science fiction films are up for Oscars, much to the delight of single men with a penchant for multi-sided dice.' (*Guardian* Sports 'Omens', 6 March) [CW] • Learned critical discussion of *District 9* ... Marc Maron: 'He [an sf-cognizant friend] just started to question the logic of certain things.' Brendan McDonald: 'There's no logic in it, it's science fiction.' MM: 'But real sci-fi guys want things to make sense down the line.' BM: 'It's about aliens hanging around on Earth.' (WTF podcast, March) [TM]

Awards. *James Tiptree Jr* (gender exploration): Greer Gilman, *Cloud & Ashes: Three Winter's Tales*; Fumi Yoshinaga, *Ooku: The Inner Chambers* (vols 1 & 2). • **Golden Raspberry** (Razzies) for filmic badness: *Transformers: Revenge Of The Fallen* 'won' worst picture, screenplay and director (Michael Bay). For 'worst of the decade', the film category honoured the timeless quality of *Battlefield Earth* (2000). [MPJ] Whose original scriptwriter J.D. Shapiro was moved to make a public apology, even though 'I can't help but be strangely proud of it. Because out of all the sucky movies, mine is the suckiest.' (*New York Post*, 28 March) • **SFRA Pilgrim** (sf/fantasy scholarship): Eric S. Rabkin. • **SF Hall of Fame** 2010 inductees: Octavia E. Butler, Roger Zelazny, Douglas Trumbull, and Richard Matheson. [L] • **SF Poetry Association Grand Master** candidates: Richard L. Tierney and Jane Yolen. • **Oscars**: again genre films won only in lesser categories despite widespread claims that this year would be different. *Avatar*: Art Direction, Cinematography, Visual Effects. *Star Trek: Make-up*. *Up*: Animated Feature Film, Original Score. [MPJ] • **SFWA Author Emeritus** announced for 2010: Neal Barrett, Jr.

R.I.P. Robert Culp (1930-2010), US actor whose most famed credits were the *Outer Limits* segments 'Demon with a Glass Hand' and 'The Architects of Fear', died on 24 March aged 79. [BT] ● **Sid Fleischman** (1920-2010), US author of many supernatural novels for children, died on 17 March—the day after he turned 90. [MMW] ● **Michael Foot** (1913-2010), much-respected UK politician and past Labour Party leader whose books included the near-future speculation *The Trial of Mussolini* (as by Cassius, 1943) and the biography *H.G.: The History of Mr Wells* (1995), died on 3 March aged 96. ● **Dick Giordano** (1932-2010), US comics editor/artist who worked for Charlton, DC (inking *Batman* and *Green Lantern/Arrow*; VP from 1983), Marvel, and his own Continuity Associates, died on 27 March aged 77. [GD] ● **Peter Graves** (1926-2010) US actor remembered for *Mission Impossible*, *Fantasy Island* and both *Airplane!* films, died on March 14, four days short of his 84th birthday. [SFS] ● **Corey Haim** (1971-2010), Canadian actor best known for the vampire film *The Lost Boys* (1987), died on 10 March; he was 38. Other genre film credits included the sf *Prayer of the Rollerboys* (1991). [MPJ] ● **John Hickleton**, UK comics artist who worked on *Judge Dredd*, *Nemesis* the Warlock and other *2000 AD* regulars, died at a Swiss assisted-suicide centre on 19 March. He was 42 and had suffered for ten years from multiple sclerosis. [JG] ● **John McGarr** (1964-2010), US actor/producer who produced and starred in *House of the Wolf Man* (2009), was killed by a drunk driver while walking out to breakfast at the Indianapolis Horrorhound convention on 25 March. He was 45. [SG] ● **Patricia Wrightson** (1921-2010), Australian author whose sf and fantasy (often for children) made effective use of Aboriginal myth and the Australian landscape, died on 15 March; she was 88. In 1986 she received the Hans Christian Anderson medal. [F770]

As Others See Doctor Who Fans. 'As the Doctor, [Matt] Smith will be scrutinised not only by 10 million viewers, but also by some very nervous BBC executives and a dedicated—some would say slightly unhinged—online fan community.' (*Telegraph*, 11 March) [SG/MPJ]

Award Shortlists. Arthur C. Clarke: Gwyneth Jones, *Spirit*; China Miéville, *The City & The City*; Adam Roberts, *Yellow Blue Tibia*; Kim Stanley Robinson, *Galileo's Dream*; Marcel Theroux, *Far North*; Chris Wooding, *Retribution Falls*. ● Compton Crook (first novel): Paolo Bacigalupi, *The Windup Girl*; D.D. Barant, *Dying Bites*; Gail Carriger, *Souless*; Jonathan L. Howard, *Johannes Cabal, the Necromancer*. ● *Lambda* (LGBT). CHILDREN'S/YA: Malinda Lo, *Ash*; Michael Cart, ed., *How Beautiful the Ordinary*; P.E. Ryan, *In Mike We Trust*; Dale Peck, *Sprout*; Nick Burd, *The Vast Fields of Ordinary*. SF/FANTASY/HORROR: Rebecca Ore, *Centuries Ago and Very Fast*; Amber Dawn, *Fist of the Spider Woman*; Lee Thomas, *In the Closet, Under the Bed*; Catherine M. Valente, *Palimpsest*; Tom Cardamone, *Pumpkin Teeth*. ● *Prometheus* (libertarian): Orson Scott Card, *Hidden Empire*; Cory Doctorow, *Makers*; Dani and Eytan Kollin, *The Unincorporated Man*; Harry Turtledove, *Librating Atlantis*; Harry Turtledove, *The United States of Atlantis*.

As Others See Some Of Us. 'Klingon speakers, those who have devoted themselves to the study of a language invented for the *Star Trek* franchise, inhabit the lowest possible rung of the geek ladder. Dungeons & Dragons players, ham radio operators, robot engineers, computer programmers, comic book collectors—they all look down on Klingon speakers. Even the most ardent *Star Trek* fanatics, the Trekkies, who dress up in costume every day, who can recite scripts of entire episodes, who collect *Star Trek* paraphernalia with mad devotion, consider Klingon speakers beneath them.' (Arika Okrent, *In The Land Of Invented Languages*, 2009) [MMW]

Stokers (horror). NOVEL Sarah Langan, *Audry's Door*. FIRST NOVEL Hank Schwaeble, *Damnabe*. LONG FICTION Lisa Morton, *The Lucid Dreaming*. SHORT Norman Prentiss, 'In the Porches of My Ears' (*Postscripts* 18). ANTHOLOGY Christopher Conlon, *He Is Legend*. COLLECTION Gene O'Neill, *A Taste of Tenderloin*. NONFICTION Michael Knost, *Writers Workshop of Horror*. POETRY Lucy A. Snyder, *Chimeric Machines*.

Speaking of Stoker: Dublin Council liked his great-great-nephew's proposal for a statue of Bram Stoker in the man's native city; but alas, the Irish economy has been bled dry. So, no Dublin memorial unless Stoker's family can raise ~€100,000... (*Independent*, 26 March) [MPJ] C.o.A. Chris Bell, 15 Whinnys Rd, Loudwater, High Wycombe, HP10 9RJ. Terry Jeeves, Broomgrove Nursing Home, 30 Broomgrove Rd, Sheffield, S10 2LR (fanzines etc still welcomed, but expect no reply).

To Coin A Phrase. Who could offer the most original comment on Sunderland University's new course module in space law? 'Space law course to tackle final frontier [...] boldly going into the potential legal conundra of outer space.' (*Guardian*, 14 March) '... boldly going where no others have gone before. [...] the final frontier of the legal system ...'

(*JournalLive.co.uk*, 13 March) 'To boldly go where no law student has gone before.' (*Sunderland Echo*, 15 March) '... boldly going where no UK law school has gone before ...' (*Lawyer* 2B, 16 March; also *NEbusiness.co.uk*, 24 March) '... boldly going where no British university has gone before ...' (*Northern Echo*, 13 March) [MPJ] We searched in vain for a single instance of 'It's law, Jim, but not as we know it.'

Outraged Letters. Neil Ford on Maura Hughes on *SFX* (see A272): 'Maura did not mention that February 2010 is the first, and so far only, Women in Horror Month, as so declared by Someone On The Internet (womeninhorrormonth.com). The shamefully male editors of *SFX* probably didn't even know there was such an event to observe or otherwise.'

Magazine Scene. Several editors of China's *Science Fiction World* published an open letter complaining that their 'unprofessional' boss has no clue, expecting them to do writing, translation and artwork in-house rather than pay writers, translators or artists. Monthly circulation has dropped from 150,000 to 130,000 since he took charge at the start of 2009. (Those faint envious moans you hear are from the Western sf magazine editors.) Major Chinese authors have backed the *SFW* protest.

Random Fandom. Chris Garcia set fire to his legendary beard during a bout of kamikaze cooking on 5 March. Exclamation marks were freely used. ● Richard E. Geis, who always checks the *Ansible* obits for his name, should be able to see them better after his successful left-eye cataract surgery. [AIP] ● Cheryl Morgan was refused entry to the USA at San Francisco airport on 11 March, and returned to Britain. Though apparently resulting from a communications error between the State Department and Customs & Border Control, this bars her from ever again visiting the USA on the visa-waiver programme. ● Douglas Spencer & Julia Daly are engaged, and plan to marry in May 2012.

'Hogfather' = Bacon? Review of a book on the who-wrote-Shakespeare follies: 'Perhaps in 400 years, we'll be analysing the Discworld novels to discover the "real" Pratchett.' (*Independent*, 28 March) [PD]

As Others Bewail Our Defects. Eli Lehrer on *Analog's* eightieth anniversary: 'Great literature, by definition, manages to ask (and sometimes answer) universal questions about the human condition. Although character-driven stories—which are quite possible even in a hard science fiction context—can address almost anything, a major focus of any hard sci-fi story will, almost by definition, involve something that has never happened to anyone. (Yet.) So hard science fiction, even when well crafted, will probably never make it into the literary canon.' (*Weekly Standard*, 15 March) [MMW] Did H.G. Wells write any?

The Dead Past. 50 Years Ago: a London Eastercon changed hotels at 3 days' notice after 'the shattering announcement by the management of the Sandringham Hotel, the advertised meeting place, cancelling the convention on Tuesday, 12th April. [Committee members] in charge of booking arrangements were told that the management would not after all allow alcohol on the premises and that frankly we were considered a bunch of rowdies.' (*Skyrack* 17, April 1960) ● 45 Years Ago: an anonymous slow reader borrowed a copy of *Quatermass and the Pit* from a Sheffield library—returned at last in 2010. [DKMK] Rumours that he/she has now started on Robert Jordan are considered too good to check.

Fanfundry. GUFF voting reminder: the deadline is 5 April. See taff.org.uk/guff.html. Douglas Spencer's campaign involves the shock revelation that he is an anagram of Ego And Scruples; James Shields may yet unveil himself as a contender who Hides Less Jam.

Thog's Masterclass. Dept of Alien Anatomy, or Arithmetic. 'Their four legs were all the same, the rear ones not specialized like, say, those of horses. Each leg folded in two places; the top and bottom bones went one way, the middle one the other.' Later: 'Their knees, all twelve per person, were bent into a kind of half circle that left Ron towering over them.' (Mike Shepherd, *Kris Longknife: Undaunted*, 2009) [PM] ● **Expletives Dept.** "'Dunghheap!" one of the albino twins ejaculated. "Nothing goes to the waste lands!" (Stephen King, *The Dark Tower 3: The Waste Lands*, 1991) [GS] ● **Dept of Sexual Side-Effects.** 'Penway had no reflexes. He lay there helpless whilst wild, disjointed thoughts formed, vanished and reformed, hammered against his numbed consciousness, swirled and danced like paper bits in a high wind.' (Paul W. Fairman, *I, The Machine*, 1968) [AR] ● **Metaphor Dept.** 'Pippa leapt from one metal stump to the next, her balance refined, arms outstretched a little, her face a Picasso of concentration.' (Andy Remic, *War Machine*, 2007) [RD]

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