



## Ansible 81 April 1994

From Dave Langford, 94 London Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 5AU. Fax 0734 669914. ISSN 0265-9816. Logo by Dan Steffan. E-mail [ansible@cix.compulink.co.uk](mailto:ansible@cix.compulink.co.uk). Cartoon by Ian Gunn. *Ansible* is available for SAE or personal grovelling.

**SOU'WESTER.** The 1994 British Eastercon saw the expected Hogarthian scenes of desperate fun in the Adelphi Hotel, Liverpool. Attendance approached 800. Again your editor and his merry hacks produced the newsletter (*The Adelphi Coracle*) and missed the convention itself, a hallowed fan tradition which I think will have to stop.... Countless issues appeared, John Dallman having hypnotized Gestetner Ltd into loaning a super copypriinter. About the only item we censored was an explicit article on 'How To Have Sex With A Jacuzzi', although the Games mob seemed miffed when a lengthy submission listing the zillions of treats they offered and ending 'In fact, about the only thing we don't have is Dungeons and Dragons' was cut by ace copyeditor John Grant to: 'Trimmed To Fit Space. The Games Room doesn't have Dungeons and Dragons.' • GoHs **Neil Gaiman**, **Diane Duane** and **Peter Morwood** baffled the committee at dinner with an erudite discussion of the works of J.P. Martin (*Uncle* etc), while other GoH **Barbara Hambly** looked bemused. • **Ramsey Campbell** offered handy writing hints ("Think of the first line BEFORE you write it down") and insisted that his new mega-collection *Alone with the Horrors* is not about baby-sitting. • **Diana Wynne Jones's** appearance was much welcomed, but her dread back pains returned and at 8:15am on Saturday morning I found her dismally awaiting a taxi back to the station. (Commiserations.) • On 1 April the 21st birthday of VAT was celebrated, and on 4 April the 10th birthday of 1984's opening scene. • Following the Groucho Club 'write a novel in 24 hours' competition, eight volunteer lunatics each strove to write one in 7 minutes (winner: Jane Killick). • **Evolution** won the 1996 Eastercon bidding with 124 votes, totally defeating two unfunny spoof bids which got 10 votes between them; there were also 17 abstentions. • **Security** problems, curse of the Adelphi, seemed well handled by John Harold's mysterious 'stealth' techniques whose outward signs were pacing corridors, issuing cute little burglar alarms and telling a really quite boggling number of fans that they hadn't bothered to close their hotel-room doors. • **Eastercon Awards.** Long Text: Clute/Nicholls, *The Encyclopaedia of SF*. Short Text: Eric Brown, 'The Time-Lapsed Man'. Artwork: Stephen Briggs & Terry Pratchett, *The Streets of Ankh-Morpork*. Dramatic: *The Wasp Factory* dramatization. • **BSFA Awards.** Novel: Chris Evans, *Aztec Century*. Short: Rob Holdstock & Garry Kilworth, 'The Ragthorn'. Artwork: Jim Burns for *Red Dust* cover—Jim's 10th BSFA award, talented bugger. Special Award (very popular, with a lengthy presentation speech read by Iain Banks): *The Encyclopaedia of SF*. • **More Awards.** Doc Weir for general niceness: Tim Broadribb. Phlosque (new award for notably and noisomely cute sf/fantasy art): Dave Mooring. Ken McIntyre (fan art): Barbara Mascetti's Stratmann-wedding invitation design. • **The Astral Leauge** [*sic*], most eldritch of elites, had one of its periodic revivals at the ichor-spattered hands of Peter Weston (Occult Master of Tunelessness), who led a revivalist chorus of Astral Hymns that efficiently cleared half the main hotel lounge. • **Fix!** The committee let slip that *Ansible* had more Eastercon Award nominations than the rest of the Short Text category put together; we decided you were ineligible 'cos you won it last year.' Fair enough, boss. • **Bob Shaw** reminisced: 'When I was young we couldn't afford drinks—we just chewed tar off the road.' • **Jim Orr** of Nimbus Info Systems proudly demonstrated the latest proof of the CD-ROM *SF Encyclopaedia*, supposedly being finished at last *this very week!* • **Gamma** bawled out entire bars full of tightfists like John Clute who failed to be enticed by his amazing offer of the previously unpublished P.K. Dick novel *Gather Yourself Together* at (thanks to a special US-airlift and no-discount deal) **£36.00** ... due in June. • **Chris Bell** thanks 'everyone except Steve Jones' for being nice to her. • **Dave Langford's** brain still hurts. •

### Children of the Damned

**Poppy Z. Brite**, the New Orleans dark-fantasy writer, went down well on her early-March UK tour. 'Intelligent, witty, humorous, sympathetic and good-looking,' babbles *Chris Fowler*. 'Poppy, on a Barbican Event panel with Sybil Marshall (in feisty grandma mode) and Esther Freud, read a piece from *Lost Souls* which was pretty mild. When challenged as to why she didn't gross out the Brits with any of a hundred more, er, explicit passages, she explained her frantic round of promotional duties had left her "brain dead". Her reading knocked spots off both her fellow writers—almost as entertaining as the day's final session, where Howard Jacobson did his best to offend the PC members of the audience while Beryl Bainbridge had obviously dipped far too heavily into the hospitality bottles.... All thanks to Penguin.'

**Pat Cadigan's** mysterious affliction of Progressive Syllable Loss means (she confides) that following *Mindplayers*, *Synners* and *Fools* her next novel has to be called *S*. After which....

**John Grant**, famed for **Lone Wolf** game tie-in novels, is muttering about Roc's 'Shadowrun' game tie-in novel called ... *Lone Wolf* (by Nigel Findley). Luckily Findley's style is decidedly fragging different from Grant's, making fragging endless fragging use of one fragging adjective. Or fragging participle.

**Cecelia Holland** continues the 'William James' saga: 'I have now read most of the **Sunfall** trilogy and am convinced this guy sat there with my books open next to him on the table while he "wrote" his. He also plagiarized parts of *The Earl* (in England it was titled *A Hammer for Princes*) and *Great Maria*. (Both books, being set in Medieval Europe, rely, oh, really heavily, you know, on *The Secret History of the Mongols*.) In fact I think he had at a lot of people, such as Dorothy Dunnett, as well as me. But me mostly.' • *Later:* 'The [New York] Authors Guild has read the evidence I gave them for my case of plagiarism against William James and they saw the case is very strong. You can publish that letter now, and I hope you do.' Glad to oblige....

**Robert Shea** died of cancer on 10 March. He's best remembered for co-writing **Illuminatus!** with Robert Anton Wilson (still with us, despite a tiresome Internet death hoax a week earlier).

**Whitley Strieber** is not mentioned this issue, but just wait.

**Gene Wolfe** thinks 'I ought to explain why Charles Brown is mad at me, since I'm the only one who cares. It all began (and ended) at the World Fantasy Convention banquet. Harlan Ellison got the Grand Master award, and I complained, mentioning that I was older and a better writer. (Both true.) He reciprocated by awarding me his trophy, saying (and I quote), "You want it? Here, take it!" • Naturally I joined the winners who were posing for pictures. Out of deference to the sensibilities of history, I held my thumb over Harlan's name. At no time did I claim to be Harlan Ellison no matter what Charles may print. Naturally, I appear in all the news photos of the event. That, as I think you will agree, is only right and just. Harlan's trophy—I gave it back, having been reminded that it is properly presented at the end of the recipient's career—appears in the pictures too, and it should be easy to take out my face and substitute his. We look very much alike, except that Harlan is handsome. • This is the truth. I have done nothing wrong....'

### Conteck

29 Apr - 2 May • **UFP 94** (*Trek*), Britannia Int'l Hotel, London Docklands. Contact 61 Scotchill, Coventry, CV6 2EW.

6-8 May • **Virtual Futures: A Philosophical Conference**, Univ of Warwick. With surprise return of Pat Cadigan ('Goddess and Professional Burden') after reportedly being—along with

Bruce Sterling—the only non-boring feature of the March ICA thingy. £10 reg, £12 after 30 Apr. Contact CRPL, Dept of Philosophy, Univ of Warwick, Coventry, CV4 7AL.

20-22 May • **Mexicon 6** ('The Party'), Hertford Park Hotel, Stevenage. £9.50 reg. £19.50 twin/dbl, £22.50 sngl. Contact 121 Cape Hill, Smethwick, Warley, West Midlands, B66 4SH.

26-9 May • **EuROcon**, Timisoara, Romania. £15 reg. Optional '7-day advance tour of historic Transylvania'. Contact Bridget Wilkinson, 17 Mimosa, 29 Avenue Rd, Tottenham, N15 5JF. In a fit of Romegalomania the organizers are now said to have wangled UNESCO funding ... tomorrow, the Worldcon?

27-30 May • **Inconceivable** (humour/sf), Tudor Court Hotel, Draycott, near Derby. Now £25 reg. Contact 12 Crich Ave, Littleover, Derby, DE23 6ES. Gigggle! Titter!

22-24 Jul • **Dimension Jump** (*Red Dwarf*), Angel Hotel, Northampton. £25 reg to 1 Jun, then £30. Send 'two stamps' to Garden Cottage, Hall Farm, Scottow, Norwich, NR10 5DF.

4-5 Mar 95 • **Microcon 15**, Exeter Univ. Details to follow.

26-9 Jul 95 • **The Time Machine:**, H.G.Wells Soc centenary symposium, Imperial College, London. Titles/abstracts of proposed papers to Hon Sec, HGW Soc, English Dept, Nene College, Moulton Park, Northants, NN2 7AL (by 31 Oct 94).

5-8 Apr 96 • **Evolution** (Eastercon), Metropole Hotel, Brighton. GoHs Vernor Vinge, Colin Greenland, Bryan Talbot, Jack Cohen. (Jack babbled at Easter that he'd had no idea he was a GoH, but later remembered agreeing. 'Like many brilliant men Jack's memory for what he's doing in the midrange future is a bit tenuous.' [PMcM]) £20 reg. Room rates said to be still under negotiation. Contact 13 Lindfield Gdns, Hampstead, London, NW3 6PX.

**Rumblings** • The *Faan Awards*, scheduled for revival at **Corflu Nova** (USA), have been dropped again owing to fandom's invincible apathy. [AG] • **The Scottish Convention:** following Maureen Speller's and Paul Kincaid's anguished denial of rumours about the Serious Literary programming ('We are not, repeat not, running it ...'), *Ansible* is delighted to announce that it will be run by Paul Kincaid and Maureen Speller ('I am well aware of the fact that we are mad taking this on').

## Infinitely Improbable

**Who He?** Galaxy-famous fantasy hack Robert Jordan began life as Jim Rigney; the celebrated (*Ansible, passim*) William James of **Sunfall** is said to be really James William Bell; but who lurks behind the mask of gossip columnist Eva D.Fanglord?

**Critical Wave**, the UK newsletter by which others are judged, was recently mailed out late owing to lack of funds—too few people resubscribed on time. Martin Tudor now promises a swift return to schedule, adding that he's awesomely cut *CW* debts from nearly £4000 to £1000+ in the last 2½ years. ('The time I've been in work—funny coincidence.')

**Star Trek News:** 'KIRK SPLIT ON HOMOSEXUALITY', says this headline from the Catholic mag *The Tablet*, and, er.... [MP] • **Sociology of Religion** (55:1, 1994) features 'Star Trek Fandom as a Religious Phenomenon', by Michael Jindra: 'Star Trek fandom involves a sacralization of elements of our culture, along with the formation of communities with regularized practices that include a "canon" and a hierarchy. Star Trek fandom is also associated with a popular stigma, giving fans a sense of persecution and identity common to active religious groups.' Visions of stigmata in the numinous shape of Starfleet insignia....

**C.o.A.** Ken Brown, 108 Sandrock Road, Lewisham. *Mog Decarnin*, 521 N.Sweetzer Ave #1, West Hollywood, CA 90048-2641, USA. *Steven McDonald*, 70 Greenfield Road, Essex Junction, Vermont 05452-3922, USA. *Barbara & Hugh Mascetti*, 12 Chesnut Way, Takeley, Herts, CM22 6RW. *Paul Williams*, PO Box 231155, Encinitas, CA 92023, USA. **Also:** 'Dave Wood joins Grandfather Fandom—Louie Henry Wood b.3 April!'

**Fire and Water**, HarperCollins's sf newsletter, 'is undergoing a radical rethink. The reason for this is that copies were not going out of bookshops as had been the original intention. So a new, revamped edition is forecast.' Real books which suffer this problem just get dumped.

**Squatters' Rights.** Following the row between descendants of

Lucy Maud Montgomery and the politicians on Prince Edward Island, Canada, who claim intellectual property rights to *Anne of Green Gables* because the province is integral to the novel ... *Steve Green* remarks: 'No doubt Liverpool City Council is already contacting Ramsey Campbell, while the population of Narnia will be eager for a slice of *Shadowlands*.'

**Corrections.** A79: the Wrigley/Cross 'Best of Lionel Fanthorpe' won't appear until Summer 1995. • A80: in *Samhain* vs. Unspeakable Local Press, 'Woodcraft Folk group' should read just 'playgroup'. • *Jonathan Cowie: an Apology.* We are very sorry about Jonathan Cowie.

**Good Bits.** 'She knew how to embroider and milk a cow.'—Connie Willis, *Doomsday Book*. 'He lifted her tee-shirt over her head. Her silk panties followed.'—Peter Hamilton, *Mindstar Rising*.

**Almost Censored!** I rather hoped to give the vexed subject of Harlan Ellison a rest, but *Dan Steffan* is made of sterner stuff: 'On a recent episode of the Sci-Fi (gag) Channel show "Sci-Fi Buzz", Harlan (their weekly crabby commentator) took a camera crew into his house and showed them the scene of his earthquake nose-break, accompanied by his out-of-breath running description of the events—we saw the staircase he tumbled from, the books (now piled on a pool table) that fell from their shelves and the ominously empty spot that once held a framed bit of artwork that nearly ended his career when it leapt from the wall, straight for HE's head. It was just like watching Oswald get shot or seeing the Shuttle explode.' • Chris Priest's *The Last Deadloss Visions* has its first trade publication in May from Fantagraphics (\$6.95), tastefully retitled *The Book on the Edge of Forever*. In lieu of an enthusiastic Ellison jacket blurb, a huge drawing of him dominates the cover. Brits can obtain CP's own revised edition directly from him at 32 Elphinstone Rd, Hastings, E.Sussex, TN34 2EQ ... £7.50 post free.

## Nasty Tales

We had some response to Paul Barnett's A80 rant about West Country newspaper hounding of John Gullidge and *Samhain* for no apparent reason other than to give a spurious 'local' angle on video-nasty prosecutions in remote parts of Britain. Both papers were faxed in advance so they could comment: the *Western Morning News* remains dumb, but Rachael Campey of the *Exeter Express & Echo* eventually wrote to say our piece was offensive ('It was, and justifiably so'—Paul Barnett) and inaccurate (no details offered), and furthermore that the *E&E* was by no means a sensationalist tabloid. To demonstrate this, and perhaps to show John Gullidge just what they can do to anyone who offends by making a complaint, the *E&E* ran a 30 March story based on the shock horror news that a mother withdrew her child from JG's playgroup some weeks earlier ... i.e., as a result of the paper's own initial smear. The drift, despite glowing testimonials from co-workers, children and parents, was that JG is unfit to be an assistant playgroup leader thanks to involvement with a well-regarded horror movie review mag. QED.

**Paul Barnett** is pondering a *SAMHAINBALLS* fund (remember MJ-BALLS?) which could raise money for legal action to shut up the *E&E* before it succeeds in its apparent goal of losing John Gullidge his job. All tentative so far: write to 17 Polsloe Rd, Exeter, Devon, EX1 2HL if you'd like to be kept informed. *Ansible* will pass on any e-mail enquiries.

**Simon Green** was 'shocked ... but not surprised. I got raided by the fuzz myself last year. Two plain-clothes officers turned up asking for me. They showed a warrant card that looked like something had been chewing on it....' • Somewhere up North they'd arrested a video dealer for selling porno/pirate videos. When they checked his mailing list, they found my name. He'd been advertising rare horror stuff (at least a year before), and I'd ordered something. The fuzz were convinced it was porn, and demanded that I hand it over. "Your parents needn't know, just give us the tape. We don't want to come back with a search warrant." • So I showed them my video collection, which was and is rather large, and all of it kosher. They went through every title. It took over an hour of hard talking to convince them I wasn't the porn king of Bradford-on-Avon. • Now, they were never rude or intimidating, but they had come to my house convinced that I was guilty. None of that "presumed innocent" crap. I found the whole thing rather upsetting.' •

*Ansible* 81 © Dave Langford, 1994. Thanks to Jane Barnett, Paul 'Thog' Barnett, Chris Bell, Simon Bradshaw, John Clute, John Dallman, Chris 'Not The Novelist, The Other One' Fowler, Abigail 'Shouting at people is what I live for!' Frost, Neil Gaiman, Alexis Gilliland, Rob Hansen, Robert Lichtman, Pat McMurray, Janice Murray, Teresa Nielsen Hayden, Marion Pitman, Jilly Reed, Sou'Wester, Gary & Linda Stratmann, Usenet, Jan van't Ent. 7 Apr 94