

Ansible



Ansible 98 September 1995

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The Scottish Convention ... It was the best of times, it was the worst of times: it was a Worldcon in the hangar-like halls of the Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre, Glasgow. Total attendance: 4,800. All the usual desperate fun was had, punctuated by endless shuttle-bus and taxi rides between city-centre hotels and the SECC in its distant post-industrial wasteland amid car parks approximately the size of Kansas. Few coherent memories remain—just a handful of snapshots.

First and saddest: **John Brunner** bustling suavely through the fan area. A hurried exchange of Hellos and then he's gone forever: a stroke, death within hours, a flood of memorials and regrets. Numbness spreads. John would have been hugely tickled by the idea of making his exit at a major convention ... but not just yet. *Lisanne Norman* writes: 'At 9 minutes past 5pm on Friday 25 August, while his wife LYI, my friend Judith and myself held his hand, John Brunner slipped peacefully away from us. The end for him was gentle, and he went with what love all three of us could surround him with. I will never forget him.' •

Drummers and Pipers ... marching through the SECC concourse and into the gigantic Hall 4 with its weirdly assorted fanfanzine litter (bouncy castles, play areas, fast-food stalls, con bidding desks, fanzine tables, Ukrainians selling trade goods at unbelievable prices, etc, etc) to launch a lavish opening wine-party financed by Glasgow's grateful ratepayers.... A partly convincing *Nessie* features in the parade and nearly eats Peter Morwood. • **Samuel R. Delany** (GoH) with a beard more genially patriarchal than ever, encountered at a HarperCollins celebration mysteriously sited on a moored Clyde ferry miles from anywhere. He has read my fanzine writings! I swoon. • **Ian and Judy Watson** telling of a fire evacuation from the Moat House Hotel (where showers trigger alarms if you leave the bathroom door open). 'We thought you had to run to the car park in your *pyjamas*' gesticulates Ian, 'We were the only ones! Everyone else had anoraks and camo gear!' To make it more interesting, Judy adds: 'And of course Ian had this enormous erection.' •

Terry Pratchett magically converting the same fire alert into a 4am signing session when he encountered a fan carrying (all together now) a Rare Unsigned Copy. TP's antics with a pop-up dildo during a panel with Tom Holt remain veiled in diplomacy. • **John Clute** on the *Fantasy Encyclopaedia* panel, miraculously conveying his theory of true fantasy's pattern of Wrongness, Thinning and Healing against near-impossible odds. Problem: the SECC acoustics. 'Rooms' are flimsy, non-soundproofed, roofless enclosures; voices float upward into murmurous echoing vastness. To use the sound system is to compete with adjacent rooms: since the entrances face one another, John finds himself staring down the aisle at his hated sonic rival across the way, who is Gardner Dozois. Each manically succeeds in drowning out the other. (To do it properly, the committee explains firmly, would have cost money.) •

Vince Clarke (FGoH) tucking into frogs' legs under the watchfully sozzled eye of his self-appointed minder *Chuch Harris*: 'I am here to make sure he has fun *whether he likes it or not*.' • **Michael Swanwick** musing, 'I like gratuitous sex and think it has a place in fiction as well....' • **Greg Pickersgill** (fan area Grubby Eminence) blinking when a mild 'Hello' to *Teresa Nielsen Hayden* elicits the response 'FUCK YOU, PICKERSGILL!'—little does he know that seconds earlier, TNH placed a bet with me that GP would ignore her all weekend.... • **Evening Fan Programme** offering *Moose TV*, *Ian Sorensen's play Dune or The Sand of Music*, and *The Lovely Jackie McRobert* (so described on her visiting cards). • **Fanfundery ...** TAFF's Dan (and Lynn) Steffan, and GUFF's Ian Gunn and Karen Pender-Gunn, all being jolly good guests.

• **Peter Weston** fulfilling a ritual Worldcon need by hurling beer over the most Scientologist-like figure to hand—in this case, Ted White....

HUGO CEREMONY. Vast crowds filling the Extravaganzas hall amid

the usual atmosphere of sweaty paranoia exuding from nominees whose pose of Total Cool is fast eroded by delays and minor presentations: BIG HEART award to Ken Slater, FIRST PANDOM to Jack Speer and Harry Warner Jr; Cordwainer Smith gets a 'Japanese Hugo' (SEIUN AWARD) for the 1961 'A Planet Named Shayol' and Dan Simmons another for *Hyperion*. Robert Silverberg's spoken memorial for John Brunner is simple, word-perfect, and causes a four-minute standing ovation for the late great man. This feels right—as does the JOHN W. CAMPBELL award for best new writer, presented to our very own Jeff Noon. • Then the Hugos proper. FANZINE: shock horror victory of *Ansible*. FAN ARTIST: Teddy Harvia. (Meanwhile your editor is detained in a Kafkaesque maze backstage, until—) FAN WRITER, me: I can only say, 'Unfortunately, Martin Hoare can't be with us tonight....' SEMIPROZINE: *Interzone*—and suddenly this award's impartial presenter Kim Newman is leaping gleefully around 'like a demented Muppet' as David Pringle marches to the stage. ARTWORK: *Lady Cottingham's Pressed Fairy Book* by Brian Froud and Terry Jones. DRAMATIC: *All Good Things (ST:TNG)*. PRO ARTIST: Jim Burns. PRO EDITOR: Gardner Dozois, whose shadow never grows less. NONFICTION: *I. Asimov: a Memoir* by the late Himself. SHORT STORY: 'None So Blind' by ever-popular Joe Haldeman. NOVELLETTE: 'The Martian Child' by David Gerrold, who with memorable tackiness hauls his young son on-stage to eulogize him as the Real Martian Child. (A voice says, 'He was worse at the Nebulas.') NOVELLA: 'Seven Views of Olduvai Gorge' by Mike Resnick—nominated in four categories and thus, in inscrutable US phrasing, the first person to bat .250 in the Hugos. NOVEL: *Mirror Dance* by Lois McMaster Bujold. • And so to wild parties, fireworks, tears, sighs of relief and, all night, a background throb of gloating from a select few. 'I'm still making the Hugos,' confides artificer Peter Weston, 'but basically it's a sideline.' He adds in doomy tones, 'This empowers me to say: Remember, Langford, you are but mortal.' H'mm. Is 11 too many?

LAST SNAPSHOTS. **Chris Priest**, bemusedly discovering that his squib *The Book on the Edge of Forever* ended up a mere 4 votes behind the Asimov nonfiction Hugo winner; also that mild-mannered Norman Spinrad carried a commission from Harlan Ellison to 'punch Priest out if he wins'. ('I keep wondering why I would become more punchable for winning an award I did not canvass, when the presumed offence remains, irrespective of winning or not winning?' In other words, why didn't Norman belt me one while he had the chance? Apparently because, while muttering something non-committal to placate the great HE, NS has no intention of being silly enough to obey instructions.) •

Baltimore, winners of the 1998 Worldcon site selection vote, mercifully pursuing their 'pirates' bidding theme by naming the convention 'BucConeer'. Oh dearie me. Details: PO Box 1376, Baltimore, MD 21203, USA. • **Balanced Reporting:** the *Sunday Mail* attacking nasty anorak-wearing sci-fi fans in a story headed *Weirdos' Show Is Branded A Rip-Off*. This is justified by (a) locating a woman who owing to media misrepresentation has expected a free *Star Trek* exhibition and doesn't like what she finds after paying £90; (b) moving on to lengthy descriptions of oddball fans 'looking as though they were on drugs' without finding space to report that the complainer got a rapid refund. •

Science Programme organizers groaning that their early and frequent requests for equipment went astray in the committee's management labyrinth: nevertheless, despite the maddening proximity of a Live Aliens promotion playing awful music and sound effects at top volume all too near the science and fan areas, it is agreed (and endorsed by Mighty Jon Cowie, Before Whom Mere Fans Tremble) that they do a splendid job. • **Bob Guccione** of *Omni* infamy being revealed, on p79 of Dorling Kindersley's spiffily produced *Science Fiction: The Illustrated Encyclopaedia*, to look uncannily like me. Separated at birth? 'Not my

fault,' ringingly declares compiler John Clute. 'This should be worth lots of publicity in *Ansible*...' • **Voice of the Mysterions**, the con newsletter, producing an impressive 15 issues plus many extras (can you spot the unsigned Langford contributions?). In unwise homage to the Mexican headline that plunged hotel relations into war, a squib about booze running out at a publishers' party is titled SCUM! SCUM! SCUM!. Repeated apologies ('That wasn't grovelling enough!') are demanded by massed publishers who threaten the Ultimate Sanction of not paying the bar bill.... • **Typo of the Convention**: Wizards of the Coast, purveyors of expensively addictive card games, billing themselves in one of their own ads as 'Wizards of the Cost'. • **Strange Fruit**: Chuch Harris exploring a fruit-bowl in the suite where I'm holding a post-Hugo sprawl, and finding weird objects covered in thick blue fur. Fascinated, he peps one between finger and thumb in a gooeey red splatter. A special effect from *Alien*, or a symbol of Intersection's good things (acoustics excepted) bursting through layers of foreboding? No, it is an elderly Glasgow strawberry. • **The End**. Sore-throated and euphoric, I am toying with a final drink in the Central Hotel and telling hungover Tony Berry all about last night's spiffy Indian restaurant meal. Slowly he speaks: 'I was there. At the same table. You twit.' It seems time to leave.... Martin Hoare briefs me extensively on the horrors of getting massive, rocket-shaped chunks of metal through airport security: in fact the Glasgow x-ray operator merely falls around laughing and beckons colleagues with noises of 'We've Got A Right One Here!' The rest is history.

Conine

22-4 Sep • **6th Festival of Fantastic Films**, Sacha's Hotel, Manchester. £45 reg: cheques to 'Society of Fantastic Films'. Contact 95 Meadowgate Rd, Salford, Manchester, M6 8EN.

28 Sep - 1 Oct • **Boucheron** (World Mystery Con), Royal Most House Hotel, Nottingham. GoH Colin Dexter, James Ellroy. £55 reg. Cheques to Conference Nottingham, Business Info Centre, 309 Haydn Rd, Nottingham, NG5 1DG.

Oct • **Fantasycon** ... has lapsed into oblivion this year.

27-31 Oct • **Welcome to my Nightmare** (horror part of UK Year of Literature Festival), Swansea. £15 reg. Contact 14 Cae Eithin, Llanyfelach, Swansea, SA6 6EZ. *British Fantasy Awards & BFS AGM moved here owing to collapse of Fantasycon.*

5-8 Apr 96 • **Evolution** (Eastercon), Radisson Edwardian Hotel, nr Heathrow. Now £28 reg; 'very soft currencies £5'. Contact 13 Lindfield Gdns, Hampstead, London, NW3 6PX.

Rumblings • **Intuition** is a 1998 Eastercon bid: 38 Scotland Rd, Cambridge, CB4 1HQ. • Grown men pulled their own heads off rather than imagine the rumoured Worldcon bid Cardiff in 2003.

Infinitely Improbable

Random Fandom. *Jim Barker* mutters: 'What with bloody computers, software and clip art, the graphic design area is not what it was and I've decided to expand the cartoon illustration side of things. (The day someone develops a program than can emulate Jim Barker style cartoons, we can all quietly fade away....)' • *Jon Langford's* mighty maleness was in the *Guardian* 'Women' pages (24 Aug): a plaster model clutched to the bosom of 'Cynthia Plastercaster', who collects, er, impressions of rock stars.... • *Joseph Nicholas* was seen in deep trance at his own pre-con party, captioned 'I died in the war for people like you—give generously.' Sideshow proceeds went to GUFF.... • **TAFF**: ballots detailing a race between Leo Brett, Pel Torro and John E.Muller may lack authenticity. Their origin is hinted only in Abigail Frost's eldritch cry after receiving a vote on this form: 'You Bastard, Dave Clark!' She adds: 'The 1996 (westward) race looms. Nomination deadlines to be announced.' Those wishing a TAFF trip to LAcon should be canvassing nominators now: 3 European, 2 N.American, and no more, please. 95 Wilmot St, London, E2 0BP. • **D.West's Deliverance** (150pp duplicated A4), comprising his awesome fanzine writings since 1985, was selling briskly in Glasgow. Now £9/£25 (no S cheques) from 17 Carlisle St, Keighley, W.Yorks, BD21 4PX. Well-written, irritating, meaty, controversial stuff.

C.O.A. *Charles & Cora Burbee*, 46749 Pala Rd, Temecula, CA

92592, USA. *Tommy Ferguson*, 42 Ava Drive, Belfast, BT7 3DW. *Sally Ann Melia*, 2 Waynlete Street, Earlsfield, London, SW18 3QE.

R.I.P. *Michael Ende*, best known for *The Neverending Story* (whose movie version he despised as plastic kitsch), died aged 65 on 28 Aug.

Ujog's Flasterclass. 'The flame's hand flattened the road flat.' (K.W.Jeter, *Blade Runner 2*) [S] • 'His chuckle seemed to come from below his belt.' (Nancy Price, *Night Woman*, 1992) [PB]

John Brunner, 1934-1995

Chris Priest writes ...

John Brunner's sudden death at the Glasgow Worldcon came as a profound shock, but not, sadly, to those who had been in contact with him recently, a surprise. Every conversation I had with John in the last two or three years was spiked with his unhappiness, frustration and disappointment. His health had become intermittently poor, his finances generally shaky and his career seemed at a low ebb. But in earlier years he was buoyant. John was the first major sf writer I came to know personally, and although I often found his company uncomfortable, because away from home he put on a defensive veneer, I never ceased to admire him, like him and more often than not love him. Here is what I will remember of him:

John was a passionate political liberal: he was against the bomb, against racism, against government oppression, against corruption. Many of us are too, but John gave up most of his non-writing life to these causes. He lobbied, marched, wrote songs, joined committees, demonstrated.

He and his first wife Marjorie were constant and loyal friends to me throughout the break-up of my first marriage. None but the three of us knew this, and now only I remain.

At home: He had the largest collection of folk and jazz records I have ever seen. He was a brilliant and adventurous cook, and delighted in giving his guests gullet-searing soups or palate-teasing delicacies. John liked fast, open-top cars, enjoyed wine and tobacco, revelled in the company of women. He loved animals. He enjoyed excruciating people with his awful and invariably unfunny puns. He was personally generous, giving freely his hospitality, time and interest.

Professionally: He was a fierce defender of what he understood science fiction to be—I once saw him stoutly standing up to a film-company executive, whose film *Zardoz* John reckoned to betray all the things for which sf stood, and who was threatening to drag John outside for a scrap. His novels were highly readable, fast-moving, professionally executed and extrovert in style; the best of his serious novels, *Stand on Zanzibar*, *The Shockwave Rider*, one or two others, are amongst the finest, most imaginative and best written works in the field (memorial editions must surely appear?).

I never heard John say anything bitchy or jealous about another writer. On the contrary, he was supportive and helpful to young writers; at the same time he always told them the truth about their writing, as he saw it. (I recall this well.) He had an incisive critical mind, as anyone who was at a Milford Conference with him will know. He was probably the widest-read man I have ever met: his house was packed with books, and his mind was furnished with their contents. John, in his literary-database role, would delight in showing off his knowledge, always with a playful edge, often with serendipitous results.

He was a friend, and while the world at large has lost one of its best and most under-rated writers, our small sf family has lost an extraordinary, intelligent, erudite and amusing man. Our loss is terrible. (Chris Priest)

• *John Brunner's secular funeral was held at Taunton Deane Crematorium on Wed 6 Sept, with perhaps 50 in attendance. Following strange Chinese music, John's widow LiYi Tan Brunner and others (including Chris Bell, Martin Hoare, Pauline Morgan, Caroline Mullan, and Chris Priest) related memories of him. Terry Pratchett was also present. • LiYi asks that tributes take the form of a donation to Friends of Foundation, c/o 75 Roslyn Avenue, Harold Wood, Essex, RM3 0RG, marked as a 'John Brunner Memorial' contribution. She hopes for a memorial exhibit as part of the SF Foundation Library. • Before the funeral I re-read *The Shockwave Rider* (for a memorial appreciation) and *Traveller in Black* (just because) ... a rewarding way to remember John. Goodbye.*

Ansible 98 © Dave Langford, 1995. Thanks to Paul Barnes, Gary Forber, Abigail Frost, Joseph Nicholas, Chris Priest, Sima, Hugo Voters and our Hero Distributors: Janice Murray (HA), SCIS, Alan Stewart (OJ), Martin-Tudor and Bridget Wilkinson (FATH). 7 Sep 95