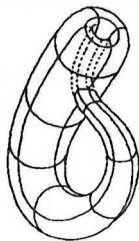


Ansible



Ansible 68 March 1993

From Dave Langford, 94 London Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 5AU. Fax 0734 669914. ISSN 0265-9816. Logo by Dan Steffan. *Ansible* is available for SAEs, whim, or (wealthy idiots only) £12/year. Vote early, vote often: ABIGAIL FROST for TAFF!

Sideways Through Borneo

Stephen Baxter boldly went to the GW/Boxtree launch party (Dillons, Oxford, 10 Feb): 'The lead authors gave brief talks and answered questions from a tolerant audience. D.Ferring told us how he'd taken all the jokes out of the Konrad books, J.Yeovil told us how the lead in *Drachenfels* is based on Orson Welles, and I.Watson told us how war-gaming dates back to H.G.Wells in 1913, and went on to explain to the startled gathering that **Warhammer** fiction has a certain integrity because—just as in the Warhammer game—for most of history humanity has been driven by mass psychoses based on power fantasies. "Yes, but look on the bright side!" we all cried.'

Don Herron reports from death's door: 'I may have been the last person to see the poet and film critic Margo Skinner (Mrs Fritz Leiber the 2nd) alive. After a short hospitalization, she died Jan 13th from lung cancer. A month earlier Jeanne and I had stopped into her apartment, where she told us of her wishes for burial, which involved having her cat Lulu cremated with her. In the elevator, this dialogue ensued: JEANNE: "Uh, did I hear right? She is going to have her cat killed and cremated with her?" ME: "Yeah, you know, the Viking funeral thing." The folk handling her estate, however, have decided against this plan, so I can report to *Ansible* that Margo's and Lulu's ashes will *not* be mixed with some from Fritz's urn, and will *not* then, according to Margo's plan, be interred in a pet cemetery in Marin County. JEANNE: "And she wants to be buried in a pet cemetery???" ME: "Well, sure—you know Margo."

Kim Huett has a modest proposal. 'Avedon ["you will have to die!"] is being a little harsh. Rather than go to such extremes if you win any more Hugos, I would prefer it if the assembled fans at the pub just pointed their fingers at you and chanted *Geis, Geis, Geis* for a couple of hours....'

Keith Laumer died on 23 January, aged 67.

Stephen Marley (see A67) 'rewrote his 15,000 sample words to feature the new, cuddly Judge Dredd ("Take *that!*, er, please, ma'am") and has been signed up for the third Dredd novel after all.' [JGJ] But we hear negotiations got fraught when the full tininess of the 'generous' advance was revealed. Spies claim there is a further agonizing choice: accept the amazing Dredd descending royalty scale or take a (somewhat increased) flat fee and kiss your rights goodbye....

Scott Meredith, legendary sf literary agent, died in New York on 11 Feb. He was 69. The *Independent* obituary claimed that one British author had laughed riotously at the news, while another said 'Good!' Whom can they possibly mean?

Charles Platt reveals in *SF Eye* that he (like Greg Benford) plans to have his head frozen and cryonically stored for a glorious future waking. Certain authors have been 'imagining the reactions of the resuscitated Platt and Benford when they realize they were interesting only for having lived at the same time as that Great Writer, Ursula Le Guin....' [YR]

Maureen Speller has overdosed on fantasy proofreading: 'The author, an American, had a curious style. Tootling along in the usual sub-archaic mode, you'd come across comments like "It's just something cultural", in reference to a tribe's habit of giving a child a new name at a certain age.... Not a verb, subject or object was allowed to escape without more than its fair share of adjectivity and adverbiality. And the author had

a habit of making passive states active. It's amazing the way emotions were flying around, assaulting people in the most unlikely places at the most unlikely moments. They did a lot of spiralling down, as I recall—a phrase which now enters Speller's Guide to Spotting Naff Fantasy, lovingly dedicated to Tom Deitz and Charles de Lint, the other two major research sources so far.... Giveaway phrases in modern fantasies are "snagged" and "slathered". If people "snag" things rather than picking them up, as do we less imaginative but more practical mortals, this is one sign that you have a naff fantasy on your hands. The bulk of my opprobrium is saved for "slather". I just know, the moment someone in a novel slathers their food with something, that I'm going to hate this story. Perhaps it is the similarity to "lather" ... visions of bubbly mustard or butter being shovelled on to food is more than this stomach can bear.'

Lucy Sussex wrote on the back of an obscene postcard: 'More on Brother Orson [Card]—in a belated *F&SF* review of Aussie George Turner's *Brainchild*, he complained that the novel was too Australia-centric! Also, he couldn't believe that the research in the book (which takes place in good old Aussie labs) could possibly occur outside of the US of A. George wrote back to say that many US technologies are based on research done by Australia's very own CSIRO. No reply as yet....'

Condite

London First-Thursdays Meetings. Enough. As fannish turn-out declines, the steady drop in *Ansible's* required print run is fine for my bank account ... but even tolerant Langford can no longer stand that hideous crush at the Hamilton Hall Permanent Beer Promotion. In February, pink flyers urged an instant move to the Florence Nightingale, 199 Westminster Bridge Rd. Other fans mutter of regrouping at the old Wellington, now revamped with the same total area but 1/3 of it a wine bar with its own street entrance. Yet others are seeking the Ideal venue lurking among the Platonic Forms (*Bernie Peek*: 'We've already rejected better places than the Nightingale!'). Those based in Reading can only say they'd prefer even a mildly unsuitable pub to the present bloody impossible one. ● **5 March Addendum!** On 4 March a new Hamilton Hall atrocity (closing the whole 'fan bar' for a private party) led to a clear vote for return to the Wellington in April. For new readers: this pub is opposite the Old Vic exit from Waterloo Station.

6-7 Mar ● **Microcon**, Exeter University Union. GoH Colin Takebackplenty. Contact 24 Buddle Lane, Exeter, EX4 1JH.

10 Mar (and 2nd Wed of month henceforth) ● **BSFA**, upstairs bar, The Conservatory (Café Munchen), St Giles High St. Speaker: Mary Scott of *Nudists May Be Encountered* fame.

13 Mar ● **Picocon**, Imperial College Union, Prince Consort Rd, London. GoH Colin Thatmanagain. 10am-10pm; £5 reg.

19 Mar ● **British Fantasy Soc** open night with Karl Edward Wagner: Falkland Arms, Bloomsbury Way, WC1. 6:30pm on.

19-21 Mar ● **Economy II** (Shoestringcon XIV), Hatfield. GoH Storm Constantine. £8 reg, UH students/PSIFA members £5. Contact PSIFA, UHSU, U of Herts, Hatfield, Herts, AL10 9AB.

25 Mar ● **Clarke Award** presentation, Soho Room, Groucho Club, Dean St, London. 6pm for 7:30pm. All welcome.

26-8 Mar ● **Action 93** (Trek), Shepperton Moat House. £30-£40 reg. Contact 12 Saville Cres, Ashford, TW15 1SX.

8-12 Apr ● **Helicon**, Eastercon/Eurocon, Jersey. £28 reg. Contact 63 Drake Rd, Chessington, Surrey, KT9 1LQ.

30 Apr ● **Wedding of the Century!** Jean Owen and Martin

Hoare, 'if I find that copy of the decree absolute...' [MAH]

24 Jul • **Dangercon V** (humorous sf/kids' TV), Croydon. £3 reg. 11am-11pm. Contact 37 Keens Rd, Croydon, CR0 1AH.

2-6 Sep • **Confrancisco** (51st Worldcon), San Francisco: rates rise from \$110 to \$125 on 1 Apr. (\$25 supporting-only.) For sterling rates, contact 12 Stannard Rd, London, E8 1DB.

10-12 Sep • **Sto-Con-Trent** (roleplaying), Keele Univ. £15 reg to Easter. Contact 12b Sprowston Rd, Norwich, NR3 4QN.

1-4 Apr 94 • **Sou'Wester**, Eastercon, Liverpool. £25 reg, £23 for paid-up presupporters. Contact 3 West Shrubbery, Redland, Bristol, BS6 6SZ. (Last issue I forgot the rates had risen. Sorry.)

24-8 Aug 95 • **Intersection**, 53rd Worldcon, Glasgow. At last, the 1993 rates: £50, with Presupporter/'Friend'/Voter bargains ... P £45, V £35, PV £30, F £15, FP £10, FV/FPV free. £15 supporting (P £10, F/V free). P and F discounts cease on 30 Apr 93 (Fs become plain-vanilla supporters); other rates OK to 15 Sep. [P] Contact: 121 Cape Hill, Smethwick, Warley, B66 4SH.

Rumblings • News from **Boskone**: 'Tim Illingworth bought a round! Oh, and Boston might be dropping their 1998 Worldcon bid—the rumour is they've lost the Sheraton Hotel to a conference of gynaecologists or something.' [MAH]

Infinitely Improbable

Secrets of Publishing. Editor: I'll be back with an offer tomorrow! *New, Accountant-Driven Hodder Costing System*: Not so fast. Every costing (be it the new Jeffrey Archer hardback—as it won't be any longer—or 15,000 copies of a £3.99 paperback original) must now include a blanket £5,000 for 'overheads'. **Prospective Author**: Bloody hell, after mark-up that's over £1.65 of the said paperback cover price, not much below the unit production cost of the book! It'll have to be priced at £4.99, just like most paperbacks these days. **Dynamic Hodder Sales People**: Sorry, squire, £3.99 is the ceiling. Editor: Sorreee....

Forward the Foundation: at a final meeting on 4 Feb the SF Foundation Council voted itself into oblivion, with effect as soon as 'Friends of Foundation' achieve charitable status and Take Over. The SFF's new home Liverpool University is hiring an assistant librarian as administrator of the sf collection. Though urged to publicize this career opportunity, I note the deadline (CV and 3 referees essential) is tomorrow, 5 March....

Research Your Market: 'Critical Wave, which has never published prose or poetry....' [Steve Green, CW29]

Time Warp. Chris Priest is bemused by the letter column of the latest *Asimov's*. 'All the letters are headed with "Dear Dr Asimov". Are they all old letters? Are they all from cretins? Or does the magazine put the salutations on, like a communist regime refusing to admit the old leader is really dead?'

TAFF Death Race: gosh, the tension! M.Ashley offers the well-tested 'Vote for me, I'm ill' ploy. T.Berry was denounced in the USA as a fraud for claiming to be a founder of Frank's APA (er, there's been more than one Frank's). A.Watkins took a vow of silence and A.Frost is toying with local politics. Nigel Richardson analyses the issues for MA: 'All [Abi] has to do is state in her platform that she's female, single, heterosexual, has a posh voice and a couple of short, clingy dresses, and you're history. But she'll probably rave on about John Clute, Polish parliamentary reform in the 18th century and Lloyd George's underpants instead.' (*Saliromania* 9)

Psychic Vibes: Damien Broderick of *The Lotto Effect* fame (A65) mutters about incurring 'the predictable derision of all great minds' with this psi study, and complains that our informant Yvonne Rousseau failed to mention having helped by reading an early draft, or that her hubby John Foyster, 'who now sees right through it all, originally suggested that I look at the Lotto data as a natural experiment on psi claims ... Foyster, who does know a lot of stats, suggested a non-psi explanation for part of my results but got very sour around the bile-emitting organ when I mentioned that his terrific insight actually seems to support a paranormal interpretation.'

Lateral Thinking: fans completing the recent BSFA *Matrix*

Crossword #5 noticed a haunting similarity between their answers and the purported Crossword #4 solution just opposite....

C.O.A. Foundation (editorial), Edward James, Univ of York, The King's Manor, York, YO1 2EP. **Foundation** (business) & **Friends of Foundation**, c/o New Worlds, 71-2 Charing Cross Rd, WC2H 0AA. **SF Foundation** (& **Foundation** reviews), c/o Special Collections, Liverpool Univ Library, PO Box 123, Liverpool, L69 3DA. **Oliver & Jacky Grüter-Andrew**, 13 St Cloud's Rd, Auckland Hill, West Norwood, SE27 9PN. **Second Foundation**, c/o Special Collections, Imperial Library, Trantor.

Work In Progress. **Rob Hansen** is toiling on *Then #4*, his history of 1970s British fandom, packed with nostalgia and once-awesome names like Leroy Kettle, Peter Roberts, Joy Hibbert....

• **Don Herron** bribes me with *Selected Letters of Philip K.Dick: Vol 4 1975-6* (Underwood-Miller \$39.95), which he edited—ace stuff. Tim Powers's introduction relates how PKD found he had the power to forgive sins: 'How many people have you absolved?' 'Well, none, Powers. Today I've decided I was mistaken, and yesterday you weren't home, and when I called Jeter he got huffy and said he didn't want his sins forgiven. ... So I just forgave my cats' sins.' • **Chris Priest** is writing the biography of UK astronaut Helen Sharman.

Update™! Rumour has it that Games Workshop have been serving writs on distributors and bookshops (including Waterstones) who still handled the Laurence James **Dark Future™** titles in defiance of the injunction against ... well, actually, only against their publishers (Transworld, whose appeal comes to court next week). Meanwhile Brian Aldiss is reportedly not best pleased that his *Greybeard™* title is being pinched for a new P.D.James novel from Faber—who published the original Aldiss book but appear to have forgotten.

Million magazine has (alas) dropped in circulation to 2,000.

Bumper Stickers. Never thought I'd see a good twist on the 'I ♥ New York' theme, but recently I came across 'I ♠ My Cat'.

The Caucus-Race

Nebulas: the novel shortlist consists of *A Million Open Doors* (John Barnes), *Sarah Canary* (Karen Joy Fowler), *China Mountain Zhang* (Maureen F.McHugh), *A Fire Upon the Deep* (Vernor Vinge), *Doomsday Book* (Connie Willis) and *Briar Rose* (Jane Yolen). [AP/SFC] • **P.K.Dick Award** nominations are *Take Back Plenty* (Colin Ubiquitous), *Through the Heart* (Richard Grant), *Æstival Tide* (Elizabeth Hand), *Iron Tears* (R.A.Lafferty) and *In the Mothers' Land* (Elisabeth Vonarburg). • **Clarke Award**. The official release called *Sarah Canary* and M.John Harrison's *The Course of the Heart* 'ineligible', but judge Maureen Speller disagrees. 'They weren't chosen, is all, but were liked by enough people to make it worth an honourable mention. For someone who makes his living as a freelance writer, David V.Barrett [*the Clarke administrator*] sure has trouble with the language sometimes.' Current backstage wrangling concerns Maurice Goldsmith of the Science Policy Foundation (what does this actually do?), who seems grimly determined to stay a Clarke judge in perpetuity while others rotate out of office as per the rules.... • **BSFA Awards**. Novels are *Hot Head* (Simon Ings), *Hearts, Hands & Voices* (Ian McDonald), *Red Mars* (Kim Stanley Robinson), *Lost Futures* (Lisa Tuttle) and *Doomsday Book*. Shorts, all but one from *Interzone*: 'Priest of Hands' (Storm Constantine), 'Reification Highway' (Greg Egan), 'The Sculptor' (Garry Kilworth), 'Returning' (Ian McLeod), 'Innocents' (Ian McDonald, *New Worlds* 2) and 'The Coming of Vertumnus' (Ian Watson). Artwork, all covers: *Hearts, Hands & Voices* (Jim Burns), *Kaeti on Tour/IZ66* (ditto), *IZ65* (Mark Harrison), *IZ58* (SMS) and *Doomsday Book* (an NEL 'Sod Off, We're Not Crediting A Mere Artist' special). Dramatic presentation: *Insufficient Votes to Warrant an Award* (directed by Roger Corman). Martin Hoare adds: 'I hear the BSFA aren't holding their AGM or presenting their awards at Helicon. Going to be Mexican instead. Maybe they'd heard what we were going to do—schedule the AGM and award presentation against each other at 10:00am on Sunday!' Quoth the BSFA: 'Once again: we can't hold company AGMs on Jersey because of its offshore status.' Tra la. •

Ansible 68 © Dave Langford, 1993. Thanks to Paul Barnett, CRITICAL WAVE, John Grant, Martin Hoare's E-Mail Link, Kim Huen (credit by request: 'Ansible's Keeper of Those Exotic Rubber Extras'), Tim Illingworth, Andy 'Mad Faxman' Porter, Chris Priest, Yvonne Rousseau, SF CHRONICLE, Maureen Speller and Our World-Spanning Hero Distributors. 4/3/93