

Ansible



Ansible 83 June 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. Cartoon by Ian Gunn. *Ansible* is available for SAE or deep personal grovelling.

MEXICON 6: THE PARTY. This lightweight event (held in the posh international resort of Stevenage) celebrated the tenth anniversary of 1984's 'Tynecon II: the Mexican' to such enjoyable effect that the happy throng voted *nem con* never to do this terrible thing again. To prevent any recurrence, the accumulated convention funds—some £1,400—were turned over to a Mexican Foundation created on the spot by spontaneous popular acclaim ... although tiny twinges of cynicism greeted the appearance of previously printed flyers announcing this body's existence and accurately predicting its committee membership (Rhodri James, Christina Lake, Greg Pickersgill [Chair], Martin Tudor, Pam Wells; 3 Bethany Row, Narberth Rd, Haverfordwest, SA61 2XG). Rather than stifle democracy by putting the question to the much larger Mexican 5 mailing list, matters were decided by a show of hands after a two-hour debate steered by that man Pickersgill—and Mexican was no more. The Mexican Foundation will, er, help fund unspecified worthy projects, and wants your money. Some 5,271,009 fans have already complained about the name's possible confusion with the SF Foundation, though 'SF' and 'Mexicon' are not pronounced *all* that similarly.... ● An item on censorship saw fearless Roz Kaveney being brutally and repeatedly censored by John Harvey's sound system: 'The thing about snuff movies is that WHEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE!' ● The 'Choice Sleaze' panel featured Iain Sinclair revealing certain New Agers' theory that the unspeakable Derek Beackon's victory (since reversed) in that Isle of Dogs by-election was because his house is built on the intersection of the two most powerful ley lines in London. (Ken Brown explains: 'Canary Wharf apparently blocks the flow of force and causes disturbances in the Nature of Things leading to the fascist victory. Do you realize Eastercon 1995 is to be held just by the most powerful ley line in London?') Abigail Frost accused Sinclair of having got it all from her favourite pressure group the London Psychogeographical Society, but he denied all knowledge. *Frost*: 'I accept Mr Sinclair's denial of all knowledge.' ● Fleeing hordes of audience members refused to speak of the panel on e-mail and fanzines. 'It was @hell in there,' seemed to be the consensus. 'Wibble!' explained Charles Stross, and fell over. ● Other memories? The Ultra Quiz round in which half the con struggled to construct Eiffel Towers from straws and paperclips (John Harvey, unrolling the tape measure of judgement: 'Size is important.'). The surprise appearance of Charles Platt and his lady Susan Kim. A totally inaudible video of John Jarrold raving from the safety of the USA that sf was dead, or all crap, or edited by John Jarrold, or something equally terrible. Lightbulbs glowing over heads as the price of canned Guinness at the hotel bar was compared with that of identical cans at the late-opening Tesco mere yards away....

The Argonauts of the Air

John Brunner cried 'They seem to value the arts more in Romania than in the west' after receiving the supreme accolade: being waved through customs on route to EuROcon, merely because officials discovered he was a writer. [JC]

Emma Bull's musical group 'The Flash Girls' was reviewed in *Folk Roots* magazine, which calls her a 'Somewhat renowned former sci-fi authoress and art rocker....' Former? [JN]

Harlan Ellison phoned about various *Ansible* pieces, saying in particular that his huge wrath at the inclusion of that *Last*

Dangerous Visions story in NESFA's Cordwainer Smith collection had a lot to do with HE himself having partly rewritten Smith's imperfect draft for *TLDV* ... only to learn for the first time of the story's pre-emption (courtesy of the Scott Meredith agency) when he saw the NESFA volume. He protested that coverage here made him look like, if I heard correctly, 'a goofus'. *Mea culpa*, no doubt; as Mike Glycer keeps complaining, *Ansible* has this fatal tendency to portray practically everyone as a goofus....

Raymond Z.Gallun, the old-time sf author whose first sale was 'The Space Dwellers' in 1929, died on 2 Apr aged 83. [SFC]

Alasdair Gray's photo appears in Colin Manlove's *Scottish Fantasy Literature: A Critical Survey*, with an analytical caption worthy of Lombroso: 'This is a coolly interrogative Gray, whose narrow lips and strong nose, together with the sheer hairiness of aspect, sufficiently suggest the academic manqué who has outdone all academics. This is the Gray who refuses to be pinned down....' [DP] But is it the one who writes books?

Nicola Griffith won the 1994 James Tiptree Jr award for 'gender-bending' sf with her 1993 novel *Ammonite*. [JG]

Teddy Harvia wishes to claim precedence for a scientific discovery: 'I ridiculed Carl Sagan long before Apple implied he was a butthead. He did to science what L.Ron Hubbard did to religion. Popularity does not convert to substance.'

Paul McAuley has an update (see A82): 'Regarding the lunatic wannabe from Canterbury....Mighty forces have averted my sincere (as in imitation is ...) friend's kamikaze legal action to wrest ownership of my own story from me. I don't know quite what he was offering to publishers, except a handwritten note concerning a short story collection including "his" "Karl and the Ogre". Apparently, he has also written something called *Pasquale's Machine*, and claims that Paul McCartney stole the lyrics and music of "Yesterday" from him.'

James Randi, scourge of psychic frauds, controversially insists that despite the net rumour spread by one G.Riley (a crony of Uri Geller) he is not dead. 'Typically, [Riley] has picked up on an anonymous phone call and accepted it because it's "news" he would like to be true. With all the earth-shaking successes he and his "colleague" have had recently (sold-out houses in Australia, stunning wins in the law courts, straightening out Galileo and finding the lost Mars Observer for NASA, to name only a few miracles) one would think that he could sit back on his laurels. (Please, will someone explain the "laurels" reference to him. He may think it's a part of his body.)'

Steve Sneyd grumps: 'Intrigued by the cognitive dissonance at work in the bumf for the U of Liverpool MA in sf studies ... the need for a good First or Second Class Hons in LITERATURE would, I'd think, eliminate chances of most sf writers doing the course (but then perhaps they don't want 'em anyhow, danger of lively writing sneaking into the thesis?). Blights at a stroke my tawdry hopes of trying to do an MA in SF poetry....'

Verna Smith Trestrail, E.E.Smith's daughter and a noted First Fandom member in her own right, died in March aged 73.

Jane Yolen has been censored again: 'A [school] librarian reading from my picture book *Tam Lin* was accused of being a satanist, and a parent tried to sue her, stating "After my daughter heard that story, she needed therapy." At the school board level, the librarian won, but *then* the school administrator took her aside and said, "Don't use that story again. We simply don't have the time or money to fight this battle again." Win the battle—lose the war!'

Connexivum

10-12 Jun • **Shots on the Page** (mystery/detective event), Forte Crest Hotel, Nottingham. £40 reg. Contact Broadway Media Centre, 14 Broad St, Nottingham, NG1 3AL.

24-26 Jun • **The Scottish Convention Staff Weekend**, Leofric Hotel, Coventry. £30/person/night. Contact 13 St Cloud Rd, West Norwood, SE27 9PN; (081) 761 2635. '... the main topics of discussion this time will be Timeline's and Theme's.' *Ansible* suggests a further seminar on Apostrophe's.

8-10 Jul • **BAcon** (Unicon 15), New Hall Coll, Cambridge. GoH Geoff Ryman, Simon Ings. £16 reg. Contact 38 Scotland Road, Chesterton, Cambridge, CB4 1QG; (0223) 564483.

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

29-31 Jul • **Wincon III**, King Alfred's Coll, Winchester. GoH: Algis Budrys, James Hogan, Norman Spinrad. £23 reg. Contact 12 Crowsbury Close, Emsworth, Hants, PO10 7TS.

1-5 Sep • **Conadian** (52nd Worldcon), Winnipeg Convention Centre, Manitoba, Canada. \$125 reg (\$Can160) to 15 Jul. UK contact: 147 Francis Rd, London, E10 6NT.

30 Sep - 2 Oct • **Fantasycon XIX**, Midland Hotel, Brum. GoH Katherine Kurtz, Brian Lumley. £30 reg. Contact 137 Priory Rd, Hall Green, Birmingham, B28 0TG.

1-2 Oct • **Octocon 94**, Royal Marine Hotel, Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin. GoH Rob Holdstock. £16 reg to 1 Sep; £20 at door. Contact 20 Newgrove Ave, Sandymount, Dublin 4, Ireland.

14-16 Oct • **D-CONTANIMÉT** (animé), Grand Hotel, Brum. £20 reg to 17 Sept, then £25. Contact 13 Prescott Close, Banbury, Oxon, OX16 ORD. (0295) 256284.

12 Mar 95 (Sunday!) • **Picocon 12**, Imperial College Union, Prince Consort Rd, SW7. GoH Iain Banks. Contact 13 Lindfield Gdns, Hampstead, London, NW3 6PX (after 1 July).

Rumblings • **Conadian's** business meeting will consider a motion to pension off winners of 5 consecutive Hugos in one category with a Lifetime Award, followed by 5 years' ineligibility for that category. Sounds quite sensible—throw out boring old farts like.... (H'mm. Counts surreptitiously on fingers.) • **Intersection** London pub meetings continue on 3rd Fri each month in the Wellington. • **EuROcon** in Timisoara: Jonathan Cowie sent an enthusiastic report too voluminous to print. Even the guest list ran to 17 awesome names, from J. Brunner and J. Haldeman to J. Cowie. Everything was apparently a great success except some of the organization and all of the coffee: 'Norman Spinrad declared he was going to introduce a Coffee Ceremony (*à la* Japanese Tea Ceremony) into the culture.' Highlight: a laser rock show with fireworks boggled the town. Despite euphoria JC felt he had to 'express disgust at Western fans who refused to attend owing to the difference in Eastern and Western rates ... the latter represented a couple of hours of average UK pay but half a month's Eastern pay!' UK fans who stayed home through mere lack of money are informed that they 'really missed out' on a 'very worthy, and rewarding, venture'. Gee ... thanks, Jon.

Infinitely Improbable

Know Your Market. The 1995 Arthur C. Clarke Award—for best sf novel published in the UK this year—has received its first submission! Yes, Serif have rushed in Steve Aylett's *The Crime Studio*, an exciting collection of non-sf short stories....

Andy Porter's Language Lessons. 'Omphalos (Latin for Bellybutton) is to be a new quarterly SF book and magazine review publication....' [*SF Chronicle*, May 94]

Public Service Bits. Jack Cohen was much cheered when invited to become a vice-president of the ever so venerable Linnean Society. • David Garnett announces that *New Worlds 4* (the last in its present paperback incarnation—boo, hiss) has stuff by Graham Charnock, Lisa Tuttle, Ian McDonald, Garry Kilworth, Barrington J. Bayley, Elizabeth Sourbut, Matthew Dickens, Peter F. Hamilton, Michael Moorcock, Robert Holdstock and D. Langford. • Simon Green asks if anyone

can recall a 60s children's book called *After Bath*, 'about the quest to recharge the magic in a magician's moustache?' • Chris Priest's new UK edition of *The Last Deadloss Visions* costs £5.50 (not £7.50 as in A81) post free from him at 32 Elphinstone Rd, Hastings, TN34 2EQ. \$10 by airmail. • Marcus Rowland seeks weird but genuine scientific theories, 1890-1945, for his new *Forgotten Futures* game package *George E. Challenger's Mysterious World*: suggestions, with dates, to 22 Westbourne Pk Villas, London, W2 5EA. • Ian Stewart hopes to tap the massed erudition of *Ansible* readers for the locations of British (especially Scottish) airship facilities during World War I—info to him at Maths Inst, U of Warwick, Coventry, CV4 7AL. • **Thog's Masterclass** ... truly awful lines from published sf and fantasy are still being accumulated here for a possible Grant/Langford book(let)—all contributions welcomed.

C.o.A. Bruce Gillespie, 59 Keele St, Collingwood, Vic 3066, Australia (not a move, just loss of faith in the PO box number). Jack Herman & Cath McDonnell, Unit 10, 57-59 Illawarra Rd, Allawah, 2218, Australia. Frank Key, 103 Cavendish Rd, Highams Pk, London, E4. Malice *Aforethought Press*, Flat 2, 10 Netherwood Rd, London, W14 0EJ. Tom Perry (again!), PO Box 62134, Phoenix, AZ 85082, USA. Erwin S. 'Filthy Pierre' Strauss, 101 S. Whiting #700, Alexandria, VA 22304, USA.

GUFF. The Get Up-&-over Fan Fund will wait an Aussie fan to **The Scottish Convention** in Glasgow next year: ballots are now circulating (available from me) and the choice of candidates is LynC, Ian Gunn & Karen Pender-Gunn (these two jointly), and Kim Huett. Only Kim has sent *Ansible* a vote-winning statement, about his enthusiasm for 'being introduced to Greg Pickersgill for the first time. Better yet watching someone else being introduced to Greg Pickersgill for the first time, from a safe distance. I have come to the conclusion that either you exaggerate Greg's pronouncements beyond all belief or he is a Rasputin-like figure with long greasy hair and filthy shapeless clothing. [...] Are you telling everyone what a nice guy I am?'

SAMHAINballs: the spiteful West Country newspaper campaign against John Gullidge and his horror review magazine *Samhain* (see A80-81) seems to have died down. Paul Barnett's plans for a legal fund are thus suspended; his thanks to all who offered help. A *Prominent Member Of The UK Horror Community Sends Encouragement*: 'I'm afraid John Gullidge has never considered himself one of the "horror community" (which is one of the reasons I will not support him or his magazine, as I feel he has brought a lot of these problems on himself).'

Fame at Last. How to deter computer spies in 2050: 'She [...] typed: *Whoever you are, be warned: I'm about to display the Langford Mind-Erasing Fractal Basilisk, so ...*' (Greg Egan, *Permutation City*)

Science Corner. More literate than the Astral League ... more scientific than the London Psychogeographical Society ... Joseph Nicholas offers a flyer from the *Association of Autonomous Astronauts* ('Write to us about our plans for an independent space exploration program'), which reveals that EVERYTHING WE KNOW IS WRONG. Spying on the Royal Society's March meeting, the AoAA was swift to note the insidious political agenda behind modern so-called mathematics: 'The threat to the notion of the static universe, set in motion in the 20th Century by the discovery of the relativity of all knowledge, has caused the ruling class to hit back with its bullshit theory of chaos. [...] Chaos Theory, with all its talk of disorder in geometry and mathematical systems sensitive to initial conditions, is nothing more than another instrument of control in the hands of a ruling class attempting to strengthen their islands of order surrounded by a sea of chaos, in the vain hope of preserving their privileged existence.' Yes, yes, yes! But the people can hit back: 'Much was made of the "curse of dimensionality"; that is, when these boffins attempt to map their mathematical models in higher dimensions than three the predictions become far more problematical. We will be exploring the possibilities for higher-dimensionality acts of subversion.' Just hurl a well-aimed tesseract into the machinery of capitalist government, and.... (Data: *The London Spy* from B.M.Jed, London, WC1N 3XX)

Ansible 83 © Dave Langford, 1994. Thanks to Ken Brown, CIX, Jonathan Cowie, Abigail Frost, Joanne Gamoll, Alex McLintock, Joseph Nicholas, David Pringle, *SF Chronicle* and Usenet. Special thanks to our hero distributors Vikki Lee France & Steve Jeffrey (SCIS), Alex Heatley (NZ), Janice Murray (USA), Alan Stewart (Oz), Martin Tudor (Brum Group News) and Bridget Wilkinson (FATW), to whom I Owe It All (Whatever It Is). 2 June 94