

Ansible



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From Dave Langford, 94 London Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 5AU. Fax 0734 669914. ISSN 0265-9816. Logo by Dan Steffan. *Ansible* can be had by grovelling in person, by making me rich, or for stamped addressed envelopes (1 per copy).

MY SECRET SHAME. It's hard to make this public confession, but the foul thing has to be said: *Ansible* can now receive electronic mail and hot news at ansible@cix.compulink.co.uk.

From an Ultimate Dim Thule

Anthony Burgess died last week. What can I say? In sf there wasn't just *A Clockwork Orange* but *The Wanting Seed* (featuring Asimov, Heinlein and T.S.Eliot in an orgy), 1985, sf strands in books like *The End of the World News*, and more.... A big enough writer to try *everything*. I liked his reviews, too.

Ken Campbell won the *Evening Standard* Drama Award for Best Comedy, for *Jamais Vu ...* as premièreed at Mexicon 5.

Jack Cohen incautiously wrote in the *Britannica Yearbook* that he'd invented various sf aliens like the brainy saurians in the *Eden* series. Harry Harrison rushed in a stern correction, making it clear that *he* did all the important inventing ("There are going to be these big lizards called Yilanè!") while hired hand Jack had merely sorted out the biology, biochemistry, physiology, and suchlike trivia. Dr Jack has since been spotted fondling a giant syringe full of something greenly luminescent and practising his line, "Trust me, Harry, I'm a doctor...."

Lionel Fanthorpe ran a charity auction at Orycon (see over) and sold a copy of *Galaxy 666* for \$40—twice as much, he wept, as he was paid to write the book in 1963.... [JM]

Dr Colin Greenland wraps up the Anonymous Plot Donor (see A75-6): 'Smiling Brian Stableford shames me for my surly response to our pseudonymous benefactor's unsolicited supply of free wizzo skiffy ideas. Now I greet with glee every new little envelope full of extrapolative ingenuity. My joy is unconfined at being showered with *monetary versions of Hari Seldon's "psychohistory"* and childlike computers who try to make a better world out of the implications of the 1948 *Hendrick Casimir experiments with microscopic-cavity resonance and vacuum* [sic]. Sounds terrific to me. I'd write a dozen of them if I could understand them. I'm overjoyed to hear that Dr Stableford and you too, Dr Langford of 94 London Road, Reading, have also been selected out of literally hundreds of sf writers to receive this very special service, and yes, I'd like nothing better than to share it with all my writing friends; but how am I ever to xerox my address book to Rachel Oliver aka Alex Little (11) when "she" always writes from a different non-existent address? In fact I wonder uneasily how Dr S knows "she" lives in Norton-in-Derwent, a place significantly *never mentioned* in Amanda Haertel's communications to date. Is this a slip? Or a clue via "wormhole-throat" from a possible future? Has anyone ever seen Brian Stableford and Siobahn Munster in the same place at the same time?'
• **Andy Hooper** adds: 'It would be a fraternal gesture if Colin or Brian sent to Norton-in-Derwent the addresses of some authors who could really use the assistance, such as P**rs *nth*ny or Ors*n Sc*ttd C*rd.'

Judith Hanna collected the UK Transport Journalist of the Year runner-up bronze medal (and £100 cheque). Also, 'she got a handshake and a few words from Princess Anne—and the opportunity to note that when proposing the loyal toast, the said Princess does *not* say "Me mum".' [JN]

Don Herron sends snippets of history: 'Speaking of Charlie Brown losing the Hugo, I found the following comment while browsing in back issues of *Locus*. From p4 of #71 (Jan 1971), Charlie Brown, reflecting on recent Hugo voting, writes that Jerry Lapidus "feels that two Hugos and three nominations are enough for *SF Review* and I agree." Say *what?*'

Graham Joyce received the BFS August Derleth award for

Dark Sister. I tried to bear this in mind during a chilling performance at Novacon, with GJ and a confederate reading alternate sentences from Lionel Fanthorpe's *March of the Robots* and the somehow hauntingly similar *Night of the Crabs* by Guy N.Smith. Grown men pulled their own heads off rather than endure more than five minutes of such literary intensity.

Tanith Lee won new fame in *Literary Review's* 'Bad Sex in Fiction' competition; an extract from her *Heart-Beast* was a runner-up. 'A fine piece of bad writing, lacking only the element of perfunctoriness to reach high art in the field'—Auberon Waugh, judge.

Terry Pratchett learned self-expression in the USA: 'Did my orang-outan impression in Stephen Barnes's tai-ch'i class (well, he said let yourself feel as free as the spirit of an animal; it wasn't as if I *believed* he had lice on him).'

Bob Shaw, in an exploratory operation, was found to be suffering from cancer of the bowel. This was caught in good time, but the radio/chemotherapy is still a nasty business—hence his continuing hospital stay, though he's been able to go out for short walks. There was a very long queue to sign Bob's multiple get-well cards at Novacon.

Will Shetterly, world-famous (in Minnesota) fantasy author and consort of even more famous Emma Bull, is running for Governor of Minnesota. [NR]

Confraction

23 Dec • **Xmas Wellington Meeting**. Be there or be sober.

28-30 Jan 94 • **Starbase (Trek)**, Hilton Hotel, Leeds. GoH George Takei. £35 reg; no memberships at the door (or after 14 Jan). Contact 152 Otley Rd, Headingley, Leeds, LS16 5JX.

4-6 Feb 94 • **Vibraphone** (filk), Oak Hotel, Brighton. £27 reg. Contact 2 Duncan Gate, London Rd, Bromley, BR1 3SG.

4-6 Mar 94 • **Masque III** (costume con), Stakis Victoria Hotel, Nottingham. £20 reg to 30 Dec, then £25. Contact 4 Ednaston Ct, Ashbourne, Derbyshire, DE6 3BA.

1-4 Apr 94 • **Sou'Wester** (Eastercon), Liverpool. *Now* £27 reg. Contact 3 West Shrubbery, Redland, Bristol, BS6 6SZ. • **Neil Gaiman, leering**: 'Does being a GoH mean I get to sleep with the con chair?' **Chris Bell** (for it is she): 'Er, I'm not chairing Sou'Wester. Marcus Streets is.' **Neil**: 'Errrr....'

4-6 Nov 94 • **Novacon 24**, Royal Angus Hotel, Brum. (Date/venue to be confirmed.) GoH Graham Joyce. £20 reg. Contact 14 Park St, Lye, Stourbridge, W.Midlands, DY9 8SS.

14-17 Apr 95 • **Confabulation** (Eastercon), Britannia Int'l Hotel, London Docklands. £15 reg rising to £20 on 1 Jan 94. Quick: contact 3 York St, Altrincham, Cheshire, WA15 9QH.

Oct 97 • **World Fantasy Con** in London (new hotel). [SJ]

Infinitely Improbable

Nova Awards went to Simon Ounsley's *Lagoon* (fanzine), Simon again (fan writer—'It took me 15 years to get my first Nova ... and about 30 seconds to get the second one') and Dave Mooring (fan artist). The Leeds Group Mind again....

Hubbard Watch. The US journo magazine *The Quill* (Nov/Dec 93) has an article on L.Ron's PR operations which supports a commonly held though oft-denied sf view: '**Author Services Inc** ... established in the early 1980s as a for-profit "full service literary agency" with offices on Hollywood's Sunset Boulevard. The only catch was that Hubbard was the only author. And every staff member was in the Sea Organization [*Scientology's inner circle*].' [JA] Hi, Fred!

C.o.A. Etc. Ken Lake, Metro Inn, PO Box 9043, Nadi Airport, Fiji [to end Dec. From a bed of pain in Honiara, Solomon Islands: 'Shall I die in this pesthole? If so, kiss Catie Cary for me.']. *Eunice Pearson/Phill Probert*, 2 New Houses, Pant Rd, Dowlais, Merthyr Tydfil, Mid-Glam. ● *Late flash:* Lee David Frederick Bond-Hibbert born 29 July.... [SG]

Orycon 15 in Portland, Oregon, had Terry Pratchett and Lionel Fanthorpe as guests. Our mole reports: 'In the original Discworld story Pratchett contributed to the programme book, the influence of Fanthorpe's earlier work was obvious. The Pratchett "Theatre of Cruelty" begins: *It was a fine summer morning, the kind to make a man happy to be alive. And probably the man would have been happier to be alive. He was, in fact, dead. / It would be hard to be deader without special training.* This opening is highly reminiscent of Fanthorpe's much earlier work *Out of the Darkness*, which begins: *Bellenger was dead when they found him. That Bellenger was dead was probably the understatement of the year. Bellenger was horribly, violently dead! / If there can be various degrees of anything so terrible and final as death, then it could be said that Bellenger was as dead as it was possible to be.* Also in the Orycon programme book, Guy N.Smith writes of Fanthorpe's influence on his writing career. It is interesting that two such quality writers should have been inspired by the prolific but unrecognized works of one man.' [AoO]

Scientific Units. 'The moving target felt vaguely feminine and wholly dangerous: it felt light-years older than Jezrael's biological age of twenty-five.' (Anne Gay, *The Brooch of Azure Midnight*)

Ethical Dilemma. A certain Cr*t*c*l W*ve editor, not Martin Tudor, asks me to urge that you all support this newly 'relaunched' sf news mag (6 issues: £8.50). He marks the request **DNQ**. So I shouldn't really mention 845 Alum Rock Rd, Ward End, Birmingham, B8 2AG....

That SF Encyclopaedia CD-ROM ... is now (re)scheduled for January. I have one of the 3 proof copies so far produced, and have been hunting for bugs. At present, trying to read the entry for CHALKER, JACK causes one's computer to hang up irretrievably—leading to a modest campaign for the retention of this neat enhancement in the final retail edition.

TAFF. Martin Morse Wooster donated a hotel offer card (double room for price of single in selected Brit hotels to end May 94). Highest bid by mid-Jan secures: ask A.Frost, 95 Wilmot St, London, E2 0BP.

World Fantasy Con. Tim Powers's *Last Call* won the WF novel award, Harlan Ellison a Lifetime Achievement award. 'Pretty good con ... impressive dealers' room ... great mix of attendees and guests ... con suite with complimentary meals and free bar! Only disappointments were a poorly organized art show and some of the worst programming ever to grace a WFC. Programmer Steven Brust (he of the dragon books) concentrated on fantasy writers, local fans and mostly himself, ignoring the horror people, publishers and artists present.' [SJ]

Miscegenation! Boxtree's publicity explains the sinister success of their games tie-in books: 'We commission the very best writers—authors like Ian Newman and Kim Watson.' [DP]

Forgotten Futures. Marcus Rowland begs a plug for his shareware disk of role-playing game rules, plus copious source material based (mainly) on Kipling's ABC stories. I was interested by Utopian scene-setting dialogues like: 'Ah, Comrade Reporter Langford, welcome to People's Synthetic Food Processing Plant 12B. Here we take sawdust and convert it to the finest synthetic protein ...' [several pages of explanation omitted] 'This is wonderful, Comrade Food Synthesis Manager Bell. Now, how does the operation of this plant fit into Comrade Glorious Leader Illingworth's five year socio-economic plan?' [several more pages omitted].... [22 Westbourne Pk Villas, London, W2 5EA]

ConFrancisco (oyez! oyez!) rushed to say 'Oops!' and refund the £15-odd which UPS charged me to receive my add-on bits of Hugo. ConFrancisco, possibly the finest con ever....

No Lawsuit! H.Ellison won't be suing NESFA 'into oblivion' over their use of Cordwainer Smith's *Last Dangerous Visions* story. 'NESFA and Mr. Ellison have reached an amicable settlement, and we will still continue to publish the Smith book.' [BY] Perhaps, when he consulted the contract, HE might have found his rights to the story had long expired? Meanwhile the NESFA collection sold out and is being reprinted.

Hazel's Language Lessons: Solomons Pijin. *nambawan*, the best; *nambaten*, the worst; *nambanaen*, Honiara Central Hospital; *mektrabol long hasban* (or *long mere*), to commit adultery; *beleran*, diarrhoea. [KL]

The Ellison Appreciation Society

Charles Platt explains his new, philanthropic project:

More than eight years ago, Harlan Ellison struck a glancing blow to the side of my jaw with the immortal words, 'That's from Larry Shaw, motherfucker. Who's dead.' This tap of the knuckles was retribution for my public expression of disgust at the tastelessness of an obituary-like 'tribute' to the then still living Larry Shaw that Ellison had staged at a worldcon. (Shaw was an editor who bought some early Ellison stories.)

Anyway: following the fisticuffs, Ellison heard that I was planning to publish a work by critic and author Gregory Feeley, listing in relentless detail every novel that Ellison had ever claimed he was currently writing. (In at least one case, he claimed he had *finished the manuscript*. None of these works has ever been seen by an editor, and most of them never got past the conceptual stage.)

Outraged by my refusal to shut up, Ellison threatened to sue. I responded with a suggestion that we could have a peace treaty. If Ellison would apologize for hitting me and would promise to withdraw his legal action, I would promise not to write about him any more.

Ellison agreed. He went further: in a letter dated April 19th, 1988, he described his assault on me as 'both violent and inappropriate.' He said, 'I fully and sincerely apologize' for any public embarrassment caused. He added, 'I assure you that if your reticence in private and in public and in print about me is maintained, that I will punctiliously refrain from making any comments of any kind about you.'

Fair enough. As of mid-1988, I stopped making any references to Harlan Ellison. I pretty much forgot about him. Years passed. My involvement in sf diminished, to the point where I literally wasn't sure whether Ellison was still alive.

This year, I heard that he had started using an absurdly dramatized version of our 'violent' encounter as a humorous anecdote at sf conventions. Finally in November I received a call from the *Comics Journal*, which plans to print, verbatim, a speech which Ellison gave at a large comics event. The speech describes how he pulverized my face to the point where I could not speak and was forced to bump my head on the floor in order to plead for mercy. It alleges that everyone who saw this encounter was so much on Ellison's side, and so hostile to me, they all claimed they had seen nothing. (Actually, Fred Pohl spontaneously offered to testify on my behalf, but that's another story.)

I admit I was pissed off that this sanctimonious champion of human rights had risen from the grave and unilaterally reneged on his written word. I called him and told him he was a silly old bugger. He shouted a few obscenities, threatened to 'pop me one' if I didn't leave him alone, and hung up on me.

I have now written to him requesting (another) cessation of hostilities. This time, he has to apologize publicly—perhaps in a letter to *Locus*. If he is unwilling to do so, wearily, I will take steps of my own. I will subsidize a new business venture: the **Ellison Information Library**. This will serve as a clearing house for anyone who has a story to tell about Mr. Ellison. Serious critical analyses, reminiscences, testimonials from ex-wives—the Library will be open to all data, the only proviso being that it must be *true*. It will be a long-overdue resource for scholars, critics, and readers who want some counterpoint to the self-aggrandizement which continues to emanate from Ellison Wonderland. With any luck, the Library will endure as a monument to Ellison long after his death—and maybe even after mine.

The Ellison Information Library will be available online. The first few documents will be 'golden oldies', such as Christopher Priest's *The Last Deadloss Visions* (never before circulated in the United States) and my own 'LDV/RIP', in which I tabulated the death rates of contributors to *The Last Dangerous Visions*. In due course, I'm sure I will be able to publish more timely work, including Gregory Feeley's much-anticipated but still-unseen overview of those many, many, MANY unwritten novels.

Naturally, I have better things to do, but if Harlan Ellison is going to go around spreading gossip about me, the least I can do is spread some truth about him. [charles@mindvox.phantom.com, 21 Nov 83]

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