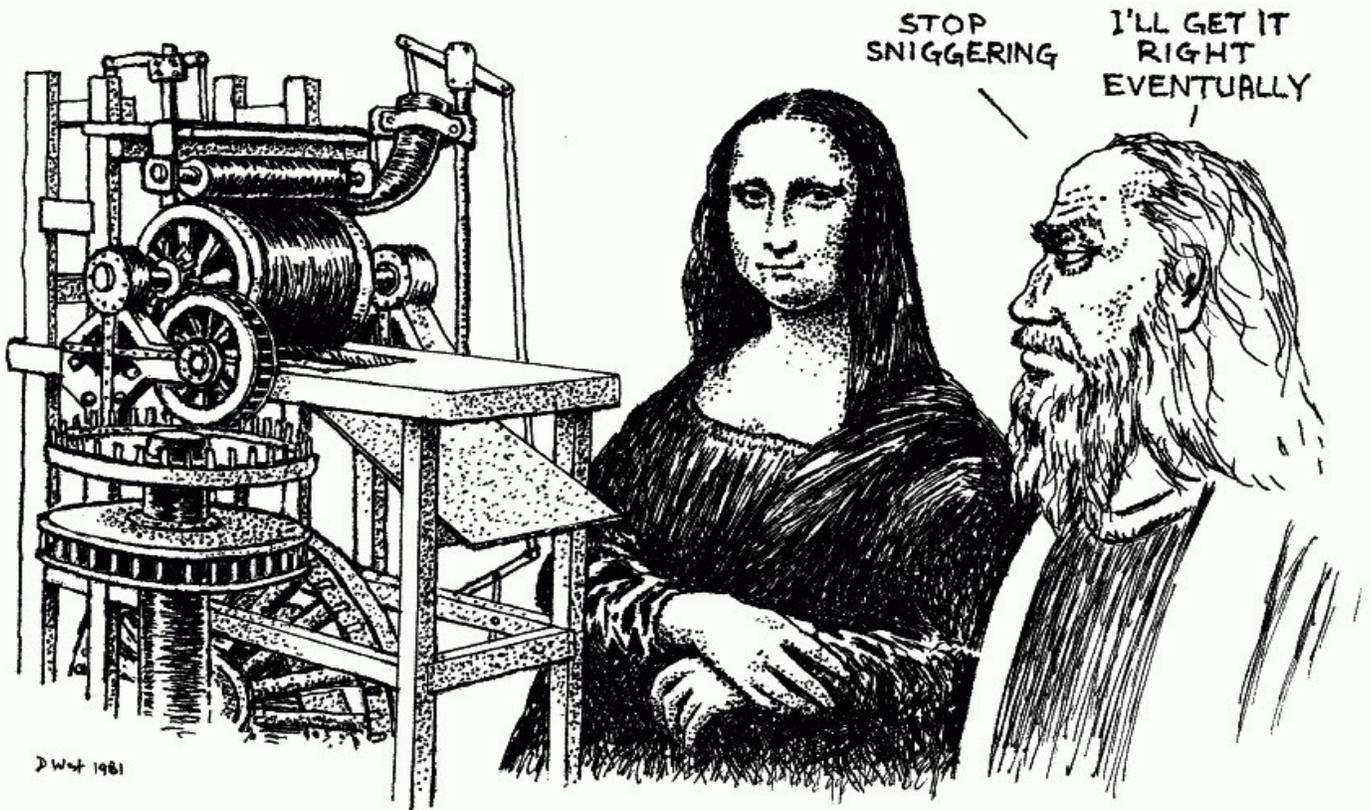


available



First Series
1979-1987

***Ansible* First Series 1979-1987**

Edited by David Langford

Published by

Ansible Editions

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ae.ansible.uk

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appreciation.

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Introduction

Here are the first fifty issues of David Langford's not very legendary British sf/fan newsletter *Ansible* in ebook form. That's nearly 300,000 words of outdated trivia, against which insomnia stands no chance. Those who have followed *Ansible* from its early days or have rummaged in the web archive at news.ansible.uk are permitted to stop reading at this point.

A little history for new readers. This first series of *Ansible* ran for fifty issues – really only forty-nine since the second and third were rashly combined as a double issue.* Taking over the subscription list of its predecessor *Checkpoint* (edited by Peter Roberts since 1971 and about to cease with issue 100), *Ansible* launched in August 1979 at Seacon '79, that year's World SF Convention in Brighton. The fiftieth and much more substantial issue, dated August/September 1987, was distributed at the *next* UK Worldcon: Conspiracy '87, also in Brighton. After that, numbed by the shock of winning its first Hugo award, *Ansible* gently subsided and didn't reappear until the October 1991 relaunch in slimmer form (a single sheet of A4) and with a rigorous monthly schedule that still continues unbroken as of 2016.

* A bad decision which probably discouraged several subscribers from renewing. It was supposed to be a double-sized Worldcon special, and so it was, but the only available paper was of decidedly inferior quality and the reproduction was pretty awful. The embarrassment lingers to this day.

In those days *Ansible* was invariably printed on quarto (10" x 8") paper, a format even then becoming obsolete. The first five were entirely duplicated (mimeographed if you're American) on a battered old electric Roneo machine. Reduced-print photolitho front pages were introduced at number 6 (February 1980), with the rest of the issue duplicated. This hybrid format continued to number 41 (December 1984) – though #35 was an exception, being entirely duplicated using electrostencils of photo-reduced text, except for a final normally-duplicated page. At number 42 (March 1985), all-litho production from word-processed printout became the norm. It wasn't until the second-series relaunch in October 1991 that *Ansible* finally adopted A4 paper.

Members of the heroic team that rekeyed the first forty-one issues are

credited in [Acknowledgments](#) (below). They finished the work of transcription in September 1997, at which point *Ansible* was fully archived online in plain text format. As a further treat for readers, I tidied up the whole lot as nicer-looking HTML pages at the end of 1999, and have improved the format a couple of times since ... but typos are still coming to light, most recently in a gruelling spell-check scrutiny of the entire 1979-1987 text during the preparation of this ebook. Do let me know if you spot any more.

Most visual material not directly linked to news stories or squibs has been omitted from this ebook edition. In particular, virtually all the masthead and filler cartoons were dropped to reduce the size of an already vast document – see news.ansible.uk if interested. Also, the above-mentioned rekeying team spontaneously (and pardonably) skipped a good number of terminally boring CoA or Change of Address lists. These are still missing from the web archive but for the sake of fandom’s historians have been laboriously reinstated here. So have the various arcane symbols (mostly Greek letters from the IBM Selectric Symbol typeball) and all but the most difficult diacriticals which infested the popular though erratic department Hazel’s Language Lessons.

Apologies about the inclusion – for the sake of completeness – of some longer contributions which also feature in the free ebook *Wrath of the Fanglord* edited by David Langford. If you have these already, just try to pretend they aren’t included here.

Dan Steffan’s *Ansible* logo (below) first appeared in issue 50 and has been used in horizontally compressed form throughout the newsletter’s second series.

I can’t believe I’m still publishing this thing thirty-seven years later....

David Langford, June 2016

ANSIBLE



1979

***Ansible* 1**

August 1979

ANSIBLE 1 (August 1979) comes from Dave Langford, 22 Northumberland Avenue, Reading, Berkshire RG2 7PW, UK. Available for news, articles, artwork, selected trades or money: 4/50p in UK & Europe, 3/\$1 in USA (airmail), 5/\$1 in Australia & NZ (airmail). Sterling, US dollars or International Reply Coupons (worth 10½p each at this end and lots more at your end) are acceptable; foreign-currency cheques dwindle almost to nothing whilst passing through my bank, and thus will earn you almost no credit. Cartoon by Alexis Gilliland. The Restormel Press No. is a thing of the past; you'll doubtless be bored to know this is Langford No. 34.

The Passing of the Carrot: This is not *Checkpoint*. Peter Roberts has been muttering for a good while now about folding *Checkpoint* at issue 100, which should coincide with *Seacon*; he's passing on the subscription list but clinging grimly to the title, which he insists must be buried with him. Here, then, is *Ansible* – a newszine which will differ subtly from *Checkpoint* in that the editor is not Peter Roberts (I did ask, but he wouldn't let me borrow his name). This issue rides with *The Northern Guffblower* 5 for no special reason, and counts as one issue at the old rates to *Checkpoint* subscribers; future rates are as above mainly owing to postal increases. Write now if you want a refund; better, send money and news. I also want short articles which are topical, which illuminate fandom's relationship with the eternal cosmic verities, or (failing all that) which I like. I do not particularly want sacks of letters telling me how subtly inappropriate is the title *Ansible* for something carried to the post office at a speed which makes Achilles and the tortoise appear to be running neck-and-neck. (If the word "ansible" means nothing to you, what *have* you been reading?)

Nothing To Lose But: Last week came two "fannish chain letters", possibly not the most brilliant notion since *Space: 1999*. The principle is familiar – you add your name to the bottom of a list, send out 8 copies of the letter to chosen victims plus a postcard to whoever's at the top of the list (all this

within 3 days), and by and by you should receive 262,144 postcards. Even a Leeds fan would need no beer mats for a week or two with that lot. However, I'm interested to see that the chain (both letters are in the same chain) purports to have begun in January 1973. Assuming fans have been co-operating ever since, the number of postcards going the rounds in the current cycle should be some 10^{720} ; even with a dropout rate of 50% or more, there should be enough in transit to collapse the post office into a black hole (ditto the solar system). This is most unfannish: without the efforts of a Second Foundation at the other end of fandom which is circulating a chain of Cavorite postcards, we'd be gurgling messily down into a singularity. Only *Ansible* brings you the facts.

Handbags Across The Galaxy: It was a surprise to read in *DNQ* that now standing for TAFF 1980 is none other than Joseph Nicholas: the lad hasn't mentioned his ambitions in this country. Other prospective candidates such as Jim Barker and the *Ansible* editor will be having a word with Joe in some dark alley behind the Metropole. But Joe's own fan club will be emerging in force at Seacon – the Surrey Limpwrist, including Alan Dorey, Kevin Smith, Bruce Healey, the Maules, the Drs Jackson, the Harveys and others too nonexistent to mention. Already the Limpwrist Constitution has gone through various crises to be revealed in *Nabu*, while the secret Limpwrist badge is the subject of much bored and apathetic speculation. Chris Priest, meanwhile, has been preparing his own badges for the Jaqueline Lichtenberg Appreciation Society – inspired by Ms Lichtenberg's generous offer to Seacon to hold Jaqueline Lichtenberg fan gatherings and to take neos round the book room telling them what to buy.

Completely Surrounded By Vugs: SF Book Club supremo Paul Begg informs me that David & Charles are planning a follow-up to that super collection *Aries 1* (not to be missed by Langford completists). The new collection will not be called *Aries 2* (which is OK by me), will be paying twice the money (yes, yes, go on Paul) and will not be featuring writers who appeared in *Aries 1*. Hate, hate, hate. Another rumour from D&C is that the SFBC will be folding next year, perhaps in an attempt to make sure they don't print Bob Tucker's *The Lincoln Hunters* for a third time. Several people, including Greg Pickersgill, insist that SFBC lost its charm when they stopped numbering their books; D&C remain impervious to such criticism. Better death than dishonour, and so on. It may be that D&C will not survive

the Langford book on flying saucers, due next month.

Book Nook: Fritz Leiber fans will no doubt be desperate to acquire Chris Morgan's near-as-dammit-complete Leiber bibliography, chronicling all known appearances of 37 books, 64 articles and 206 stories by The Man. Available for £1.50/\$3.00 from me or from Chris (39 Hollybrow, Selly Oak, Birmingham B29 4LX); if you're reading this at Seacon, you should find copies in the Fan Room and Book Room. Meanwhile, still moving in these lofty strata of publication, Ian Garbutt confides that: "*Creations* is the name of my new mag, not to be confused with *Tangent* despite the logo on the front cover." I don't know what sort of fanzine this will be; Ian's only hint is that Jim Barker is "the *wrong type* of artist" to feature in *Creations*.

COA: Seth Goldberg, 5950 Imperial Hwy. #43, South Gate, CA 90280, USA / Liese Hoare, Flat 2, Pincents Hill House, Pincents Lane, Calcot, Reading, RG3 5TU / Gerald Lawrence, 14 Pymmes Green Road, New Southgate, London N11 1BY / Wally Stoelting, 132 Harriet, Coloma, MI 49038, USA

Lies, Lies: I don't think I believe the item below, supposedly from a Florida newspaper; however, you never know ... *WANTED – person to work on nuclear fissionable isotope molecular reactive counters and three phase cyclotronic uranium photosynthesisers – NO EXPERIENCE NECESSARY.*

For reasons which once seemed sensible, Ansible 1 was incorporated in to the current issue of the GUFF fan fund's newsletter The Northern Guffblower, whose lead article (which also explains the acronym) was ...

GUFF – A Message From Our Founder Chris Priest

Once upon a time I was met at an airport by a rabbi, and the rabbi was wearing a track-suit, and the track-suit had paint stains all over it. This was the earliest impression I had of our great former colony south-east of India, namely, Australia.

During the summer of 1977 I got a distinct impression that people were avoiding me. Why, I wondered, did people yawn when I talked about Australia; why did doors slam in my face when they saw my bush-hat and

boomerang? Was I *really* going on about it as much as my friends (who had obviously seen too many Lifebuoy adverts) were claiming? In the end, I found I was boring even myself ... so perhaps there was some truth in it all.

The fact is I had a terrific time in Australia, and I'm proud to be one of the small but growing band of Yanks and Pommies in the sf world who have made the long journey south. Bob Tucker, William Rotsler, Ursula Le Guin, Terry Carr, Bob Silverberg, Vonda McIntyre, Brian Aldiss are a few of the others. As far as I know, we all retain much the same sort of happy impression of the place ... I had what I think of as the best time of my life down under. It's hard to say why, exactly ... because it's true that Australia can offer little more than is readily available in Britain or the States, except perhaps the novelty of a different accent, and awe-inspiring scenery.

I think that one of the strongest feelings I had out there was one of reassurance. When you fly from London, you pass through most of southern Asia, with the countries you visit briefly becoming progressively more alien and confusing: in the case of the flight I was on, Iran, India and Malaysia. Then, when you are least expecting it, you land in a place that looks like a cross between Torquay and Oxford Street, where the natives speak English (OK, a garbled form of English, I know, I know), and where they play cricket and watch *Star Trek* and drive on the left and collect old runs of *Astounding* and generally act in more-or-less comprehensible ways.

There was also reassurance in the feeling that Australia is a *long way* from everywhere else, that if nuclear war broke out no one would get around to bombing the place until you'd had time to dig a nice safe hole. And reassurance in the fact that it is so culturally old-fashioned; Melbourne in 1977 felt to me like London used to feel in 1967, a sense of things beginning to open up, and general health and prosperity ... and girls wearing *mini-skirts* (which alone brought a few nostalgic tears to the eyes of this particular sexist pig).

And why should the science fiction world be interested in Australia? They've got nothing there we can't supply for ourselves. They've a few sf writers, and they've run a Worldcon, and they've got fandom, and they have feuds and alliances and monthly meetings, just like us. I must confess (and indeed, have hitherto made no secret of it) that before I made the trip I shared this feeling in some measure. Australia, considered in prospect, felt as if it was going to

be a cultural and social suburb, one where the only possible difference would be that strangers in pubs would call you a Pommy bastard. I was wrong, and I grovel in abject apology for ever letting the notion occur to me. Not only did no one ever call me a Pommy bastard (and they didn't call me "cobber", either), but the whole time I was there I experienced a quite indescribable and intangible sense of *difference*, one which was all the more confusing for being overlaid with apparent similarities.

Whatever the cause, I felt energized and inspirited by the visit in ways I hadn't felt since I first encountered fandom in 1962. Because they *are* just like us, in the sense that they read *New Worlds* and *Astounding* and *Hyphen* and *Vector*, and they have cons where boring people drone on about boring things on boring panels, and they have the other sort of cons where interesting people drink too much and become indiscreet and highly entertaining. Ok, they haven't got the Astral League, but they've got a Magic Pudding Club (or at least they had one while I was there), and they've got the Paul Stevens Show and the Golden Caterpillar Awards ... and what amounts to a sort of parallel fannish tradition, where the differences became apparent because I was no part of them, but where the similarities also were apparent, because it was all unmistakably fannish.

(And in case anyone's interested, the art of sf writing has the same quality of difference/similarity. There is a certain amount of Australian sf which is derivative of Anglo-American writing ... but there is also a new kind of Australian sf, practised most by the newer writers, naturally enough, where there is a new inwardness, a new sense of response to their own cultural/literary environment.)

Anyway, if you look back at those names I listed of visitors to Australia, you'll see that most of them are of writers, not fans. (Though some of the writers do have fannish links.) During the first weekend I was in Australia there was a con, and during this I was struck by one of my occasional IDEAS. We've had TAFF for years, in which, as everyone in fandom knows, a fannish visit from or to Britain or America is paid for by fannish charity ... and more recently DUFF has been in existence, in which fannish visits between America and Australia are arranged. It suddenly occurred to me that it was time the third side of the triangle was closed, and after a few minutes of non-sober reflection in the bar, GUFF was created by unanimous consent.

The Get Up and over Fan Fund was created with the specific intention of bringing an Australian fan to Britain for **Seacon '79**. After a few early hiccups, GUFF came into formal being, and, mostly because of the hard work and dedication of the two Administrators, Dave Langford in Britain and Leigh Edmonds in Australia, not only was sufficient money raised, but a clear winner was found. That winner was John Foyster, who is here at **Seacon**. Foyster was my own nomination for GUFF (based on the entirely unprejudiced fact that I have met neither of the other two candidates, Eric Lindsay and John Alderson), which gives me special pleasure in the fact of his win.

Which brings me back to the rabbi in the paint-smeared track-suit, for it was none other than he.

I'm at a loss to describe John objectively, because my knowledge of him before my Australian visit was minimal. I knew his writing through his work in *Australian Science Fiction Review*, where he went in for intelligent if idiosyncratic criticism of sf. Later, I read *JOE (The Journal of Omphalistic Epistemology)*, which was a sort of round-letter discussion fanzine about sf. I had heard he edited something called *BOF (Boys' Own Fanzine)*, in collaboration with Leigh Edmonds. And I knew he had been on the committees of various cons in Australia. What I didn't know was he looked like a rabbi.

Later, I heard him in action at the con ... he goes in for a sort of sly fannish troublemaking, with a style and wittiness that gladdens the heart; he is an excellent extempore speaker. After the con, while I was drifting around on the fringes of fandom, I began to get to know him a little better. There are three things about him, events really, that I remember.

Firstly, he had the pleasant habit of taking me to bookshops; not the glossy, obvious bookshops, but the sort of hidden-away secondhand shops I wouldn't have been able to find without either a much longer stay in Melbourne or a native to show the way. Secondly, he introduced me to friends of his outside the fannish world; although this perhaps sounds like an anti-fannish sentiment, it was actually something I appreciated a lot at the time. Thirdly, he showed me the true essence of Australia. We were waiting for a tram one hot evening in Swanston Street, a long straight road that runs through the centre of Melbourne on a roughly north-south line. Suddenly, John looked

solemn. “This street,” he said, “contains the very essence of All That Is Australia.” I glanced around at the numerous Chinese restaurants (one of which we had just left), and said something smart, cynical, and unoriginal. “Listen you Pommy bastard,” he said, contradicting what I said earlier, “I’m being serious. This street is symbolic of The Essence of Australia. There we have the Symbol of Australia’s Past” ... and he pointed towards the south, where on a small hill stands the Shrine of Remembrance, all Corinthian pillars and steadfast architecture. Duly sobered, I nodded with appropriate solemnity. “And there,” said John, pointing towards the north, “we have the Symbol of Australia’s Future.” I looked, and at the other end of Swanston Street, almost as impressive in its own way, was Foster’s brewery ...

GUFF doesn’t, or shouldn’t, end with John Foyster’s visit to SEACON. I’d like to think that his is the inaugural fannish trip between Australia and Britain, and that many more will follow in years to come. Don’t let us allow it to wither away in indifference! It strikes me that the next opportunity for a GUFF trip could be in 1983, when Australia is bidding for the Worldcon. Then it will be our turn to send a British fan on a visit which, I can promise sincerely, will be highly enjoyable and eternally memorable. Here’s what we have to do:

- Support GUFF with cash.
- Treat it as a fannish charity on a par with TAFF and DUFF. Give freely ... or donate auction-material whenever possible.
- Support the **Australia in ’83** campaign. Join the Worldcon of 1981, and vote for Australia in ’83.
- When the GUFF campaign begins, lobby for the chosen candidates, vote for your choice ... and give freely.

And if Australia doesn’t win the ’83 bid, support GUFF anyway ... because after all, a Worldcon is just a slightly better excuse for a trip, and there are numerous regional and national Australian cons which will do almost as well.

Meanwhile, make the effort to seek out John Foyster and make him feel at home. If he calls you a Pommy bastard, what you have to do is call *him* a drongo (Australians don’t like this), or alternatively, if you’re the peace-loving type, buy him a drink (and we’ll send out a gunboat later).

Incidentally, if he doesn’t look like a rabbi these days, don’t blame me.

Got dem ole single element blues Kevin Smith

[the first in a series on little-known hazards of fanzine production....]

“Where’s the question mark on this thing?” I said to Dave. I was typing out the last stencil of *Drilkjis 4* on Dave’s typewriter, and my question wasn’t as dumb as it sounds because Dave’s typewriter is a golf-ball machine. “So what?” you say. “The keys are marked, aren’t they? You can read, can’t you? What does it say on that key there?”

“It says question mark,” I reply.

“Well then!” you say in disgust.

“You can’t believe everything you read,” I say. “That’s nothing but an upper case comma.” [*Footnote*: It also says question mark on the other key over there; press it and you get +.]

The problem is, you see, that the golf-balls are exchangeable to give different type-faces – one of the undoubted attractions of the machine – but the keyboard isn’t. The key-board is a standard type-writer key-board, except that several of the keys have three or four characters marked on them. This is the first clue that golf-balls might not be quite identical in ways other than the mere typeface.

The letters are all right, and so are the numbers from 2 to 9, full stop, comma, semi-colon, colon, round brackets, quotation marks, hyphen and underline. But you can’t trust anything else. There might not seem much left, but it is surprising how often you need a 1, 0 or £, say; not to mention ? and ! – especially in fanzines.

This typeface is called “Courier”. It’s a very good typeface, and Dave likes it a lot (hence *TD*, *Drilkjis*, *The Northern Guffblower* and now *Ansible* [the names are in *Courier Italic*] all use it as the basic typeface). But it has a number of flaws. One of these is the position of the question mark.

I knew it wasn’t on the key marked “?” and dimly remembered it as being on the key with ½ and %. Since Dave didn’t answer, I bravely typed ½. /, it

typed on the stencil. Out came the corflu. The / was obliterated. I typed %, and got my ?. That was another character sorted out. I already knew that there wasn't a 1, and I had to use l – which looks a little tautologous in Courier; it's a lower case L. If you hit the “1” key you get a righthand square bracket, which is a very useful character to have except when you're typing the date –]979. (The [is the upper case]; neither of these is marked.)

So by now I thought I had it sussed, and was typing confidently. Then I came to a heading which required a change of golf-ball to Dual Gothic. Ostentatious, I know, but if you've got it, flaunt it. WAR IN 2¼8 I typed, and stopped.

“There isn't a zero on the Gothic, is there?” I said.

“Er, no. You have to use an upper case O,” said Dave. “Anyway, it does say quarter on that zero key.”

He was right, it was the third character on the key. Courier, of course, has a zero. More corflu. I got the heading right and moved on to the price of his dratted book, which was in Courier again. I changed the golf-ball.

“Pound sign?” I asked.

“Where it says,” said Dave.

“Fine.” I happily typed %. “Oy!” I said. “What's this then?”

“Oh, sorry. I thought you were still on Gothic. Courier doesn't have a pound sign.”

“Bloody Americans!” I thought as I slapped on the corflu again. I found another golf-ball with a compatible pound sign and typed it in. Then came the American edition. Surely they'd get the dollar sign right. But I asked Dave anyway.

“Where it says slash,” said Dave. This seemed reasonable; the actual / was where it said ½, after all.

#, I typed. The level in the corflu bottle was getting very low.

“You did that deliberately!” I said.

“It's a very useful sign, is the hash,” said Dave. “Not many golf-balls give you a hash.”

“Where’s the bloody dollar sign?”

“Try the ‘at’.”

I tried the @ and got my \$. “What’s on the dollar, as a matter of interest?”

“Cents,” said Dave.

Well of course. What else could it be?

When they bring out a golf-ball typewriter with LCD keys that change to match the golf-ball fitted, I might possibly be tempted to buy one. But right now – forget it!

Kevin Smith

Footnote: I had to type * to get that @ above.

I had to type ¾ to get that *.

This Courier doesn’t have a ¾.

Anyone want to buy a sodding golf-ball typewriter? (DRL) [*really KJS*]

Ansible Overflow

[This section originally appeared on a spare half-page in the attached GUFF newsletter The Northern Guffblower, but seems to fit most logically here....]

Huog Award Error: a few days ago, the engraved Hugos arrived complete with creative spelling – the Dramatic Presentation Hugo is a SCIENCE FICTION AGHIEVEMENT trophy. Panic began at once, though the engravers promised corrections by Seacon (SGIENGE FIGTION ACHIEVEMENT ...). The Campbell award was marked SEACON 1978.... • **Late COA:** Phil Stephensen-Payne, c/o Systime SA Ltd, 10th Floor, Delves Square, Cnr. Delves & Kerk Sts., Johannesburg 2001, S Africa. • **Langford Buys SF Book – Scotland Yard Baffled:** the new D.G. Compton, *A Usual Lunacy*, costs \$3.95 from Borgo Press. What’s that in real money? The *Forbidden Planet* bookshop says £2.95, Rog Peyton says £2.75 and Bram Stokes shocks the nation with a mere £2.40. “Not worth changing my opinion of him for 35p,” said a One Tun pundit.... • **Mulligrubs Gives In:** John “Mulligrubs” Collick has yielded to Kev Smith’s Bane; his fanzine (formerly

101 *Ballooning Adventures* ...) will become *Mulligrubs* from issue 3. Those blind to the relevance of a term meaning “stomach pain” must own rotten dictionaries which omit the key word, i.e. colic.... • **Seacon Reich** – **Achtung!** The ordinance has gone forth: famous authors at Seacon are not to sign books at just any time, but only at official signing sessions. Also they must not sign books not bought at Seacon. Also dealers must not arrange signing sessions except at special expensive signing-only tables at which no books may be sold. Brian Aldiss, it seems, has already informed the committee of where to put these directions: he’ll be signing books wherever he finds them, to the annoyance of those who hoped to arrange a committee monopoly of his selling/signing sessions. • **D. West Reads Junk:** desperate for Seacon pocket-money, the Astral League’s High Priest has been mucking out the Gollancz slushpile: “Brain-damaging,” he reports. Watch for Arnold Tharg in yellow jackets next year.... • **Albacon Hotel Is Super** says Ken Slater with many a dribble over the marble foyers and countless bars. Be nice to hear more about the price: D. West’s claim that double rooms cost £37 a night has been pooh-poohed by Albacon, but they seem in no hurry to release the real, discounted prices. So long as the bar prices undercut those reported by the Glicksohn Advance Seacon Survey: 90p/pint for Guinness, 75p for lager.... • **Stop Press! Seacon Happens!** *You read it first in Ansible!* [last stencil 20 Aug]

Oh Godfrey – if Sir Jasper forecloses on Checkpoint, what will be left for us in life?

Merely:

ANSIBLE 1

from Dave Langford
22 Northumberland Avenue
Reading
Berks.
RG2 7PW
UK

PRINTED MATTER – REDUCED RATE

(nb: future issues will contain news.)

***Ansible* 2/3**

September/October 1979

ANSIBLE 2/3: This is the special giant Seacon issue ... hence no fancy heading, no moderation as to size and (in the true Roberts tradition) no punctuality. *Ansible* still comes from Dave Langford, 22 Northumberland Avenue, Reading, Berks, RG2 7PW, UK. Available for news, articles, art, newszine trades, money (4/50p Europe, 3/\$1 NA, 5/£1 Aus). Next issue should be of “normal” size.... September/October 1979.

Seacon '79

To reprint last issue's scoop, Seacon Has Happened! And here to tell you about it are the dregs of UK fandom. Your editor, as befits his position (sort of hunched up at the typewriter), will remain silent for now....

Kevin Smith:

What's to get excited about? You seen one Worldcon, you seen 'em all.

That may or not be true; it is highly irrelevant. Seacon '79 was my first Worldcon, so not for me the blasé, seen-it-all attitude of the experienced American Worldcon-goer. I've been to British cons, of course – since 1972 – and I've even chaired an Eastercon (Skycon in 1978), but the Worldcon was going to be different wasn't it? And I was all excited about it. So was most of British fandom.

It was going to be BIG, for one thing, and so it turned out. It was seven times as big as the previous biggie, Skycon.

There were going to be foreigners there, too. We've had foreigners before, but only in small, easy-to-handle numbers. At Seacon, we Brits were outnumbered by foreigners – about three to one.

It was going to be expensive – despite Mr Weston's protestations a couple of

years ago. Expensive rooms, expensive booze, expensive food, and for a couple of days longer than British cons usually last. But by saving up for months beforehand and staying in a little hotel near the Metropole rather than at it, the wallet managed to stand the strain, just. Me too.

And the feel of it was going to be different. This was a *Worldcon*, damn it, not just any old British con! And there the predictions, or expectations fell apart. The feel of Seacon was *not* different; it was familiar. I felt at home.

So was the whole thing a waste of time and money, then? No, no, a thousand times no! The feel was fannish and familiar, but there were lots of new people who fitted in and contributed to it. Legendary American fans and unknown British neos – I was meeting both for the first time – added enough vitality to break up the established rounds of British fandom without ruining its fannish ambience. It was great, I tell you!

But don't ask me how life was outside the fanroom.

Dave Bridges:

We found Brighton despite my efforts as co-pilot. Indeed we even found the hotel, though I'd left my map at home. First impressions of Brighton were unfavourable – the beach was too pebbly to support a tent. A minor detail. Impressions of the hotel were also unfavourable – it was faded and getting old. The furniture was shabby and the style outdated. We were pleased not to have booked a room. Now to the convention, for it's the convention we were here to enjoy, not the luxuries of a hotel. Impressions? It was faded and getting old. It was only Saturday evening but already everyone looked as though they'd been living it up for months and were just no feeling the error of their ways. I was at once lost in a sea of faces. Richard and Ian didn't even bother to swim for shore – they simply went out to find a pub.

We had arrived too late – already the gates were down, the convention closed. Later we tried to watch a film, but it was like watching a home movie projected onto a dark wall for lack of a screen. Then, when at the end of each reel there was a pause while the projectionist got himself sorted out, we decided this wasn't good enough and went to find some sleep.

We'd found a room at the hotel – our own suite with private washroom and toilets. In fact we were camped out in a deserted cloakroom in a disused

lobby: the only thing in our price range.

The only parts of the convention I saw that came even close to my expectations of professionalism were the exhibition from Dragon's Dream and the book room, which of course *were* professional. The rest of the con was amateur and looked it. No better, and in some cases worse, than a normal convention. Even the fan room looked as though someone had forgotten to wind it up.

We went out onto the beach to play in the pebbles and entertain ourselves with games of "Bink" and "Fill-his-shirt-with-rocks". This was fun. We left while it was still Sunday, there being little else to do.

If this was a Worldcon, the Americans are welcome to them.

Bob (FOKT) Shaw:

Seacon was good. It began on time, and ended on time. It has a whole lot of things that you could do, and a lot of people to talk to. Or so I'm told, for I seemed mostly to see the same old faces as before, and only rarely attended the Programme in whatever form....

Everything about Seacon's organisation smacked (at least to someone who was relatively outside the actual nitty-gritty of the organisation) of care and good sense. The mammoth problems compared to most UK cons in the past were coped with in a way to make me, as a sometime Faircon chairman, quite envious.

The Gophers, until the revolution, seemed to (a) have a hell of a time and (b) get on with it; the walkie-talkies, radio mikes etc. seemed to obviate so many of the awkward pauses that might have occurred while runners passed messages.

The things that did go wrong were almost traditional, despite the "help" of paid outsiders – the film projection facilities (for the satanically-created 35mm projectors, at least) just were not up to scratch. Still, there comes a time when you've just got to accept what the contractor says. In this case, they blew it. But that was the only failure of the technology at Seacon.

The hotel was *dear*. Hellish expensive, but obviously at least trying. And, after one night of slightly strong-arm tactics, sensible about room parties.

(Even then, compared to Skycon they were pussycats.) The geography of the place was awkward; but if there were so few conference centres available, you have to take what's going.

The "usual" items – art show, dealer's room, fan room etc were all OK. I'm told *Omni* screwed up the plans for security with books, but that wasn't too bad a flaw. [*] The Art Show I did not like. The crazy Heath Robinson arrangements that passed for display boards made the amateur/semi-pro side look foolish and awkward. Which is the way that many of the artists felt when trying to hang their works.... And the Art Show was totally overwhelmed by the Dragon's Dream exhibition. Beautiful.

But how did I *feel* about the con? In the first place it was like being back at my first con. The old new-boy-at-school feeling.... There seemed to be thousands of (sometimes hugely fat) American fans, all of whom knew one another and would walk all over us poor, downtrodden UK types in the process of exchanging funny handshakes. The actual number of semi-alcoholic illiterates (such as the Albacon committee) did not seem much higher than at a normal con. I didn't meet all that many new people; the whole affair, for me, was like a 5 day Eastercon, with people. How many fans *can* you have a pint with?

Memories: "Superman" making with the apologies for beating *Hitch-Hiker's Guide*; Bob Shaw almost dancing with glee over his Hugo; a certain US national, his Hugo and the queue of people *not* willing to take it back to the states for him; Arthur Clarke and his slightly small suit.... Plus nasties: the guy who got clonked on the head by a falling pint mug (the Yanks hated *that*) and the cretin from Yorkshire who blacked ½r Cruttenden's eye.

Overall, a Good Thing.

[* The idea was fine: *Omni* provided standardized bags for book room purchases, which were to be sealed and rubber-stamped across the seal to achieve total security. Only the bags proved to be black plastic (except for the *Omni* logo) and the Time of the Invisible Rubber Stamp was at hand. DRL]

Alun Harries:

What little I can remember.... Being extremely rude to Cathy Ball and waiting

3 days to apologize. A party held in the ladies' toilet on the sixth floor. A member of the Metropole staff asking me to leave at 4am. My first sensible, if curtailed, conversation with Alan Dorey without the threat of unsuppressed physical violence. Beer at 60p a pint. Telling John Harvey that he would make a good blockhead.

Enough incestuousness. I do not consider Seacon the best place for a first experience of conventions. I went to Novacon 8 *because* I did not want a Worldcon to be my first contact with fandom as a group. I did speak to a few "virgin" attendees and they were having a great time ... but it was an atypical event, both in size and atmosphere, and they may well be disappointed in future.

Joseph Nicholas:

Seacon was huge by British standards, of course, but almost the only times I noticed the vastness of its attendance were at the opening and closing ceremonies; sitting in the gallery above the main hall, looking down at the crowds and think "Christ! Thousands of them!" like a battle of Britain fighter pilot encountering his first Luftwaffe air raid. Otherwise it somehow contrived to seem not unlike a big Eastercon, only with a wider variety of accents: lots of people unknown to me milling around looking for things to do, the obligatory clumps of D&D players who never seemed to do anything else, people known to me huddled in the Fan Room drinking themselves slowly into a stupor, and I – having rashly said "yes" to Roy's 15-month-previous request to run the book auctions – rushing around either making sure everything got where it was supposed to or filling out innumerable record sheets in a forlorn attempt to keep track of the proliferating mounds of auction material suddenly flowing in from every direction, much of it helpfully unaccompanied by the detailed lists so thoughtfully not prepared by its sellers many weeks beforehand. Which is the main reason why I didn't notice Seacon's hugeness: I was too bloody busy, and in consequence missed most of the programme items that I really wanted to see. (Ah, the selflessness of my dedication!) But I daresay most other committee members/helpers will claim as much for themselves, so why complain? The evenings, after all, were virtually trouble-free, and I've a fund of anecdotes about all kinds of trivial incidents, all begging to be expressed on paper – but not here. Contrary

to what Kev Smith said in the fake flyer, *Another Bloody Fanzine* will publish occasional conreps, so you can read them all there. Like, for instance, what Cathy Ball said to me when –

[Editorial intrusion: Kev Smith denies having taken Joseph's style in vain in the *ABF* flyer (now a collector's item). Could you disbelieve an accountant? Of course you couldn't. More news about Joe later this issue.... DRL]

Lisanne Sutherland:

I was one of the Fancy Dress competitors. We gathered in Hall 2 at 7.30pm for the pre-judging and photographic session. After being allocated numbers, we were herded behind a curtain into a tiny triangular area. There were 60-70 people at least, in costumes ranging from scantily fragile to bulkily fragile, all trying to squeeze into the tiny space until their name was called. In fact we had to overflow into Hall 1 – there was no way Katie and her 20ft wings could have fitted in there.

On hearing your number, you emerged to walk past the battery of cameras, stopping briefly on each of the 3 marked areas. We had to do this twice. Then it was 9pm and were lined up behind curtained screens in Hall 1 waiting for the real competition ... at this point a friend had to be taken out of her robot maid costume suffering from heat prostration. None of us had expected to be on our feet so long, nor had we anticipated the cramped, overheated conditions. After that incident, kind souls came round with glasses of iced water and saved several lives! (Thank you from all of us, whoever you are.) The only really cool ones amongst us were those in body paint or (like our Katie) in wings!

The worst part was, as usual, waiting to go on. Once on the stage, it was too late to worry. Then there was the wait for the results. I don't know how long *that* took, since it isn't ethnic for Darkovans to wear wrist watches; it seemed to take hours. Only afterwards were we free to find liquid sustenance and to change. We had been in costume for at least 5 hours: a long time for those in robot, android, dragon, star-trooper, Darth vader and green wookie costumes.

It was an experience. I thought the couple of hours at Yorcon Fancy Dress were bad ... those for whom this was their first Worldcon fancy-dress learned

something – to wear as little as possible!

[Note to future organizers: it was a minor mistake not to have roped off the part of the hall reserved for competitors after they'd paraded. Instead there was an irascible security guard who ordered people around more or less at random and irrespective of whether they were standing in the way of anything. Though my memory may be playing tricks, I seem to recall this chap walking round me to evict D. West, who was standing further away from the reserved area than I... By the way, Lianne won something or other with her group, as she fails to mention partly through modesty and partly because she revealed all in a piece for Ken Slater's catalogue. Rumour had it that Katie Davies wanted to reveal all also, but settled for a G-string and wings which coyly hid her shoulder blades. DRL]

John Harvey:

I did more humping at Seacon than at any convention I've been to. For the benefit of American readers, that means carrying boxes of books, fanzines, programme books, equipment, more books, displays and yet more books. I've not lost more sweat since I worked on the furnaces at a steelworks. Add the pleasure of driving a 35cwt van overladen with the above items, and I started Seacon absolutely worn out.

Eve appeared to have the fan room mostly under control by Friday; the TV games machines were glowing red hot and bulging with 10p pieces. The man with the big sack had arrived to empty them when Eve remarked: "Didn't we have 8 machines?" "Of course," I replied. "Well there's only 7 now." "WHAT?"

I madly rushed around the room counting. Only 7 present. I spent the next hour with Martin Easterbrook going frantic looking for the machine. Nobody could have pinched it – could they? Hotel staff said they'd seen people struggling with one – through the doors to the *street*. Which master criminal, in broad daylight, under our very noses ...? Visions of Seacon having to pay out £2000+ came to mind. We tracked the machine to a suite in the hotel and were less than polite to the miscreant – who, it turned out, had ordered

machines and found them delivered to the Fan Room. When he liberated one for his own use he forgot to tell anyone.

The Seacon newssheet proved a trial: Graham England announced that our duplicator had broken down at 4am – what d’you expect, I thought, it’s not used to late nights. So jolly hours were spent up to my elbows in ink. Thanks to Dave Langford for helping change the inkpad I tore. Make me feel like a *real* faned with my inky fingers.

The highlight of the con must have been the banquet – and the Hugos. All those authors venturing out of the SFWA suite like woodworm out of a bedhead. Perhaps the fanroom party with its powerful punch was even better; and then there was the gopher party with a mountain of booze and everyone getting very silly and the scene fading away to the haunting sound all too familiar at conventions ... something that leaves little piles on the carpet!

Alan Mattingly:

This being my very, very, very first con, I haven’t much to compare it with – all the British fans I met said it was rather boring as cons go, while the US fans (Rich Coad, anyway – he’s really British) said how bluddy good it was & made US cons look like feminist rallies.

As I’m a neo, more or less, perhaps I should give a brief account of how I met the big name fans & the barriers that were encountered...

On entering the fanroom (after many amazing adventures in the labyrinthine passages of the Metropole trying to avoid American fans who wobbled about like giant weebles) I felt sheepish, to say the least. I’d read about how hard it is for a neo to get “in”. So I merely viewed the exhibits, eyeing the probable fans dubiously, trying to judge their sanity. The first I actually encountered was Greg Killerpigs. I was at that moment thumbing through a pile of *Seamonsters 3*; Mr K sauntered nonchalantly across to me & said in an affected voice, “That’s 50p”. “No it’s not, I get mine free.” A bemused expression crossed his (face?). He looked at my name badge, stared hard into my eyes. “So you’re ~~Anal~~ Alan Mattingly?!” [*] He screamed with laughter, folding up & rolling about the floor. “Here Simone,” he called, “look, it’s Alan Mattingly.”

Simone, somewhat more polite than young Killerpigs, grimaced. “Oh yes,

you write me those, er, illegible locs.” She drifted away but not before Kev Smith had come to my defence: “He writes quite good letters to me.” (I like Kev.) K, trying his hardest to lose me, palmed me off onto Steve Higgins, who gave me a guided tour of major UK fans present: Dave Langford thrust a copy of *TD16* into my hands, mumbled something about skinheads and punks, then disappeared. John Collick cringed. D. West said: “I’ve never heard of you” and crawled away. John Harvey said: “I was on the toilet when I read that typo[*], I’ve been meaning to write a letter of apology but every time I sit down to write it I can’t help curling up with laughter ... it was one of Eve’s best you know.”

And so on....

[* “Anal Mattingly”: famous *Matrix* typo, © Eve Harvey and the BSFA, 1979.]

Pamela Boal:

... I’m not exactly in a position to write a report but I do have a bill to prove I almost attended Seacon.

[This is the conclusion of Pamela’s contribution, which ran to 2,500 words and Wouldn’t Fit. Pamela had a rough time: the Bedford was impossible for her wheelchair and she had to move to the Metropole (which like the Bedford “caters for the disabled” – i.e. has one toilet with the wheelchair symbol on the door, provided you can get up the steps to find it). At least, you’d think, someone staying in the hotel which includes the Seacon exhibition complex should have no trouble. You’d be wrong. The exhibition/conference bit is an afterthought to the main body of the Metropole, and each has its own lifts: however, they are linked only by two flights of stairs, neither with even a handrail. Pamela and one or two other people unable to climb stairs enjoyed a delightful quarter-mile walk round the side of the hotel (often in the rain) whenever they wished to go from hotel room to con hall or vice versa. This is not a trivial matter: those who like me can crawl drunkenly up stairs without a second thought are apt to underestimate problems of access. (Note how cretin Langford used

the word “walk” in the last sentence but one, for example – not quite the word for a tortuous progress by wheelchair over appallingly maintained pavements.) The next con committee is advised to take note.... Anyone wanting to see or publish Pamela’s full exposition should drop me a line. DRL]

John Collick:

I was thinking of doing a kind of stream of consciousness piece, something along the lines of WEDNESDAY: Euurgh, aargh, bleurgh, gasp, *thud*. THURSDAY: Yech, yeurch ... but as you quite rightly pointed out, it would have become a bit tiresome after the third paragraph. However, it certainly reflects how I felt during and after the Worldcon, it was certainly fast, gruelling and physically overwhelming and I seemed to come rather worse off than most people. In the first three days I was brutally kneed in the groin by mild-mannered David Pringle and I sprained my ankle escaping from the clutches of D. West (as well as tripping and sliding three yards along the corridor on my knees). One thing that took me aback was the room-party situation. At British cons I’m used to wandering in and out of room parties unchallenged, whether invited or not. What struck me when drifting through the parties at Seacon was the unfriendliness of the participants. At the Australia in ’83 party I was challenged by some irate little woman who insisted that I should have brought several bottles and a picnic hamper in order to gain admittance, and I soon lost count of the number of invitation-only affairs. Mind you, the Scandinavians had the right idea. All you had to do was wander into their party with an empty glass shouting “Schøndünaviahä ürhn ’83” and it was instantly filled with whiskey as several slim Panatellas were thrust into your top pocket. Because of the cliqueishness of most of the room parties (and the vast crowd in the Swedish one) most nights were spent on the stairs shouting Astral Hymns or standing outside the SFWA being crushed into the wallpaper pattern every time someone opened the door. The final ignominy came when I ended up having a conversation with Alun Harries on the floor of a women’s toilet. Strange con, Seacon.

Cyril Simsa:

... I might yet someday soon produce a full report that tells in detail of the things that came to pass before my beadiest of eyes (you know the sort of bead I mean – the kind that’s made of polished glass); at present, though, I feel struck dumb – as speechless as a corncrake going round a threshing mill (and round and round and round).

I could recount how dashing Alan Dorey entertains photographers; I could expound on Leroy Kettle’s blitz of Sunday’s stairwell parties (“I’ve been talking to hotel security; they say we must stop walking on their carpets”); I could even, if pressed, recall the trendy journalist who came looking for street-incredibility, but ended up by talking to a spiky Cambridge undergrad, interrogating him in anxious tones on where the punks had gone; I could ... I could, but probably I won’t, if only ’cause the so-called anecdotal style of fanwriting is killing off the fannish fanzine, right?

I don’t know why I go to cons: at the beginning and the end I always feel deeply depressed. – Ah, but the period in between: the part that slips away so quickly when you try to write it down – -the concentrated essence of a con which always drags you back for more....

Seacon was simply the most concentrated con I’ve ever been to.

[But what was that about my style of fanwriting? ... DRL]

Mike Dickinson:

As grievously damaged braincells order themselves into some lumpish semblance of normality I must confess that I have just spent (Wednesday to Tuesday) the best week of my life. Some of the credit must go to the con committee, especially Peter Weston, whose new talent for pleasant silliness must be kept up, and the superbly organized Kevin Williams. The speakers also deserve credit, although I suspect that the only one I’ll always remember is the saintlike Sturgeon, who spoke more good sense about important things than I’ve ever heard in so short a time. However, programme events are not vital to the life of the con: the people are, and I met more new people who were open, friendly and interesting than I could expect in a year’s mundane activity. In fact I believe I have made several friends and if anyone can suggest a better way of passing a week than that he is welcome to his suggestion.

Of course I am referring to Americans. I came to the con with a slightly nervous curiosity, after all that had been stated in zines beforehand about how different from us they were. I knew there were some I wanted to meet, whom I wanted to be more than just names: all were charming, especially the amazing Joyce Scrivner and Terry Hughes – a one-man justification of TAFF. However it was the ordinary American fan-in-the-con which was the revelation. They treat the convention like a holiday in the Mardi Gras sense – normal rules do not apply. Liberated women in appreciable numbers, a cheap and plentiful supply of the finer things in life and a cultivation of silliness (I remember the disappointment expressed that Phil Foglio did not wear his moose antlers for the Hugo awards) help, but where was the paranoia and drunken belligerence? Surely it is not possible to run a con without them. Perhaps again those liberated women make a difference and even Kevin Smith will agree that men don't exactly suffer. A final myth to dispose of – American authors are no more stand-offish than British. For every Pournelle there are several fans who (like Rob Holdstock) also write professionally, such as the Haldemans and the Eisensteins.

Thanks to the organizers, thanks to the people I met, especially thanks to the good fans of Chicago and Minneapolis: I'll see you there sometime. Let's do it again in '84.

[Or in '83, as Martin Hoare is reported to have been babbling ... no thanks. The power-struggles for '83 and '84 already seem well-defined, and it would be (in my humble opinion) idiotic to enter a late bid for either year. A few fans, euphoric from Seacon, *are* murmuring of '86 or '87 and adding in low tones that Malcolm Edwards wouldn't make a bad chairman. Ah well, these mini-reports are of course all highly subjective: to take a couple of instances from Mike's, Sturgeon annoyed Chris Priest by being too "twee" while Peter Weston's patter was termed "dire" by several people. What a good thing that I missed one and failed to hear most of the other, thus being spared the horror of possessing contentious opinions.... DRL]

Alan Dorey: *The Real Seacon*

Rich Coad knew where we were going. My drink supply was low. My

balance wasn't what it could have been, and we just *had* to find somewhere that resembled a room party.

"Gee, this place looks kinda neat." The door, already ajar, was breached like one running the four minute mile in ten seconds, and we fell on top of an untidy group of other people, each displaying a different stage of inebriation. Apart from Brian Parker, attempting to talk to a captive audience of Heady Matters, it looked well appointed – a nice long bench along one wall, a deep pile carpet, and three doors at one end. Large cans and bottles of booze appeared, and soon disappeared in the approved manner. Joe Nicholas also materialized from somewhere, so he was allocated a space in one corner just in case he lapsed into unconsciousness again.

"Where's the bog?" I somehow managed to splutter, realizing that my bladder was exerting far more pressure on my brain's decision-making process than was my craving for alcohol. An American female lying sprawled across the floor flapped ineffectively towards the three doors. "Great, which fucking door is it?" With a stunning display of logic, spiced with a fear of great embarrassment, I tried the first ... and success. Bladder relieved, I staggered out again, only to see Joe fall out of the adjoining door with a similarly soporific smile upon his face. "There's two bogs in this room?" I said, marvelling at my powers of deduction. "Right on there chief." I then saw Mike Dickinson stagger into the third door. "Another bog?" Mike grinned as only drunks can. Bloody Hell! What an absolutely superb hotel room ... lots of carpet ... lots of room ... three bogs ... and can't even see the beds! And Christ ... what bloody *huge* ash trays they've got in here! Even down to the instructions on how to incinerate cigarettes. Must be to help the Americans.

Peter Weston forced his way in later ... this was it. The usual bit ... "Can't have long-haired British fans terrorizing sleeping residents. Back to your own hotels ... take a thousand lines and see me in the morning." But no ... Weston was drunk too! And demanded a pen so that he could inscribe rude words on Joe's face ... legs, arms, knees and handbag. "I've always wanted to do this!" he screamed anarchically – and there are photographs to prove it.

Suddenly a woman burst into the room. "Bloody hell ... this is a private room party! You can only come in if you've got gallons of drink and six sex-starved women outside." "Oh my god ... who are all you nuts? Can't you read

the bloody notice on the door? This is the Ladies' Powder Room!"

So now we knew.

Linda Hutchinson:

The fan room ... the strangest assortment of accents and tongues I'd heard outside Oxford. We found some friendly faces, and even friendlier wallets, and proceeded to swap scandal. I'm positive that there were some disgusting facts about Peter Weston, but unfortunately I can't remember which were about him and which about others. Not that it really matters – most people seem to get up to the same disgusting things.

The first day ended as usual with too much beer and a splitting headache; the other days blended into a homogeneous mass of beer and writhing bodies. People seemed to disappear whilst you were speaking to them, carried away on a tide of heaving drunken "humanity" headed god knows where for Christ knows what. The only person who kept reappearing was Boris (perhaps cloned). Memories of the Denver bidding party, with bodies sprawled every which way, of Langford lying supine with Joyce Scrivner, of Joe Nicholas in impassioned embrace with a mass of hair attached to some woman, of Cas being pursued by a clean-cut young American (possibly a Mormon missionary), of trying to convince first-time American visitors of the merits of British beer (difficult when only Watneys was left), and of confessing to Boris that I'd been to some programmed events (only the films and play) – maybe because I was carried along by the forever heaving bodies, maybe because there were more events than usual, maybe because at times I gave up hope of finding someone who didn't want to talk about the significance of *Battlestar Galactica* to the human condition in a modern technological world (this is true: a very intense young lady was engaged in just such a conversation). Or maybe just to stop tripping over TV crews and Boris.

Others:

Jean Sheward: "Someone should have warned me about Keith Walker years ago. I spent the duration of Seacon dodging this self-confessed non-fan, and while the ladies' loo at the Metropole is luxuriously appointed it fails to reach

the high level of cultural interface which is such a feature of the Tun cubby-hole.” [Next time, try the powder room.] ... **Peter Nicholls:** “Here, a week late, 2,600 words too long, and not nearly as funny as my previous attempt, is my promised con report.” [This has been promoted from humble *Ansible* to the high-class and suitably prolix *Drilkjis* – next issue real soon now.] ... **Mike Glicksohn:** “Already, the five and a half week trip is just a fuzzy memory. Come to think of it, though, it was a fuzzy memory while it was happening so perhaps it isn’t too surprising that it seems part of the remote past already.” ... **Steve McDonald:** “I was sorely disappointed in Jo Nicholas for standing and giving me that ‘I’m pissed out of my mind and couldn’t give a fuck WHAT you call me’ look.... I got to sit next to John Brunner and Ben Bova in a nearby pub. Very weird, that.... The things I do to meet Langford and Smith.” ... **Chris Priest:** “I was never one to know when a joke has gone on too long.” ... **Bob FOKT Shaw:** “My feelings are mixed – it was a great Eastercon, but ...”

Me:

I enjoyed Seacon. This says startlingly little about the real quality of the con, since we vile elitist (etc, etc) fannish fans have strange and unfair resources to fall back on, no matter how newcomers may be suffering; however, the consensus seems to be that Dave Bridges is all wet just this once and that Seacon was good stuff. Little or no part in this was played by my programme appearances: a repeat of my megagenocide talk from Yorcon (now reprinted in *Drilkjis*) and a fanwriting panel. The latter I almost missed – I was punished for lateness by being handed the microphone and left alone for several subjective hours until my babblings died away utterly – while the former was immensely egoboosting since there was standing room only and even Peter Weston couldn’t (he said) get in, while (if Leroy Kettle can be believed) there were fewer people in the main con hall than my little one. All this set me pretending to be a pro – remorselessly pouncing on copies of my book and signing them despite the owners’ cries of protest – until overweening hubris led me to the SFWA suite and an attempt to sign up. Oh, they said. Oh, we never thought anyone from Britain would want to join. So we didn’t bring any application forms; so there. I spent the rest of the con in the fan room; it felt just like an Eastercon, though somehow I missed all the traditional clashes with heavily-armed security. The gap was filled when, as I

left the Metropole one night, I was searched on suspicion of harbouring stolen cameras. This still rankles (as does the distressing fact that I was fuller of whisky than witty repartee, and accepted the outrage in blank silence); however, Seacon felt precisely like a traditional UK con after that. The American accents were one hint that something bigger was happening Out There; another was the feeling of a vast echo-chamber in which the con's rumours were reverberating. To pass on a rumour in the fan-room was like shouting in some immense cavern: after a disconcerting long interval the echo returns, weirdly distorted by its reflections along all the halls and corridors of the Metropole. Thus the great "American Riffraff" story: if Joyce Scrivner has got it right, the phrase was used *sotto voce* by a "snooty British lady" as she informed US fan Jane Hawkins that this here party was by invitation only, and so on. By the time the rumour-mills had finished, the phrase was on the lips of Vonda McIntyre's publishers as they brutally hurled her from their select gathering; a security man was said to have spat "American riffraff" at Karen Anderson whilst barring her from the party where hubby Poul and the SFWA were disporting themselves; "American Riffraff" badges sprouted like mushrooms; an international incident seemed imminent, but nothing much actually happened. Still wilder rumours were flying when the con was over: Charles Platt had denounced Chris Priest to SFWA as being responsible for mockery of their members via the Jacqueline Lichtenberg Appreciation Society! Jerry Pournelle had offered physical violence to Charles Platt! Marion Zimmer Bradley and others were working to have Chris Priest drummed out of SFWA! Ted White was to become editor of *Heavy Metal* at \$50,000 per annum! Greg Pickersgill and Simone Walsh had split up! Andrew Kaveney (*Foundation* reviewer) had changed sex! It seemed that Seacon had distorted our sense of reality forever. All those post-con rumours proved to be true. Help.

The Great Anticlimax Other Conventions

Albacon (31st Eastercon, 4-6 April 1980, Albany Hotel, Glasgow) has finally released some more data. Hotel rates are £11.70 per person per night, including VAT and service but not breakfast ... I got away with £15.18 *with* cooked breakfast for a double room at Seacon, but then I avoided the posh

hotels. Booking forms out in “early September”, but mine hasn’t come yet. Bob Fokt Shaw says of the hotel: “At first sight it just looks like a slick money-stealer, but the facilities seem to get better the more we look. The main con hall is smaller than we’d like...” But who visits the main con hall, eh? £5 full membership (rises in 1980) or £2 supporting to Gerry Gillin, 9 Dunottar St, Glasgow G33. There’s vague talk down south of arranging an excursion train from London to Glasgow, probably starting around mid-day on the Thursday or whenever the train times permit – those interested should ask Eve Harvey (I think).

Eastercon 1981 could return to the Leeds Dragonara, site of the successful Yorcon; the exact composition of the bidding committee keeps changing. No opposition appears to have declared itself, though there’s a faint rumour that the Edinburgh group would like to justify all Southern paranoia by keeping the Eastercon in Scotland. Shaping up for ’82 is an all-woman committee with Eve Harvey (chair), Pat Charnock (registrations), Coral Jackson, Kath Mitchell, Simone Walsh, Chris Atkinson and Sue Williams. This may switch to ’81 if Leeds founders. I hope to see some advance fliers at Novacon and thus have time to think....

Faancon 5 (Feb 1-3 1980, Cambridge) has single rooms at £7.48, double at £14.95 inc. VAT and cooked breakfast – £9.78/£16.10 with shower. More of the hardcore fannish fans are taking an interest this time, it seems. £1.50 to Celia Parsons, House in the Field, May Hill, Longhope, Glos. GL17 0NP.

Denvention II is the ’81 Worldcon (Sept 2-7 1981, Denver Hilton) – it beat the Los Angeles (130 votes) and Seattle (320) with a decisive 453 votes. (H’m: what is the missing word in that sentence? bids/wookies/omissions/delete as appropriate.) Rates: \$4/£2 if you voted and presupported, \$5/£2.50 if you merely voted, \$15/£7.50 otherwise – for attending membership, which will rise in 1980. Supporting membership is half this until 1980: it rises to \$15. Attending is \$25 1 Jan 80 to 1 Sept 80, thereafter still more. Addresses: Denvention II, PO Box 11545, Denver, CO 80211, USA or (Europe) Graham England, 1 Fleetway, Didcot, Oxon OX11 8BZ, UK. Pro GoH: C.L. Moore and Clifford Simak. Fan: Rusty Hevelin.

Worldcon 83 could be in Australia (\$3A supporting to PO Box J175, Brickfield Hill, 2000 NSW, Australia), or Baltimore (?), or Scandinavia (£1 supporting to 191 The Heights, Northolt, Middlesex). That’s Sydney,

Baltimore or Copenhagen. Rumoured flaws are said to be (respectively) Melbourne rivalry, lack of information and lack of experience. I incline to Australia: but more when it happens.

Publications

Lots of things for sale again. Even *Speculation* was on sale at Seacon, Peter Weston having dumped the remaining copies of the 33rd issue as free gifts in the fan room – whereupon D. West sold 23 of them at 30p each to unsuspecting passers-by.... **Official Seacon Publications** are available from Eve & John Harvey, 55 Blanchland Rd, Morden, Surrey SM4 5NE: these are *The Enchanted Duplicator* (43pp, 70p), *Mood 70* (fanthology ed. Kev Smith, with Charnock, Edwards, Holdstock, Kettle, Langford, Nicholls, Pickersgill; 64pp, £1.20), *Fanartist Scrapbook* (Bell, Barker, Clark, Gregory, Hansen, Higgins, Hunter, McKie, Parker, Stephenson, Wellbank, West; £1.20): postage 30p each, 40p for 2 or 3.... **Collected Bob Shaw** vols 1 and 2 available from Rob Jackson, 8 Lavender Rd, West Ewell, Surrey KT19 9EB, or Joyce Scrivner, 2528 15th Ave S, Minneapolis, MN 55404, USA: *Best of the Bushel* (64pp, A5, 32 illos, £1.10/\$2.20) and *The Eastercon Speeches* (52pp, A5, 35 illos, £1/\$2), both post free.... **Other Fanthology** is *By British* ed. Maule and Nicholas (Kettle, Smith, Piggott, Charnock, Langford, Shaw, Brosnan, Priest, Stephenson, Hansen, Holdstock; 81pp, £1.50/\$3 post free) – from Ian Maule, 5 Beaconsfield Rd, New Malden, Surrey, KT3 3HY or Terry Hughes, 606 N Jefferson St, Arlington, VA 22205, USA.... **Fritz Leiber: A Bibliography** compiled by Chris Morgan (36pp, 2pp photos, £1.50/\$3) has been approved by Leiber (“Nice job”): available from me, post free.

Sercondom

Paul Barnett, late of David & Charles and pseudonymous editor of *Aries 1*, reveals more: “Oho, so *Aries 1* hasn’t been on the bestseller charts? Perhaps it’s to do with the fact that D&C *very carefully* made sure that they got absolutely no trade publicity for it whatsoever during the build-up to Seacon. All three trade journals had special sf issues, plus additional features in other issues, covered with reviews of and ads for sf books published by absolutely everybody apart from D&C. It got quite suspenseful in the weeks before

Seacon, wondering if D&C could manage yet again not to get the book mentioned.” Well, well. *Not Aries 2* is paying £75/1000 words, but only huge name authors need apply (said editor Paul Begg, toying with a slushpile containing 3 Lafferty manuscripts)... Dave Pringle is (“99% certain”) becoming assistant editor at Maxim Jakubowski’s “Virgin Books”, which starts up in October – he expects to move to London in the near future.... Steve McDonald reports on Orson Scott Card’s dragon anthology: “Ace refuse to issue contracts and pay for *Dragontales*, so 26 very pissed off authors and one raging Mormon editor are all firing little lumps of shit in Jim’s direction.” (I.e. Jim Baen’s direction. Ah, Jim’s OK really. Bought two of mine, didn’t he?).... **Kevin Smith Sells At Last!!!** An event fit to compare with G. Peyton Wertenbaker’s first sale rocked the sf world as *Ad Astra* editor James Manning offered Kevin a lucrative £35 contract for his story of devil-worship in Croydon. Already this rising young star in the sf galaxy is planning a tale of aliens in Croydon.... Meanwhile in Japan, pros and fans voted separately on all-time best translated sf. Owing to a temporary anomaly (Kevin’s story not yet having been translated), Clarke’s *Childhood’s End* topped both polls.... **WARRSF:** We also received rejection slips from Ed Ferman and Stanley Schmidt. Rats.

FAANs

Checkpoint covered the Hugos and left me the dregs (by the way, the infinitely more important *Checkpoint* poll will continue in *Ansible*). FAAN winners were Jeanne Gomoll & Janice Bogstad (joint best editor), Bob Shaw (fan writer), Alexis Gilliland (humorous art), Joan Hanke-Woods (who? serious art), Harry Warner (LOC writer) and *Mythologies 14* ed. Don D’Amassa (single issue). 99 votes were cast, so the awards aren’t as neglected as Victoria Wayne feared: but UK participation was virtually zero. Thrifty Brits won’t pay to vote....

Fan Funds

GUFF raised £25.43 at Seacon, more than half from auction of stuff donated by Chris Priest (to whom praise). But Mike Glicksohn would like a word: “That Priest fellow reveals the typical chauvinism of Big Name Pros who are

only interested in seeing their names WRIT LARGE in the fan press. (When we fail to kowtow, some even print their own fanzines just to practise the writing large of their own names; disgraceful example of egomania, isn't it?) He mentions all these stfnal hegras to Australia and *deliberately mentions only the pros!* What about John Berry, Jan Finder, Don Thompson, Denny Lien, Susan Wood, even Mike Glicksohn?..." I confronted Chris with this letter and he said "Well, I didn't know about them..." GUFF will run from here to Australia in 1981 – interested fans should start thinking about getting nominated.

TAFFman Terry Hughes turned out to be a great guy, no argument. Next year's nominations will close soon – write to Terry or Peter Roberts swiftly if you'd like to try the UK-US race – hell, you've only me and Barker to beat. (Joe Nicholas's momentary enthusiasm seems to have waned.)

COA

Simone Walsh, 13 Ferme Park Road, Finsbury Park, London, N.4 / Dai Price, Flat 4, 14 Plastwton Gardens, Canton, Cardiff, CF1 9HF

Misc

Ian Maule has gone into a frenzy of fanpublishing since Seacon – a flood of *Paranoids*, each better than the next. These are released at Surrey Limpwrist meetings (2nd & 4th Wed each month at the Southampton, Surbiton station). **Chris Priest** has looked in on said gatherings as part of his continuing fannish renaissance: next comes the secret apa FEAPA (the invitations to which say 20 Oct when they should really read 22 March 1980). A spate of Jackie Lichtenberg Appreciation Society fliers has also been appearing, most recently giving the address 70 Ledbury Rd, London W.11.... **Useless Facts Dept:** 19,000 pints were drunk at Seacon by the time of the closing ceremony.... Simone Walsh's car was nicked from near the Tun just before Seacon (it later turned up near the Elephant & Castle; since then she's been parking it as close as possible and unobtrusively leaning on it all evening).... Andrew Kaveney (Ms) now wishes to be known as Ros (pronounced and for all I know spelt "Roz") Kaveney: she was looking forward to silicone injections in September. Such is the fate of those who write negative reviews

of Jack Chalker.... Following its consecration as an official Dr Who gathering place in some dreadful prozine, the Tun is more packed than ever and there are hints of a growing fannish urge to move elsewhere.... Alan Dorey and Joe Nicholas will shortly be sharing a flat near Victoria station ... watch for COA here....

“Fandom is a damn sight better life than pushing peanuts up the Pennines with your penis.” (G. Pickersgill)

ANSIBLE 2/3

from Dave Langford

22 Northumberland Ave

READING, Berks. RG2 7PW

UK

PRINTED MATTER REDUCED

***Ansible* 4**

November 1979

ANSIBLE 4 from Dave Langford, 22 Northumberland Ave, Reading, Berks, RG2 7PW, UK. Cost 4/50p Europe, 3/\$1 NA, Africa, 5/\$1 Australia: credit given for news, art, articles, newszine trades. Subscriptions have been transferred from *Checkpoint* and also the long-deceased *SF International News*: kindly Keith Freeman arranged the latter and is responsible for the snazzy BSFA-style mailing labels with their oh-so-subtle hint at the number of the last issue you will receive without further effort. If you don't have one of these suave labels it means that (a) you have no credit whatsoever and have merely talked me into giving you a copy – shame; (b) I haven't got your address into Keith's files yet; (c) the label fell off; or (d) some other doubtless excellent reason applies. This issue is dated November 1979.

Obituary

Dr Christopher Evans died on 10th October. He was 48. By profession a psychologist and computer scientist, he had a long-standing interest in science fiction. He edited two anthologies of psychological sf/horror stories, *Mind at Bay* and *Mind in Chains*; was on the masthead of *New Worlds* as science editor for issues 175-194 (and also published articles and “computer fiction” in the magazine); and was a contributing editor to *Omni*. His books include *Cults of Unreason* – an entertaining and perceptive study of scientology and other pseudoscience – and the recently-published *The Mighty Micro*, on the likely impact of the microprocessor revolution. A six-part TV series written and presented by him, based on *The Mighty Micro*, was to have been broadcast starting in early September, but has been delayed by the commercial TV strike here; presumably it will still appear. He contributed sf-related material to *Penthouse* – including interviews with Asimov, Ballard and Bova – and appeared quite regularly on TV and radio in this country. He was a member of the Science Fiction Foundation.

He had been seriously ill earlier this year, but had appeared to be recovering at Seacon, where he gave a talk on machine intelligence; it proved to be his last public appearance. He became ill again on 8th October, and evidently deteriorated very rapidly; the suddenness of his death seems to have been a shock to everyone around him.

These are the cold facts. What should be added is that he was a friendly, unpretentious and extremely intelligent man. (*Malcolm Edwards*)

Space-Ex 1984

This colossal multimedia event is scheduled for 4-11 August 1984 in the Wembley Conference Centre, covering spaceflight, astronomy, sf and UFO interests plus “every kind of spin-off you can imagine”: perhaps even a bar, though this unashamedly commercial exhibition (as opposed to convention) may not be catering for every little minority. The current budget of £280,000 makes Peter Weston’s wildest dreams seem a trifle paltry. Attendance will cost £3/day, “and for the enthusiast who would like to literally escape into the world of Fantasy £12 for the whole seven days” (£15 in ’81, £17 in ’82, £21 thereafter). Rush £12 for your VIP ticket to The Interplanetary Space Travel Research Assoc, 21 Hargwyne Street, Stockwell, London, SW9 9RQ. One planned feature is a “Trading Post” where dealers can set up shop in futuristic surroundings for an old-fashioned £2000 (fan table at £100). Success in 1984 could lead to repeats, perhaps every other year: ISTRA are already eyeing significant years like 1999 (as in Space) and 2001 (as in Odyssey). Of course it’s too late for a Space-Ex 334, but think of the polished perfection attainable by 5,271,009.... If by some miracle I achieve a monthly schedule I’ll have 67 more chances for pre-exhibition comments on this event. Watch this space.

negotiation. Please contact THE SOCIETY OF ADEPTUS in
Adeptus, 110 Tottenham Court Road,
London W1. Tel. 01-388 5965.
● **PHOTOGRAPHER/ARTIST** needed,
good freelance pay. J.L.A.S. Action
Committee, 864 1957.
● **LEGAL AID SOLICITORS** in Camden
Town require someone as receptionist/
general assistant. Duties include attending

The advert on the left [here above: “*PHOTOGRAPHER/ARTIST needed,*”

good freelance pay. J.L.A.S. Action Committee, 864 1957.”] appeared in *Time Out* on 4 October – yet another repercussion of the Jackie Lichtenberg Appreciation Society. Famed author Chris Priest (whose phone number bears a striking resemblance to that given) was delighted to receive over 100 responses, even at 7.30am on the following Saturday: he managed to divert part of the initial flood to 01-727-6075, which had appeared on several JLAS flyers and which proved, to everybody’s amazement, to be the phone number of Charles Platt (who complained). Subsequently, the phantom advertiser struck again: “Overworked author requires secretary ...” I have not confirmed the rumour that among the applicants was a sultry-voiced lady who, recognizing the prospective employer as Chris, switched to more normal tones and announced herself as Roz Kaveney. The telephone is certainly a marvellous invention.

Chris is now giving up fandom for a bit – in order, he says, to write a book.

Polycon

Phil James

(Phil James speaks and Langford savagely edits)

... I can’t comment on the events of Friday night. Not being as omniscient as some, I can neither confirm nor deny that two *Battlestar Galactica* fans suffered a quite interestingly revolting fate at the hands of their peers when discovered reading *The Dispossessed* in the lavatory, or even that Ian Williams, making a surprise visit to the con, circled the building for several hours on a push-bike threatening to crash into the wall unless someone published his novel.

Arriving at Hatfield station about 11am, it took me almost an hour to get to the Polytechnic; I was wearing my best pair of fannish-lounging-about-bars legs, unsuitable for cross-country work. The map was misleading – even hardened dungeon adventurers ended up in Bayfordbury or Hertford (send an unmarked envelope full of used small-denomination notes and I’ll mention no names, Mr A*e*i*g*n) – so I gave up and navigated by the hot October sun. One hour later, with visions of a tall cool glass of Harp* awaiting me, I reached the bar.

It was closed.

Instead I joined Martin Easterbrook and Margaret Austin (known to wits at her workplace as “Jane” for a reason that escapes me at the moment) in Elephant House, the con hall, for Ken Bulmer’s informal and interesting GoH speech. The hall was decorated with the Polycon logo and so much aluminium foil that GoH Mat Irvine confessed to feeling like an oven-ready turkey. Mat gave a good talk on his work in the BBC-TC Special Effects Department: series like *Dr Who*, *Spaceships of the Mind* and *Blake’s Seven* were naturally highlighted, but contrary to popular belief he spends most of his time designing new radio-controlled underwear display units for *Are You Being Served?*

Spent some time watching *Forbidden Planet* in the video room; ended up in the bar, which reminded me of a Doc Smith space dreadnaught – surrounded by a force field broken only by a large port through which a coruscating stream of ravening pints of real ale passed continuously, and a smaller side-port which opened intermittently to emit steaming quanta of pasties and wave-packets of crisps.

Inevitably, since Polycon comes so soon after, there will be unfair comparisons between it and Seacon. The worldcon had Filthy Pierre’s wind-powered synthesizer whereas all Polycon could manage was Jake Grigg’s musical calculator. Seacon had expensive keg rubbish whereas Polycon only had two or three cheap real ales.... It is true that Polycon’s support was somewhat muted as wallets across the land recovered from Seacon.... Pleasant, unhurried, and after Seacon a more personal, intimate way of passing the weekend. The committee, after recovering from falling off the back of the convention stage, can feel reasonably pleased with its efforts. (Phil James)

* Ugh. Or perhaps Phil merely intended to pour it over his head.... DRL

Welshfandom Moves

Pilgrims to Newport, Gwent (Hub o’ the Universe, bach) on Friday nights may now find the cream of young Welsh manhood, plus Bryn Fortey, in “The Artful Dodger” on Chepstow Road (more or less opposite the “Odeon”) – strangely close to Bryn’s home, in fact ...

It's the Arts

Bolton Little Theatre plans exhibitions of our great fanartists' work: Terry Jeeves after Christmas and Kevin Clarke of FOKT right after Novacon – provided the latter doesn't drop out for fear that BR staff may touch his pictures en route. In this case Novacon may feature a ritual disembowelling of the said artist, says intrepid reporter Bernard Earp. Mr Earp also shyly confesses to being a stage star: "At the moment we are doing *Hadrian VII* and with my usual knack of getting really great parts I'm playing the Pope's corpse." Which reminds me that the new Mekons album is out soon.

Cons

Albacon '80 has finally issued its first progress report, a mere six months after winning the bid (at this rate, look for the programme book in 1984): booking forms are enclosed. Note that the increased membership rates have been brought forward from 1 Jan 1980 to 1 Dec 1979, though what they will be is not stated: better get in quick with your £2 supporting or £5 attending membership fee. No further news of the rumoured **Edinburgh '81** bid, except for two snippets in the new *Matrix* – naughty Jim Barker has slipped an "Edinburgh in '81" graffito into his "Captive" strip, while Simon Ounsley's clubs column mentions that the Edinburgh group is "just starting up".

Infinitely Improbable

John Piggott wishes to announce that he and Pat Douglas were married at Southend Registry Office on 28 July; the baby is due around 15 November; "I can't think what Greg will say about this." • Brian Stableford has formed himself into "Cosmic Perspectives Ltd", following Messrs. Brunner, Aldiss, Fanthorpe and A.P. Herbert (who started it all by becoming "Haddock Productions Ltd"). • **Rog Peyton** has been on the wagon since shortly after Seacon: the consumption of his usual 50 gins&tonic at a Trekkie con *without discernible effect* worried him, as did the kidney pains which started a day or two later. Having already caused rioting in the One Tun by consuming tonic&tonic, Rog is trying to hold out until after Novacon. • Yes, there will

be a **Silicon in 1980**, is the word from Harry Bell. • **The 1979 Milford (UK) Writers' Conference** is not reported here because it was cancelled – too many people dropped out as a direct or indirect result of Seacon. • **D. West** has been trying for a Civil Service job in order to feed the kids while the family breadwinner goes off to college: previously he'd been turned down as unwilling to make a true career of driving a van. • A feature of **Polycon** missed by Phil James was the horde of skinheads which burst in at 2am on Sunday and savaged a couple of committee members. Can it be coincidence that *2000 AD* is planning to serialize *The Stainless Steel Rat*? • **The BSFA Award** nomination forms are going out with the November mailing: categories are Novel, Short Fiction, Media and Cover Artist. To revitalize the award a bit, all Albacon members will be able to vote (as well as BSFA members) on a slate of nominations chosen by BSFA members alone. • The strange and excellent **cover** of *Matrix 26* (remember it for the Ken McIntyre award and the *Checkpoint/Ansible* poll) was sketched by Jim Barker and inked by Harry Bell, a labour-saving system which so delights Jim that his next piece will be sketched and inked by Harry on paper supplied by Jim.... • **On 25 October** the new Langford opus, *An Account of a Meeting with Denizens of Another World, 1871*, was published by David & Charles. Buy it – or at least send along any reviews of it that you may see and thus increase your *Ansible* credit. • **This issue** produced just in time for distribution at Novacon.

“An anagram of an ancient Flemish curse threatening swelling of the testicles, failure of brother's ‘musical’ ventures and sterility unto the 7th generation” (Alun Harries):

ANSIBLE 4

Dave Langford
22 Northumberland Avenue
READING
Berkshire
RG2 7PW
UNITED KINGDOM

***Ansible* 5**

December 1979

ANSIBLE 5 ... still from Dave Langford, 22 Northumberland Avenue, Reading, Berks, RG2 7PW, UK. 4/50p Europe, 3/\$I NA & Africa, 5/\$1 Aus: credit given for news etc. See mailing label (courtesy of Keith Freeman) for your current status. E-stencils by John Harvey, art by Ken Fletcher, last issue's art by Jim Barker (a fine second choice for TAFF). Also news from lots of people who will doubtless be just as happy to remain anonymous. This issue dated December 1979.

As Much Fun as a Wet Weekend in Birmingham

Paul Kincaid

I got to Novacon 9 a lot earlier than expected. True to form, I then consumed copious amounts of alcohol, only to make the catastrophic discovery that John and Eve (Harvey) had forgotten the Alka Seltzer. Meekly I retired to my revolving bed. Next morning all hell had broken loose.... Funny start to a con, more like Saturday than Friday night. But then the whole damn con was a little upside down, low-key after Yorcon and Seacon, and so damn short. Can't remember much of Friday, except the first round of the best quiz I've seen at a con, and Langford [\[1\]](#) demanding this conrep on pain of having to pay a subscription to *Ansible*. Saturday afternoon seemed to consist mostly of explaining why I was drinking Coke [\[2\]](#). Then we got Chris Priest's GoH speech, which developed into a well-deserved polemic against the cretinous views that have beset sf for too damn long [\[3\]](#). This was followed by a formal debate on characterization in sf which gave the devil [\[4\]](#) the best arguments, or at least the funniest. Good God, this con is about ¼ the length of Seacon, and I've already been to more programme items than I saw all the time I was in Brighton.

So after a curry and the first drink of the day, it was the traditional disco or try-out of whatever nerve gas Langford is marketing these days. Well, take a

look at Gerry Webb's mincing steps, and the wide berth that sane people give Kev Smith when he invades the dance-floor. Still, it provides innocent amusement. The not so innocent amusements come later, at those curious tribal rites known as room parties. Not that this one seemed destined to take place: hosts Dorey and Nicholas had thought better of the idea and took quite a bit of hunting down. When we eventually managed to crowd into their room, Alan Dorey enjoyed playing dictator: "Hey boss, got drink? Then get out." Kev Smith was viciously defensive of his naked upper lip. We performed a carefully considered editorial job upon the Gideon Bible, considerably improving it in the process, for which our hosts were later charged [£3.50!] though a similar improvement of the telephone directory went without comment.

Sunday ... I remember Jim Barker trying to subvert justice by providing two teams of limpwrists [5] for the quiz final. And with deep regret, I remember coughing up for Albacon at last. Then there was the train journey back to Folkestone, which was a horror story in its own right; and work the next day, and the day after ... and the whole thing sank into the sort of forgetfulness where I'm not sure if any of it actually happened. I'll end the fiction here, and get back to [6] trying to sleep it off. (Paul Kincaid)

[Footnotes: 1. Nonsense. I have an alibi.

2. A typical explanation: "Because you haven't bought me a proper drink – mine's a pint."

3. Watch for this in *Drilkjis* 5, not long to be denied you.

4: Not a kind synonym for "Ian Watson and Dave Langford" ... and "angels" Peter Weston and Pam Bulmer were remiss enough to win, by one lousy, rotten vote....

5. I.e. lifesize Dorey, Nicholas & Maule cutouts, almost as wondrous as Jim's cardboard Peter Weston with animated moustache. However, the real Limpwrists won the quiz.

6. Isn't it odd that [in the original fanzine] all these footnotes relate to the first few words of a line? DRL]

The Nova Award

Simone Walsh's *Seamonsters* won decisively, and Simone accepted the trophy with a gracious word or two for the efforts of her former production

staff. The vote-counting is of course shrouded in deadly secrecy, so although I can reveal that some 30 ballots were cast I cannot say anything about the points scored by *Seamonsters* [74] or such runners-up as *Dot* [45], *Deadloss* [42] and *Twll-Ddu* [35]. Just as well, otherwise, I might be moved to wonder why the Nova and the *Checkpoint* poll so seldom agree.

10,000 Fanzines from Home

Alan Dorey

Seacon, for those who have already forgotten Brighton's antidote to the Tory Party Conference, was heralded as being the make or break event for many fanzine editors. Yet, curiously, very few new publications were seen; indeed, this year's Novacon saw fewer fanzines than Nelson had eyes. And the trend looks like continuing.

Of course, prior to Seacon, the fannish presses were at fever pitch as desperate editors sought to push out their pent-up words of wisdom. We'll show those Americans! was the clarion call, and yet ... where were all the US fanzines? US fans outnumbered us 5-1, but apart from *Mota*, *Space Junk* and a few others, there was no competition. That didn't mean that UK fanzines were a prospector's delight. Far from it. Apart from the bright light of innovation shining in the form of John Collick's fine *For a Few Fanzines More*, Simon Ounsley's refreshingly witty article in *Ocelot 2* and Simone Walsh's excellent *Seamonsters 4*, there was little to write home about. Fanzines on display neither excited nor stupefied the often bemused audience, though Swedish and Czech fans eagerly snapped up at least one copy of each issue, eyes revolving at 78rpm in keen anticipation of learning all about British SF. One wonders what they made of the repetitious ruminating on the lack of direction and inventiveness in UK fandom. "Ver ist the Science Fiction?" Good question. No doubt recently released BSFA *Vector* editor Dave Wingrove will provide a comprehensive answer when *Kipple 3* hits the streets.

Seacon prompted dormant editors to splutter back into life like a collection of rain-drenched Strombolis – or as Derek and Clive put it, "Life, well it's a kind of existence." Keith Walker and Peter Presford swung back into action, the desperate duo fighting crime with their shields of ineptitude. The problem

is that they're quite articulate in real life, but when pubbing their ish all bodily control seems to evaporate. In complete contrast, mild-mannered Dave Langford dons his secret fannish disguise and produces superb issues of *Twll-Ddu*, *Ansible* and *Drilkjis* [1]. Partner in crime Kev Smith contributes an amusing spoof of a feminist Seacon. Darroll Pardoe, champion of women's rights, denounces it as a "polemic against the entirely welcome development of women's programming ... at recent Worldcons". Take note, Mr Smith, and repent your sins – or write a LoC to Ian Maule, who seems to have a lively correspondence column. *Nabu 8* materialized as a good, solid issue. Maule, of course, has now returned to the idiosyncratic, witty, low-print-run, fortnightly *Paranoid*. Who said fannish industry was dead, especially when it takes Rob Jackson five whole days to duplicate *Inca 1*?

Some fanzines did mention sf, besides Ounsley and James's marvellous "interview" with Brian Stableford: Geoff Rippington's *Arena SF 9* was solid, interesting, but a little limp. Rob Holdstock (star of an *Arena* interview) and Chris Evans produced a landmark fanzine in *Focus*, sponsored by the ever-thrilling BSFA. Peter Pinto gave the truth behind Hamlyn paperbacks in *Feetnotes 4*, and the special Seacon issue of the BSFA's *Vector* had whole words not reprinted from earlier issues. Still, Seacon must have shocked some people into action, since a few new fanzines were to be seen gathering dust in letterboxes. *Amanita*, from Cyril Simsa, was a fine example of the literate but dull production. Ah well, Novacon was only weeks away – back to fever-pitch went folks desperate to give birth in time for the hallowed Nova Award. Somehow the message didn't get passed down the line, since Novacon produced almost nothing bar a deserved winning of the Nova by Simone Walsh. Anyway, there's always Albacon, where we can show the Scots how to produce fanzines. Or can we, with the BSFA membership voting FOKT "Alltimebestfanzine" [2]?

Meanwhile I'll go back to *Mad Scientist's Digest 6* from Brian Earl Brown and learn all about the real British fans and fanzines, courtesy of new messiah Ian Williams.... (Alan Dorey)

[FEETNOTE: 1. This sentence presumably means that I'm quite articulate in fanzines, but ...

2. Since evil Sandy Brown caused the entire FOKT membership to vote on forms already filled in, this isn't surprising: the rest of the BSFA weren't very interested. In answer to queries from Detroit,

let me explain that “Friends of Kilgore Trout” is the Glasgow SF group and that their mascot “Bob FOKT Shaw” is so called in this zine in order to distinguish him from the real BOB SHAW. OK?
DRL]

Swedish Notes

Little more on the Scandinavian Worldcon bid, outside what’s in their flyer (the one in which they engagingly reveal that the committee is 11 years old and is called Herman. Gug). Anders Bellis notes that pre-supporting membership is over 700 and that the total support of Polish fandom has been pledged. He goes on to tell of the feud between SFSF (swedish equivalent of the BSFA) and fannish fans ... “SFSF has contracted a new (and smaller) clubhouse, where the members of the society won’t be allowed in ... it will be just for the board of SFSF. In spite of this they are rising the member-fee by one third, from 20skr to 30 skr (about £3) a year ... They also want the board meetings to be closed to members, because ‘they have a lot to talk about which is not fit for the members’ ears’. The 16th Dec will see our annual meeting with the election of the new board. There is a proposition for a new board and the people in that proposition have said that if we don’t elect them, they will economically ruin the society.” Don’t tell Alan Dorey....

A Letter: Chris Priest

(See report on phone hoax in [Ansible 4](#))

I have now identified the perpetrator of the hoax. It came as no surprise, but I wanted to be sure and obtained the handwriting from Time Out. Although the writing shows attempts at disguise, it is too well known to me to leave any doubts. (Anyone who questions this can have a copy of the forms, and see for themselves.) By the way, I don’t reckon it was a very good hoax: The best hoaxes are fun as well as irritating for the victim; and I can’t see that the hoaxer in this case could have got much satisfaction from it as the real victims were the innocent people who rang me up.

And there’s the matter of the second advertisement, The first was one I

accepted in good part, but the second just made things very tedious, and has left me with the desire to redress the balance. I'm making no secret of the fact that in true fannish spirit I am intending to exact a revenge. I have a few ideas of my own, but what I'd really welcome are a few ideas from others. In my view the perfect hoax should above all be funny, as well as embarrassing or irritating to the victim, and should preferably take place in public. Also, it shouldn't cause expense or damage (except perhaps to pride).

If anyone can come up with an ingenious plan for a practical joke that fulfils these conditions, I'd be glad to hear from them. It needn't be wholly original, the best jokes often being the old ones, and it doesn't matter how complicated or elaborate it is. There is absolutely no limit to the trouble or expense I am prepared to go to in order to take satisfaction from revenge. Nor is there any hurry ... I might commit the hoax immediately, but then I might hang around for a few years.

So will some Machiavellian genius contact me, please? You can be sure of complete confidence. All I want are ideas, not collaborators.

Incidentally, before things get out of hand and someone feels like taking a pre-emptive strike at me, I'll just say two things. First, why don't you wait to see what I do? I don't particularly want to start a round of hoaxing, and at the moment the revenge is mine. Second, please don't take my phone-number in vain. I don't want to have to do it, but if anyone publicizes my number again, I'll immediately get it changed and go ex-directory. I work hard and value my privacy, and no-one's ever abused it before.

Meanwhile, let's have some funny ideas. (*Chris Priest*)

Serious & Constructive

Another new limited company is Greystoke Mobray Ltd, latest pseudonym of R.L. Fanthorpe: he has now started his own paperback publishing house and apparently intends to reissue all the Badger Books from which he derived his fame. But the first book issued (co-authored with wife Patricia) is a new work, *The Black Lion*. The blurb is evocative indeed: "*Mark Sable, a lonely and alienated ex-convict, encounters an old mystic who gives him a curious medallion. This strange talisman transports Mark from the hostility of Earth*

to his rightful home on Derl. Here, as the Black Lion, re-incarnate feudal King of Dar, and royal brother to the Golden Tiger, Mark sets out in quest of the great Power Sphere of Kalun ... Mark's beautiful young Queen, Amana, is a prisoner in the torture dungeons of Ramos ... her defiant courage unbroken by the whips and branding irons of her sadistic enemies, and the threat of lingering death in the arena." Gosh, I bet you can't wait to send a quid for an autographed copy, to GM Ltd, 3D Boverton St, Roath Park, Cardiff, CF2 5ES, Wales. • And speaking of power spheres, **Ben Bova** has been booted upstairs as *Omni's* executive editor, leaving the humble fiction editor post to Robert Sheckley. • **Paul Begg** is no longer associated with the SFBC: perhaps now we'll get back to the steady diet of Robert Hale books denied us under the fascist Begg administration. • The **Virgin Books** venture mentioned last issue folded ... or nearly so. Dave Pringle's job didn't materialize, but I learn that Maxim Jakubowski is trapped in a Virgin office doing nobody knows what. No books appear to be scheduled. But Virgin have now produced the Mekons' first LP, *The Quality of Mercy is not Strnen* (with a monkey and a typewriter on the jacket). No red-blooded fan will wish to miss the amazing Dan Dare track, though I shall somehow force myself to do so. • **D. West** has been reading Jackie Lichtenberg's books for Gollancz. He bounced them as being "nothing but blatant homosexual fantasies". Thus spake the guardian of Bingley's morals ... • **Space-Ex '84** was selling those VIP Memberships at Novacon (see last issue): they confided that their planned attendance of 63,000 (9,000 per day) has been frowned upon by the GLC, who only wish to permit 5,000 a day. • **Peter Nicholls** points out a startling piece of sf in *Reviews of Modern Physics 51:3* (July 79): an article by Freeman Dyson of spheres fame, which observes among other things that all matter flows like liquid on a timescale of 10×10^{65} years and is radioactive, decaying (no matter what it is) to iron in 10×10^{1500} years or so. Later: "Communication of an infinite quantity of information at a finite cost in energy is possible." Who needs Larry Niven – or the post office? • **John Foyster** has "achieved real, scientific immortality – a reference in a hardcover book! On the other hand, I'd probably choose to be remembered by a grateful posterity for something other than 'A Class of Solutions of Einstein's Equations which admit a 3-parameter Group of Isometries'." • **Hitch-Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy** (the Pan book with grotty cover art, no copy-editing and ugly lack of justified margins) topped the best-seller lists: less well known is the fact that another fantasy work, *Fungus the Bogeyman* by Raymond Briggs, was a best-

selling children's book (top of the list) at about the same time. Go and buy them both. • **Steve McDonald** says he has this year's John W Campbell Award sewn up tight. H'mm.

Hansard

Leroy Kettle sends the following bit from 24 October 1979: "FREE MEDICAL AND DENTAL CARE (ALIENS): Mrs Shersby asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if, in order to reduce unnecessary public expenditure, he will terminate the provision of free medical and dental care to aliens under the National Health Service, with the exception of citizens of member states of the EEC providing identical reciprocal treatment." Leroy adds: "This could ruin 20th Century Fox."

Lifted from *The Times*

Dr Immanuel Velikovsky died on November 17 (aged 84) and received a nice obituary in *The Times*. • Someone called Albert Scrope is trying to raise 2 million pounds in the City as half the cost of a Biggles film. "Our story introduces an American girl as love interest, which is essential. We have also changed Biggles' cousin Algy a bit. He has become a sort of aristocratic, psychopathic killer." Watch for Scrope's Wodehouse film, with Bertie Wooster made a dedicated Communist worker....

Our Title

Mike Glicksohn: "I looked up 'ansible' in my OED and naturally it isn't there.... For the illiterates among us, kindly delineate the reference please."

Mike Glycer: "*Ansible* is a good name for a newszine. In fact I've been booting myself for not finding such a well-known relevant term in my own search for a title...."

Brian Earl Brown: "The [party in the Ladies' Powder Room at Seacon](#) sounds like a Legendary Event, sort of like Room 770.

Maybe Glycer will change the name of his newszine to Ladies' Powder Room.

It would be a relief." **Chris Priest** (who wins the grand prize): "I've just realized it's an anagram of 'lesbian'." (Does Ursula Le Guin know that?)

Infinitely Improbable

D. West wishes it to be known that it was not as a van driver but as an assistant caretaker that he failed to get a job. He's fallen back on giving talks to the Leeds group: the first cost the university £5 and only 2 people walked out, so D is confident of making a return appearance at £15. • **Cyril Simsa**, currently serving 8 weeks hard study of seaweed metabolism, reports a college notice about how Professor D. West will be talking on "Are Young Criminals Abnormal"? • **D. responds**: "Did you know that there is a wrestler called Pete Roberts? Also a country&western group called the Dave Pringle Band?" • **Harry Bell** confirms that Kevin Williams is chairman of Silicon 4 and will shortly be issuing a flyer. • I have been reprov'd for the comments on Seacon's Fancy Dress (issue 2/3): Coral Jackson notes that the overcrowding was caused by last-minute entries and therefore could not have been foreseen, so that to comment on it is unjustifiable. • "**The only sf film society in the country**" is the Creative Psychology Film Soc, 39-41 Manestys Lane, Paradise St, Liverpool L1: SAE for details. • **Harry Andruschak** would like a volunteer to run *South of the Moon* (a 20-24 page apa listing) in some UK fanzine. Address: 6933 Rosemead Blvd #31, San Gabriel, CA 91775, USA. • It is I suppose inevitable that a **Hitch-Hikers' Fandom** should have sprung up, and there is a club called "Hitchhikers Anonymous" which will be pleased to somehow co-ordinate your liking for the book/series/record. I've lost the flyer and the only detail I can remember is that the rules of the club demand you send 50p to Joy Hibbert, Knouchley, West Bank, Winster, Matlock, Derbyshire, DE4 2DQ. • **Lovers of sf** will be pleased to learn that the October *IASFM* was largely destroyed by a warehouse fire (unfortunately it was reprinted). *F&SF* also suffered slightly – only back numbers, though. • **New fan would like zines**: Rochelle Reynolds, PO Box 1133, 23 Washington Ave, Hance, MA 02601, USA. • Please cancel Simone Walsh's COA and write to her c/o Greg for now. •

Taff Nominations 1980

Prospective candidates for TAFF (Eurofan to Boston in 1980) have until 31 Dec 1979 to file nominations with Peter Roberts: Required: (1) 3 European & two NA nominators (2) platform of 100 words or so; (3) bond of \$5 (£2.50); (4) written undertaking to attend the 1580 Worldcon if elected (barring acts

of god). Contact Peter at Starcross 553 before the end of the year for further information (or write, of course).

Great Moments of SF Prose:

“Dimly they/it perceived the final annihilation of a minuscule agglutination of refined masses ...” (Alan Dead Foster, in *The Black Hole*)

Remember, you read it in
ANSIBLE 5

Dave Langford
22 Northumberland Avenue
Reading
Berks
RG2 7PW
UK

1980

***Ansible* 6**

February 1980

ANSIBLE 6 from Dave Langford, 22 Northumberland Avenue, Reading, Berks, RG2 7PW, UK. Rates: 4/50p in Europe, 3/\$1 NA and Africa, 5/\$1 Australia. Credit given for news; also certain trades. Those who have not renewed subscriptions should study the item to the left [*omitted: a credit card slip for a purchase of "1 Hydrogen bomb"*]. See Keith Freeman's nifty mailing label for your status. Comments on this keep-the-weight-down-while-getting-more-in format are invited. This issue is dated February 1980 (no, there was no January issue: sorry).

Stop Press: Elmer T Hack Retires!

After a short and undistinguished writing career, Elmer T. Hack, the author of countless sf novels and short stories too numerous to remember, has announced his retirement from the field. Hack cites "writer's cramp, artistic boredom, creeping paralysis of the brain and stagnation of the wallet" as the reasons for his retirement. After taking a short holiday in Tierra del Fuego, Hack plans to go into business as a retailer of the artificial eyes recently developed via microprocessor technology. He expects to open his Vision Chip Shop in the near future. If he has as much success in this venture as he did with his writing, then no-one will be unable to say that he is not doing extremely well – will they? Hack's last novel, *The Three Tomatoes of Alma Everidge*, will be published by Nadir Books in the near future. Rumours that the cover will be black with the words REST IN PEACE prominently displayed on it are as yet unconfirmed. (*Chris Evans*)

Little-Known Hazards of Fanzine Publishing: Part 2

Steev Higgins

One little-known hazard of fanzine publishing is the irksome necessity of attending fannish gatherings in order to glean material. It becomes even more difficult when one lives some distance from the Metropolis and thus finds most parties and Tuns somewhat out of reach. Fear not! for there is a solution. The Northern Tun, held in that centre of all things Northern, the West Riding Hotel, Wellington St, Leeds, may well be the answer to all your problems.

There is some controversy over the exact date of the first Northern Tun, arising from the question of whether the last Leeds Group meeting of Feb '79 (made cosmopolitan by the presence of such jet-setters as Dave Bridges and Paul Kincaid), at which the suggestion of opening the last meeting of each month to all Northern fandom was first made, actually counts – or whether the officially dubbed Inaugural Meeting the following month (blessed by the presence of no less than two non-regular personages, myself and the aforementioned Kincaid) actually holds that honour. This is a vital question up here, where attendances at fannish gatherings are the equivalents of scalps to American Indians, and people like Dave Pringle cut notches in their travelling cases for each One Tun.

Still, whenever it actually arrives, the first anniversary is fast approaching; the tone of the meetings has done anything but remain the same. Early meetings consisted of Paul and I drifting over to join a bloated Leeds group for an extended falling-over. With the departure of young Paul and the ubiquitous Alan Dorey to seek fame and fortune in distant parts, and the fading of Yorcon into the race-memory with the consequent lapse of the members attracted by it, including the vast Ryan clan, faces changed. In compensation, Mike Scantlebury finally made his threatened appearance, complete with van and sundry reluctant Mancunians he and I had dragged along. The van was useful for transporting the whole crew back to continue revelries into the early hours, a feature of the meetings which has never died out. Laden with booze procured by whip-round, those who can face further merriment make their way back to whoever is willing to put people up (most of the group have spare floor space) and indulge in such traditional pastimes as playing records loudly, including various Doors albums and especially “Alabama Song (Whiskey Bar)”, which Alan reckons to be the classic fannish track. This continues until someone falls over and is drawn upon, or the host becomes tired and institutes Plan A: passing round the unfinished 4th

part of Gonad the Barbarian, at which everyone flees.

The next casualty was John Collick, who was dragged off kicking and screaming to some den of iniquity down south. Dave Pringle's threats of going off to make Virgins came to nothing, and when last heard of he was still getting up an hour before going to bed and licking road clean wi' t' tongue. A new addition to the intellectual part of the group was Tom Shippey, and Dorey finally managed to get a job so he could afford to return every month. Life goes on.

The much mooted Leeds Group fanzine has been through various mutations and atrophied from a massive, ground-breaking, Northern-fans-only, all-Southerners-are-poofs genzine to a regular Northern Tun scandal sheet; and indeed response to this idea has been such that it might yet appear to join the ranks of such as *Ocelot*, *O'Ryan* and *Blank Whole*, and their Manchester counterparts like *Stomach Pump*, *Perihelion* and the new improved *Tripe Picker's Journal*. Anyone who wants to gain an insight into the arcane workings of the BSFA and Yorcon II can do worse than drop into the West Riding on the last Friday of the month. See you there. (*Steev Higgins*)

Footnote From D. West: "Usual falling down drunkenness & debauchery in Leeds. Four Leeds fans in a car were stopped by Police as part of the bid to catch the Ripper. Thanks to Tom Shippey's amazing (in the circumstances) ability to remember both the colour and registration number of the vehicle he was driving, no immediate arrests were made. On another occasion I held an auction of tatty SF, raising various small sums for the DWF (not a new Welsh word but the Distressed West Fund). Best price was 40p for a copy of *Sex Turned On* by Richard E Geis, secured after some brisk bidding by Graham James. (The bits of this interesting volume I read were all about black lace panties. There were also some rather poor photographic illustrations, showing a woman half into the same garments.) Ah, what it is to be a Big Name Hugo Winner. How many years must I wait?"

Births, Marriages & Deaths: John Piggott

On 29 November 1979, at 7.57 a.m. (I was there and looked at the clock ...), to John & Pat Piggott, a daughter (Katherine). 9lb 6oz.... Needless to say both parents are overjoyed. I have plans to introduce her to fandom, but it must be

a gradual process. The strength of her lungs, especially at times when civilized people are asleep, is such that the first function she attends will really have to be the next BSFA AGM. (*John Piggott*)

Bizarre Practices in High Wycombe

Chris Evans

Saturday, Nov 24, 1979 saw the “silver anniversary” of Pieria, which has little to do with food or diseases of the gums, but is in fact a gathering of people interested in writing and sufficiently masochistic to expose their latest fictional outpourings to the critical gaze of the group. At this 25th meeting I made my debut, pleased to be invited but somewhat apprehensive that my own story (precirculated to all members, like all contributions) might prove as dross amidst nuggets of gold. After the preliminary food, drink and gossip (and, in my case, numerous cigarettes) ten of us (plus Hazel as umpire) sat down to discuss the stories. Despite my fears, the criticism proved to be informed, friendly and spiced with a fair degree of wit and levity. Between stories we paused for refreshments, visits to the loo and deep sighs of relief. Even so, the programme was crowded, and we concluded at 10.30 that evening, having dismembered 8 of the 10 stories. Next morning we reconvened at 11.00 a.m. and polished off the other two, before attacking the remnants of cakes and other delicacies provided by various attendees. What can be said of Pieria 25? Only that the stories were good, the critical standards high, the atmosphere intense and energetic but far from stuffy. It was a social gathering as well as a writers’ meet, and ultimately quite exhausting in a stimulating way. There were a couple of birthday cakes (one with candles), some booze and even time for the reading of a new Mac Malsenn story for which your editor must take all the blame. At one point Rob Holdstock and I completely missed the point of a witty Mike Rohan story, and henceforward any mention of dinosaurs to a Pieria member is likely to raise a smile or even a chuckle. It was that sort of meeting, too....
(Chris Evans)

A Letter: Bob Shaw

Dear Mr Langford: I have been writing to fan editors for many years, but this

is the first time I have ever read a fanzine.... To aid Chris Priest in his search for the perfect practical joke, I'd like to describe one I invented many years ago while living in Canada. There was an unpopular character in our office who had this habit of logging his car mileage each time he bought petrol, and of working out to three decimal places how many miles he was getting to the gallon. Apparently he used the information to diagnose all kinds of things about the car, and it was vitally important to him – so I decided to balls up his system. A common, uninspired practical joker might have siphoned off some petrol from his tank, but I got a better idea. I brought three or four others in on the thing, and every other day we had a whip-round and bought a gallon of petrol (it was ridiculously cheap out there at the time) and surreptitiously poured it into his tank. There is no way to describe the confusion, bafflement and doubting of reality that this bloke went through as it gradually dawned on him that his car was using *no petrol at all*: I can still see him repeatedly going over the entries in his log-book, and struggling to comprehend what was going on, and never coming near the truth because – after all – no practical joker is going to do his victim a good turn by providing him with free petrol.

I submit that this is close to the perfect practical joke because it was so funny for the perpetrators to watch and yet it did not harm the victim in any material way.

Also a word of advice to Paul Kincaid from a more experienced boozer – forget about Alka Seltzers. They work all right, especially if you take them before going to bed, but the cost is atrocious. You can get the same effect, or better, by swallowing two aspirins washed down with a tablespoon of baking soda in a glass of water. (*Bob Shaw*)

The Guardian, 6 December 1979

The Enid Blyton With Tears element is at its strongest in Myra Schneider's Will the Real Pete Roberts Stand Up? (Heinemann Pyramid, £2.95). As authentic a portrait of life on the edge of despair as you're ever likely to read, it concerns a lad in care who gets involved with petty crime and a pretty girl and comes out almost unkissed and totally unscathed.

The item on the left [*here above; also transcribed below*] was pointed out by Leroy Kettle and others – no statement as yet from the *real* Real Peter Rabbit, who was last heard of a week ago (he was about to run off TAFF forms which at the time of typing I haven't received).

“The Enid Blyton With Tears element is at its strongest in Myra Schneider's *Will The Real Pete Roberts Stand Up?* (Heinemann Pyramid, £2.95). As authentic a portrait of life on the edge of despair as you're ever likely to read, it concerns a lad in care who gets involved with petty crime and a pretty girl and comes out almost unkissed and totally unscathed.”

Become An Instant Pro – Or Filthy, at Least

Andrew Porter (PO Box 4175, NY 10017, USA) wants conreps for his *SF Chronicle* and will pay 3 cents per word, \$5 for a photo (sterling equivalent) for coverage of, I presume, major cons. “Time value is important” – so forget that Seacon report you meant to finish one day. SFC also wants a paid UK correspondent, especially for professional stuff: send credentials & indication of ability to write. “Charles Platt need not apply,” says Mr Porter.

Meanwhile, your editor is assembling material for a collection of amazing “scientific” boobs, ranging from Bishop Ussher's calculation of the date of Creation (4004 BC, 21st October, 10.30 in the morning, wasn't it?) to such

profound 20th century statements as that of the limit of 2,000 for the automobile market in Europe (only that many chauffeurs available, you see) and onward to the present day. Anyone sending suitable and preferably documented material will achieve undying fame on the acknowledgements page ... not to mention extension of their *Ansible* subscription....

Celt May Win Taff, Says Our Correspondent

The 1980 TAFF nominations closed on 31 Dec '79 with only two nominated candidates, Jim Barker and some chap called Dave Langford. Barker hints at a Welsh and Langford at a Scots victory; both agree the Celts have a good chance, Mr Hold O'Verfunds having announced Irish ancestry. Barker & Langford (who were nominated by, among others, Langford & Barker) plan a fundraising fanzine which will include such delights as a Barker article with Langford illustrations, and vice-versa: material for this peerless work is sought from all *Ansible* readers who happen to be called Barker or, for that matter, Langford. TAFF form enclosed if Peter Roberts gets it here in time. Vote for a Celt!



Impression of the TAFF candidates, above, by Jim Barker [left]

Foundation Totters

Malcolm Edwards recently announced his resignation as SF Foundation administrator, feeling that his other sources of income – Gollancz, bookdealing, freelance writing – were adequate for his simple needs. At once replacements were rumoured: Dave Pringle, Brian Stableford (who had, however, just contrived a long-term contract with Reading U; he should be

moving here this summer), Roz Kaveney, Dave Langford (false rumour put about by literary sociologist to increase the Pringle paranoia) and, shock horror, Gerry Webb. (“The Webb SF Foundation Consultancy Ltd: no subject too small, no fee too large!”) Thanks to our wonderful government’s assault on education, the problem of succession has become (ho ho) academic: the NELP will not be replacing Malcolm and the Foundation thus effectively dies. *Foundation* should continue; the fate of the library etc. is uncertain. Malcolm adds glumly that the post would probably have been axed in any case; his cleverly timed resignation merely ensures he will receive no redundancy payment.

Cons

Albacon PR2 is out, at last making it clear that hotel rates are £11.70 per person per night (some read previous announcements as meaning a rate per room)... **Rockcon**; the possibly-a-hoax Edinburgh ’81 bid (“a figment of the other Bob Shaw’s imagination”, says an Edinburgh fan in Matrix) is advertised in this PR.... **Yorcon II** planning continues, says John Collick, who will be doing the Fan Room if the bid wins; he’s already assembling notions for the fan programme (Albacon is still asking for ideas in PR2).... **Meanwhile, in 1982:**

“The committee for the 1982 South of England Eastercon bid are: Eve Harvey (chairman), and the Significant Members of her Team: Chris Atkinson (programme); Pat Charnock (membership secretary); Coral Jackson (publicity & publications); Janice Maule (treasurer); Kath Mitchell (bookroom and films); Simone Walsh (fan room); and Sue Williams (art show). Despite the obvious feminine bias, the committee wish to stress that just as an all-male committee is not chauvinistic, so this will not be a feminist convention. The exact location of the hotel and room rates will be announced in the not too distant future. Presupporting membership (50p) will be available at Albacon.” (*Coral Jackson*)

Denvention II rates go up from 1 Jan 80. Supporting/attending rates are: if you voted far site selection at Seacon, free/£7.50; if you didn’t, £3.75/£12.50; 1st March to 1st Sept 1980, same but no discount for site voters; after 1st Sept, further increase. 50p off for presupporters. Cheques to Denvention; all Eurocurrencies OK; send to Graham England, 1 Fleetway, Didcot, Oxon,

OX11 8BZ. Graham would like to hear from anyone whose site selection ballot cheque wasn't paid for any reason; also from Denvention I attendees, who get free membership. NB: Graham will be changing jobs and fleeing Britain on March 20th (to "Munich, Luxembourg, Rome or somewhere else"); watch for COA here.

COA

W.R. BENEDICT, #12-401 Grier Ave INE, Calgary, Alta, Canada, T2K 3T8 / JOHN COLLICK (termtime only), Room 38, Norwich House, Sussex U, Falmer, Brighton, Sussex / LEIGH EDMONDS, PO Box 433, Civic Square, Canberra, ACT 2606, Australia / PAUL KINCAID, 17 Radnor Bridge Rd, Folkestone, Kent (the change is that it's no longer "Basement Flat" and the address is now permanent) / ERIC MAYER & KATHY MALONE, 654 Boulevard East (2nd floor), Weehawken, New Jersey 07087, USA / JOE NICHOLAS, Room 9, 94 St George's Square, Pimlico, London SW.1 / PIERROT PUBLISHING LTD, 60 Greek St, Soho Square, London W1V 5LR / KEVIN SMITH, 10 Cleves Court, St Mark's Hill, Surbiton, Surrey, KT6 4PS / PHIL STEPHENSEN-PAYNE, c/o Systime SA (Pty) Ltd, PO Box 3238, Johannesburg 2000, South Africa / alert readers will deduce that the Dorey/Nicholas Flatsharing Plan fell through.

Serious and Constructive

Ian Watson writes: "Got a letter from a French ufologist I'm friendly with. He was in a state of great excitement because he'd discovered a close encounter, vintage 1871, in a book entitled *Account of a meeting with denizens* etc, commented on by ... hmm. Ufologist wanted me to get the book instantly, to determine with my anglophone ear whether it sounded authentic.... You naughty man, Dave!" • **Maxim Jakubowski** has bounced back at Virgin Books, says Dave Pringle with a sob: he has a secretary, expects to take on a junior editor and will probably publish 10 books in 1980. Send him all your grubby handwritten MSS; or try them on Paul Barnett's new editorial consultancy: *BEAUTIFUL BARNETT BOOKS INC (They Blast your Brains, Stagger your Synapses and Break your Bank!!!), Book House (geddit?), 84 Wykes Rd, Exeter.* • **Galileo** have sent Peter Roberts a free copy

of their sf newspaper, SF TIMES (50 cents), in which he was horrified to find a picture of D. Langford. Good grief.... • **Douglas Adams** has been replaced as *Dr Who* script editor by one Chris Bidmead, who plans to reduce the frivolity and up the drama. Hope he kills off K9.

Infinitely Improbable

Peter Roberts's phone number is now (0626) 890553. • **FAAn Award** nominations are open again; forms available from me. • **The Surrey Limpwrist**s now meet on the 2nd Friday and 4th Tuesday of the month, still in the Southampton in Surbiton. • **Mary Long** has given birth to something called David (good name that) Mark and weighing 9lb 6½oz, thus beating the Piggotts by a clear ½oz! • **Leigh Edmonds & Valma Brown** have married at last: says Leigh; “We’ve only been married a week and it seems like years.” • **Joe Nicholas** has a phone number too: 01 821 8819 (shared with many others). • **Ron Salomon**, a pervert, has arranged honorary citizenship for me in Father Flanagan’s Boys’ Home (Nebraska); next he promises the same in Dean Martin’s Home for Wayward Girls. Somebody stop this man.... • **Andy Darlington** has been giving sponsored poetry readings: “strange pub venue with antagonistic groups (student clique, OAPs who’d come expecting to play dominoes, nouveau-Mod group with parkas & Who logos) sitting around hating each other. The organizer walks out, turns off the jukebox in mid-record and says ‘Let’s have some poetry – here’s Andy ...!’” Let us draw a veil over the ensuing scene.... • **D. West** complains of misquotation re Jackie Lichtenberg: not “blatant homosexual fantasy” but “blatantly *silly* homosexual fantasy” is his opinion of her books. I stand corrected. • **Chris Morgan** writes: “I’ve been reading Fred T Jane’s 1897 novel *To Venus in Five Seconds* ... it will cause Hazel to jump up and down and gnash her teeth due to its treatment of the ancient Egyptians (who really all came from Mexico in their matter transmitters, you see).” • I hear that my “Sex Pirates of the Blood Asteroid” (recently reprinted for 5,350,000 *Penthouse* readers) looks like being on the slate for the BSFA Award. “It’s that or let Chris Priest win,” said an ashen-faced Dorey.

Stop Press! The UK postal increase (25% on 2nd class mail) means *Ansible* will cost 60p for 4 issues in

the UK henceforth. Existing subs will be honoured at the old rates; foreign rates notified when postal rates are available. **Stop Press Again!** Got a letter from a French ufologist: “Unless you prove me the contrary, I consider your book is a Hoax.” Rats.

ANSIBLE 6: 22 Northumberland Ave, Reading, Berks, UK.

***Ansible* 7**

March 1980

ANSIBLE SEVEN from Dave Langford, 22 Northumberland Avenue, Reading, Berks, RG2 7PW, UK. Please note totally revised subscription rates: UK 4/60p, US 5/£1, Australia ditto, Europe 6/£1: sent airmail abroad. Existing subs honoured at old rates. All foreigners may subscribe at UK rates and get *Ansible* by seemail (i.e. very late). No subs over £1 (£1.20 UK) please. And no foreign cheques or currency: I've had too much trouble with slithering dollars, funny cheques &c. Sorry! Your status should appear on the mailing label (take another bow, Keith Freeman). "Langford for TAFF" cartoon by D. West – take heed! This issue is dated March 1980; the next will appear in time for Albacon, with luck.

Rockcon – The Factoids

Sandy Brown

I think it's time somebody did something definite to squash this **Rockcon** thing. There is no doubt whatever that it's a kid-on by Blob Shaw, as are other silly ads like "Aviemore in 84". Although Jim Darroch didn't say so in *Matrix*, he and Owen Whiteoak, another stalwart of Edinburgh SF, were most displeased at Novacon when Shaw turned up and started handing out Edinburgh con literature; not to mention never having been consulted. And if *they* are not prepared to organize an Edinburgh con, Shaw will not, because several of the Trouts, over a year ago, recommended the Albacon committee to try Edinburgh hotels as possible sites for Albacon: firstly because though in Shaw's eyes the Albany was ideal and there was no way he could forego it, it was forcibly pointed out that the Albany wasn't offering a reasonable deal on room rates (it's all very well to advertise their basic room rate at £26 per night, but could they possibly hope to fill their hotel – guaranteed – in the off-season?), and secondly because Glasgow has an ill-deserved reputation, and Edinburgh would be more acceptable to English fans. But Shaw, it appears (up here at close range), is organizing the con single-handed, and

wilfully not telling his committee what he is doing until he has done it. And with none of the regular-con-going Trouts willing to be on the same committee again with Shaw, because of him doing exactly the same at Faircon 1 (only one of the dozen on the Faircon 1 concom was on the Faircon 2 one), it appears to most of us that he is using his present committee as a rubberstamp. No doubt they will deny such allegation vehemently, but the truth is quite obvious.

Next, a word in defence of Jimmy Robertson, who is unfairly collecting a lot of stick about the Albacon fanroom. About a year ago, Shaw asked me (!) to organize the fanroom. I declined, (1) because of having been involved in Faircon 1 (see above) and (2) I knew I wouldn't be acceptable to fandom. I suggested to Shaw that Jim Barker would be entirely acceptable, despite being FGoH, and would enjoy the experience. So I broached the subject with Jim at Yorcon. He, needless to say, was not keen, but when officially approached by Albacon, reluctantly agreed, but, also at Yorcon, asked Jimmy Robertson to act as local agent for him in connection with the fanroom. Now, Jimmy was quite aware that he wasn't the ideal choice, but, because he's a nice guy, didn't want to let Jim down, so he agreed. He came up with some ideas, but because there are so few Albacon PRs, and those that do come out are late, he's been left with egg on his face by being quoted in February 1980 as looking for fanroom ideas which should have appeared in a nonexistent July 1979 PR. But then, the fanroom is only what fans make it.

... Perhaps a likely name for the 1982 bid should be *Frockcon*. (Sandy Brown)

Appalling Scenes of Violence & Brutality in UK Fandom

Not having been present, the *Ansible* staff has little to report on the appalling scenes of violence and brutality at last month's Maule/Dorey party. The central-heating pipes are said to be "as well as could be expected"; a number of spokespersons added, "No comment, for god's sake!" With a further outbreak of sickening violence, fannish fandom has switched partially from the crowded One Tun to the Three Compasses nearby (turn left not right out of Farringdon station): a Canadian zine, *The Monthly Monthly*, carries a letter from Graham England explaining how he was bounced from this select gathering. More violence, more brutality! Only *Ansible* brings you the full

blow-by-blow record of this atrocity:

GRAHAM ENGLAND: (appears in doorway of Three Compasses)

GREG PICKERSGILL: Ahh, it's bloody boring Graham England.

GRAHAM ENGLAND: (turns around and goes back to One Tun)

Where will all this violence end?

Fear & Loathing in Sweden: Anders Bellis

1979 was a really amazing year for SveriFandom. There were 507 fanzines emerging from Sweden, with about 3500 pages all in all. There has never been such an amount of fanzines any previous year in SveriFandom.

Herman, the concom for our '83 bid, simply refuses to give any info about the progress of their bid. They refuse to reply to letters and fanzines seeking for more information. My suggestion is that every fan who doesn't get an answer to his or her questions about the bid immediately stop to support it. Herman doesn't deserve having fans supporting them if they refuse to give any info away about their bid. Support Australia instead.

The feud between the board of our biggest SF organization, SFSF, and fannish fandom [see *Ansible 5* – DRL] was, unfortunately, won by the board of SFSF. They got elected for another year on the yearly business meeting. The old regime is back.... Alan Dorey claims in *Ansible 5* that SveriFen at Seacon said "Where is the science fiction?" when seeing a fanzine. My reply is that most SveriFen are a lot more fannish than Alan Dorey can ever hope to be. (Anders Bellis)

Exciting Sci-Fi News from Peter Pinto

Penguins have killed off their newly-revived SF list. Works bought will probably come out (this includes Jack L. Chalker's Well World series up to and including volume 3A – it's a trilogy with vols 2 and 3 both divided into two halves) but that's all. Culprit is the arch-fiend Peter Mayer, responsible for the slavery contracts dispute between Pocket Books and the SFWA ... could it be he has a grudge against SF now? The Hamlyn Paperbacks SF/Fantasy list has been terminated with the publication of the collection by the Kuttners, *Clash by Night*. Sales were, unsurprisingly, abysmal in the face

of a total lack of promotion and godawful covers (though the Theodore Sturgeon collection *A Touch of Strange* had a superb cover by Tim White, worth the cost of the book itself). Whether or not the new managing director, Ralph Stokes (who set up that somewhat-less-than-a-success story, Tandem Publishing, circa 1964), will revive the programme ever is in doubt.

There is no truth to the rumor that (Peter Pinto)

Mysterious Intimations from George Hay

The Foundation may totter, but it remains unfallen. If I have anything to do with it, it may actually expand.... The education cuts, here as elsewhere, have the happy effect of obliging heads of academic bodies to do the right thing – a step which, as long as they have their pinkies on the public funds. they would never dream of taking –

The key meeting on this is on the 28th Feb: will brief you thereafter.

Painful Piles

Do you suffer from this endemic disease – the piles of paper which make their way through your letter-box to cause suffering and torment? Of course you do. Here is a sampling of my own outbreak (conventional fanzines being excluded because there are too damn many of them).

* **Flyer/contents page of *Warhoon 28***, the super hardcover issue containing 614 pages of Walt Willis's writings. The contents list runs to three sides, closely typed in double columns: looks a pretty amazing effort. \$25 to Richard Bergeron, 1 West 72nd St, New York, NY 10023, USA.

* **Certificate of registration** under Registration of Business Names Act, 1916: yes, *Ansible* is now an official business name; hope Ursula Le Guin won't mind.

* **Flyer for Philip Strick's "science fiction workshop"** titled *Attack From Outer Space!* One-day event of film & discussion with extracts & 3 full films (*Invasion, Not of This Earth, The Thing from Another World*); from 9.30am on 15 March 1980 at NELP; £7 inc lunch etc; write to SEH Short Course Unit, NELP, Longbridge Rd, Dagenham, Essex.

* **Xerox article explaining in detail the hideous relative effects of various beverages**, with such details as how 5½ beers leave you legally incapable after 8 hours sleep ... enough of this. Is Kev Smith, the donor, trying to tell me something?

* **Fantasy Artists Network** flyer – artists’ association asks \$8/year membership (inc 4 issues of “showcase” zine *Fantasy*): FAN, PO Box 5157, Sherman Oaks, CA 91413, USA.

* **Silicon 4** flier; Aug 22-25 in Newcastle; £2.50 to Harry Bell, 9 Lincoln St, Gateshead, Tyne & Wear, NE8 4EE.

* **Floodcon**, the Johnstown in ’83 bid which guarantees a flood and closed-circuit TV coverage of a (democratically selected) GoH and FGoH’s struggles against the rising waters, asks only \$1 for voting privileges, PRs, pre-supporter’s button. Write c/o 420 Bantel St, Johnstown, PA 15905, USA. In connexion with this, Jan Howard Finder proposes HUFF (Held Under Fan Fund) to take some UK fan to perish beneath the flood also. I appear to be UK administrator; send money and votes at once. Proceeds to TAFF etc (or may be invested in cloud-seeding firm).

* **Science Fiction Books Published In Britain**: Gerald Bishop still publishes this bibliography bimonthly: sub is £1.50 yearly to Aardvark House, PO Box 10, Winchester, SO22 4QA. Cumulative volumes available also.

* **Everett Masson & Furby (Hitchin) Ltd** “have taken this opportunity of writing ... even if you have no plans to sell your business at the present time, we urge you to keep the literature ... extensive recent sales have left us particularly in need of all businesses with a sub post office attached.” What’s all this, then?

* **Bibliography** of all SF/fantasy published in Dutch to 1978: a snip at Dfl.19.50 (around a fiver) from Leo Kindt, Spotvogellan 45 A, PO Box 87933, 2508 DH DEN HAAG, the Netherlands. Gerald Bishop is already drooling, I bet....

* **The Fine Art Of Fanzine Publishing**: the secrets guarded for so long are revealed at last in a booklet from Unknown Press, 25 Parkway, Montclair, NJ 07042. \$1.00.

* **Balrog Awards**: it’s already too late to nominate; you can get a final ballot from the Student Activities Office, Johnson County Community College,

Overland Park, Kansas 66201, USA. Apparently it's another fantasy award. Who needs more awards? Final ballot deadline 24 March 1980.

* **Lloyd Biggle Jr** would like you to put your fanzine on file for all posterity: SF Collection, Pop Culture Library, Bowling Green U, Bowling Green, OH 43403, USA. Fanzine editors are granted permission to send single copies or even *several issues at a time!* How can you resist it?

* I have been reproved for inadequate plugging of **Yorcon II** (Leeds Eastercon, 1981). Presupporting membership is available at 50p and in the event of a successful bid this brings you a £1 deduction from membership fees. Committee resembles that of the excellent Yorcon 1 (1979); hotel and manager are also as before (Dragonara, Leeds); I now hear that a room price has been fixed at little more than the 1979 rates. Sounds good. Write to 12 Fearnville Terrace, LEEDS, LS8 3DU.

* **Drilkjis 5** has now been printed – a really super issue with Priest, Watson, Bulmer, Nicholls, Langford, Smith, Joe Nicholas and a supporting cast of several including Peter Weston. Available when we see you (Albacon? the Tun?); tell us if you won't be seeing us. Also available for 50p. "Magnificent" – K.J. Smith. "Yes" – D. Langford.

* **BSFA Press Release 2** is out and contains news of the BSFA Award nominations ... but let's have a new heading.

The BSFA Award Nominations

Novel: *The Unlimited Dream Company* (Ballard), *The Fountains of Paradise* (Clarke), *On Wings of Song* (Disch), *Blind Voices* (Reamy), *A.K.A.: A Cosmic Fable* (Swigart).

Short Fiction: "Camps" (Dann), "Sex Pirates of the Blood Asteroid" (Langford – yay yay! Vote for this one!), "Prose Bowl" (Malzberg/Pronzini), "Crossing Into Cambodia" (Moorcock), "Palely Loitering" (Priest).

Media: *Alien*, *The China Syndrome*, *Hitch-Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy* (record), *Dr Who*, *Quatermass*.

Artist: Jim Burns, Chris Foss, John Harris, Peter Lord, Tony Roberts, Patrick Woodroffe.

Voting forms go to BSFA members with the next mailing (March) and will be available to all Albacon members (who can vote even without joining the BSFA).

Fleet Street Horror

[Original edition had pasted-in newspaper clippings]

“Saint Kevin’s stadium” ... *Observer* headline vetoed by Kev Smith as title of his *Drilkjis 5* editorial....

No comment here (sent in by Michael Ashley): “Flying Saucer: Gurdjieff Revisits Earth (Coombe Spring Press, £1.95). Bryn Thring, a pupil of the Russian mystic who died in 1949, has kept a diary of her daily thoughts and actions for 30 years. It opens chinks in the unconscious and leads to possibilities only hinted at in most religion.”

Faancon

Faancon 5 (1-3 Feb) was in downtown Cambridge, the hotel being well placed for the cattle-market etc. 40-odd fans were present; Celia Parsons ran the lack of programme by remote control whilst absent at CUSFS meetings, lectures, rat-torturing sessions, lacrosse games ... however, she was sighted in the bar on at least two occasions. Lousy beer but good fun. Hotel sitting-room layout was a minor problem; fans tended to sit in a huge circle just looking at one another rather than address the whole room; the cursed circle was broken when enough people piled in. Faancon 6 membership £1.50 from Kev Smith, 10 Cleves Court, St Marks Hill, Surbiton, Surrey, KT6 4PS: I too am involved and already (while considering hotels in Oxford) we’re thinking of a namechange. Skycon II?

Cons

Nothing Official from the ’82 ladies’ Easterconcom; I hear that a grotty hotel in Leicester and a pricy one in London are being checked out. Early days yet.... **Limpwristcon** may not be the name of the Spring Bank Holiday affair intended to replace the Pickerswalsh party, but hotel investigations

continue.... **South Petherton Folk Festival** runs from June 20-22; details presumably available from the Brunners.... **Albacon** fanroom man Jimmy Robertson begs that TAFF/GUFF auction material be sent clearly marked with its intended destination: 64 Hamilton Rd, Bellshill, Lanarks.... **Letter From Bob (Fokt) Shaw Follows:** "I [got] married this month to a two-time con goer (well, Faircons). We decided to make the cat legit. The cat, by the way, will be at Albacon in his Superman outfit. (You'll believe a cat can fliiiiiegh!) I was on the phone to Original Records, who say they'll do more Hitcher records, but single albums and not re-hashed BBC material: it continues to sell well.... **Rockcon:** NOT a figment of JUST my imagination. Things are somewhat more real than certain disaffected Edinburgh fans suggest. Try sending for the Bid from Phil Dawson! Or me, even – I just happen to have a few copies. *[But he didn't send one. – DRL]* Actually, we are worried about Rockcon. Consider: a number of less than generous fen (notably from the deep south, like Leeds) have declined to attend Albacon. The last Faircon attracted 400 folk, $\frac{3}{4}$ of whom know nothing about fandom at large and are surpassed in insularity only by (well I won't name him) and will, if offered another Scottish Eastercon, certainly vote for it. So you must consider that there will be 300 parochial Scots sitting in the Con Hall on Sunday, itching to go to Edinburgh the following year.... What chance does anyone else have against that? ... Which is why, like Dr Frankenstein, we're a little perturbed by the potential of our (certainly) real creation. How'd they like a permanent Scottish Eastercon, eh?" (Interesting. I've been hearing that some fans – Albacon members – plan to send in postal votes on '81 bidding. No precedents exist in either direction for this, I believe. Be interested to see how Albacon treats such votes.) **Fanthorpe Rides Again** with a series of minicons/courses: "Marvels & Mysteries" June 7/8 (von Daniken & crew), "Traditional Hauntings, Ghosts & Supernatural Literature" October 11/12: discussions, slides, bookstall, more fannish things, beer etc for around £12 plus £3/night B&B. Venue: Norwich. Details from Greystoke Mobray Ltd, 30 Boverton St, Roath Park, Cardiff, CF2 5ES.

COA

GRAHAM ENGLAND (forwarding address only from March 16: he's leaving for Munich): c/o 70 Woodland Close, Ickenham, Middlesex •
FOCUS editorial address: 38 Peters Avenue, London Colney, Herts., AL2

1NQ • ROCHELLE REYNOLDS: Country Club Apts #23, Bldg 1840 Middlesex St, Lowell MA 01851, USA • NICK SHEARS; 1 Beechwood Court, West Street Lane, Carshalton, Surrey • SIMONE WALSH: 35 Braund Avenue, Greenford, Middlesex. (Lots of Middlesex about these days.) Quotation from D. West follows to fill up page: “I am rather in favour of a successful Edinburgh in 81 bid. Wake the buggers up a bit. Eastercons are going the same way as the Olympic Games. Spleen. Venom. Bile. Reckless laying waste of absolutely everybody. Fandom getting dull and complacent. KTF. ... More later.”

Infinitely Improbable

The eldritch silence of **Peter Roberts** is now explained: book 1 of his fantasy trilogy *The Bogdark Maccora* (not a sequel to *The Corobite Mines*) has been submitted to Granada. Spies report links with Peter’s D&D days (book 2, *The Massymore of Trevarrow*, is named for his D&D zine and dungeon): I trust it features those baddies more boring than orcs, the dreaded *mongs*. • **John Brosnan** is writing a best-seller about a giant nuclear-powered zeppelin. • **Harlan Ellison** speaks (*Comics Journal*, spotted by Rob Hansen): “Two years from now, I will be on the top of the best-seller list ... the novel that I’m writing ... will be the number 1 fiction best-seller in the nation. I promise you ... a natural best-seller idea. It’s got to be a runaway. I mean, it’s such a simple, terrific idea you say, ‘Oh Christ, why didn’t I think of that? Why didn’t anyone think of that?’ I thought of it. And I’m going to write it.” Doubtless 1982 will see Harlan’s book about a giant nuclear-powered Zeppelin. • **Chris Priest** resigns from SFWA! In the usual exclusive interview he confided: “I’ve explained why in a *Vector* article.” In a less exclusive interview, Alan Dorey said: “Triffic article. No, I don’t have a copy handy, so piss off Langford.” As always, *Ansible* brings you the facts. • **Chris Morgan**, new Brum Group newsletter editor, is urgently soliciting review copies from publishers. Asked how a busy pro has time for so much reviewing, he laughingly explained “Pauline will do most of them – I’m only going to read the good ones.” • **Elmer T Hack**’s memory lingers on at BSFA-HQ, where countless *Best of Hacks* (Barker, Evans, Priest) remain unsold. Send Alan Dorey 80p (BSFA members 60p, US \$2.20): 20 Hermitage Woods Cres, St John’s, Woking, Surrey, GU21 1UE. (That OK, Alan? Do I get the award now?) • **The Langford/Barker TAFF zine** has (so

far) a cover, writings on mice, caterpillars, dyspepsia and Larry Niven, the first ever page of Langford fanart and a lengthy “Captive” strip. Jim plans to upstage me at Albacon with a “Captive” slide show (different from Foglio’s “Capture” in that Jim intends to win 3 rather than 2 Hugos). John Brunner supplies the voice of Number One. • **Casualties** at last month’s Oxford SF Group banquet were light, though President Hugh Mascetti was several times blown up and set afire in the traditional manner, to much applause. Albacon banquet please copy. • **D West** is gloating over his massive article for (probably) *Ocelot*: all UK fandom is denounced, especially Langford, Dorey, Nicholas. “Everybody denounced. Grudging approval for self.” I am “both Middle Class Fandom and A Bad Example.” D also proves the continued existence of the MaD Group with a cinema ad: *The Living Dead At The Manchester Morgue*. • **Chris Chivers** was recently killed on *Blake’s 7*, but not thoroughly enough. • **Line reported from J Lichtenberg book**: “‘Zlit!’ he rasped.” • **Joe Nicholas** is retitling the BSFA’s *Paperback Parlour ... Paperback Inferno*. Eventually the word “paperback” will be dropped. • **Brian Earl Brown** is suspicious of *Ansible* news: thinks it’s distorted. I have the authority of the Astral League (also the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Queen) in saying: “Nonsense!”

“Names are not always what they seem. The common Welsh name Bzjxxllwcp is pronounced Jackson.”
(Mark Twain)

Really it’s pronounced “ANSIBLE 7”

from Dave Langford
22 Northumberland Avenue,
READING, Berks, RG2 7PW

UNITED KINGDOM

***Ansible* 8**

April 1980

ANSIBLE 8 ... from Dave Langford, 22 Northumberland Avenue, Reading, Berks, RG1 7PW, UK. Please note totally revised subscription rates: UK 4/60p, US 5/£2, Australia ditto, Europe 6/£1: sent airmail abroad. Existing subs honoured at old rates. All foreigners may subscribe at UK rates and get *Ansible* by seamaile (i.e. very late). No subs over £1 (£1.20 UK) please. And no foreign cheques or currency: I've had too much trouble with slithering dollars, funny cheques &c. Sorry! Your status should appear on the mailing label (take another bow, Keith Freeman). Cartoon by Rob Hansen. *Ansible* 8: April 1980.

More Trouble in the Pictish Provinces

Bob Jewett: Having been shown the latest issue of *Ansible* [[Ansible 7](#)] with Sandy Brown's incredible letter I feel I really must correct his errors of fact.

(1) Bob Shaw originally suggested Edinburgh back in 1978 as an Eastercon site. I, amongst others, rejected the idea in favour of Glasgow because I felt you require a committee on the ground in order to run a convention.

(2) I was on the Faircon '78 and '79 committees, as were about five other people, most of whom are also on the Albacon committee.

(3) I refute the allegation that we don't know what Bob Shaw is up to; frankly I know more about what he's been doing than what Jimmy Robertson has done. This is, however, just as we intended things to be, because some time ago we decided to let people get on with the job rather than pester them for one-syllable descriptions of their every move (as happened during Faircon '78).

The only thing Sandy is correct in saying is that we did have real problems recruiting a Fan Room organizer – we were, I'm sure, quite lucky to get Jimmy Robertson; after all, we might have had Sandy Brown instead.

(Savage stuff this: I couldn't resist writing to ask Bob whether, in calling all Sandy's non-fanroom remarks other than correct, he was asserting the bona-fide status of the "Rockcon" '81 bid [as denied by Sandy]. Unfortunately I'm having to finish this part of *Ansible* for the printers too soon to feature any reply; maybe in the duplicated bit? Meanwhile, the incredible controversialist returns.... DRL)

Sandy Brown: I do not feel that my personal statement in *Ansible 7* needs any justification by me, but I will explain my motives for writing what I did. As far as most non-Scottish fans are concerned, there are only 2 Scottish names they are familiar with: Jim Barker and Bob Shaw; Jim Barker because of his popularity at conventions and his legendary amount of published artwork, Bob Shaw because of whips and green slime at conventions, and his finger in just about every SF activity in Scotland. Jim Barker doesn't say much in print, Bob Shaw does, therefore it's not surprising to find the non-Scottish fans (and many Scottish ones) have assumed that Bob Shaw speaks for Scotland. But he does not. And if no-one else would say it, I felt that I had to. If Scots are not all brilliant cartoonists, neither are they all Shaw's creatures. There is the same range of good guys, bad guys, tossers, chancers and workers as in any group of fans.

It has been put to me that I was making a deliberate attack on Albacon. Apart from its being a foolish assumption that one person, not a member of a convention committee, could materially affect a convention less than one month before that convention, I do not see that any Scot would do other than hope that a Scottish-run Eastercon would be a success, if for no other reason than to show that we are not all tartan hooligans. No, it was an attempt to prevent a joke in poor taste being taken seriously. Any beans spilled about Albacon were incidental. I had heard it said that either Rockcon was real, or that it was purely to keep the Yorcon 2 bid on its toes. The former was not true, and as for the latter, "Rockcon" and "Aviemore" adverts were being displayed in Glasgow in mid-1979, whereas "Yorcon II" was not revealed until Novacon in 1979.

(In a subsequent letter, Sandy reveals that he's just taken a course in "Negotiating Skills".... I have been promised an official Irate Committee Letter from Albacon [Bob Jewett's was a personal response], but this has not materialized in time for this bit of *Ansible*. All I have left is a controversial statement from Jim Barker, who wishes to make the shocking revelation that

The Best of Elmer T Hack has apparently been mentioned in *SFR*, causing a flood of four US orders from Joyce Scrivner, Brian Earl Brown, Doug Moench [Marvel Comics writer] and a Texas university which merely enclosed a form whereby Jim could apply to be a vendor in the state of Texas: this must be sent back before Jim can actually sell anything there. Jim also wants me to publicize his incredibly generous donation to the Albacon TAFF auction of the *SF Yearbook* cartoons he did, relettered for legibility. Naturally I am striking back with a donation of the *War In 2080* manuscript or something. DRL)

Serious & Constructive

Hugo Award Nominations have been notified to the lucky nominees, and a little fast telephoning establishes that UK nominees include Chris Priest (novelette: "Palely Loitering"), Bob Shaw (fanwriter), me (ditto) and Peter Nicholls (nonfiction: *The Encyclopaedia of SF*). More later.

David Pringle News Follows: "The author of that wonderful book *Earth is the Alien Planet: J.G. Ballard's Four Dimensional Nightmare* (Borgo Press 1979), namely David Pringle, is now busily engaged in writing an in-depth study of Edgar Rice Burroughs's Tarzan novels for the same publisher. The provisional title is *Tarzan in the Flesh* (with apologies to Philip José Farmer) and it should be the most world-shaking critical book ever. I'm also under contract to write 30,000 word critiques of Simak, Sturgeon and Disch. Should get them all done by 1990, with a bit of luck." (David Pringle)

And Speaking Of Philip José Farmer, my US readers will be delighted to learn that the shortly-to-be-reprinted Ace editions of *The Mad Goblin* and *Lord of the Trees* are very heavily censored; only the French editions are full and frank, and re-translations of these into English are to appear from Virgin. It's probably about time someone got round to translating Farmer into English.... (*Matrix*)

The Recession Continues with publisher after publisher rushing lemming-like to doom. Following Penguin, Hamlyn and Magnum, Granada (Panther) are cutting back; Collins (Fontana) managed a £3M loss over the last year. Now all this cutting back is in part a self-fulfilling prophecy: if the books aren't there to be bought, the publishing industry will indeed make less

money and will then congratulate itself on its wise decision to axe all this minority nonsense like SF.... And so on.

Nebula Awards Will Be Announced on 26 April. The nominations are as follows. NOVEL: *Titan* (Varley), *Fountains of Paradise* (Clarke), *On Wings of Song* (Disch), *JEM* (Pohl), *Road to Corlay* (Cowper), *Juniper Time* (Wilhelm). NOVELLA: “Enemy Mine” (Longyear), “Fireship” (Vinge), “Tale of Gorgik” (Delany), “Mars Masked” (Pohl), “The Story Writer” (Wilson), “Battle of the Abaco Reefs” (Schenck). NOVELETTE: “Sandkings” (Martin), “Options” (Varley), “Camps” (Dann), “Pathways of Desire” (Le Guin), “Ways of Love” (Anderson), “Angel of Death” (Shea). SHORT STORY: “Unaccompanied Sonata” (Card), “Extraordinary Voyages of Amelie Bertrand” (Russ), “Way of Cross and Dragon” (Martin), “giANTS” (Bryant), “Red as Blood” (Lee), “Vernalfest Morning” (Bishop). It must be pure coincidence that Chris Priest, following his criticism of and resignation from SFWA, has failed to be nominated for a Nebula despite the appearance of “Palely Loitering” on the Hugo and BSFA award shortlists.... (*Locus*)

Analog Has Been Sold to Davis, owners of *Isaac Asimov's*. There is a sinister tone, as of a Soviet psychiatrist, in the purchasers' comment: “*Analog* has finally found a home where it will be treated properly.” (*SF Chronicle*)

Convention Calendar

This list will occur occasionally: I'd rather not repeat con details in issue after issue. NB Anglocentricism....

Eaglecon '80; 12-13 April; Y Hotel, London W.1; for the old Eagle comic's devotees; SAE 4 Grasmere Road, Bromley, Kent BR1 48A. Guests include Frank Hampson.

Eurocon 5; May 1-4; Stresa, Italy; c/o Editrice Nord, Via Rubena 25, 20148 MILANO, Italy.

U.F.P. Con '80; 24-25 May; De Vere Hotel, Coventry; Star Trek; SAE 135 Greenstead Rd, Loughton, Essex LG10 3DJ.

Unicon '80; 4-7 July; Keele University; guests Harry Harrison, Dave de Leuw, Peter Roberts, Ashley Walker; £2.50 supp/£5 att; PO Box 92, Derby,

DE1 1AP

Fantasycon; August 1-3; Crest Hotel, Preston, Lancs; GoH Ramsey Campbell; £1.50 supp; 2 Daisy Bank, Quernmore Road, Lancaster, Lancs, LA1 3JW.

Silicon 4; August 22-25; Newcastle; £2.50 to Harry Bell, 9 Lincoln St, Gateshead, Tyne & Wear, NE8 4EE.

Noreascon 2; August 29-September 1; Sheraton-Boston Hotel & Hynes Civic Auditorium; 38th Worldcon; GoH Kate Wilhelm & Damon Knight, FGoH Bruce Pelz; £13.95 att/£3.72 supp to end of April; Andrew Stephenson, 19 Du Pre Walk, Wooburn Green, High Wycombe, Bucks, HP10 0QJ.

Beneluxcon 7/Sfancon 11; September 5-8; Fabliola Home, Gent, Belgium; SAE Vernon Brown, Aston U, Dept of Pharmacy, Gosta Green, Birmingham, B4 7ET.

Anglicon; September 5-7; U of East Anglia, Norwich; guests include Brian Stableford, R.L. Fanthorpe (surprise:); £20 inc 2 nights B&B to 1 Trendall Rd, Sprowston, Norwich, Norfolk, NR7 8BT.

Terracon '80; September 20-21; Dragonara, Leeds; Star Trek; SAE Dot Owens, 30 Ovendon Way (or in some listings: 51 Furniss Drive, Illingworth), Halifax, West Yorks.

Hitchercon 1; 26-28 September; Glasgow; SAE Steve Miller, 30 Ronaldsay St, Milton, Glasgow G22.

Novacon 10; October 31-November 2; Royal Angus, Birmingham; GoH Brian Aldiss; £2 supp (att to be announced), hotel rates £19 twin/double, £12 single, all-inclusive; Krystyna Bula c/o "Nurseryland", 183 Shenley Road, Boreham Wood, Herts.

Win a Free Trip to Australia!!!

John Foyster, married since February 29 to Jennifer Bryce, holds out the enticing prospect of a GUFF trip for some lucky UK fan. Details are exactly as for TAFF: find three UK and two Oz nominators, tell me, and you're away. The nominations will close in August (I think) and subsequent voting

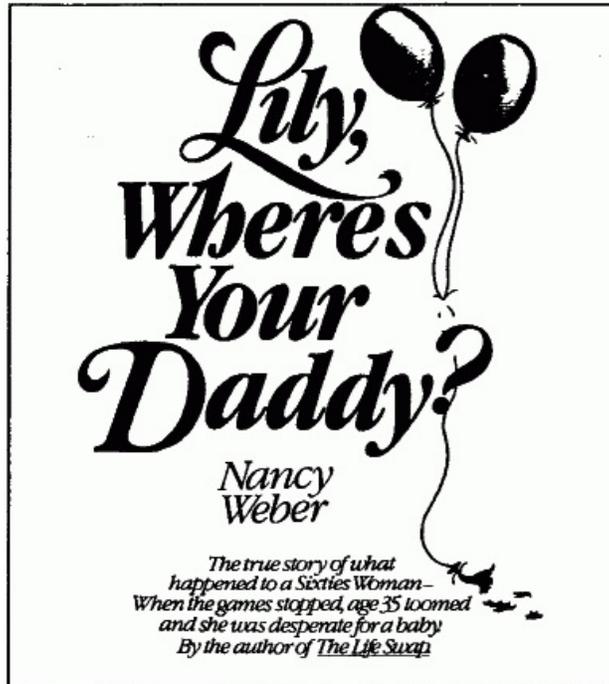
in early 1981, providing a trip to the Aussie con to be held in Adelaide in June '81 (GoH Frank Herbert). If you don't own *Northern Guffblower 5 / Ansible 1*, send SAE to me and read Chris Priest's article on the general wonderfulness of GUFF. I'm UK administrator still.

Updates from Past *Ansibles*

In A4 I described **Space-Ex 1984** as an “unashamedly commercial venture” (£280,000 budget etc); Hon. President **Mike Parry** refutes: “We are not a business and never have been, all money generated through the event will be used to make it a success by large campaigns of advertising and large projects in fact on reflection we may make a large loss.” **Alan Dorey**, not wholly happy with A7 reportage, proposes a motion to amend his statement there by striking out the words “piss off Langford” and inserting “fetch drink, Langford”. Your editor doesn't recall obeying either instruction. **George Hay** asks that I retroactively refrain from quoting his letter as printed in A7. Readers should try not to have read this item. (The SF Foundation council meeting referred to was delayed to 20 March, said Dave Pringle: “I notice with a groan that G. Hay is intending to loom large at the meeting.” No word of decisions.)

Taff-Ddu alias *Twll-Ddu 17* is now available, a bumper number of 30 crammed pages, all by myself and Jim Barker. Proceeds to TAFF. 60p (75p by post) in UK: provisional US cost \$1.50 (\$2 by post) from Joyce Scrivner, 2528 15th Ave S., Minneapolis, MN 55404, USA – stocks may not reach her until May, but order swiftly: “Had me wheezing with laughter ... it is all first-class material” (Chris Priest); “A close second to the Willis Warhoon for the next FAAn Single Ish award” (Rob Jackson); “Triffic boss, fetch drink” (AD).

The Cords of Vanity



The item on the left [here above, heading text transcribed below] was sent by Malcolm Edwards with the interesting comment “Nancy Weber was Charles Platt’s wife” – can this be a hoax??

Lily, Where's Your Daddy? Nancy Weber
July / Nonfiction / 6" x 9" ISBN 0-39990075-6 / 270 pages / \$10.95
/ RICHARD MAREK PUBLISHERS

What happens if you're nearing thirty-five, unmarried and desperate to have a baby? In this compelling confessional, Nancy Weber tells the world.

Nancy Weber, journalist and novelist, had lived through the '60s indulging in all its abandoned merriment – the parties, the drinking, the drugs, the many lovers and that one great love: a well-known, too-well-married man whose long-time mistress she was proud to be. She wrote what many called the most scandalous work of its era, *The Life Swap*, in which she spoke of those chaotic times and her belief that one could invent one's own life and identity. But the games began to pall. When she met the young writer she calls Phillip, she hoped it signaled endgame.

They'd known each other only five weeks when they married. He

wanted a wife, lover, coauthor, companion. She, nearing thirty-five, wanted a baby. Three months later, she was pregnant. For Nancy, it was a time of private ecstasy, for Philip a time of anguish. The marriage became a nightmare of recrimination, guilt, estrangement. For a shining moment, at Lily's birth, it seemed things might change. Then, ten days later, Phillip left them both.

Moving beyond Oriana Fallaci's *Letters to a Child Never Born*, this book is a letter from a joyful mother to the child she did bear – a loving bridge between a child and the father who didn't so much turn his back on her as on the best in himself. But it is also a candid revelation about bridging another gap, between the swinging '60s and the settled '70s, the time when inventing life ends and living it must begin.

Nancy Weber, who lives in New York City, is the author of The Life Swap, an account of her trading lives with another woman.

And *this* was unearthed by notorious comics fan Jim Barker. Well, Leroy?



Supplement

This insert is not really part of *Ansible* proper; it consists of (most of) a couple of letters which will be of hardly any interest after Albacon. Thus, rather than bankrupt myself by increasing the size of *Ansible 8* by enough to take it over a weightstep, or keep this until it's lost all topicality, I'm inserting this supplement in UK copies (and any others where I can afford more than 10g). Same goes for the *Taff-Ddu* flyer, ingeniously printed on the backs of

bits of A4 to confuse and annoy you all. (A4: not the paper size!)

The Albacon Committee (except for Bob Shaw): On behalf of the Committee of Eastercon 80, Albacon, and the Friends of Kilgore Trout, we would like to categorically refute the remarkable and vicious claims made by Sandy Brown in [Ansible 7](#).

Far from being a “rubber stamp” for Bob Shaw we are an active and informed cross-section of Fandom, which fact would be obvious to Sandy had he cared to become in any way involved with Albacon, or, indeed, with the last Faircon.

Sandy Brown laid down an ultimatum prior to our success at Yorcon last year, to the effect that he would only become involved in either of the two Glasgow conventions then planned if one of them was dropped. The Committee decided to go ahead with both Faircon and Albacon, and Sandy thereafter dropped out. He has no basis on which to pass any judgement of our organization.

Our committee is not made up of Bob Shaw’s bootlickers, and resents such a calumny.

(This letter came with 10 signatures, many illegible so I won’t list them here. Return address was 30 Ronaldsay St, Milton, Glasgow. DRL)

Bob Shaw (the one which the Albacon Committee is not a rubber stamp for): I distinctly refute Sandy’s point regarding the Albany. I have always supported it as a site for a Glasgow Eastercon, true. But so have the rest of the Committee (who toured all the major City Centre hotels before making a virtually unanimous decision).

Room rates at the Albany are good. If you want cheaper room rates, then go to a second-rate Hotel. Sandy Brown criticized bitterly the Faircon ’79 room rates also. Finally, to shut him up, he was invited along to the Ingram where he made absolutely no impression on the deal offered. Faircon made the decision to *subsidize* Hotel rates, as many attendees were local and it was felt that a positive inducement was required to aid southern fans. In point of fact, this worked. At Albacon no such deal is contemplated. The Hotel rate for nine months after Faircon at a much superior Hotel is *still* cheaper!

Sandy’s bee in his bonnet about Edinburgh requires little or no comment. There are few suitable sites for an Eastercon (as revealed *after* the Rockcon

flier – up to that point it was thought that it might, after all, have to be genuine!) and in any case Edinburgh Fandom would have to compete with masses of tourists and suchlike. No good hotel deals at all could come from there!

Sandy – who wasn't on the Faircon '79 Committee – is quite wrong about the carry-over from the original Faircon. A good half-dozen folk from that con, not to mention all but one of the Faircon '79 Committee, are involved. The comments on the Committee not knowing what is going on are absurd. Of course, Jimmy Robertson hasn't bothered to turn up at most meetings, and so certainly wasn't aware of what was going on, But then, as Jimmy was always the first to point out, he didn't need to know what was happening elsewhere.... The entire Committee is not required to oversee every detail of the various aspects of the Convention. For example: I (and the rest of the Committee not actively involved) know little and care less about the organization of our films. I have faith in John Mooney, Bruce Saville, Dave Ellis and Chris O'Kane. I don't need to know any more than that the film side is organized. If anyone asks me a question which relates to films I refer them to one of the above stalwarts. And the Film Programme organizers care little about the minutiae of the hotel booking system, and so on. Policy decisions are referred back to the Committee, where we all have the chance to make decisions. These have, I suggest, already been shown to be good enough to make Faircon a success.

In point of fact, our efforts to democratize decision making (as opposed to organization) have gone to great lengths. FOKT was polled on the subject of movies; constant requests for advice, comments and information have been broadcast to the world. Precious little feedback has been seen as yet. But that, as they say, is up to you lot. I don't count you among such uncommunicative folk, Dave; your advice and help has been greatly appreciated; ditto Graham England, Martin Hoare, Ken Slater and various others.

Rather than being a rubber-stamp, the Albacon Committee has been a contrary and argumentative beast at times, sitting on many of my pet notions and ideas.

As to the Fanroom, well, Jimmy Robertson has done his best, and despite not agreeing with many decisions has continued to offer support and aid. We were at first very unsure about the whole idea of a Fanroom. The question of

whether or not it should be merely an open room in which fans could gather, which seemed like a waste of precious space, or if it should have a programme of its own, was thrashed out over a period of months. It now looks as though we'll have a proper fan programme plus an area next to the Con Hall to punt cons, fnz etc.

Sandy Brown was offered the Fanroom post; he declined it. He was asked to produce the Programme Book; he refused. All attempts to cater to his remarkable concept of the world have come to nothing, despite our best attempts.

Finally, a word about the recent *Matrix* editorial, which many *Ansible* readers will have read. Far from "coming into the hands" of the BSFA, our draft programme was sent to Alan Dorey. Included in that package was a copy of our proposals for the Main and Alternative programmes. Out of 75 items (not counting fan, video and audio events) FOUR deal with microprocessors. All take place on the Alternative Programme, which is designed to cater for specialist interests. For the editor of *Matrix* to pontificate on the Albacon programme, and to take such an absurd stance about minor aspects, is simply indicative of the downright hostility offered by the BSFA to every aspect of Albacon.... Alan Dorey, as Chairman of Yorcon '79, has also failed to submit accounts for that con, though reminded no less than a month ago. Raising these points within the pages of *Matrix* itself would, I feel, be futile. Doubtless any letter from myself would "not arrive".... (Bob Shaw 26-3-80)

(Gosh. I have only one spare Sandy Brown comment to hand, which reads: "Anyone who can read will have realized that my original letter is about Rockcon, not Albacon." The editor being bloody exhausted, readers can study the letters in A7 and A8 and decide for themselves whether anyone's exaggerating or fibbing.

(The BSFA comments refer to John Harvey's editorial in *Matrix* 28. To use Bob's statistical approach, the editorial has ten paragraphs. One says that "three separate items on microprocessors" are a bit much; one is an apology for presuming to criticize coupled with pious hope for a good con: four have nothing to do with Albacon; the remaining four make the much more justifiable complaint that Albacon hasn't produced enough PRs nor produced them on time. Come on, Bob, there've been *problems* and babbling about Yorcon accounts (nowt to do with the BSFA: but where are they, Alan?) is a

rotten cover-up. As for John Harvey's alleged habit of "failing to receive" critical letters ... have you never taken a look at the *Matrix* letter column? Surely Eve doesn't write them all.... DRL)

END OF INSERTED SUPPLEMENT

More Updates

Amazing how swiftly the litho part can be overtaken by events. *SF Commentary* has arrived with an article by Chris Priest on why he left SFWA; in passing he mentions that in recent years he's always withdrawn stories which looked likely to get a Nebula nomination, so my snide comments on the subject are for once unjustified. Replacement snide comment: when I rang Richard Cowper to ask if he had a Hugo nomination, he was surprised to learn (from *Locus*, via me) of his Nebula nomination. This from a member of SFWA who is supposed to have received masses of publications with just such information. Meanwhile, a flood of two letters from Glasgow (Bob Shaw and The Albacon Committee) attempts to refute utterly the various Sandy Brown comments in A7.

COA

ELI COHEN, 86-04 Grand Ave, Apt 4D; Elmhurst, NY 11373, USA • JOHN FOYSTER, 21 Shakespeare Grove, St Kilda, Vic 3182, Australia • ROZ KAVENEY, 42A Colvestone Crescent, London, E.8 • Alan Mattingly, 29 Barnsley Street, Bethnal Green, Tower Hamlets, London, F.l

Infinitely Improbable

The eldritch silence of **Peter Roberts** is now explained: book 1 of his fantasy trilogy *The Bogdark Maccora* (not a sequel to *The Corobite Mines*) has been bounced by Granada. • **Another example** of how sf reduces the mundane world to gibbering: *Computing* (March 20) mentions "a computer teaching system based on Chinese dragons and two fantasy series, Ursula Le Guin's 'Wizard of Royal Sea' and Anne McCaffrey's 'Dragon Riders of Sperrn'." [*Sic.*] With this to remind me of the possibilities, I'm not going to complain

about how in the second word of my review in *Foundation 18*, “book” was subtly mistyped as “house”. Four blank pages were provided to distract me from this enigma. • **Peter Weston** has been made redundant and is seeking a new job. Perhaps this will satisfy Joyce Scrivner, who from US experience is ghoulishly sure that Peter, having been a Worldcon chairman, must get divorced soon; she’s sent several letters asking about this. • **John Foyster** reports with glee that *War in 2080* has been remaindered in Melbourne. I hate you, John. • The eldritch silence of **Terry Hughes** is now explained: book 1 of his fantasy trilogy *The Bogdark ...* Sorry, wrong TAFF administrator. Terry’s problem is a broken duplicator, which gave out in early February even as he was running off a *Mota*. • Strange to say, it was **Eve Harvey** (reportedly a fervent “Barker for TAFF” devotee) who omitted an important line when typing Jim Barker’s platform for the ballot distributed to 800 BSFA members. Nice of you, Eve, but ... • **The Jacksons are pregnant!** (ETA 29 October) To prove this, Rob displayed a piece of paper covered in mysterious collocations of letters, and claimed to be devising a name which would embody at least one initial of every Surrey Limpwrist. Coral says she’ll read *Inca* to the hapless brat in order to send it to sleep. • The astonishing **Fanthorpe** work *The Black Lion* has been reviewed in *Karate & Oriental Arts*: I’ve also received some “Study Notes on the Typology of the Chronicles of Derl Wothor: Vol 1, *The Black Lion*” by Dr J.B. Frye. The eight pages of notes manage to make *The Black Lion* sound like *A Voyage to Arcturus*, only better written and with more sex. “... The volcanic peaks of Bors and Daril, vibrant with volcanic energy. They represent libido and sexual dynamism.” Wonder which represents which. • **Michael Moorcock** has set fire to 70 Ledbury Road and rendered part of it uninhabitable by knocking over an electric fire, unless I misheard Malcolm Edwards’s newsflash over the telephone. • Another sf note from **Peter Pinto**: “Hamlyn paperbacks are out of the Walter Clare commitment to import, and pay for, hundreds and thousands of putrid Warner paperbacks (eg, Thongor ...). I don’t yet know how much they paid to get out of the contract ... but it’ll be plenty. They lost a bomb on *Meteor!* (serve them right ... lousy sci-fi movie tie-in).” • **Your Editor** has just been promoted to the exalted rank of Higher Scientific Officer and his salary upgraded to the level of “pittance”. Might be able to afford some stamps to post this *Ansible* on time, now. • **The 4th Polish National Con** has been announced: Sept 16-21 1980 in Cracow, with countless guests including John Brunner and Bob Shaw. The matter of

registration fees is (says the flyer) too complex to explain on a single sheet of A4 paper: to acquire the *other* flyer write to Wiktor Bukato, PO Box 983, 00-950 Warsaw, Poland. • **Noreascon** membership reached 3200 on March 12. They plan to issue full Hugo vote counts after the con, thus enabling me to wallow again in the joy of being beaten by “No Award”, no doubt. • **The World Sf Meeting** planned for Zagreb in late April has been cancelled by Chairman Harry Harrison, since the organizing committee failed to answer letters, issue progress reports etc. The committee has written to *Locus* saying all is well. Tough luck, committee. An emergency meeting will be held at Eurocon: see p.2: • Meanwhile, more **con rumours** are in the air: there is talk of Jim Barker, Harry Bell and the depleted Gannets bidding for Easter '83 in (wait for it) Edinburgh. This may switch to '82 if anything happens to the ladies' bid already reported. • **Limpwristcon** is not to be a 1980 event, but a hotel in Woking is a strong contender for May '81. • **The British Fantasy Society** did a BSFA recently, imitating the great collapse of 1974. The February Fantasycon was a casualty; another may take place in August by way of compensation. • **Greg Pickersgill Books** have issued their 1st list, available For SAE. “Apologies for the delay in getting this list out. I’m afraid you wouldn’t believe the reasons even if I could tell you....” • **Ben Bova and Harlan Ellison** are suing ABC-TV/Paramount for \$3M, the allegation being plagiarism of their “Brillo” in the film and series *Future Cop*. However, A.E. van Vogt has reportedly given up trying to extract money from the Alien folk on the ground of plagiarism of “Black Destroyer”.... • NB the following **Statement From Matrix**: “Sex Pirates of the Blood Asteroid” (the story by one “David Langford” which appears on the BSFA Award nominations after I promised to keep quiet about Al*n D*r*y’s purchase of a gold throne with the litho fund) has no connection with *Sex Pirates of the Blood Asteroid*, that immortal literary work cited by John Constantine [a pseudonymous D. West] in the last *Vector*. The latter is an unpublished novel, the former an unfortunately published short (*Aries 1*). Nor should my “story” be confused with the “Sex Pirates of the Blood Asteroid” in the January *Penthouse*: only the author’s name and the text are the same. (Reprinted because *Matrix* omitted much of the punctuation.)

Harlan Ellison

Has nothing new to tell us on

His basic literary theme:

“I have a mouth, so I must scream.”

(squeezed out of *Taff-Ddu*)

This has been

ANSIBLE 8

from Dave Langford

22 Northumberland Avenue

READING, Berks.

RG2 7PW

United Kingdom

***Ansible* 9**

April 1980

ANSIBLE 9: April '80. From Dave Langford, 22 Northumberland Avenue, Reading, Berks, RG2 7PW, UK. Please note totally revised subscription rates: UK 4/60p, US 5/£1, Australia ditto, Europe 6/£1: sent airmail abroad. Existing subs honoured at old rates. All foreigners may subscribe at UK rates and get *Ansible* by seamaile (i.e. very late) No subs over £1 (£1.20 UK) please. And no foreign cheques or currency: I've had too much trouble with slithering dollars, funny cheques &c. Sorry! Your status should appear on the mailing label (take another bow, Keith Freeman). Cartoon by Jim Barker.

Flash: FAAn Award Nominees

Editor Mike Glycer, Jeanne Gomoll/Janice Bogstad, Terry Hughes, Jerry Kaufman/Suzle Tompkins, Dave Langford. *Writer* Arthur Hlavaty, DRL, Steve Leigh, Kevin Smith. *Humorous Art* Jim Barker, Ken Fletcher, Alexis Gilliland, Marc Schirmeister, Stu Shiffman. *Serious Art* Victoria Poyser, Joan Hanke-Woods. *LoC Writer* Avedon Carol, Adrienne Fein, A Hlavaty, Harry Warner Jr. *Single Ish: By British, Deadloss 2, Family Relations, Lans Lantern 9, Scientifricion 11.*

Taffy Was a Welshman

Bacteria have been munching my delicate tissues since Easter: you can imagine the tonic effect of a phone call telling me I'd won TAFF (even though the shock to the system kept me inarticulate for days). Somehow I'd never really expected this result; the words "Bloody hell!" are still constantly on my lips. Many thanks indeed to all voters, to administrators Terry Hughes and Peter Roberts, and above all to my esteemed rival Jim Barker, a fine fan and a good friend. After his 1977 TAFF victory, Peter voiced the pious hope that he wouldn't be too disappointing to those who'd dared not to vote for

him: while echoing this I can add the good news that (if his plans succeed) Jim too will be at Noreascon.... And so, of course, will Hazel.

I'm now the European administrator of this healthy (£700 over here: take another bow, Peter) fan fund. It can always stand being a bit healthier ... huge stocks of *Taff-Ddu*, the super 30-page Barker/Langford fundraising zine ("Truly exceptional" – Mike Glicksohn), are available at 75p post free (or \$2 from Joyce Scrivner in the US). UK copies of this *Ansible* include Peter's *Taff Talk 4* with voting details – Langford 83, Barker 38, HOF 2 – and other goodies for sale. More of this in future *Ansibles*. Meanwhile, rather than raise money for two fan funds at once, I'd be grateful if someone could take over administrating the UK end of GUFF. My US trip plans are as yet chaotic – all I have is a passport and the vague notion that I have to promise not to overthrow the US Government by violence. Meanwhile, prospective US candidates might like to start thinking about the *next* TAFF race....

Thanks again, everybody. And with a resurgence of my stunning talent for the *mot juste*: Bloody hell!

Hugo Award Nominations 1980

NOVEL: *The Fountains of Paradise* (Arthur C Clarke), *Harpist in the Wind* (Patricia A McKillip), *Jem* (Frederik Pohl), *On Wings of Song* (Thomas M Disch), *Titan* (John Varley). NOVELLA: "The Battle of the Abaco Reefs" (Hilbert Schenck), "Enemy Mine" (Barry B Longyear), "Ker-Plop" (Ted Reynolds), "The Moon Goddess and the Son" (Donald Kingsbury), "Songhouse" (Orson Scott Card) NOVELETTE: "Fireflood" (Vonda N McIntyre), "Homecoming" (Barry B Longyear), "The Locusts" (Larry Niven & Steven Barnes), "Options" (John Varley), "Palely Loitering" (Christopher Priest), "Sandkings" (George RR Martin). SHORT STORY: "Can These Bones Live?" (Ted Reynolds), "Daisy, in the Sun" (Connie Willis), "giANTS" (Edward Bryant), "Unaccompanied Sonata" (Orson Scott Card), "The Way of Cross and Dragon" (George RR Martin). NON-FICTION: *Barlowe's Guide to Extraterrestrials* (Wayne Douglas Barlowe & Ian Summers), *In Memory Yet Green* (Isaac Asimov), *The Language of the Night* (Ursula K Le Guin), *The Science Fiction Encyclopaedia* (ed. Peter Nicholls), *Wonderworks* (Michael Whelan). DRAMATIC PRESENTATION: *Alien*, *The Black Hole*, *The Muppet Movie*, *Star Trek-The Motion Picture*, *Time*

After Time. PROFESSIONAL ARTIST: Vincent DiFate, Stephen Fabian, Paul Lehr, Boris Vallejo, Michael Whelan. PROFESSIONAL EDITOR: James Baen, Ben Bova, Edward L Ferman, Stanley Schmidt, George H Scithers. FANZINE: *File 770*, *Janus*, *Locus*, *Science Fiction Review*, *Thrust*. FANWRITER: Richard E Geis, Mike Glyer, Arthur D Hlavaty, Dave Langford, Bob Shaw. FANARTIST: Alexis Gilliland, Jeanne Gomoll, Joan Hanke-Woods, Victoria Poyser, Bill Rotsler, Stu Shiffman.

Non-Hugo awards follow: JOHN W CAMPBELL AWARD: Lynn Abbey, Diane Duane, Karen G Jollie, Barry B Longyear, Alan Ryan, Somtow, Sucharitkul. GANDALF GRANDMASTER: Ray Bradbury, Marion Zimmer Bradley, Anne McCaffrey, Patricia A McKillip, Jack Vance, Roger Zelazny.

All this is lifted from Noreascon Press Release #15. There were 563 ballots; the largest number nominating in a category was 485 (novel); the largest number of nominees in any category was 212 (fanwriter); the ranges of nominations for finalists were as follows: novel 51-146, novella 39-123, novelette 39-88, short 27-56, nonfiction 23-121, dramatic 28-234, pro art 48-151, pro editor 111-183, fanzine 31-84, fanwriter 15-60, fanartist 25-99, JWC 14-110, Gandalf 34-92.

Albacon: 31st British Eastercon, Easter 1980

Boswell's last-ditch defense of Scotland was that God *had* made the awful country: said Dr Johnson, "Sir, comparisons are invidious: but God made Hell." This amply understates the fears of many Southerners as they passed railway signs hitherto undreamt of, hideous places like Preston and Carlisle and Motherwell, to Glasgow and the Albany hotel. Ominous rumblings had been sounding for months, thanks to a policy of handling hotel bookings and con literature like some dangerous radioactive material best left to cool off for a few years before action: there will be a pause while Pat Charnock responds to last issue's Committee letters....

"As a humble member, I have felt very aware of the lack of communication. The 'constant requests for advice, comments and information' haven't reached me. As soon as I received the hotel booking form, back last year, I sent it back with my deposit. I also sent a letter to Bob Shaw asking if he could arrange any kind of fares deal with BR. At the beginning of this year,

water started trickling through the roof of the old Charnockian homestead, and we decided we'd have to forego Albacon and get the roof fixed instead. So I wrote, cancelling, and asking if I could have my deposit back.... In March I received a receipt from a hotel chain dated November, posted February about 5 weeks beforehand without a post code." (I.e., presumably, to "4 Fletcher Road, London" – DRL) "About that time I also received – sort of by accident, because it came in Gray's BSFA mailing – details of Albacon's fares deal with BR, about 2 days after the final date for getting tickets." (That BSFA mailing was delayed, but only by 1 week – DRL) "I shot another letter off to the committee, and have still heard nothing. I phoned the hotel and was told they hadn't got a reservation for me. I don't even know how to get to the hotel, because no-one bothered to send me a progress report."

"I've worked on a con committee, and can appreciate some of the pressures Albacon is labouring under; but if they don't find it necessary to communicate with their colleagues, perhaps they find it even less desirable to communicate with their members?" (PC, 12 April)

Expectations were thus low. And as the Mancon committee is still trying to convince us, a con can't be good if fans are rotten enough not to expect it to be good.... Sadly for this interesting piece of logic, Albacon proved enjoyable. The hotel attitude – always a dubious factor until zero hour, as the Skycon committee is still trying to convince you – made up for much: no visible security thugs, no desperate race to close the bars in fear of profits, and (a stroke of pure luck for the committee) a standard hotel beer which was both cheap* and good†. This inexorably pervaded the central nervous system, warping perceptions of time until the collapse of the main programme – which moved along with the oiled precision of an epileptic snail – seemed hardly to matter; it erased memories so you scarcely noticed the reappearance of a chunk of recycled article in Bob Shaw's funny-as-ever talk (the "Oyster Ratings" from *Mota* crept in), now slated for the Bell/Williams *Out of the Blue*; it did its best with the interminable dance routine following the banquet, but that tedious business still took many subjective hours. Further doses of reality-bending beer resigned me to a film programme whereby anything I wanted to see was shown without warning at times like 4am. Really Good programme ideas included, as expected, Shaw and FGoH Barker – the latter's "Captive" slide show (despite technical hitches this time)

being certain of encores at many future cons, starting with Silicon '80. GoH Colin Kapp, despite the aspersions of a jolly but typically anonymous bookseller (“Worst speaker the Brum Group’s ever had”), was also highly popular. Less expected guests were Patrick Moore and Bernard Dixon (now Euroeditor of *Omni* and planning a Euroedition); aided by a minion of indeterminate sex, Dixon ran a lunch party replete with free wine (which vanished as though down many singularities) and free *Omnis* (less easy to shift). Your editor escaped before Moore’s promotional talk, alarmed by the Moore profile, whose convexity puts Martin Hoare to shame and would bring reflexive twitches to the fingers of Captain Ahab....

* 47p/pint. † Belhaven 80/-, as a matter of fact.

The fan room, niftily organized by Jimmy Robertson and Jim Barker (each trying hard to give the other all the credit), was a constant bright spot. There were many square acres of Barker art, plus a few scribbles by other artists placed in a good light under the table at the back; piles of fanzines on sale and display; competitions; a passable sound system; and lots of appearances of *me* on the programme – if you expected me to say a word against this excellent fan room, think again. I blathered on that grand sf subject “Mice” (see *DNQ28 & Taff-Ddu*), proposed motions in debates and underwent bit appearances in “Call My Bluff” and the inevitable fan charades, where our FGoH left me to act out *The Incredibly Mixed-Up People Who Stopped Living And Became Zombies* [sic]; Langford’s revenge had him playing on long after the audience had left, acting out *Hot Wireless Sets, Aspirin Tablets, The Sandpaper Sides Of Used Matchboxes And Something That Might Have Been Castor Oil* by D.G. Compton. Jim and I featured in an improbable TAFF interview conducted by Eve Harvey, which despite high-minded and virtuous intentions collapsed in a morass of towels, bursting balloons, ad-libs, vomiting plastic rats and the appalling revelation of why Barker once used a pseudonym (not to mention speculation on whyever Langford didn’t). The full story will be told elsewhere.

Vast sums were raised for TAFF etc by typical Rog Peyton auctioneering of items like individual pages ripped from Ian Watson novels, or the Barker “mobile” interestingly constructed from two (underinflated) balloons and one (rather large) sausage: this artform sold for fivepence. Jim unearthed mounds of artwork for this auction, while I hit back with aged fanzines and pieces of paper formerly touched by Colin Wilson. A pat on the back to those who

bought it....

The usual awards were handed out. The Doc Weir went to Bob (the real) Shaw; Joyce Mains was elevated to the rank of Prime Trout, an office whose responsibilities one shudders to contemplate; a FOKT Nice Guy award was presented to Jim White. Fancy dress prizes were showered on the Fanthorpes in various roles from *The Black Lion*; MC Rog Peyton loudly observed “You may not be able to write, Lionel, but you make good costumes.” BSFA Awards went to J. G. Ballard for *The Unlimited Dream Company*, Chris Priest for “Palely Loitering” (curse you, Priest), the Hitch-Hiker record and artist Jim Burns. Yorcon II won the ’81 Eastercon bidding unopposed, bar a hastily improvised Rockcon spoof from Martin Hoare: it’s back to the good old Leeds Dragonara with GoH Ian Watson and FGoH D. Langford (gosh).

Yorcon II, 32nd British Eastercon, April 17-20 1981: Send £3 supporting membership at once to Graham James, 12 Fearnville Terrace, Oakwood, Leeds, LS8 3DU. Attending membership is £6, conversion £3 (£5 attending & £2 conversion for already paid-up presupporters).

Other observations: the CCTV system which relayed the main programme about the hotel helped keep said programme ill-attended, it being all too plain that nothing was happening (or that another instalment of the dread film quiz was on – same thing, really); the continuous *Star Trek* video showings were said to perform a valuable public service by keeping Trekkies from underfoot; the Jim Barker “Blankety Blank” event was such that I dare not mention it for fear of severe haemorrhage (speaking of which, the Langford nostril did indeed perform, in the small hours of Sunday morning); bar staff were universally friendly, if bemused; next time I’ll avoid the steak pie – 99% kidney – ecch; guests Barker and Kapp shared a single penthouse suite, something which I hope will not give Yorcon ideas (Ian and I are just good friends); all I remember of the BSFA and Leeds-Victory parties is that both were highly memorable, a table being smashed at the former and every fan in sight at the latter; finally, none of the above is necessarily reliable – as you’d guessed – since by Monday I was coming down with dread diseases which immobilized me for two weeks. Even so, as the Albany sank slowly in the North and Hazel and I abandoned ourselves to the wild delights of BR sandwiches, 50 minute delays at Motherwell and a train whose every seat had been reserved from Inverness to Euston, we suffered from a strong illusion of having been to a pleasant convention. Must have been that beer, we *know*

those Scots can have been up to no good.

Sandy Brown provides a postscript, confirmed in essence by a number of other sources....

“At Glasgow Sheriff Court yesterday, Sgt. Hamish McPheet of the Strathclyde Constabulary, giving evidence in the trial of 120 delegates to a sci-fi convention held in Glasgow at Easter, accused of mobbing and rioting and attempting to lynch Robert P Shaw (25), chairman of the convention, said ‘On the evening of Monday 7 April, as I was proceeding along Douglas St, Glasgow, in a northerly direction (that is, towards the big numbers), my attention was attracted by a riotous assembly exiting from the Albany Hotel where, I had reason to believe, a science fiction convention was ending. Upon closer investigation, I observed the chairman of the aforementioned convention being forcibly abducted from the hotel, whilst several unidentified persons sprayed him with a substance which I later ascertained to be red dye. He was thereupon tied to an adjacent lamppost and a jet of water from a hotel fire hose was directed onto his person. I immediately summoned reinforcements, but the assembly dispersed into the hotel before they could arrive. I was unable to ascertain whether the ringleaders were delegates or members of the convention committee.’” (SB)

[Inserted flyer]

M.C.F.L.F.

Are you a *Middle Class Fan*?

If so, you are a member of a nice but persecuted minority, and you are invited to close ranks with those of your own kind.

The MIDDLE CLASS FANNISH LIBERATION FRONT will protect *your* interests.

You are a *Middle Class Fan* if:

1. You live in the HOME COUNTIES, the THAMES VALLEY or a SMART SUBURB.
2. You possess a DEGREE, a PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATION or a WORD PROCESSOR.

3. You buy at least ONE HARDCOVER SF NOVEL a year.
4. You prefer J. G. BALLARD and URSULA LE GUIN to LARRY NIVEN or ANNE McCAFFREY.
5. You SECRETLY COLLECT SF as a HEDGE AGAINST INFLATION.
6. You have PUBLISHED SF PROFESSIONALLY.
7. You have had a REJECTION from Isaac Asimov's Sci-Fi Magazine (same as 6).
8. You belong to FEAPA.
9. You have a TRENDY DISABILITY, such as deafness, literacy or wit.
10. You are ABLE TO READ WITHOUT MOVING YOUR LIPS.
11. You DONATE BLOOD or support the EQUAL RIGHTS AMENDMENT.
12. You read THE SUNDAY TIMES, FOUNDATION or ANSIBLE.
13. You think WORKING CLASS FANS do actually smell a bit.
14. You have been recently DENOUNCED.

Are you a MIDDLE CLASS FAN?

Now is the time to sit down with a nice cup of tea and be counted. Just fill in the form below, and send it to the address shown.

TO: D. WEST, 17 Carlisle St, Keighley, West Yorks, BD21 4PX.

Yes! I am a *Middle Class Fan* and proud of it, and wish to join THE MIDDLE CLASS FANNISH LIBERATION FRONT. Please send me full details of how to look down on people, type out my own litho plates, make macramé pot-holders, cook vegetarian dishes and produce my own Christmas cards.

I enclose £20.00 (American Express and Diners Club accepted).

NAME:

ADDRESS:

MIDDLE CLASS QUALIFICATION (list numbers above):

SCHOOL/REGIMENT:

[This flyer appeared in the first mailing of the incredibly secret apa, FEAPA, and also at Albacon. No admission of the identity of the perpetrator has been made. No reference to the D. West DENUNCIATION (which finally appeared in Dave Bridges's *One-*

Off) could possibly be intended....]

Awards &C

FAAn votes (see p1) should go to Mike Glicksohn or Rob Jackson by mid-June. Rank choices in order on a form (from me or Rob) or bit of paper, adding “No Award” as desired; also vote for 3 of the following as committee members ... *Marty Cantor, Mike Glycer, Dave Langford, Roger Reynolds, Bruce Pelz, Victoria Vayne*. \$1 voting fee still required (unless you nominated) but next year it should be free. (Mike Glicksohn) • **Brian Earl Brown’s *Whole Fanzine Catalog* poll**, though US, is UK dominated: best fanzine *Twll-Ddu*, best writer Langford, best artist (tie) Barker/Gilliland, best article the Langford “Genocide for Fun & Profit”. Little did they know that – *official correction to article follows* – in the bit on antimatter, “1.25 kilotons” should read “1.2 megatons”. • **Checkpoint/Ansible Poll** forms enclosed where weightsteps permit; all may vote, ranking up to 5 items for Best UK Fanzine, Writer and Artist, plus 1 nomination for each of Best Single Ish, Article Column and Fanzine Cover. *Ansible* is not eligible (take that, Glycer!). Ballots by May 31, please.

Boobs

This section has nothing to do with the ladies’-underwear poster Jim Barker doctored for Albacon so it read BOOB SHAW WELCOMES YOU TO ALBRACON. It’s just that I typed April (not May) on the front; also US should read NA in several places in the TAFF article; also, Peter Roberts’s TAFF flyer has a credit to Phil Stephenson-Payne which should read Philippa S-P (she now wishes to be known as Philippa Grove-Stephenson, to add to the confusion). The info on Virgin Books’s Philip José Farmer titles (last issue) was wholly false, which will teach me not to steal news from *Matrix*; and Penguin and Magnum have loudly denied any intention to cut back their sf programmes (believe that if you like). In *Matrix 29* Rob Jackson lists out-of-date sub rates for *Ansible* (they are still as on p1) and the wrong price for *Taff-Ddu* (the 60p cover price doesn’t include postage; unless you buy one from me at the Tun or something it’s 75p.)

Infinitely Improbable

Ian Watson Sells Story! Smiling Jan “Filthy” Finder confirmed this momentous event and admitted that through some mischance he had purchased Ian’s contribution to the Finder anthology of “First contact” stories. Surely memorable enough to stick in the minds of many Hugo voters, the story consists of one word. The text is not reproduced here for fear of Ian’s bill for 3 cents (plus VAT), but we can reveal that it has four letters. • The **Denvention** (Denver in ’81) Worldcon agent is now Linda Hutchinson: membership £7.50 to 14 Bowmonts Road, Tadley, Basingstoke, Hants. • **Swedish fan Kaj Harju** says the Swedish fanfeud (see A5) is a mere figment of Anders Bellis and Ahrvid Engholm. • **Andy Porter** ’phoned a couple of weeks before Albacon asking about BSFA Award results, as announced at Albacon. Said Mr Porter, “I guess I goofed.” • **Kevin Smith** has achieved further power and fame (but not, as usual, money) with his entry in *Computing*’s “silly units” competition, receiving a special prize (of unknown nature, which hasn’t yet arrived) for the style and flair of such entries as “A device which can detect 10 to the power of 12 simultaneous radioactive decays is a *geiger counter*” • **Omni** are running a short-short story competition, 500-600 word entries should be sent to Andie Burland, *Omni*, 2 Bramber Road, London, W14 9PB. *Ansible* readers are advised to boycott this brutally exploitative contest, nor to be tempted by the mere £500 prize; let the *Ansible* editor prostitute himself. Deadline is 31st April ... oh, all right, July. • **Andy Richards** reports that the UK paperback of Dick’s *A Scanner Darkly* has the year printed as “1945 not 1985”. Funny, my (Del Rey) copy says 1994. • **Spies** inform me that Peter Nicholls’s life insurance recently lapsed through non-payment: *Ansible*, you see, Knows All. • **Aghacon**, 2nd Spring Bank Holiday Leeds Partycon, takes place in Leeds from May 23-26 1980, largely at Graham James’s place (as Yorcon II address; see p2). GoH D. West; programme of thrilling items promised; membership £2 (£3.50 for two). Phone Graham (Leeds 721478) or Alan Dorey (Brookwood 3886) for details. • **George Hay** says the Photographers’ Gallery has agreed to his “camera futures” exhibition, so far untitled but running for 1 month from December 19 1980. SF material (“not too way out”) welcomed. • **Martin Hoare**, in the course of describing how he ran Albacon, keeps telling me how much better it was than nasty old Yorcon last year; unfriendly voices from Limpwrist territory hint that this is not unconnected with Yorcon II’s decision

to have fetching-and-carrying done by the local fans without benefit of Martin's vast "Ops Manager" experience.... • **Mike Glicksohn** writes: "Ever seen the animated English film *Great?* Two months ago I bought a \$1400 video machine just so I could watch it and it's still the only tape I have but I'm quite satisfied with the arrangement...." (Never heard of it, boss.) • Nasty people like **Chris Priest** and **Arthur Hlavaty** have taken to sending me fascinating letters covered with scrawls of "DNP" and "This is not for *Ansible*, you damned fan!". This trend must cease. And speaking of cessation, correspondence about Albacon is closed with the appearance of my own totally fair and objective comments.... • Just delivered: **Fantasy Archives** catalogue, from which I see that 1977 Robert Howard trash costs \$35 when signed by "editor" Karl Edward Wagner, while the first printing of Alan Dead Foster's Star Wars book is going for \$50. Cringe.... • **FEAPA lives!** (Maybe.) • **Jim Barker** merrily explains that my post-Albacon symptoms were just like his parents' (pre-Albacon). "I've heard of Typhoid Mary, but Influenza Jimmy? Conventioneers' Disease, anyone?" Hate. • Would anyone be interested in a small, regular **fan meeting** in a pub/club near Reading station once a month? Might be worth trying.

Remember – a free issue if you vote in the *Checkpoint/Ansible* poll (see within)!

"This was the Stygian darkness of which poets wrote. This was the pit of Acheron of which the creators of classic prose made mention. This was the kind of darkness which made thick, black velvet seem like chiffon by contrast. This was the kind of darkness that turned pitch into translucent polythene, when the two were placed side by side...." (*Neuron World* by R L Fanthorpe)

This was ... ANSIBLE 9!

Dave Langford
22 Northumberland Avenue
READING, Berks.

RG2 7PW
United Kingdom

***Ansible* 10**

June 1980

ANSIBLE 10 • June 1980

DAVE LANGFORD, 22 Northumberland Avenue, READING, Berks. RG2 7PW, UK. Subscriptions: 4/60p UK, 6/£1 Europe, 5/£1 elsewhere; no foreign cheques or currency, or subs over £1 (£1.20 UK), please. See the mailing label (courtesy of Keith Freeman) for your sub. status. ARTWORK: Rob Hansen. [*Starfan* strip.]

Results of the 1979-1980 *Checkpoint/Ansible* Fan Poll

This is the ninth British fan poll, the previous eight having appeared in Peter Roberts's *Checkpoint*; it covers fannish doings from just after Easter 1979 to just after Easter 1980. All fans were eligible to vote, but ballots only went out with *Ansible*. Voters this time were:

Michael Ashley, David Bridges, John Collick, Alan Dorey, Keith Freeman, Mike Glicksohn, William T Goodall, Rob Hansen, Alun Harries, Rob Holdstock, Terry Hughes, Rob Jackson, Chris Lewis, Ian Maule, Joe Nicholas, Paul Oldroyd, Simon Ounsley, Mike Paine, Dai Price, Chris Priest, David Pringle, David Redd, John Shire, Kevin Smith, Ian Watson and Taral Wayne – twenty-six in all.

BEST BRITISH FANZINE: Twenty-seven titles, plus “No Award”, were nominated. Five points were awarded for a first-place vote, four for a second and so on: this system was also used for the fanwriter and fanartist categories. *Ansible* was not eligible. Last year's placings appear in brackets.

1) TWLL-DDU (63 points)(1st) ed. Dave Langford – address as above. Normally available for the usual; #17 was a TAFF fundraiser costing 75p post free; two issues in 1979/80. *Twll-Ddu* continues fitfully, hampered by its editor's habit of taking time off for *Drilkjis* and *Ansible*. The 16th issue followed the previous ones in being a personalzine wherein editorial

babblings were varied with letters and quotations – almost all genuine, though people refuse to believe this. Its cover, by Rob Hansen, showed gorgeous Joe Nicholas being invaded by a giant incontinent washing machine; within were diary entries on fanzines, books, parties, cons, cars, crumpets and the Great Albatross of Northumberland Avenue. *Taff-Ddu* (= *Twill-Ddu* 17), voted Best Single Issue in this poll) broke new ground by taking on Jim Barker – voted Best Artist in this poll – as coproducer: the result was twice TD’s usual length, with writing and art from each perpetrator. Jim’s cover showed him and TAFF rival Langford about to duel with pistols; within, cosmic knowledge on curries, mice, African exploration, slimming, tortoises and more was imparted; there was another of Jim’s excellent “Captive” strips, this time Langford-scripted and six pages long. Buy now! Personally, I find TD just the sort of fanzine I’d like to produce myself. Thank you, folks.

2) DEADLOSS (42 points) (=5th) ed. Chris Priest, 1 Ortygia House, 6 Lower Road, Harrow, Middlesex, HA2 0DA. “Available only on whim”; one issue in 1979/80. One of the biggest (48pp + covers) and most satisfying genzines for years. Within, Langford plays the fool, Joe Nicholas kicks Lester del Rey, Graham Charnock interviews Status (yawn) Quo, Rob Hansen enjoys Yorcon, Chris Evans “interviews” Elmer T Hack, Dicky Howett reminisces on being a cartoonist and various letter-writers write letters; there are also Barker, Hansen and Howett cartoons. This is good stuff; what makes *Deadloss 2* special is the constant presence of C Priest, who embeds the contributions in fluent personal commentary, highly readable and provoking cries of envy from us nerds who can’t work straight onto stencil. Chunks of this are short articles in their own right: more truths about “Static Gravity”, accurate criticism of fanzine critics, a poke at “creative writing” tuition ... *Deadloss* would have scored still more points had I not disqualified a ballot from one “Persi Strich”: ahem. Let’s hope there’s a 1980 issue.

3) DRILKJIS (35 points) (-) Kevin Smith, 10 Cleves Court, St. Marks Hill, Surbiton, Surrey, KT6 4PS, and Dave Langford, address above. Available for 50p or the usual; two issues in 1979/80. This is the first time the lazy editors have managed two issues in the period of the poll. *Drilkjis 4* featured a D. West cover of stunning irrelevance, a transcript of the Langford “Genocide” talk from Yorcon, Kevin stomping SF series, Jon Langford on “Fat Nazi Women”, Dave attacking Kevin’s earlier dismissal of SF as literature, Joe

Nicholas on the Covenant books, and letters. #5, all-litho, had Kevin stomping Jackie Lichtenberg, Chris Priest stomping virtually everyone (this being his Novacon GoH speech), Joe Nicholas stomping the Hugos, various fans stomping one another in a debate on SF characterization (also at Novacon) and a long, scurrilous Seacon report from Peter Nicholls, plus letters, reviews, a filthy Rob Hansen cover and Phil Foglio stomping pictorially on Jim Barker. Quite apart from being a co-editor, I'm pleased to see *Drilkjis* here as an indication that serious talk on SF (its ostensible purpose, despite some of the sillier items above) is still thought worthwhile.

=4) DOT (25 points) (3rd) ed. Kevin Smith – address above. Available for the usual; two or maybe three issues in 1979/80. This super-literate personalzine features Kevin making fanwriting look absurdly easy as he philosophizes about fandom, reports on trivia and reviews fanzines (#6), or concocts elaborate fictions about feminist mayhem at Seacon – so powerfully conveyed that Rob Jackson felt it necessary to inform BSFA members that the man-slaughter had not in fact taken place – and telepathic socks (#7). The eighth *Dot*, a source of worldwide frustration, was a mere mailing wrapper with notes on why some fans were getting #7 so late (having failed miserably to collect it at Seacon). Note that without being ostentatious in the manner of a Langford, the Smith style *is* distinctive when he's not parodying someone else. It is wholly traditional and in keeping with cosmic harmony that either *Dot* or Kevin-as-fanwriter should finish in fourth place....

=4) SEAMONSTERS (25 points) (2nd) ed. Simone Walsh, 35 Braund Avenue, Greenford, Middlesex. Available for the usual, though possibly not any more; one issue in 1979/80. This would probably be the “focal point” UK fanzine had its schedule not slipped to one issue a year, or less. *Seamonsters 4* was a good fannish read: Simone rambling about fandom and temping; Dave Pringle lurking behind a pretext (that he's transcribing his wife Ann's unconscious thoughts) which enables him to turn in some incredibly bitchy comments on fans at Yorcon; Brin Fortey's “Charlie Was A Good Old Boy”, a tiny anecdote of an enormous penis, showing what good writing can do with the most unlikely material – voted Best Article this year; a jerky piece from Cathy Ball reacting to UK fandom; a Rob Hansen snippet; and a *big* and fascinating letter column. The cover was a joint Bell-Hansen effort: much sense-of-wonder. *Seamonsters* is a fanzine which can be re-read without loss of pleasure; we can only hope that even without duplicator boss Greg

Pickersgill it can struggle back into print....

Runners-Up: being other fanzines which received more than five points ... ONE-OFF (Dave Bridges) 19pts; PARANOID (Ian & Janice Maule) 15pts; BY BRITISH (Ian Maule & Joe Nicholas) 13pts; OCELOT (Graham James & Simon Ounsley) 10pts; NABU (Ian Maule) & “No Award” each 9pts; GROSS ENCOUNTERS (Alan Dorey) 8pts; VECTOR (BSFA/Mike Dickinson) 7pts; MATRIX (BSFA/John & Eve Harvey) 6pts.

BEST BRITISH FANWRITER: Eighteen fans were nominated; all details of scoring etc as for Best British Fanzine, above.

1) DAVE LANGFORD (96 points) (1st) 2) D. WEST (46 points) (3rd) 3) KEVIN SMITH (40 points) (=4th) 4) CHRIS PRIEST (31 points) (=4th) =5) DAVID BRIDGES (28 points) (8th) =5) BOB SHAW (28 points) (10th)

Runners-Up: Joseph Nicholas 18pts; Alan Dorey 7pts; Simone Walsh 6pts.

BEST BRITISH FANARTIST: Thirteen fans, plus “No Award”, were nominated; such is the lack of UK fanartists that only five got more than five points.

1) JIM BARKER (94 points) (1st) 2) HARRY BELL (73 points) (2nd) 3) ROB HANSEN (57 points) (3rd) 4) D. WEST (30 points) (4th) 5) JOHN COLLICK (7 points) (-)

BEST SINGLE ISSUE: Nine fanzines were nominated. In this and the following two special-achievement categories, there is no points system: one vote counts as one vote and that’s that. But see “Afterword”.

1) TAFF-DDU (Jim Barker & Dave Langford) (five votes) =2) BY BRITISH (Ian Maule & Joe Nicholas) (three votes) =2) DEADLOSS 2 (Chris Priest) (three votes) =2) DRILKJIS 5 (Kev Smith & Dave Langford) (three votes) =2) FOR A FEW FANZINES MORE (John Collick) (three votes) =2) ONE-OFF 8 (David Bridges) (three votes) 7) SEAMONSTERS 4 (Simone Walsh) (two votes)

BEST ARTICLE OR COLUMN

1) Bryn Fortey: “Charlie Was A Good Old Boy” from *Seamonsters 4* (three votes) =2) Abi Frost: “Second Thermidor (Level 1)” from *New River Blues 2*

(two votes) =2) Dave Langford: “Fall of the Mouse of Usher” from *Taff-Ddu*
(two votes) =2) Joseph Nicholas: “Coming From Behind: A Short History of
British Fanzines in the Seventies” from *By British* (two votes) =2) D. West:
“Ah, Sweet Arrogance” from *One-Off 8* (two votes)

BEST FANZINE COVER: Ten covers were nominated, from nine different
fanzine titles.

1) D. West: *Inca 1* (four votes) =2) Jim Barker: *Taff-Ddu* (three votes) =2)
Rob Hansen: *Drilkjis 5* (three votes) =2) D. West: *Drilkjis 4* (three votes) 5)
Harry Bell: *Out of the Blue 1* (two votes)

WHERE ARE THEY NOW? I thought it might be interesting,
albeit in poor taste, to note items placed in last year’s *Checkpoint*
poll which have vanished from the poll this time around. In fact, all
last year’s fanzines are still placed somewhere; three fanwriters
have vanished, being Peter Roberts (6th), Greg Pickersgill (7th) and
Rob Holdstock (9th), and one fanartist, Jon Langford (5th). The
current mutterings of stagnant fandom are perhaps supported by the
lack of change from last year: four of the top five fanzines were in
last year’s top five (and the other has been around since 1976), and
likewise four of the top five writers, and likewise the top four
artists, who are even in precisely the same order. Where’s this new
blood I sometimes hear tell of? Or if there’s new blood around,
then certainly no-one’s voting for it.

AFTERWORD: The format of this poll has been swiped almost intact from
Peter Roberts. I’m quite happy with the system as regards the first three
categories, though we should bear in mind that the ordering of winners is
scarcely a Cosmic Judgement – often one or two first-place votes could
reverse the order of two items, and with such a small voting sample the
statistics are lousy. However, the stats are lousier still in the “Special
Achievement” categories: following certain conversations, I intend to allow
three votes rather than just one in these categories. Depending on your
comments in the next ten months, said three votes could either be ranked with
3, 2 and 1 points respectively, or could each be worth one point (the latter
being the system used for Hugo nominations counting) eliminating the agony
of “is A better than B?”.

MEANWHILE ... I have been Reproved for not running the *Twll-Ddu* Worst

Fanzine (etc) Poll. OK: here's a substitute. Before the end of July, you may all send in ten ranked nominations (or fewer than ten, if you prefer) for a free-for-all Worst Fannish Thing of 1979-80 Poll. Fans, cons, organizations, fanzines, artwork: *everything* is eligible as a Worst Thing, provided only that it's British and manifested its badness in the period (just after) Easter '79 to (just after) Easter '80.

I await your votes with great interest. As in the Best Things poll above, voting extends your *Ansible* credit.

[Voting slip with almost identical wording included but not transcribed.]

Jim Barker is currently looking for a better job which entails putting together a new portfolio. Obviously he can't do this and continue with the usual high level of fan work: he's cutting down drastically for the next few months, though not stopping altogether. Once the portfolio is finished and he's got his fantastic new job, he'll be back to his usual prolific output. The full story behind this will be disclosed in *Dead Hedgehog*, his new personalzine out "real soon now". (*Jim Barker*) (*Ansible* knows nothing of the strange things which have lately happened to Jim; thus we do not print details of how watching *Demon With A Glass Hand* led Jim by easy stages to arson, nor are we aware that the police wanted very much to prosecute but have at length decided to let him off with a warning. Jim is looking for a new job some little way away from Falkirk: say, in London....)

Ian Watson: "What you overlook in your report of my historic first contact assault on Jan Howard Finder is that one infinitely telling word is preceded by six words of title – making the title six times as long as the story, a feat that only Harlan Ellison otherwise could contemplate – thus raising the revenue from the story to at least 21¢, which *almost* covers the cost of the postage."

Kevin Smith's continual search for fame has now led him onto the John Peel programme: Peel requested information on cars driven in the "Saint" books, and Kevin was swift to oblige at enormous length, also asking in his letter for a record to be played "for accountants everywhere". Such genius does not go unrecognized: John Peel awarded him a 1978 Radio 1 calendar (they had a lot left over), while the BSFA at once made him the new editor of *Vector*....

Chris Evans, known as C.D. Evans on the Faber list owing to the existence of Dr Christopher Evans, has now, following the death of Dr Christopher Evans, been permitted to change his name, as regards Faber, from C.D. Evans to Chris Evans.

COA

Dave Cockfield, 10 Sanford Walk, New Cross, London, SE.14 // Rob Hansen, c/o 7a Lawrence Road, South Ealing, London, W.5 // Terry Hughes, 6205 Wilson Blvd (Apt 102), Falls Church, VA 22044, USA // Roz Kaveney, 28 Ironside House, Homerton Road, London, E.9 // Brian Parker & Terry Clifton, 8 Brinkworth Close, Hockley, Essex // Graham England, Bussard Str 22, 8025 Unterhaching, W Germany

Infinitely Improbable

Brushing aside *Ansible's* pleas to be spared an exclusive interview, **Rob Holdstock** announced "I'm better than John Fowles at science fiction...." The reason? "I've published more SF than he has." Such confidence explains why Rob's *Where The Time Winds Blow* has now been bounced by 6 US publishers. • **Ian Williams** has failed his third driving test, or so says uncharitable Harry Bell, not omitting to add "Ho, ho." • **George Hay** has spoken sternly to me for suggesting that the SF Foundation might collapse without any administrator. Just as monarchies are infinitely stronger without a king or queen, so the Foundation is going from strength to strength in the absence of Malcolm Edwards: thus speaks George. • **A new fantasy film *Clash of the Titans*** is scheduled for mid-1981; it seems to be a follow-up to *Jason and the Argonauts* and might well be a good thing. However, I have not been favoured with a "press kit", merely with a somewhat snotty circular from SF PR consultant Bjo Trimble, inviting me to send samples of *Ansible* and prove myself worthy of attention. "Press Kits" are being tailored to fanzines' "specific needs", which probably means that rotten little duplicated efforts won't be getting MGM's nice photographs. • **Limpwrist Power-Mania** grows: Chris Priest has now suggested that we (Britain) bid for the 1984 Eurocon and merge it with Eastercon that year. Graham England (Our German Correspondent) reports that Eurocon '82 "could well be in Moscow

if the Soviet Writers' Union agrees" (Moscow being a well-known European capital), while Eurocon '84 is up for grabs. Graham feels a little faint at the thought of Peter Weston as Big Brother staring out of posters.... **Awards** presented at Eurocon this year include Best Novel: *The White Dragon*, Best European Authors: John Brunner and Stanislaw Lem, Best European Artist: Karel Thole, Best European Fans: Waldemar Kumming and Andrzej Pruszyński. • Nebula Awards went to *The Fountains of Paradise* plus Barry Longyear's "Enemy Mine" (novella), George RR Martin's "Sandkings", Edward Bryant's "giANTS". • Interesting bit from **John Eggeling's Phantasmagoria Books catalogue**: despite the official story, it seems that some of John Creasey's vast output was ghost-written – "this information came from a reputable author who once turned down such a commission." • **The Ellison-Bova Plagiarism Suit** against ABC/Paramount (for stealing their "Brillo" as *Future Cop*) led to \$337,000 damages award, the lucky authors settling for a piffling \$285,000 to avoid an appeal. I am waiting keenly for *Dr. Who* or some such huge-budget production to plagiarize my own "Sex Pirates and the Blood Asteroid." • **Abi Frost** writes: "I had better let you know – since Roz wants everyone to, yet is too busy spinning round crying 'Fame! Power! Respectability!' to do anything about it – that the back jacket of Ian Watson's forthcoming work *Gardens of Delight* is to bear the very important lines: '*Books and Bookmen* described *God's World* as a "dazzling elegant and convoluted edifice of plot and ideas".' Roz was sent a proof copy of the book; that in the present state of the industry presumably counts as major graft.... Also: the current issue of Book Marketing Council's '101 exciting events you could have sold lots of books because of if only we'd got the thing out on time newsletter' contains the following: 'LWT have signed a robot, Metal Mickey, as the star of a new situation comedy series.' A desperate attempt to be seen to cater for minority cultures before Franchise Day, no doubt. Anyway, watch out for a new fringe fandom." (AJF) • **The Yorcon Committee** has settled down with Tom Shippey and David Pringle as joint chairmen. Former chairman Mike Dickinson, in preparation for his USA move, is practising being 3000 miles away from UK fans by not answering letters or telephones, and sending messengers to buy food rather than leave his house.... • Concerning **Penguin's "nonexistent" cutback**, Peter Pinto notes that SF editor Paul Sidey has gone and Penguin considered no SF titles between January and May. Meanwhile, among the 1300 sacked at IPC were all Hamlyn pb staff below editorial-director level. • **Peter Roberts**

reveals: “I am now in the employ of David & Charles. Everyone must join the SF Book Club, or it’s back to beach-cleaning....” And **Rob Hansen** has a London job, hence COA. • **TAFF**: nominations open 15 July – 15 August, voting from end August to 1 December. *Now* is the time to nominate likely US fans! Candidates so far are Stu Shiffman, Gary Farber (“probable”), Taral & Victoria Vayne (“thinking about it!”). GUFF: new UK administrator *still* wanted. Volunteers? Candidates so far: Joe Nicholas and (probably) Malcolm Edwards. • **Many thanks** to the US fans who’ve offered hospitality to me & Hazel. We’ll be arriving in New York on 27 August, 2.45pm local time, with Jim Barker & Harry Bell, and departing after 2 weeks (3 for Jim & Harry). • **Late Poll Votes** came from G. James, D. West, P. Roberts & J. Harvey: Their only effect on the first 3 categories would be minor rearrangement of the top 5 places and elevation of “No Award” to =6th fanzine, while 3 more articles would have moved into the =2 slot for Best Article. Sorry, folks: time & printers wait for no fan. • **Remember Space-Ex 1999?** Bob Day reports it’s “liable to collapse in a shower of unfulfilled promises and the odd bankruptcy, due to schisms in the organizing body ISTRA. News gleaned from a ‘leader’ at Albacon who now claims to the sole ISTRA Top Person and whose name I totally forget”. • **The Amazing BBC Seacon Programme** was recently repeated, and eager fans wishing to relive the interview with Peter “My Convention” Weston were shocked to discover this bit had been cut (tee hee). • **Lots of fans** received press passes for *The Empire Strikes Back*; not having the time to spare, I passed mine to Andrew Stephenson, who wished to earn great favour by taking “a friend” (Chris Bidmead of *Dr. Who*, to whom Andrew will now sell countless scripts). Andrew’s promised review appears here: “ ”. • On **Martin Hoare**’s recommendation I hereby announce the Reading Pub Meeting for the third Thursday of each month (starting June 19) from 8pm in the Osborne Arms, Reading: right from railway station, turn left after bus station and it’s on the second turning opposite. See you there? • **Ron Salomon** is working for the US Census Office (he’s sent me a Census Office Employee’s Official Credential, which I hope to use whilst there): no sooner had they given him 125,000 census forms to check than the building, and the forms, burnt down. Nice work if you can get it. • **The Surrey Limpwrist Con** is now called “Surcon” and all rumours about it in *Ansible* are denied, doubtless including this one. • **D. Langford** is shutting down activity for 2 months: deadlines.

Hazel's Language Lessons:
No 2, Amharic

The word *tāgabbā* means ...
(a) to be married (b) to be infectious.
This proves it.

ANSIBLE 10 from Dave Langford
22 Northumberland Avenue
READING, Berks. RG2 7PW
UK

***Ansible* 11**

August 1980

ANSIBLE 11 (August 1980) is still from DAVE LANGFORD, 22 Northumberland Avenue, READING, Berks RG2 7PW, UK. Subscriptions: 4/60p UK, 6/£1 elsewhere; remember that foreign cheques/currency lose heavily on conversion. Your last issue number appears on Keith Freeman's subtly crafted mailing label (SUB DUE or a row of stars indicating vast and imminent peril). Heading ["I'm sorry – the UNMOVED MOVER isn't in right now ..."] by Stu Shiffman.

The 1979-1980 Worst Thing Poll

Ballots were distributed in *Ansible 10*, allowing hatemongers up to 10 ranked nominations for the worst thing of the period Easter '79 to Easter '80: 10 points awarded for a first-place nomination, 9 for second, etc. The 17 voters were M. Ashley, A. Bostick, S. Brown, G. Cox, R. Day, B. Earp, K. Freeman, A. Harries, J. Harvey, R. Holdstock, P. Holdsworth, H. McNabb, J. Nicholas, P. Oldroyd, R. Salomon, J. Scrivner, & J. Shire (their first names are veiled in decent anonymity).

RESULTS. 1) (56 points) **The Albacon Progress Reports**. 2) (36 points) **The Cost Of Seacon**. 3) (22 points) **Joseph Nicholas As Reviewer**. 4) (16 points) **The SFWA Suite At Seacon**. 5) (15 points) **Paperback Inferno** ed. Joe Nicholas, and **Waif 4** ed. Tom Jones, and **Peter Weston's Tv Appearance** 8) (13 points) **"Gut Reaction"** by Alan Dorey in *Another Bloody Fanzine 1*, and **Jerry Pournelle At Seacon**, and **The Seduction Of British Fans By US Infiltrators** 11) (12 points) **"Ah, Sweet Arrogance"** by D. West in *One-Off 8*, and **Polls**, and **Self-Righteous Indignation In British Fandom**. Lots of other things were nominated (I particularly liked "D. West's Lack of Heart Failure" and "D. Langford's Appallingly Inappropriate Success"); none received more than ten points. All voters had their subscriptions extended.

Scandinavian Notes

Author/editor/publisher Sam J. Lundwall has left his Swedish publishing house Delta for health reasons; his place in the vast World SF organization (from which I've heard nothing for aeons despite being a charter member) will be taken by Gerald Bishop. • Anders Bellis: "Kaj Harju's note in [A9](#) is quite untrue. The so-called figment of a feud between me/Engholm and SFSF (Scandinavian SF Assoc) was the one and only reason that the annual meeting was the biggest ever in the association's history." Ahrvid Engholm explains in great detail how he and Bellis tried to topple the sercon leaders of SFSF by numberless proxies from fans at the annual business meeting, but "in the issue of SFSF's clubzine *Fanac* ... just before the meeting, they put out a general warning to all 650 members of SFSF ... issued their own papervoteforms and requested that all loyal SF enthusiasts must sign them and send them as proxies to the SFSF chairman.... [Even so:] If we had had a proportional election – as SFSF always used to have – we would have got at least 4 of the seats. The board requested a bloc-voting, and since they had 40 votes and we only 30, there was a bloc-voting: the proportional voting was overruled and they got all ten seats. [Thus the old board was re-elected:] They have closed and secret board meetings, and they don't inform the members what decisions they take at these meetings. They have sold SFSF's magazine library ... they have an expensive clubhouse, but meetings only once a month ... they 'arranged' a con in April which turned out a total fiasco since less than 20 fans turned up ... with less than half a year left of 1980 they've published 2 issues of *Fanac* (6 planned for 1980) and one of *SF-Forum* (5 planned)...." Enough of this, or Alan Dorey might start getting ideas. Unless someone's fibbing, it sounds as though SFSF makes the BSFA seem a miracle of democratic efficiency (which of course it is, yes indeed massa Dorey ...). • Tom Olander announces Finland's first and only fanzine *Spin* ed. Markku Haapio, Käkitie 19 as 2, SF-21530 Paimio, Finland. (It's in Finnish. The pictures are pretty.) Also TSFS, a Finnish sf club with 100-plus members.

Local Groups and Things

The *Harringay & District Sci-Fi Discussion Group* (Motto: HaD Sci-Fi Up to Here) meets on 2nd and 4th Wednesday each month from approx 7.30pm in

the Salisbury Hotel lounge bar, Green Lanes, N.4; “firm wrists are essential”. The *Oxford University Speculative Fiction Group* thinks all *Ansible* readers will be desperate to know that their new President is Dave Strong (Worcester Coll.): details, no doubt, from him. The *Reading SF (Reading) Group* announced in A10 has already burst the bounds of Osborne Arms and on the third Thursday of August will start there, moving at 9.30pm to the Rising Sun (turn left at roundabout by station, and it’s down by the traffic lights). That’s August 21. The *Surrey Limpwrists* are all rumoured to be standing for TAFF in ’82: since both current Administrators are members they should have no difficulty in winning....

Conventions

It seems a little late to go on about **Noreascon**, except to note that the last newsletter I saw had membership over the 4000 mark. They’ve just sent material on “Pro Groups”, whereby I can fill in a form and be allotted a room in which to meet my adoring fans. I wonder.... • “Bob Shaw” sends data on **Hitchercon One**, whose membership application seems clever and innovative: you fill in your address on sticky labels which will then be used to send your con literature. 26-28 Sept, £4.50 supp/£9 att, cheques to Arthur Dent c/o Joy Hibbert, West Bank, Winster, Matlock, Derby, DE4 2DQ, or SAE for details. • **Space-Ex 1984** is not called **Space-Ex 1999** as in A10: oops. The Albacon rumour about its possible collapse is answered thus: “Sorry our officials made no such statements. As to Schisms in ISTRA – ISTRA thrives on exactly the opposite helping each other when trouble occurs. Bankruptcy – No chance.” (Mike Parry, Hon. Pres.) Subsequent letter: “As to the statement you refer to, we may have a good idea of who said it and why, but we shall find out for ourselves.” (Tam O’Neill, Hon.Sec.) • **Project Starcast** is of course the one in the forefront of the hugecon scene. 8-11 Oct 1982, a multimedia experience in Harrogate Exhib. Centre, and a curious system whereby £12 brings you attending membership (rising by degrees to £20 at the door), but an extra £5 must be laid out for progress reports if you want them. (PRs without membership available at £7.65 the lot.) The brochure is readily available – it was all over Unicon – but I’m not wild about the cost of PRs to keep in touch with this one. Though its only visible official, one Brian Clarke, is friendly enough, it does seem that this is a con of such enormity (I mean size) that it’ll go its vast way without heeding

the amateur prejudices of current con attendees: for this reason there is a growing consensus, openly stated by Ken Slater and the BSFA Committee, to the effect that “Project Starcast” can jolly well get along without plugs and publicity in fanzines. • **Yorcon II**, whose typo master Graham James has already distinguished himself by changing “Personally I do ...” to “Personally I do not ...” in my PR1 article, has issued said PR1 despite some problems in getting hold of mailing lists, and has since acquired an “American GoH” in the person of Tom Disch. • Numerous Scandinavian cons have been announced, the biggest being **Fabula 80**, 24-26 Oct, Copenhagen. The first PR, in newspaper format, is impressive. Full membership is 120 dkr (150 dkr after 1 Sept) to Fabula 80, postbox 329, DK-1500 Copenhagen V, Denmark. • **Chris Atkinson** threatens a further release from the all-female 1982 Eastercon bidding committee (which now includes Roz Kaveney): not that there’s any really new news, but Bram Stokes is said to be brewing a rival bid. Gosh!

Unicon 80

Peter Holdsworth

Unicon 80 was my first con – it was with trepidation that I approached the registration desk. Diverse phobias were passing through my mind, but were all dismissed within seconds of registering. There was a friendly, convivial atmosphere: I knew straightaway that I’d enjoy the con. No “fear and loathing” here! Luckily I teamed up with another new fan, Patrick Ellisdon: we wandered together throughout the con and will probably keep in touch in the future.

Unicon was divided between two buildings. Much hiking was involved, accommodation being 1/8 mile away in one direction and the refectory 1/8 mile in the other direction. The con was opened by GoH Harry Harrison at 8pm on Friday night; a main and an alternative programme ran together. Friday’s highlights included Harry and Bob (real) Shaw interviewing (insulting) each other, followed by round 1 of Mastermind and a search for room-parties – one of which was serving what appeared to be “toadstool pie”. Saturday was a full day: round 2 of Mastermind, numerous films, an interesting talk on “The Golden Age of SF” from Ken Slater (who claimed there was never a golden age of SF, only a golden age of *Astounding*), and a

panel chaired by Alan Dorey on “Getting Into Fandom”. Alan maintained that “new blood” was constantly needed: yours truly reminded him of his “fear and loathing in Leeds” article! At 9pm came the fancy dress – hilarious. One impromptu fan leapt onstage slightly inebriated and collapsed to the floor: *The Man Who Fell to Earth*. I can’t remember who won – I was slightly inebriated too. Next morning Peter Roberts gave an entertaining talk on fanzines, comparing types of fanzine to kinds of animal: “animals that go bump in the night”, “animals that leap out at you”, etc. He also told us of a fanzine which was printed on sliced cheese and had to be kept in the fridge, until somebody inadvertently ate it.

The Banquet was held in the refectory; among the goodies served were the famous Keele wines bottled in Germany especially for Keele University. Toastmaster was Bob Shaw. Harry Harrison gave a speech on Microchips; following stentorian protests from Mrs Harrison, he spoke on Microfish too.

There was an excellent exhibition of art of Dave De Leuw. Lots of the paintings were sold in the auction, where there was brisk bidding. One “lucky” bidder acquired Chrissie Pearson’s tights and a Harrison cigar butt. The fanroom was a disappointment in that nothing happened in it at all.

As far as I’m concerned, Unicon 80 was a resounding success, and if there’s a Unicon 81 I’ll definitely be going. This was my introduction to fandom, and on the strength of it I certainly hope to become more involved. (*Peter Holdsworth, cruelly edited by Dave Langford*)

Fan Fund Data

As UK administrator of **TAFF** I can tell you very little: somewhere across the Atlantic as I type this, Terry Hughes is preparing the ballot form, which will include candidates Stu Shiffman and Gary Farber. Forms will be out at Noreascon and with the next *Ansible*: the winner comes to Yorcon II next Easter. Stu has sent some “Shiffman for TAFF” cartoons which in my impartial way I can’t print: ask me if you want one for your zine; doubtless Gary’s supporters will have “Farber for TAFF” cartoons by the score, and the same for any extra candidate. Get ready to vote and donate; buy a copy of the magnificent fundraiser *Taff-Ddu* (75p from me or Jim Barker); watch for con auctions packed with goodies. • **GUFF** is in the capable hands of Rob

Jackson (flyer enclosed where postage permits) and declared candidates are still just Malcolm Edwards and Joseph Nicholas. Good luck to all concerned.

- **Urgent! Urgent!** Jan Howard FINDER announces that he is standing for DUFF (US-Australia) in 1983, but that is not the urgent bit. Jan has established a “Barker to Boston” fund aimed at easing Jim Barker’s trip: if you care to contribute before about 22 August, send money either to Jan (US) or to John&Eve Harvey, 55 Blanchland Rd, Morden, Surrey, SM4 5NE. Apparently Joyce Scrivner & Mike Glyer are both standing for DUFF ’81.

Serious & Constructive

Following their \$285,000 settlement with ABC/Paramount, **Harlan Ellison & Ben Bova** nearly lost it when one of them (guess which) said rude things about ABC/Paramount in *Time* and on TV: this has now been resettled....

- **The 4th Dune novel**, *Sandworm of Dune*, should have been delivered in July: Frank Herbert told *SFC* “It’s the story of Leto II who, as you may remember, is going to turn into a sandworm.”
- **Fantastic** will be absorbed by *Amazing* in November: another magazine vanishes.
- Nominations for the **1981 Nebulas** continue: as of late June the most popular novels were Tevis’s *Mockingbird* (13 recommendations) and, aargh, Niven’s *Ringworld Engineers* (9).
- **Alexis Gilliland**, of all people, has a novel due next March, *The Revolution from Rosinante*, “about life in & around the asteroids in 2039. For aliens, I have bankers & Japanese industrialists.”
- **Jim Barker**’s move south and vast freelance plans have been delayed by lack of opportunity for selling artwork. He and your editor are planning a vast cartoon series about a sentient computer....
- **Chris Priest**’s new novel *The Affirmation* has gone in: since US publishers love to shorten his titles he expects the US edition to be called *The*.

(Sources: *SF Chronicle*, Etc.)

Langford Resignation Shock Horror Probe Bankruptcy

The rumours in that dubious rag *Matrix* are by some strange chance true. For reasons shrouded in official secrecy and middle-class reticence – but look for revelations in *Twll-Ddu 18*, available to the usual mob or for 50p TAFF donation – this humble editor has left AWRE for the far more thrilling and less remunerative field of pro writing. Undaunted by the encouragement of

publishers (“It’s an easy decision to make, but ...”) and agents (“The book trade is in the worst depression it has known for a great many years ...”), your hero freed himself with a single bound and is now self-employed! Some day I must write a book....

COA

HARRY ANDRUSCHAK, PO Box 606, La Cañada-Flintridge, CA 91011, USA / ALAN DOREY, 286 Ballards Lane, Finchley, London, N12 OET / PHIL JAMES, 4 Gurnos Road, Merthyr Tydfil, mid-Glamorgan, CF47 9NH / DAVID ROW, 46 Campsie Close, Bucksin, Basingstoke, Hants, RG22 5DF (no relation to D. Rowe the forgotten).

Infinitely Improbable

This fanzine supports **Australia In '83** and I'll be happy to pass on donations to this Worldcon bidding fund (you get a “Friend of Oz in 83” card and a free drink if the con happens and you come!). Aussie master Carey Handfield is currently sorting out a full-time UK agent for the bid: meanwhile I'm standing in. **Important Note:** I am informed that Baltimore, another '83 bidder, is relying on foreign votes being split between Australia and Scandinavia. Personally I think it's time for another foreign con that year, and I urge supporters of *either* non-US bid to vote for the other in second place when the time comes. Herman and Aussiecon please copy. • **Joyce Scrivner** sends a Minicon 16 programme boo, from which I cull: *The American liaison of the JLAS will be present after midnight in the Art Show room. Secret meetings. Communications welcomed.* • A **Dark Star** poster sighted in London cashes in on *Star Wars* by the addition of blazing guns to the spacecraft, and clinches it with a sticker saying “From the pen of ALAN DEAN FOSTER, author of 2001”.... • **Oenophile Michael Ashley** warns: “I took a can of Barbican – the alcohol-free lager – into school. Fatalities are now in the high 30s ... imagine Harp lager, bleach and afterbirth all combined.” • **Unsuspected new LeGuin title** found in the May number of Gerbish's bibliography: *The Lather of Heaven*.... • **Harry Andruschak** reports with delight that one Ken Mann recently sent him a dozen copies of his zine with the request that they be mailed to various US fans: other UK

editors, and even Ken Mann, are asked not to overwhelm Mr Andruschak with their generosity in this fashion.... • **Taral** wants you all to buy *Not for Sale* – a real selling title that – from him at 1812-415 Willowdale Ave, Willowdale, Ont, Canada, M2N 5B4. For \$1 you get 14 of his idiosyncratic drawings with surrounding commentary: it’s a “coloring book”. Skilful work, occasionally unsuited to this mimeo format; piquant if you like Taral’s semi-erotic fantasy and very possibly a pain in the rear if you don’t. • **Jim Barker** has gone into retreat with a view to “making my style a bit more commercial”, but will doubtless be producing once more when he’s mastered the fur jockstrap and the megaglazed spaceship. • I bought **Alexis Gilliland’s** *The Iron Law of Bureaucracy* (excellent cartoon collection): with it came a very *interesting* catalogue from the publishers, Loompanics ... e.g. the blurb for the 4-volume set *How to Kill*. “These books make no moral judgements. Their purpose is to instruct you in the taking of another human life, up close.” (“Our books are sold for informational purposes only,” it says in the introduction.) • **Verbatim: The Language Quarterly** published a piece recently on legitimate short-forms of words. Here speaks the Voice Of Authority, my friends: *science fiction* contracts to *sf* and there is the note “*sci-fi* denotes bad *sf*”. Someone tell James Manning! • **More wisdom of the ages**: Hazel offers a proverb from the Kikuyu folk, “Imitation made the frog lose its buttocks.” • More from **M. Ashley**, this time on the Doris Lessing TV programme: “While the camera beadily eyed her bookshelf, the voice of the interviewer declared that ‘books by the disreputable Erich von Däniken rub shoulders with the respected sf author Isaac Asimov.’ Respected? By whom?” (That’s cruel.) • Another aspect of **Project Starcast** which worries Ken Slater is the promise of numerous small spinoff cons. “This may be a gambit to claim that other conventions are ‘offspring’ of theirs.” I’m less worried about that than about the possibility that “our” Eastercon hotels could be hired away from us by commercial sf interests: but the sf boom is dying in any case, and it may be that the time for such vast conceptions is already past. We shall see. (Yes, I know Noreascon expected 5000 pre-registrations, but that’s a different country.) • **COA again**: Andy Porter’s SFC, PO Box 4175, New York, NY 10163 (the change being the last three zipcode digits: a Post Office surprise for Andy after he’d just had 10,000 addressed envelopes printed.) • **DUFF** developments: seems Mike Glyer is not standing and the battle is between friends Joyce Scrivner and Jon Singer. • **A Cardiff sf meeting** (*Fans of Fanthorpe Sci-Fi Soc*, led by RLF himself) was held in a

pub called the Crwys on 20 July and should continue – possibly elsewhere as the natives didn't seem friendly – more data when it comes. • No longer with evil **Virgin Records** (“Virgin deal in music like army hospitals deal in amputated limbs” – *What Hi-Fi?* magazine), the Mekons with My Little Brother have signed up with some bunch called Red Rhino: millions of discs are on the way and for a huge bribe I've written an article on the Mekons for something called *New Chartbusters*.... • **Locus Awards** (1980) went to novels *Titan* (sf) and *Harpist in the Wind* (fantasy); astonishingly, Larry Niven's *Convergent Series* – comprising bits not good enough for his other collections – made it as best collection. The Nicholls *Encyclopedia of SF* won “best related nonfiction”. • **Floodcon** is still on, guaranteeing rising waters in which the democratically elected GoH's and FGoH's death struggles will occur: send \$1 to Johnstown In 83, 420 Bantel St, Johnstown, PA 15905, USA, or 50p for me to pass on. Badges, PRs, GoH voting forms.... • **DRL boobs again:** an *Empire Strikes Back* review arrived from Andrew Stephenson just in time not to appear in the nonexistent *July Ansible*. I extract: “Once again, the producers showed they really know what SF is all about: lots of whizzing to and fro in oddball transport; a wodge of mysticism; a few Harry Bell animals and Jim Barker aliens (or were those guest appearances?) ... oh yes, and the Muppets: ‘Pigs in Space’ comes to the Big Screen, or very nearly. The strengths of EMPIRE must be the enhanced and often breathtaking special effects.... Its weaknesses, sadly, are an increasing pandering to the American love of mawkish philosophizing; at least half an hour could have been cut in this area.... The drift towards the aimless, endless storytelling of the *Flash Gordon* serials is pronounced; and in a serial that allows two years between episodes, that's dangerous marketing. Even so, good fun....” (Ames) • **Letter in New Scientist** debunks Darwin: “The geological record indicates species to have occurred separately, with no transitional forms.... This may not make a scientist a creationist, but it should lead him to reject evolution as simply not fitting the facts.” Yes – it was Hugo Gernsback after all. • **The BSFA** is finally buying its litho kit (as Denounced by D. West). Eve Harvey commented: “I've never read a *Matrix* anyway.”

Hazel's Language Lessons #3

contributed by Ian Watson:

In Japanese, *uguisu no tani-watari* means

- (a) a nightingale jumping back and forth over a narrow valley;
- (b) one man in bed with two women.

ANSIBLE ELEVEN (AUGUST 1980)

from Dave Langford

22 Northumberland Avenue

READING, Berks. RG2 7PW

United Kingdom

Ansible 12

September 1980

ANSIBLE 12 (September 1980) is the special My-god-we-got-back-from-America issue of the UK newszine which uncovers the FACTS and then prints something else. Foreign Correspondent (this issue only): DAVE LANGFORD, 22 NORTHUMBERLAND AVENUE, READING, BERKS. RG2 7PW, UK. Subscriptions 4/60p UK, 6/£1 Europe, 5/£1 elsewhere. The dollar being what it is, US fans will only get 2/\$1 henceforth: sorry. If you've been round long enough to get into Keith Freeman's amazing mailing label computer, the label shows the number of your last issue: SUB DUE or ***** equate to the Black Spot: beware! Heading by Pete Lyon. New golfball by **Bad Taste Typewriter Supplies of Massachusetts**. * 15/9/80.

* Please imagine the boldfaced words as being in the cited golfball's Olde Englysshe script.

Noreascon Statistics: 38Th Worldcon, Boston

The con officially ran from Friday August 29 to Monday September 1, 174 members were fully registered by 8am on Wednesday.... Damon Knight and Kate Wilhelm were good guests of honour.... Pre-convention: 5447 memberships, 1788 Hugo ballots (1003 received after July 4), 846 site selection ballots, 225 dealers' tables and 218 artshow panels booked (80% of capacity, they filled up later), 1800 hotel bookings, 13900 pieces of mail received (around 10% in the Hugo deadline week). Latest attendance count to hand is 5755 on Sunday afternoon; registration numbers over 8000 were seen; mysteriously, 4 *supporting* memberships were sold at the con. Some 900 "gophers" fetched and carried; 2 tons of ice were brought in for Saturday night room parties; there was one false alarm of fire in the main hotel (Sheraton-Boston). Chicago won the '82 Worldcon: details from Chicon IV, PO Box A3120, Chicago, IL 60690, USA, or from the UK agent once I find out who he/she is. New changes were voted to the Worldcon constitution: site selection totals must now be published, while the following require

ratification at Denver next year: banning of non-Hugo awards (not the JWC) from Hugo ballots, compulsory publication of Hugo voting totals, a permanent nonfiction Hugo, and various oddments including amendment of Hugo balloting “to require a minimum support of nominees”. That last one should help clear British rubbish from the fan categories, eh? One motion sought to make publications ineligible for the fanzine Hugo “if a financial remuneration is paid to any contributors or staff thereof”. It was defeated, dammit. Parochial datum: at least two dozen UK fans were present, which for an American convention must be a record.

Further information on Noreascon and our wanderings before and after (thanks to Stu Shiffman, Selina Lovett and family, Alexis and Dolly Gilliland and Andy Porter – not to mention Moshe Feder, the walking guide to New York) will appear in *Twll-Ddu* and elsewhere, sporadically, during the rest of this decade. These statistics are merely a sample.... D. Langford took 55 pages of notes, none of which he can now read; Terry Carr acquired 15 stitches and I am to keep quiet about why; an indeterminate number of US fans passed the Astral League Initiation (old-style: Astral Poles cost \$2.79 plus sales tax in Boston); and in this vast convention the tenuous fan programming was much like home, average attendance at panels and TAFF/DUFF auctions being about 25. Think of that. But not too hard.

Lots of Awards

One of these days there’ll be enough sf-related awards for everybody to have one. Here are 20-odd for now....

FAAN AWARDS

FAN EDITOR Jeanne Gomoll & Janice Bogstad; FAN WRITER Dave Langford; SERIOUS ARTIST Joan Hanke-Woods; HUMOROUS ARTIST Alexis Gilliland; SINGLE ISSUE OF FANZINE *Scientifriction 11* (Mike Glycer); LoC WRITER Harry Warner, Jr.

MISCELLANEOUS RUBBISH

JOHN W CAMPBELL AWARD Barry Longyear; GANDALF GRANDMASTER OF FANTASY Ray Bradbury; BIG HEART AWARD Lou Tabakow; FIRST FANDOM AWARD George O Smith; PAT TERRY AWARD FOR HUMOUR IN SF Douglas Adams. (Ahem. Far be it from me

to knock these doubtless excellent awards, but it has been represented to me that the first tends to go to the most prolific rather than the most promising new writer, that to win the three following awards is simply a matter of being next in line, and that the last is, shall we say, a trifle ad-hoc. My real peeve is that all this stuff makes the Hugo ceremony too bloody long.)

HUGO AWARDS

FAN ARTIST Alexis Gilliland; FAN WRITER Bob Shaw; FANZINE *Locus* (Charles Brown); PROFESSIONAL EDITOR George Scithers (*IASFM*); PROFESSIONAL ARTIST Michael Whelan; DRAMATIC PRESENTATION *Alien*; NON-FICTION *The Encyclopaedia of Science Fiction* (ed. Peter Nicholls); SHORT STORY “The Way of Cross and Dragon” (George R.R. Martin); NOVELETTE “Sandkings” (George R.R. Martin); NOVELLA “Enemy Mine” (Barry Longyear); NOVEL *The Fountains of Paradise* (Arthur C Clarke).

(If you expected me to disagree with some of these, you were right. I’ll merely mention that there were more pleasant surprises than unpleasant ones, and that I’d steeled myself for the novel result: “Even if it’s *Titan*,” I murmured grimly, “I won’t scream.” Then they announced the winner, and I screamed. Students of the psychic, or of publishers’ chicanery, will be interested to learn that long before the award was made, the July/August *Australian SF News* had a Pan ad depicting the *Fountains of Paradise* cover with the captions “1980 NEBULA AWARD – Best Novel Winner” and “THE HUGO NOMINATIONS 1980 – Best Novel Winner”....)

Fan Funds and Other Strange Doings

All three major fan funds have now finalized candidates for the current races. **TAFF** will bring either Gary Farber or Stu Shiffman to Yorcon II in Leeds next year; administrators are Terry Hughes (6205 Wilson Blvd #102, Falls Church, VA 22044, USA) and myself; ballot forms are enclosed. Please try to vote if you’re eligible; whether eligible or not you’re very welcome to donate money or auctionable goodies to the fund, or to purchase the TAFF fundraisers I have in stock: *Taff-Ddu*, the Barker/Langford collaboration, at 75p; *Twll-Ddu 18* at 50p; *War In 2080 Corrections*, a small pamphlet correcting and updating the hardback of that book to save you buying the

paperback (Sphere, November), at a mere 10p each plus 10p postage. Watch for the auction at Novacon – in fact, bring donated material there rather than post it to me, since I can't carry too much....

GUFF will send either Malcolm Edwards or Joseph Nicholas to the June '81 Adelaide con (Australia); administrators are Rob Jackson (8 Lavender Rd, West Ewell, Epsom, Surrey, KT19 9EB) and John Foyster (21 Shakespeare Grove, St Kilda, Vic 3182, Aus.); ballot forms may well be enclosed.

Donations in cash and kind are welcome as above, with the small change that Rob won't be getting to Novacon, so Kevin Smith will be a surrogate Jackson during that convention. You can also send ballots c/o me – I'll pass them to Rob. And I still have some copies of the horrendous *Gonad the Barbarian* which I'd love you to take off my hands at 30p (at least)....

DUFF will also send someone to the Adelaide ADVENTION next year: either Joyce Scrivner or Jon Singer. Administrators are Ken Fletcher & Linda Lounsbury (341 E 19th St., Minneapolis, MN 55404, USA) and Keith Curtis (Box J175, Brickfield Hill, NSW 2000, Aus.): Keith was the DUFF rep at Noreascon. DUFF ballots are not enclosed.

DEADLINES! DEADLINES! Voting closes as follows: TAFF 1 December 1980, DUFF 15 January 1981, GUFF 31 January 1981. Please vote early and foil the post office. NB: although it says "ballots enclosed" above, this does not necessarily apply outside Europe owing to vast postal increases when I send more than 2 sheets. Save the world from my skinflint ways by reproducing ballot forms and sending them out with your very own fanzine.

Editorial: The Passing of the Golden Age

One day *Ansible* may blow up, nova-style, engulfing the inner planets and becoming A4 size. This would sadden preachers of the One True Way of Quarto (like Ian Maule – who's been plotting to smuggle in US "twiltone" paper, the stuff like blotting paper only less tough and strong, and cut it to quarto size in pursuit of the ultimate fannishness): in particular, those who keep runs of fanzines in nifty binders will not love me. Such perverts exist; Rob Hansen has even demanded that I stick no labels on his *Ansibles* since their cumulative bulge makes his binder look pregnant. He also sends envelopes on which and in which to put labels and *Ansibles* respectively, the

reasoning being that such esoteric stationery is hard to come by in primitive and provincial Reading. He's not that far wrong –

I nipped out for some paper, choosing the loathsome and grasping Rymans since other local stationers deny that quarto paper exists (one lot almost convinced me that it had *never* existed). “Ream of green quarto duplicator paper,” I enunciated clearly at the new salesgirl, who pointed at a shelf whereon was no quarto paper at all.

“Usually it's in the storeroom at the back,” I said.

She looked about fearfully. “Oh, no. We don't do that any more. We're *retail* now, not ... not ...” What they had been eluded her, and she clutched desperately at a ream of foolscap. “It's green,” she said triumphantly.

“It's not quarto. Ten-inch-es-by-eight.”

“Ooooo, I'll have to ask the manager....”

The manager searched the storeroom thoroughly in a record 0.02 microseconds, and returned with joyful smiles: “No, sorry, sir, I'm afraid quarto is a dying size.” I looked as significantly as I could at his rows of foolscap (bloody hell! foolscap!) sarcophagi, and departed. This dramatic exit was ruined by my return to covet a filing cabinet, mysteriously reduced to merely exorbitant cost. The manager trembled in his shoes. Would he be forced to make a sale and thus ruin this morning's record? Yes, he admitted through grim jaws, a credit card was OK. Sweat gushed from his forehead and nearly dislodged his glasses.

“How much extra for delivery?” I asked.

His eyes lit up. Saved at the eleventh hour! Blasting me with a grin of laser intensity, he sang: “Very sorry indeed sir, we have absolutely *no* facilities for delivery!”

I lingered awhile, hoping to see the managing director of Metal Box being ordered to hump away his purchase of 300 desks ... there was merely the usual succession of customers unable to find or afford their wishes. I think Rymans must be run as a tax loss. Ah, well, their paper always had this tendency to let the ink drip through and form great embossed lumps on the other side....

Thus *Ansible* may abandon the great golden (UK) fannish size. A4 costs no

more in litho and much less duplicated; postage for two sheets would be the same. Aesthetics? Terry Jeeves once wrote quarto was closest to the “golden mean” in paper size: actual height/width ratios are *foolscap* (13" x 8") 1.625, *A4* (approx 11¾ x 8¼) 1.4142, *quarto* (10 x 8) 1.25. And as any Martin Gardner knows, the true “golden ratio” *phi* is approximately 1.618. OK, Terry, going to switch to foolscap now? End of pedantry and pretentiousness....

Your letters of protest could yet halt this trend to an *A4 Ansible*. Perhaps.

More on Conventions

Numerous flyers were about at Noreascon.... DENVENTION II sounded a bit defensive: “we were just slow answering the mail for a while ... the Hilton remodelled, leaving us minus 8000 sq feet, and our movie theatre was torn down ... our *next* PR will be chock-full of information....” H’mmm: I’m a member and I haven’t had progress report 1 yet. There’s also a throwaway line about averaging 3 fans per room in the con hotel, which falls strangely on British ears.... Another defensive-sounding leaflet came from our old pals SPACE-EX 1984: I saw this but haven’t received a copy yet. The Australian and Baltimore ’83 Worldcon bids were in evidence with parties and flyers (the Scandinavians were not): Aussie flyers available from me when they arrive. I was told that if Britain wished a Worldcon they could do worse than bid in ’85, where some shadowy bid does exist but did not advertise in the Noreascon programme book, wherein are ads for Australia ’83 (20 of them!), Baltimore ’83 (2), New York ’86, Boston ’89, Chicago ’82 (2), Johnstown ’83, LA ’84, Philadelphia ’86 and “Fans for ERA”, the last urging a boycott of Chicago ’82 on feminist/political grounds and probably gaining Chicago – the winning bid – several votes; keep politics out of SF! Or at least out of fandom. No, there was no Scandinavia ’83 ad in the programme book. ... NYC in ’86 plan, tentatively, to use the New York Hilton and the 6000-seat Radio City theatre across the road. I wasn’t able to accept Linda Bushyager’s invitation to Philadelphia and thus missed their side of the case: the flyer goes on at great length about the committee’s experience in conventions other than Worldcons, and mentions the Philadelphia Sheraton. Speaking of ’86, I have here about 50 pretty postcards of New York with NY’86 slogans printed on them: anyone want one?

After all this talk of shadowy conventions which the merest twitch of fate may doom to nonexistence, it's a relief to mention good old Silicon: the fourth Silicon was held in Newcastle the week before Noreascon, about 60 fans attending, and great was the drunkenness there. I remember it with special fondness for the quiz, wherein Welshfandom (Llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrndrobwlllantysiliogogoch Division) utterly defeated teams representing the Astral League, "L'academy de la chronically effete de la Surbiton" and "The Peter Weston School of Gardening". Need I tell you which team I was on? A good con.

Miscellaneums

Keith Freeman reports that **Gillian Adams**, old time fan and former BSFA treasurer who came to conventions until a few years ago, recently died of a heart attack in France. And less recently, Malcolm Edwards told me (and I forgot to print) that **Graham Hall** died this year of cirrhosis. RIP. • **R.L. Fanthorpe** is now in the bookdealing business, or at least his wife Patricia is: RLF is still headmastering while Patricia runs the bookshop, stocked with countless skiffy works sold off by Brian Stableford, who has moved....

COA

Alyson L. Abramowitz, 23 Sylvia St, Lexington, MA 02173, USA // Merf Adamson, 3b Oakwood Avenue, Leeds, LS8 2HX // Gerald Bishop, 2 Cowper Rd, Cambridge, CB1 3SN // Alan Dorey, 20 Hermitage Woods Crescent, St John's, Woking, Surrey, GU21 1UE [the abortive COA of last issue had fallen through by the time I printed it; another is expected soon] // Darroll & Ro Pardoe, 11b Cote Lea Square, Southgate, Runcorn, Cheshire, WA7 2SA // Mike Scantlebury, 31 Bosworth St, Beswick, Manchester, M11 4AD // Peter Singleton, Newman Ward, Park Lane Special Hospital, Maghull, Liverpool, L31 1HW [only the ward has changed] // Brian Stableford, 113 Lennox Rd, Reading, Berks // Elst Weinstein, 5022 Elenore Ave #15, St Louis, MO 63116, USA // Martin Morse Wooster, 8906 Talbot, Silver Spring, Maryland 20901, USA // John Collick's term address varies: send all email to Ilkley.

Infinitely Improbable

A new **Astral Leauge Cassette** has been produced by the Charnox; one fetched an astonishing \$10 from Mike Glicksohn in a Noreascon TAFF auction. Cost to you is £3 from 4 Fletcher Rd, Chiswick, London W4 5AY; tracks include “Hey Joe Nicholas” and “Get down Jacqui”; John Harvey deprecates the sound quality and I deprecate the price (why didn’t I get a free review copy?). D. West has produced the Official Bootleg Astral Leauge Cassette and is selling this at £2, one sale being to the landlord of the Leeds “West Riding”.... • **D.** has also (a) signed up to study interdisciplinary things at Bradford U, (b) got a £300 Arts Council grant to write significant novels, (c) started on a Georgette Heyer exegesis for Borgo Press. • **Voice From The Dead:** anyone remember Richard McMahon of *Inverted Ear Trumpet* “fame”? From c/o Nurses’ Post Room, St Thomas’s Hospital, 2 Lambeth Palace Rd, London SE1 7EP, he writes to reveal he was 15 when he started *IET* in ’75 (“Those weren’t full stops, they were blackheads”), and after many adventures is now a student (male) nurse. I am to refrain from releasing his address to Graham Charnock, so don’t anyone tell him. • **“Sex Pirates Of The Blood Asteroid”** fans will be further depressed to learn the blasted story is now being translated into French and German. My god, what have I started? • **Peter Roberts** explains his job: “No, I’m not in charge of the SFBC. As you might have guessed, *nobody* is.... All 10 Readers Union societies are run together, so I write copy for the SF newsletter along with the Sports, the Gardening et. al.... Look out for overuse of the word ‘eldritch’ and other hallmarks of Roberts copywriting.” Famous Paul Begg, formerly in charge of SFBC but booted out last year, welcomes me to the freelance life he’s been practising: “An overdose of some suitable pills or a shotgun cartridge through the skull would be a quicker and less painful means of suicide than freelance writing, but it’s nice to have company on the journey to the banks of the Styx.... No doubt the Jonestown people felt the same.” • **Literary Corner**, courtesy of Andy Richards, brings you *Blades of Mars* by Edward P Bradbury (M Moorcock). Ch.11, “Queen of the Argzoon”: “That was another reason why we should not expose ourselves! The Argzoon would enjoy taking revenge on members of the race that had defeated them.” • **Roelof Goudriaan’s** *Foreign Fanzine* reveals how Perry Rhodan con auctions sell such items as the right to have a character named after you in the endless series. “A role in 3 volumes of PR brought in £60, a role in only one

volume yielded £40.” I think Rob Holdstock comes cheaper than that – ask him sometime. Wonder what happens to the money? • The success of **Barry B. Longyear** (“The man’s a fucking illiterate!” – J. Nicholas. “I’m not a Jackie Lichtenberg fan any more. I’m a Barry B. Bongyear fan now” – C. Priest) with his “Enemy Mine” in Hugo and Nebula is an indication of the new Isaac Astral award-grubbing technique: millions of copies of the story were sent to SFWA members with glowing recommendations from the Doctor. Perhaps next year *every Worldcon member* will receive a copy of Mr Bongyear’s latest masterpiece in order not to influence their Hugo votes! • **Glasgow News:** Douglas Adams has agreed to be GoH at “Hitchercon” this month, but the rumour is that few Southern fans are going. Albacon had post-convention hotel problems: a £400 charge for “electricians” (not in the agreed schedule) was slapped onto the final bill and reduced to £200 after complaints. Biggest single expense was the £1000 cost of the guests’ shared penthouse suite. A profit of £100 or so is expected. The fake Bob Shaw is now opening his own bookshop: Photon Books, 200 Woodlands Rd, Glasgow G3 6LN. • **The Sf Foundation’s** “writer-in-residence” post is said to have brought applications from C. Priest, J. Sladek and I. Watson; Andrew Stephenson commented “If Ian gets the job they’ll have to get a typewriter with umlauts”. • **Sweden Again:** this time it’s Kaj Harju’s turn to denounce Anders Bellis and Ahrvid Engholm, and sure enough he does. To condense greatly, he asserts that B&E are loudmouthed disrupters of meetings, that their fannish ways scare normal sf-fans from the clubhouse, that nobody ever believes their promises of how many issues of clubzines will be produced anyway [this was one of B&E’s points against SFSF, Swedish equivalent of the BSFA: see *A11*], that B&E only want publicity for their weekly newszine rather than reform for SFSF, that if board meetings were not closed B&E would disrupt them, etc. Not much point in carrying on this correspondence, unless an impartial Swedish arbiter can step forth.... • **Project Starcast** invited me to ask searching questions such as “Who are these guys anyway?” I did, but no answer came. • **This** will probably be distributed at the BSFA pub meeting (19 Sept), where anguished BSFA members will learn that the promised Famous Author talk has dwindled to some ad-libbing from D. Langford. • **Ansible** was duplicated at huge expense on trimmed-down foolscap paper, but new sources of quarto are now being unearthed.... • **BSFA:** Graham James is now *Matrix* editor; Kev Smith (now a Real Published Author: see *Ad Astra 11*) is official rather than unofficial *Vector*

editor; and the BSFA Award Presentation Dinner has been called off owing to publishers' apathy and BSFA poverty. • **Silicon Statistic:** chubby Rog Peyton had spent £20 playing "Space Invaders" by the Sunday. Which reminds me that Avedon Carol really does have a pinball machine in her basement (I fell short of her score of 1,251,250); while I was playing it, her father surreptitiously sold Hazel a T-Shirt printed in Armenian. • **Also At Silicon,** the **Richard E Geis Memorial Award** was presented to Joe Nicholas, and Kev Smith was commissioned to write an *Ansible* report on the football match. Here it is: "We lost." • **Note To Yorcon:** Get the excellent Aussiecon bidding films *Antifan* and *Antifan Strikes Back* if possible – they are not unfunny.

Flann O'Brien reports on the Hugo ceremony:

"But all in that room was silence save for the rumble of misdirected mucus."

You read it last in

ANSIBLE 12

Dave Langford

22 Northumberland Avenue,

READING,

Berks.

RG2 7PW

UNITED KINGDOM

***Ansible* 13**

November 1980

ANSIBLE 13, November 1980 ... Another outbreak of the UK fannish news zine from Dave Langford, 22 Northumberland Avenue, Reading, Berks. RG2 7PW, UK. Subscriptions 4/60p UK, 6/£1 Europe, 5/£1 elsewhere. Sterling preferred; if you insist on paying in dollar bills, it's 2/\$1. The amazing Keith Freeman and his Mad Mailing Labels should indicate your sub status, SUB DUE or * being like unto the first buboes in the armpits.... Heading by Taral. Lapses in frequency are because I have deadlines to meet. Several readers have suggested I should expand and make *Ansible* the UK *Locus*: thanks, but I gave up work to be a full-time writer rather than a full-time publisher. Even though new and cheaper supplies of quarto paper have been secured, *Ansible* does not make a profit (surprise, surprise); and to send more than 2 sheets adds 5½p to the cost of US and African copies in post age alone. Times are hard everywhere.... Should there not be another *Ansible* before January: Merry Christmas! 27/10/80

Milford 1980

Chris Evans

The Milford (UK) Writers' Conference resumed this year (28 Sept – 4 Oct) after a break in 1979. This is a week-long workshop held at the Compton Hotel in Milford-on-Sea, Hampshire. Membership is by invitation, the current qualification being that a person has had a work of fiction professionally published; theoretically you could get in on the strength of a 500-word vignette bought by *Scintillating Stories of Startling Science*, though in practice some kind of track record is usually necessary.

Milford-on-Sea is a small, quiet coastal town set in scenic surroundings. Verdant fields interspersed with bracken and blackberry briars eventually give way to a long, shingled beach where the incoming waves fall with a delicate whisper, and there is a splendid view of the Isle of Wight across a

short stretch of limpid sea which glitters under the golden light of the autumnal sun. (That last sentence courtesy of the Society for the Preservation of Purple Prose.) The Compton owners are by now used to the peculiar habits of conference attendees, whom they let have the run of the place.

Manuscripts are read in the morning and discussed in the afternoon. This is not a great distraction, however, since the bar is open all day and there are numerous facilities for recreational activities (of which, more in a moment). Two hours each evening are set aside for formal discussions on aspects of sf writing or informal games such a “Call My Bluff”.

Fourteen people attended this year’s gathering, four of these (including yours truly) being newcomers. In alphabetical order, they were: Pamela Bulmer (who was at one point thrown into confusion by a spurious conference schedule posted by the devious Langford), Richard Cowper (who demonstrated a flair for blocking up the pockets of the hotel’s pool table with wads of newspaper as a belated economy measure), Patrice Duvic (a French writer/bookseller whose ploy in offering free brandy to all present just before his story came up was much respected), Chris Evans (who brought a tatty story which was duly savaged), Alan Farmer (rumoured to have had a somewhat illegal substance secreted in his room), Randal Flynn (who on Saturday evening, possibly under the influence of the same illegal substance, perfected the interesting routine of dancing with a chair while still sitting on it), Rob Holdstock (a supporter of the theory that writers write with their pricks – Joanna Russ, take note), Garry Kilworth (whose quietly efficient chairmanship gets a vote of thanks here), Bobbie Lamming (whose piece left everyone deeply envious of its superbness; she is also known as Robin Douglas and R.M. Lamming), Marianne LeConte (who is as French and as womanly as a Frenchwoman can be), Dave Langford (who will doubtless have further gossip to impart elsewhere in these pages), Pip Maddern (an Australian writer presently studying at Langford’s former college of Brasenose), Chris Priest (who by dint of tireless application throughout the week progressed from a novice into a practised Space Intruders [sic] player) and Tony Richards (who continues to resist Langford’s attempts to get him to subscribe to *Ansible* and will therefore probably not read this). Hazel Langford was also there as a non-participant; she went for lots of walks and didn’t seem at all bored.

Milford has something of the atmosphere of a small-scale convention; there is

a tendency to get little sleep and drink too much. Among the fragmentary images which survive the week, I particularly recall an extremely drunken Langford and Evans vainly striving to practice Zen and the Art of Pool Playing (whereby the pockets of the pool table are supposed to assume the dimensions of dustbins – unfortunately we found the balls also grew larger in the mind’s eye, to approximately the size of dustbin lids) against an equally drunken Holdstock and Cowper. Various arcane subjects arose out of the formal and informal discussions held throughout the week: there was talk of genetically engineered clones of Adolf Hitler; of the Zen master who scaled a sheer rock-face unaided by such encumbrances as ropes and pitons; we discovered that a “tappen” really was a mucous plug formed in the rectum of a polar bear during hibernation; Rob Holdstock told of his ideal encounter with a (presumably) female fan, which discretion prevents me from elaborating on, except to say that it would be an oral encounter of a peculiar kind.

(Rob is fed up with people using his quotes out of context, so I should point out that all comments attributed to him in *Ansible* [or indeed anywhere at all – DRL] were made drunkenly and lightheartedly and are Not To Be Taken Seriously.)

By the end of the week everyone was exhausted, hungover or slightly deflated after having a prized fictional specimen delicately but uncompromisingly dissected by their colleagues. Yet everyone expressed a desire to return next year, for the feedback obtained at such gatherings is very useful. The criticism is fair and incisive, and it does every writer some good to get together occasionally with other writers and talk shop. Next year I intend to take a story so brilliant that no one will be able to find anything wrong with it. At least, not until they actually start reading the thing.... (Chris Evans)

[The editorial last word is a solemn privilege, and I enjoy abusing it. I remember Patrice borrowing my portable typewriter and finding the keyboard lettering slightly different from a French one: you will probably not believe me when I mention that he halted with a shriek every few words and gave out the all too appropriate cry “Aaaagh: Another French letter!” Since Rob is becoming sensitive about being reported, I have no intention of detailing his tales of compulsive buttock-groping both somnambulistic and in

“real time”: you will find no such filth in Ansible. The photographs, however, may be inspected by appointment. DRL]

Rumblings from the SF World

Ian Watson is reportedly on the dole, his *Gardens of Delight* not having sold outside UK hardcover ... **Michael Bishop** is also said to be in desperate straits, eking out a living by writing articles on (if my ears did not deceive me) gardening ... **Peter Nicholls** found himself in an embarrassing position concerning the SF Foundation’s writer-in-residence, having agreed to be referee for both John Sladek and Ian Watson. In the event the little-known Sladek, Watson and Priest could not stand against the colossally famous writer Colin “Who?” Greenland, who got the post and was to talk about it at the BSFA meeting of October 24, but failed to turn up.... The meetings are for members only and the next is November 21: there will be no BSFA mailing to pass on this titbit, so tell your nearest BSFA member. Venue is The Rutland, a pub on Lower Mall near Hammersmith bridge (just upstream). Also on Oct 24, the committee was pitted against the membership in a quiz largely based on Gerry Anderson productions: to its eternal dishonour, the membership won.... **R.L. Fanthorpe** has Dick Downes of the Swansea group as a director of his company “Greystoke Mobray”: he planned to pay £5000 advance on Downes’ first novel until it was pointed out that between one director and another, this might look slightly shady. **Mike Ashley** is no longer editing the GM original anthology, but a drunken Ian Watson planned to take over with a collection of shorts based on great paintings (no connection whatever with *Gardens of Delight*, of course) ... **Chris Priest** leaks secret data on the *Omni* short-short competition, telling your editor in strict confidence “You didn’t win.” ... I failed to mention last time that the **John W Campbell Memorial Award** (as opposed to the new-writer thing of similar name) went to Tom Disch for *On Wings of Song: Crowley’s Engine Summer* and Ballard’s *The Unlimited Dream Company* took second and third place. Disch is American GoH at Yorcon next Easter; the unusual invitation of two pro guests (Ian Watson is English GoH) is said to be not so much go-ahead Leeds dynamism as the result of a communications error.... **Another Triffic Award** which caused even *Locus* to boggle slightly is the “1980 Galaxy Award and Trophy for Best Novel of the Year consistent with the

tenets of the Society for the Advancement of SF and Spirituality”, which went to Donald F. Glut for his very spiritual *The Empire Strikes Back*. The first **Prometheus Award** for best libertarian sf (trophy is \$2500 in gold, and US sources drool over this without making it clear whether you have to give it back after a year) went to F Paul Wilson’s dull, routine Analog novel *Wheels Within Wheels* (see review by one of the great critics of our time, in *Vector 97*).... Computers are already supposed to have determined next year’s **Hugo novel finalists**: *Ringworld Engineers*, *Beyond the Blue Event Horizon*, *The Snow Queen*, *Lord Valentine’s Castle*, *The Number of the Beast*. Aagh. Only other things for which anyone offers any hope are Benford’s *Timescape* (UK hardback subtly amended for fear of offending the Royal Family) and what’s-his-name’s *The Magic Labyrinth*.... **Ted White** got the boot from *Heavy Metal* for his temerity in trying to introduce complicated concepts such as words of more than one syllable; **Jim Baen** has left Ace to be top man at Pinnacle, but will continue as the listed editor of *Destinies* until purchased material runs out ... **War in 2080**, which would be a bestseller if each Ansible subscriber bought 2,500 copies, is out from Sphere in February despite announcements for November: this is because some mound of tripe from Mandy Rice-Davies has snatched the November spot.... **The August Derleth Award** for best fantasy novel of (presumably) 1979 went to Tanith Lee’s *Death’s Master* at Fantasycon VI in Birmingham recently.... **The Society of Authors** recently ran a poll asking what the authors felt of their publishers, rating them from 1 to 5: herewith the scores for a few familiar names – Mills & Boon 5-; Allen &, Unwin 4+; Cape, Gollancz and Hodder 4; Faber, Hutchinson and Sidgwick & Jackson 4-; Collins, Granada, Hale, Hamlyn, Macdonald, Pan and Penguin 3+; Transworld and Allen 3; David & Charles 2+; Dobson (“a statistical achievement!”) 2. “Statistically meaningless,” sniffs an ex-D&C editor I know. This does not assess the quality of the output (I mean, Mills & Boon, good grief) but how authors feel publishers treat them. Richard Cowper, who suffered with Dobson for many books before shifting to Gollancz, was showing the poll round at Milford and chortling a lot.... **Michael Ashley** reports: “The Woman’s Own magazine dated Aug 16 carried a short story by Philip K Dick entitled ‘Mrs Drew’s Stolen Youth’ (copyrighted 1953). Fascinating, eh?” ... **Spider Robinson** speaks: “I have been informed by the Canada Council that they will not support my reading because I’m not a real Canadian Writer”.... It seems that **Harry Harrison** ghosted the last (and, alas, not very good) Leslie Charteris

novel *Vendetta for the Saint*.... Secret master of Pierrot Publishing, **Phil Dunn**, has departed from the almost bankrupt firm whilst the other directors try to save something from the ruin.... **Ursula Le Guin's** *The Beginning Place* has rather nastily been retitled *Threshold* for UK consumption (Gollancz, £6).... **Your editor**, not content with delivering a book co-written with **Chris Morgan** (the one for which I was asking for strange and loony quotations – thanks to everyone who helped – it should be out from Webb & Bower next autumn), has, coff just won *New Scientist's* #7 crossword puzzle prize ... That latest arcane potboiler magazine ***The Unexplained*** is, I am told, largely a rerun of articles which first appeared in the *Pan World Atlas of Mysteries* (Francis Hitchin, 1978): articles on spontaneous combustion, Loch Ness monsters &c are lifted straight from said book, as are many of the photographs (which indeed get recycled through book after book of this kind). I looked into the black hole article in *Unexplained* #3 and found it laughably gullible and out-of-date: 1978 seems about right. The magazine is an outrageous ripoff and should be avoided at all costs. (Some info courtesy of Our Farnborough Correspondents.) ... ***The Times London Diary*** (14/10/80) has a bit on *Omni*, or rather on executive editor Ben Nova (sic – I like it, I like it). Gist of the piece is that Bova's loud support of the campaign to have America say “finders keepers” as regards the moon is but publicity-grubbing: “The Moon Treaty ought to include a clause banning sales promotion stunts thinly disguised as serious scientific debate.” ... **Newspaper snippet** from early October: “Broadway, which has seen many strange things, saw an ovation for a white mouse at the curtain of *Charlie and Algernon*. The little critter, which ‘dances’ with P.J. Benjamin in the show, even has a biography in the program (‘has had extensive training in jazz, tap and maze-running’).” I noticed billboards for this thing in New York: it's the improbable *Flowers for Algernon* which flopped so swiftly and decisively in London.... **Simon Ounsley** reveals “why D. West has decided to don (sic) the mantle of middle-class fandom (discarding the familiar dirty raincoat) by becoming a university shithead. After many days poring over the abacus at Bingley library, he's worked out that the amount of grant and the required total wordage for course essays yield a payment rate of 10p per word, even better than IASFM [– and] the essays don't have to be morally uplifting or have happy endings ...”

(Sources: SFC, Locus, TMM, Matrix, DRL, or as credited.)

COA

MICHAEL ASHLEY, Room D.9, The Tower, Bowland College, Bailrigg, Lancaster, LA1 4YT (term time only; brother Graham would in any case like to receive fanzines at the old address) • ALLAN BEATTY, 1154 F Street (18), David, CA 95616, USA • PAUL & JUDY BEGG, 3 Market Terrace, Chapel Road, Attleborough, Norfolk • COLIN FINE, 126b Catharine Street, Cambridge, CB1 3AR • STEEV HIGGINS, Room 412, Mining House, 51 & 54/55 Evelyn Gardens, South Kensington, London, SW.7 • PAUL HURTLEY, ATC, 1 Research Drive, Shelton, CT 06484, USA (to end 1980) • LINDA K KARRH, 1608 Abadie Ave, Metairie, LA 70003, USA (to end 1980) • PAUL LAMPRILL, 45 Tintern Crescent, Coley, Reading, Berks. • JON LANGFORD, Flat 3, Belle Vue House, Belle Vue Road, Leeds 3 • BARNEY NEUFELD, 2713 2nd Ave S (307), Minneapolis, MN 55408, USA • CELIA PARSONS, Astor College, Charlotte Street, London, W1P 1LD • M. SOUTHWORTH, 13 The Droveaway, Hove, Brighton, Sussex • BRIAN STABLEFORD, 113 St Peters Road, Reading, Berks (slight correction from last time) • KEITH & DAISY WALKER, 6 Vine Street, Greaves, Lancaster, Lancs, LA1 4UF

Letter Column

Simon Ounsley: "... the amazing BSFA *Matrix*-editor initiation ritual. This requires the outgoing editor to publish a complex competition in his last edition. This may well involve 70 book-titles split into groups of 3 words and require the intrepid readers to provide a correct list of titles and authors. The large number of entries received will be passed on to the new editor but not the solution, this not having been provided by the rather warped member who devised the competition in the first place. The incoming editor thus has to win his spurs by sorting the damn thing out; the only assistance allowed is that of Kate Jeary plus one 5-min phone call to the editor of *Foundation*. The skill lies in making proper use of the phone call. Questions such as 'Is *Dragonsinger Harper of Pern* one title or two?' may not yield the required results." **John Piggott:** "While buying my season ticket recently I noticed the ticket clerk looked like Kev Smith. Ugh! I handed over my £652 like a gentleman and proceeded on my way, assuming it was a coincidence; but then I realized that accountants regularly deal with large sums of money...."

Ron Salomon: “When I checked in [at Noreascon] the firepeople were literally swarming, the elevators were shut down, and I was told there was a fire, but keep it quiet. On the 21st floor of the south tower.” *(There was a strange tendency to cover up unpleasantness at Noreascon. The committee could in no way be held responsible for, say, the fellow who broke a security guard’s arm when restrained from breaking into the swimming pool one night; but I was asked not to tell anyone about this. The rumour’s been printed in several places now, though.... Likewise, Mike Glycer was not allowed to print cartoons (in the daily newsletter) which poked fun at Kate Wilhelm or even mentioned Harlan Ellison, Alexis Gilliland having done both. A mention of Dachau in a Chicago-bid comic strip provoked screams of rage simply at the mention, and artist Phil Foglio shamefacedly explained he hadn’t known what Dachau was when he mentioned it ... When the place was used in comparison with Mancon a few years back, I don’t recall quite such a fuss. Maybe we UK fans are gross and insensitive after all? More Salomon:)* “Bloody money-hungry Sheraton management want \$69/night for a double for Boskone ’81 ... Boston ’89 has to be a hoax – people listed there are all tykes and toddlers, I’m 99% sure.”

Infinitely Improbable

Keith Walker announces his return to fan publishing: “well sorry, to disappoint you Mr D. Vest, Nickelarse and Co ...” • J.G. Ballard and, good grief, Alan Dorey are provisionally marked as guests of honour at the 1981 Unicon. • **The Reading Pub Meetings** still continue on the third Thursday of each month at the Osborne Arms (turn right out of railway station, left after bus station and it’s just up the road): the threatened move to another pub has succumbed to apathy. (NB the 18th December meet will probably be depleted by the usual Xmas One Tun.) • **Ansible** apologizes to Rosemary Walker for the COA overleaf: the mind plays funny tricks.... • **A.E. van Vogt** actually got a \$50,000 settlement for possible plagiarism of his “Discord in Scarlet” in *Alien*: he felt he could have got more but would be dead by the time the courts gave it him. • **Simon Bostock** wants to start an APA: stamp for details to 18 Gallows Inn Close, Ilkeston, Derbyshire, DE7 4BW. • Seems John Travolta is a Scientologist; Ansible wonders whether this will affect dance-alike fan Rob Hansen.... • **Latest Jackson status report:** “Still no baby yet. Coral is very large.” • **Joyce Scrivner** on Noreascon: “More than one false

fire alarm ... assault/robbery in the Sheraton Thursday, rape/robbery of one Belgian and one American fan outside the hotel (they wanted to see the hotspots), pickpockets in the Hynes, closing of the Hynes (auditorium) for shampooing carpet after a dog with diarrhoea, an audience approved intercourse session ...” • **Another Chain Letter** of the “send only £1 and get £8000” sort comes from US via Sweden and claims not to be illegal. I doubt it, and have just incurred the awful penalties of chainbreaking again. Wish fans would lay off this sort of thing. • **Nic Howard** tells of the August Derleth Society and of how it’s time AD was recognized “along with Steinbeck, Lewis, London. & Co. as a major writer of the American scene”. Apparently the good stuff is his books on small-town US country life, all the HPL/Sherlockian stuff being regarded as pot-boilery. Memberships \$5/year to 20 E Delaware, Chicago, IL 60611, USA. • **IBM** have written to the BSFA offering a word-processor system which would actually correct the spelling in Matrix: only £4878! Said Chairman Dorey, “We’ll have to start another fund...” • **Denvention II** sends its newsletter Rocky Mountain Oysters, mostly Good Intentions with apologies for unanswered mail. On Hugo trophies: “They are slightly pitted but it is understood that that is how all of them are.” Well, the Seacon ones were *very* pitted while those Noreascon ones I saw were hardly pitted at all.... • **Steve Sneyd**: “3 most popular adult education courses in Bradford this year are one on SF, one on UFOs and one on what to do in case of nuclear war, ‘convert yr bubble memory into a deadfall trap’, ‘how to microwave 2-headed cats’, like that...” • **Colin Fine**: “Polycon was an absolute shambles.” • **Something Completely Different**: a look into fannish etymology. I have written elsewhere about the high history of the fannish term “blog”, supposedly invented in the mid-50s in that taped production “The March of Slime”. Blog was a universal panacea like Beachcomber’s Snibbo: “*Blog’s the stuff for work, Blog’s the stuff for play, / Blog’s the stuff, when you feel rough, to chase the blues away....*” My footnote to fan history is the Beachcomber extract below:

“... His capillaries, set end to end, wouldn’t circle the earth more than once.”

“Phugh! That’s dreadful, Sir Harry. Poor blighter! Is there no hope?”

“Oh yes, Sir George; BLOGGO. A year ago my capillaries, set end

to end, would barely have reached China. Today they would circle the earth three times....”

(from *Captain Foulenough and Company*, 1944)

ANSIBLE 13, 22 Northumberland Avenue, Reading, Berkshire, RG2 7PW, UK. Sole proprietor: Dave Langford

[Supplement on half-size paper:]

A Brief and Scarcely Literate Addendum to *Ansible 13*

... typed in the throes of a stinking cold by Dave Langford, 22 Northumberland Avenue, Reading, Berks, RG2 7PW, UK, for inclusion in copies posted after Novacon. 5-11-80

As usual, this *Ansible* provoked a storm of complaint. On pain of having my Yorcon FGoH position revoked and Keith Walker instated in my place, I've promised to mention the following: (1) Colossally famous Colin Greenland did in fact give notice that he wouldn't be turning up to the BSFA "talk", albeit a little late in the day; (2) The go-ahead, dynamic Yorcon II committee weren't themselves responsible for the communications error hinted at on page 2; (3) OK, so I called *Wheels Within Wheels* dull on p2 and fast-paced in *Vector 37*: the two are not, I assure you, incompatible.... (4) Kev Smith wishes it to be known that he and none other was responsible for my victory in the NS crossword, by supplying the final, vital answer ... (5) Etc, etc.

Novacon news will be featured in Our Next Issue. Please note that all the Rotsler badges and Akien photographs were sold at Novacon. The excellent Brum Group gave a lovely big donation to TAFF – further details and praise next time. It was a great convention. My only niggles about anything right now concern the common cold virus (achoo again) and the shortage of TAFF voters. You might be able to do something about the second? DRL

***Ansible* 14**

December 1980

ANSIBLE 14 (December 1980) Another issue of the sometimes monthly UK SF/fan newsletter, from Dave Langford, 22 Northumberland Avenue, READING, Berks, RG2 7PW, UK. Rates were 4/60p UK, 6/£1 Europe, 5/£1 elsewhere, but will increase with coming UK postal increases. (The new UK rate will almost certainly be 6/£1.) Present subs will be fully honoured at the old rates; new subs and renewals/extensions come under the new rates, whatever they may be, as from the first *Ansible* after postal increases; if in doubt, send £1 and I'll work it out with incomparable fairness. See Keith Freeman's dinky little label, if there is one, for your present status. Heading: a doubtless festive but nevertheless rejected Xmas card design from Jon Langford. Speaking of which, it's time to air the now-traditional bad taste in golfballs and say **A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year To The Whole Flipping Lot Of You.** (1 December 1980)

Novacon 10: 31 Oct - 2 Nov 1980

Novacon was perhaps the most consistently enjoyable convention I attended this year, so much so that I instantly made arrangements for others to do the reporting while I got on with the enjoying. Alas, all arrangements fell through and I'll just have to contribute some brief, dull notes myself.

Fortunately the pictures I took should jog the memory. Let's see ... Greg Pickersgill with his tongue out (this must have been the successful Yorcon party. I think it was there that Steev Higgins, egged on by evil D. West, set fire to the shirt of huge Mike Brown and was, er, expostulated with). Peter Weston with a mike, looking like Nixon after Watergate, and Alan Dorey in the same position looking like someone annexing the Sudetenland. GoH Brian Aldiss brandishing a watering-can (a prop from his speech which purportedly proved something vandanikenesque. The speech was fun, but rambled in all directions – I overheard the editor of *Vector* deciding not to

ask for a transcript). The disco, where apparently I almost picked up a spot prize as “most aloof participant” while shoving through to collect Nova Award judges for the ballot counting at which Dave Bridges’s *One-Off* emerged a clear winner – runners-up are said to be Snorkel and *Twll-Ddu*. There are less than seemly photos of Gerry Webb, Cas “See how far I can hitch my skirt” Skelton, Mike Meara, and various participants in an obscure landing orgy. The various Limpwrist quiz teams (the Surrey version won the “University Challenge”-style contest, I think). Rog Peyton auctioning a poster of JR from Dallas (his auctioneering was brilliant as ever, and at one point a surplus apple from the Langford garden went for 85p. Something like £200 for TAFF alone must have been raised at Novacon). Tom Shippey gave another talk, as usual Novacon’s best “serious” item (and all about language in SF, too, to Hazel’s delight). Debates seem to have become instantly traditional after the successful one at Novacon 9: this year’s had a much woollier topic, “This house believes that the fragmentation of SF fandom is both inevitable and desirable”, and became an interminable wrangle on definitions. A heavy veil of secrecy surrounds my own Novacon talk, since most of it is liable to be recycled into a TAFF report. The rest I mostly missed....

Novacon was crammed (450 attending, I think), friendly (at last the Angus kept a decent bar open most of the time) and drunken (see last bracket, not to mention the numerous room parties). Next year, attempts to control membership include refusal to take memberships until the rates are announced in PR1 (to be sent to all members of this Novacon, thus countering the euphoric and automatic signing for the next one which usually occurs) and abolition of conversion from supporting to attending membership: you have to decide which, straight away. Paul Oldroyd is rumoured as N-11 chairman with Rog Peyton as “adviser” and Stan Eling as treasurer. Good use this year was made of a badge machine, producing permanent metal con badges which; for a UKcon, must be an all-time best. Organization was good throughout without loss of fannishness. Top marks.

Births, Engagements &c ...

This year, for the first time, Novacon ran into the Sunday night and effectively through the morning of Monday 3 November – and thus **Dulcie**

Eleanor Jackson, born at 11.14am that morning, has started life auspiciously during a convention. Proud parents Rob and Coral Jackson have much to say about this event: I condense Rob's speech to "6lb 7oz".

US anglophile **Rochelle Reynolds** and BSFA Oberggruppenfuhrer **Alan Dorey** have announced their engagement and forthcoming marriage on the possibly appropriate date of 4 July 1981. Graham James will be responsible for losing the ring.

My Minneapolis Correspondent writes: "Paul [Kincaid] managed to ruin any chances he had of getting propositioned in Chicago by lecturing all & sundry on British beer."

Susan Wood, 1948-1980

We couldn't really claim to know her that well. We'd exchanged letters and fanzines over the years; we'd met at the last two American worldcons; she stayed with us for a few days before and after Seacon. It's hardly enough.

Her career – both inside and outside fandom – was very successful. She taught in the English department of the University of British Columbia, and earlier this year won a difficult battle to achieve tenure – which essentially meant lifetime job security. I was one of the outside academic referees for the work in SF criticism on which her application was partially based; we both made deadpan reference to her Science Fiction Achievement Awards in critical writing. These, of course, were actually her two Hugos for best fan writer, of which she was properly proud. She had three Hugos in all – the third as co-editor of *Energumen*, the last fanzine to win the award. After *Energumen* suspended publication most of her fanwriting appeared in a personalzine, *Amor*, which while it was appearing regularly was a model of what such a fanzine can be. She published serious criticism in various books and journals – by a painful coincidence the Fall 1980 *Starship* arrived this morning, containing her regular book review column, as well as an article on Kate Wilhelm. The article suffers a little from an academic stiffness of tone; the reviews are more characteristic – forceful, lively, intelligent. She was – on the one occasion I saw her – a lucid public speaker: I'd imagine she was a good teacher. She was 32 years old.

But it would be dishonest to pretend that her outward success mirrored a

stable personal life: the fact is that for some while Susan had been – literally – desperately unhappy, and had taken refuge in alcoholism and pills which only exacerbated the problems. Though we have no definite information as yet, it seems her death was from natural causes, but it's impossible not to believe that this self-inflicted damage – with the emotional traumas of the past months – is the underlying cause. The news of her death is distressing and shocking but not unfortunately, all that surprising. What a waste.
(*Malcolm Edwards/Chris Atkinson*)

(An editorial note: Dave Rowe has just phoned to say that an inquest decided Susan's death was the result of a major heart attack. The suicide rumours are unfounded. Fran Skene sends a newspaper report, parts of which leave me speechless: "As an SF scribe might chronicle it, citizen Wood journeyed into the null on the Gregorian Calendar's Day 12, Month 11, near to 1045 hours....")

Conventions

Sometimes I wonder whether a con calendar is superfluous in Ansible, when most subscribers probably get Ken Slater's book catalogues with his near-complete listing – not to mention millions of flyers at other cons. Thus I agonize, wondering if you mind paying for what you know already....

Yorcon II: April 17-20, Dragonara Hotel, Leeds. 32nd British Eastercon. GoHs Ian Watson, Tom Disch; FGoH me. Supp £3, att £6, rooms £12.50 sngl, £8.50/person dbl/ twin (not inc breakfast & VAT). 12 Fearnville Tce, Oakwood, Leeds LS5 3DU; phone 0532-721478 evenings.

Faircon 81: July 24-27, Ingram Hotel, Glasgow. GoH John Brunner, special GoH Ken Slater. Supp £4, att £8, rises £1 after Easter, rooms £17 sngl, £12/person twin (inc breakfast & VAT). 200 Woodlands Rd, Glasgow, G3 6LN.

Beccon 81: July 31-August 2, Essex Centre Hotel, Basildon. A "new" convention aiming for approx 150 attending. GoH Barrington Bayley. Supp £2, att £5, room rates not yet out. 191 The Heights, Northolt, Middlesex, UB5 4BU.

Stucon 1: August 14-16, Stuttgart, W Germany. GoHs Marion Zimmer Bradley, David Hardy, Helmut Gabriel. Membership \$12 (\$18 after 31 Jan).

Jurgen Mercker, Eichenweg 24, D-7016 Gerlingen, West Germany.

Silicon 5: August 28-31 presumably. No data as yet. **Unicon 2:** September 11-14, Keele Univ. GoH John Sladek, FGoH Alan Dorey. Supp £3, att £5.50, room rates not yet out. “Bridge End”, Shawbury, Shrewsbury, Salop.

Novacon 11: probably 31 October-1 November. No data till PR1.

Now to the more nebulous stuff. To add to the worldcon bids listed in *A12*, I have word of a **Madison** bid for '85 (this being the SF³/*Janus* lot) and a **Vancouver in '87** bid which apparently hasn't been officially announced. This has some relevance to UK fandom since our very own Martin Hoare has been muttering about a British '85 bid on the assumption that there was no opposition. A bid that year would cause some ill-feeling from US Midwestern fans, who under the rotation scheme lost out in '79 and might do so again in '85, with only the Chicago '82 con between. Considerably stronger and more organized opposition would arise if either Australia or Scandinavia were to win the '83 con. Worse, as US cons become more quasi-professional and their membership less “fannish”, it's possible that the chances for any “foreign” bid at all are dwindling – while on the British side we have the problem that in terms of international clout from a con committee, we more or less shot our bolt for Seacon. Seems that very few Seaconcom members, having given their all to that convention, could face another committee role so soon. *Ansible*, the gadfly fanzine, offers no solutions as yet – merely the comment that '85 is probably Too Soon. Comments? Suggestions? Never too early to talk about bidding, folks, but don't go off half-cocked.

Over here a respectable-looking committee is preparing a bid for Eastercon '82, called **Channelcon** and chaired by the ever so respectable-looking Eve Harvey. The plan is to use the Metropole in Brighton, used for Seacon but found unsuitable for the Channelcon '78 bid: this time, it seems, the management is being reasonable and hoped-for room rates would be little more than Yorcon II's. Presupporting memberships cost £1: 4 Fletcher Rd, Chiswick, London, W4 SAY. Martin Easterbrook observes that, since the USSR writer's (*sic*) union has mysteriously decided Eurocon '82 can't be held in Moscow, and since the backup country Hungary might well also drop out, it's conceivable that Eurocon might merge with a successful Channelcon in that year. The BSFA has been talking about sponsoring, though not

necessarily running, a bid for Eurocon '84 – if nothing else, Orwell's year demands something special from Eastercon! In either case the problem is that we'd be expected to make provision for simultaneous translation, to run a considerably more serious programme than normal, and to provide accommodation cheap enough for impecunious members (the Poles, apparently, are notoriously so) – the latter almost certainly meaning it would have to be a campus con. Thus it could be that Eurocon and Eastercon-as-we-know-it are incompatible and would have to be separate events.

Space-Ex 1984 is still going, as reported many issues ago, with its plans for a week-long thingy in the Wembley centre. The 5,000 tickets must be selling like hot cakes, for their flyer now says "WE HAVE ONLY 4,700 TICKETS LEFT". Cost: £12 to the end of 1980, £15 to the end of 1981. 21 Hargwyne Street, Stockwell, London, SW9 9RQ. The other huge con, "Project Starcast", has still not deigned to answer the enquiries I was invited to make: however, *Matrix* says the driving force is "Power-Pulse Productions, the same people who sell old SF comics, and who made the fanzine *Star-Trek – The Magazine* and the cassette *Soundzine* [the latter reputed never to have appeared]". Gosh, wow, &c.;

“‘Darling, You’re So Wonderful,’ He Ejaculated”

Chris Morgan writes: "It's James Blish corpse-rolling time. One day last week Pauline found, by the duplicator at her school, a copy of a sheet evidently intended for an English language class. It was headed 'Not Using the Word SAID'. It went thus: 'When people write conversations in stories *said* can be a very overworked word. There are many other words that can be used to make a conversation more lively or interesting. Here are some of them. Copy them neatly and correctly into your exercise book.' The list which followed gave 55 alternatives, from 'added' via 'murmured' and 'muttered' to 'yelled' (though it did omit 'pole-vaulted')...."

Your editor can go one better than that: the latest Soc of Authors magazine has a small ad which runs: *WRITER'S AID – How to say "HE SAID" 1000 ways – £1.25.* (Readers baffled by all this should consult Blish's *The Issue At Hand*, wherein mechanical variations on "said" are Denounced.)

This seems a suitably irrelevant place to insert an irrelevant anecdote. A week

ago I wrote to George Hay about the good old *Necronomicon*; a few days ago, along came a postcard from George which told me not to worry about the *Necronomicon* contract because everything was being handled by Colin Wilson's agent &c. For some hours I was haunted by the feeling that this reply was not quite to the point. Eventually I noticed the date, and the postmark, on the card. George had sent it in December 1977. "Good grief," I swallowed tautologically..

And now a letter from the Rev P.H. Francis, responding to a curious enquiry of mine: "I do not have a copy of *The Temperate Sun*, having given all copies away. I have printed several books on the subject; but they are all in mathematical language. I can confidently state, as a result of my studies, that the sun does not send quantities of heat to the earth, after the manner of a bonfire. In fact no heat or energy leaves the sun or is received by the earth, from the sun. The sun, of course, *causes* heat to be generated on the earth. The earth's own supplies of heat or energy are used over and over again, and no loss of the earth's heat or energy occurs. This is much the same as with the earth's supplies of water. They change forms but their amount never varies. ... I regret not having a copy of *The Temperate Sun*." (Thus *Ansible's* scientific supplement is again postponed owing to a lack of textbooks.)

COA

MARK CRASKE, 38 Ladybank, Birch Hill, Bracknell, Berks • JOHN FAIREY, c/o Southlands School, Station Rd, New Romney, Kent • JULIAN HEADLONG, 8 Highland Mews, Boscobel Rd, St Leonards-on-Sea, E. Sussex • PHIL JAMES, 42 Lincoln Rd, Stevenage, Herts • DAVE LOCKE & JACKIE CAUSGROVE, 4215 Romaine Dr (Apt 22), Cincinnati, ON 45209, USA • DAVE MONTGOMERY, 62 St Peters Ave, Caversham, Reading, Berks • LISANNE NORMAN (formerly Sutherland), 20 Helena Rd, Dereham Rd, Norwich, NR2 3BZ • PETER ROBERTS, 4 Oak Place, Newton Abbot, Devon, TQ12 2EX (Peter adds that "this may be temporary, so fanzines etc should continue to go to the Starcross address") • PHIL STEPHENSEN-PAYNE, c/o "Longmead", 15 Wilmerthatch Lane, Epsom, Surrey, KT18 7EQ (from 12 Dec until he moves to Washington at the end of the year or thereabouts) • BOB WILKINSON, 16 Pound St, Warminster, Wilts • And Gary Farber was recently evicted, says Stu Shiffman: no new

address.

Infinitely Improbable

Graham England warns (by phone) that the German postal strike has cut him off from fandom and his Xmas cards are liable to come from Austria.... Globetrotting **Kev Smith** is spending time in Brussels in December and January, so complaints about *Vector 100* may be useless.... **Galaxy** magazine has died, as has *Galileo*, and the decline of SF continues with the American Book Awards being lopped of SF and other categories (“these genres have their own awards”).... **Various Meetings:** the Reading pub meet has been shifted to Wed 17 Dec to avoid a clash with the Christmas Tun (18 Dec) or the BSFA meeting (19 Dec). The BSFA thing is planned to happen regularly on the 3rd Friday of the month (Tun 1st Thursday, Reading 3rd Thursday) and will next be on 16 Jan; yes, there will be a Tun on New Year’s Day.... **The 1980 World Fantasy Novel Award** went to Elizabeth Lynn’s *Watchtower*.... **Dave Piper** has broken his ankle in a Potts fracture and is “all wired up like Spaghetti Junction”.... Old time fan **Peter Singleton** reports that the BBC will be doing a programme on Park Lane Special Hospital (Liverpool), where he resides, and that he’ll be wearing his BSFA etc badges for all to see.... **You Travelled Through Time to Taste FORBIDDEN LOVE: BUT NOW YOU MUST MURDER HER!** This sober SFBC (US) ad unearthed by Andy Richards is, improbably though it may seem, referring to Asimov’s *The End of Eternity*. Andy also notes that a film called *The Falls* (dir Peter Greenaway) was on at the NFT in November: “appears to have been made by a learned, if somewhat eccentric, ornithologist with an obsession with linguistics, a knowledge of contemporary, new wave British SF (especially writings of Ian Watson)....” Quote source not given. A better title would have been *The Embirding*.... Breathes there a fan with soul so dead as not to have noticed that our favourite film **Plan Nine From Outer Space** has received due recognition as an all-time nadir of film-making? This is in a book of “Golden Turkey” awards for awful films: other nuggets about *Plan 9* include the information that the continual change from day to night in the film was because the director planned on using an optical process machine to darken the day-scenes to match – but he forgot.... **More On Worldcons:** (1) Ahrvid Engholm and Anders Bellis contend that the “Herman” Scandinavia-in-83 bid is effectively dead – largely because of the

committee's failure to promote their bid. As virtually the only information on the bid to emerge from Sweden in 1980, this carries a certain weight. (2) It is whispered in my ear that Peter Weston is not unwilling to chair another UK Worldcon bid.... **World SF** has risen from obscurity with a directory of members and a newsletter, published by Gerald Bishop. Dues are now £5/year and presumably may be sent to him (2 Cowper Rd, Cambridge CB1 3SN) or Harry Harrison. Membership is open to anyone professionally connected with SF: the professed society aim is "communication", and I originally thought it was intended as a kind of supranational SFWA – the newsletter speaks mostly of translations (Brunner), bibliography (Gerbish) and having lots of meetings.... **Shiffman Is Taffman:** flyer enclosed where weight permits. For the rest of you, the voting figures were Gary Farber 43, Stu Shiffman 79, HOF 2: Stu will thus be attending Yorcon II as TAFF delegate.... **DUFF**, the US >> Australia fund, has candidates Joyce Scrivner and Jon Singer, and closes 15 January: to vote, rush \$2 (US) to Ken Fletcher & Linda Lounsbury, 341 E 19th St, Minneapolis, MN 55404, USA, and say whom you prefer.... **Out Of The Closet:** *Ansible* says Australia in '83, Joyce Scrivner for DUFF, Joe Nicholas for GUFF and Britain whenever.... **Rumoured TAFF candidates** for the next Eurotrip in '83 include Brian Earl Brown, Avedon Carol, Grant Canfield and possibly Gary Farber again.... **Vonda McIntyre**, they say, has done a Trekkie book wherein, heh heh, McCoy has to pull the plug on Kirk's life support system and terminate him. (See how I steal Easterbrook's news even as he steals mine).... **Chris Morgan** rumours: "I hear Paul Oldroyd may shortly announce (a) that Tanith Lee is to be GoH of Novacon 11 and (b) that attendance will be limited to two people, though this may just be a nasty rumour put about by Rog Peyton".... **Hugh Mascetti** ("I was talking to Gen Sir John Hackett last week, and ...") reveals that he and a Skelding nearly blew up Brum Central Police Station at Novacon 9, that one David S Power disabled the lift at the same con, and that members of St Peter's Coll, Oxford, have just voted to annexe the Sudetenland.... **£6500/year** is what Colin Greenland's post as Foundation resident writer is said to be worth.... **Tom Disch** will be over here for 2-3 months as part of his Yorcon trip, and Good Friend Charles Naylor also.... Reviewer-hater **Keith Roberts** has responded to Paul Kincaid's bit on *Molly Zero* (Vector) with a letter saying this is the second complimentary letter he's ever written to a reviewer.... **Yorcon PR2** is out; PR3 is imminent and will carry booking forms.... Bellis & Engholm report a **European apa**

(bimonthly, £1.50/year, contribution 12pp/year min: Joachim Henke, Jahnstrasse 21, D-6551 Volxheim, W GERMANY)... Also, **Sam Lundwall**'s departure from DELTA SF "wasn't a big deal" as he's only stepped down as managing director – he's still editing all the SF from this Swedish house.... Our very own **Gerry Webb** has reached fame (*Daily Express*, 18-11-80): he's been "selected" by Dateline's computer as an ideal mate for Lady Diana Spencer, the lady who is currently not going to marry Prince Charles. "*Lady Diana might soon forget Charles if she met Gerald Webb, a 34-Year-old former trainee astronaut and Government space research scientist ... What he lacks in high breeding, he surely makes up for in brain power.*" But what is this eligible former trainee astronaut doing on the dating computer in the first place, we wonder?.... **Harry Andruschak** writes to say he's preparing a 200-page apazine, which he hopes to be a record: he's working towards this goal by running off 100 copies of everything he writes, including the letter to me wherein he announces that he's preparing (aaagh)... **Pierrot Publishing** have now definitely gone bust, immediately after releasing the latest Holdstock/Edwards potboiler: no connection, we trust.... **George R. Stewart** of Earth Abides fame died recently at the age of 85.... **Next issue** in February, probably.

Back by popular request:

Hazel's Language Lessons #4: Kikuyu

komaria: to touch somebody
reprovingly or threateningly with a
stick and say "wee!"
(Could be a new fan tradition....)

ANSIBLE 14 from Dave Langford
22 Northumberland Avenue, READING
Berkshire RG2 7PW, U.K.

[Added flyer on half-size paper:]

**TWLL-DDU: The Journal of Eschatological Morphology
plus ANSIBLE: The Newsletter of Redundant Factoids**

edited by Dave Langford, 22 Northumberland Avenue, READING, Berks, RG2 7PW, UK. Telephone 0734-863453

This is merely a special Christmas supplementary bit of *Ansible* issued on 17 December 1980 in order to correct a hideous miscarriage of justice –

*On behalf of Frank Arnold, who provided the information on the Christmas and New Year “One Tun” meetings to be found in Ansible 14, apologies. Frank subsequently discovered that the One Tun will be **closed** on New Year’s Day. Thus the January meeting has been shifted to Thursday 8 January. If you know anyone who’s likely to appear at the One Tun on 1 January, please tell them not to!*

There we are, that wasn’t so very painful, was it? This exciting and informative supplement also goes out in lieu of Langford Christmas Cards to many of you lovely people out there. The Langfords, racked with existential guilt, have run out of cards but wish you all the usual things you might expect to be wished, just the same. Have a nice time.

Next *Ansible*: The Triumph of Ian Watson! The Moving to Switzerland of Eurocon! The Rebuttal of Paul Oldroyd! The Wholly Boring Results of the British Fantasy Awards! The Election by Acclaim of Ken Mann as BSFA Chairman! The Mistake in the TAFF Figures! The Protest of Robert P. Holdstock! The Correction of Colin Greenland! The Triumphant Return of “Hazel’s Language Lessons”! All this (well, all but one – guess which) will be faithfully misreported in the next issue ... don’t hold your breath, February’s a long way off. Meanwhile the editor toys fitfully with an abacus and a piece of paper saying *new 2nd class inland postage 11½p, first class 14p: aagh!*

1981

***Ansible* 15**

February 1981

ANSIBLE 15 (February 1981) from Dave Langford: another issue of the world's finest sf/fan newsletter produced at 22 Northumberland Avenue, Reading, Berks, RG2 7PW, UK. An urgent message concerning the Jan 1981 issue – there wasn't one. The GPO has as usual done the dirty, and despite promises that January's postal increases averaged a mere 16½% I was hardly surprised to find overseas *Ansible* postage has risen 40-48%. Thus my new rates are 6/£1 (UK), 5/£1 (Europe), 4/£1 (rest of world). Existing subs will be honoured at the old rates; subs greater than £2 are not encouraged (i.e. the excess may be treated as a TAFF donation), for reasons which should be obvious. Thanks to Keith Freeman as usual for computer labels (if yours says SUB DUE or *****, why is this? Send answers on the back of a cheque, money order or pound note, and win a further *Ansible* sub); thanks to Simon Bostock for the heading ["Y'Know, an *Ansible* a day keeps the Splundiks away...." "Stay back, I have an *Ansible*!"]. NEWSFLASH: I learn from the excellent SF CHRONICLE that a chap called Langford has a book called War in 2080 coming from Sphere in February and is working on a novel called (I regret to say) The Space Eater. The first is postponed to April, the second finished, delivered and accepted: ho ho. A serious question, now ... is anyone out there actually interested in "A has sold a story to B" news items? Let me know. (2-2-81)

The Wonderful World of Sci-Fi

Ian Watson writes: "Further to RUMBLINGS in ish 13, *Gardens of Delight* has sold to Pocket Books in America. It was a UK paperback sale I was bothered about, and that has now been consummated with Corgi (if that is not a slur on the Royal Family) for a princely low in advances almost on a par with the revenue from 'The Ultimate One-Word First Contact Story'. It is *God's World* that hasn't sold to America. Or, more accurately, Dave Hartwell told me at Brighton, 'I want to buy that book,' then when Gollancz pressed

him repeatedly to be more specific he added (on UK publication day) ‘So long as Ian rewrites it.’ Now, I don’t mind rewriting books, but after they’ve been published???”

British Fantasy Awards in 1980 went to: NOVEL *Death’s Master* (Tanith Lee); SHORT “The Button Molder” (Fritz Leiber); SMALL PRESS *Fantasy Tales 5*; FILM *Alien*; ARTIST Steve Fabian; COMIC *Heavy Metal*. (British Fantasy Society)

Starburst Fantasy Awards, whatever they may be, went to all manner of actors, directors and things, plus: TV SHOW *Blake’s 7* (gorblimey); FILM *The Empire Strikes Back*; BOOK *Hitch-Hiker’s Guide to the Galaxy*. (Simon Bostock)

Harlan Ellison and the *Comics Journal* publishers are being sued by some dolt called Michael Fleisher, the sum being \$2,000,000. Ellison, as a quick look at his DV or A,DV introductions will show, tends to praise writers he likes by saying how weird, twisted, crazy, nutty, etc. said writers (or their imaginations) are. Ellison praised Fleisher’s work during a *Comics Journal* interview. Need I say more? Well, yes: not having \$2,000,000, I’d better grovellingly retract the word “dolt” above, and add that Fleisher will be doing his comics work and his recent novel a lot of good by this ludicrous defamation suit, which may force Ellison to repeat his “praise” again and again with variations and annotations in order to justify himself....

SFWA has now declared an “Overseas Region”, meaning that in addition to the three regional directors representing various bits of the USA there will soon a fourth (to be elected) who will take responsibility for all the rest of the world. Glory be!

Pierrot Publishing Ltd has collapsed in a sufficiently spectacular ruin to get several mentions in *Private Eye*, who roused Rob Holdstock to paroxysms of jealousy by mentioning Malcolm Edwards (also Moorcock and Paul Ableman) but not Rob. The creditors’ meeting seems to have been a monumentally ridiculous affair, except of course for the creditors; latest reports on debts come to something like £500,000; there have been hints of great fiddling to squeeze more money from banks during the final crises. Secret Master Phil Dunn is said to have fled to a meditation dump (the same one favored by Bernard Levin) accompanied by his ex-stripper mistress, while his wife waits for Pierrot creditors to grab her house, furniture, clothing

etc.... Rob Holdstock, protesting that his and Malcolm's final Pierrot book *Tour of the Universe* is no potboiler but a beerglassboiler, has Vast Plans for things of his which Pierrot will not now be publishing.

Bob Shaw & Jim Barker may by now have succeeded in selling their cartoon strip to the *News of the World*: it features a robot called MacHinery, the creation of one Prof. Willis, and there's a charlady called Mrs Weston and next-door neighbors called Langford ... oh, this is too much. I don't believe a word of it, Mr Barker. (Another Barker Datum is that Bob Shaw has been writing Donald Duck strips for publication in Poland.)

Hordes Of The Things was BBC's attempt to repeat the success of *Hitch-Hiker* in fantasy format (Radio 4). Ace reviewer Philippa Grove-Stephenson covered it in three words, "Feeble, bad – pity," with an optional fourth "exploitative". More media fun from Michael Ashley, who says: "A solo artist called Richard Pinhas has an album out on the Pulse label, called 'East-West': 'The opening track (misplaced) is a fearsome roar of electronic power with vocals from SF author Norman Spinrad. The lyrics revolve around the last words of a pilot as his plane does a Plummet Airlines job.' Not to be outdone Michael Moorcock has a new single out on the small(ish) label Rough Trade, *Deepfix Dodgem Dude/Starcruiser*."

The Penguin Dictionary Of Modern Quotations (new edition) has discovered SF, with bits from Asimov, Heinlein, Clarke, Brunner, Aldiss (the last two get credits for having helped) plus surprises like Raymond (*Fungus the Bogeyman*) Briggs and a con-panel quote from Larry Niven.

SF Book Club Still Not Dead, reports Peter Roberts (who unless there's been a strange coincidence of names is now trying to flog an "encyclopaedia of fantasy"): the current titles from the UK club are JAN *Mockingbird* (Tevis); FEB *The Visitors* (Simak); MAR *The SF Solar System* (ed. Asimov et al); APRIL *The Face* (Vance). Former SFBC master Paul Begg, who I basely suggested was "booted out", corrects me as follows: "My departure from Readers Union was amid ill-feeling and perhaps a little unconventional, but I resigned of free will and in the time-honoured fashion." The libel is hereby retracted....

Market Reports have been requested by a couple of readers. Um. To cover US markets would essentially mean my reprinting page after page from *SFC* or *Locus* – no thanks, I'll do you a market report on UK SF mags, though,

since there are only two. *Ad Astra* (ed. James Manning, 22 Offerton Rd, London, SW.4) looks better and appears to have better distribution; after two years, though, it still pays a mere 1p a word. As well as fiction and science- or sf-related articles, *AA* runs a certain amount of fringe material (e.g. occult) which signally fails to fit in. At least, following gentle hints from myself and other fans, the term “sci-fi” was dropped from the cover last issue. *Extro* (edited by a consortium; 28 Moorcroft Drive, Burnage, Manchester, M19 1WH) looks more like a fanzine – at least the issues I’ve seen do – but conforms more to the “ideal” model of an sf magazine. The production’s very messy and distribution practically nonexistent as far as I can see. However, payment is slightly greater than for *AA*, 1.5p a word; and by and large *Extro*’s approach seems based on a better knowledge of the field. Short fiction, articles, reviews (no payment for these) and ... well, *Extro*’s friends will tell you how *AA* is a nasty mishmash, but *Extro* includes occult and rock material which it could do without. But it has higher standards in fiction (or so one editor says!) This is beginning to look more like a market column than a market report; I’ll close with a mention of *Fusion* (ed. Ken Mann, 22 Pennethorpe Rd, Peckham, London SE15 5TQ), which pays “£100 for the best, £20 for the rest”, apparently demands full copyright in material used (very unusual – *AA* and *Extro* buy first serial rights only, which is as it should be) and takes anything *except* sf. *Fusion* seems elusive: I’ve never found a copy anywhere, and a polite letter of enquiry about the copyright terms was promptly sent back, in the original envelope, with “Sent in error – returned in haste” scrawled on the back by somebody initialling him- or herself “KM”.

George Hay writes: “Almost the only thing I’m prepared to say about the last Council meeting of the SF Foundation is that one person present suggested that all the non-Poly members resign, but that they *did* not accept this suggestion.... Did you know that Ben Bova has agreed to be chairman of our Free Space Society? We plan midsummer conferences starting next year up till 1984, World War III permitting.”

Chris Priest’s *A Dream of Wessex* is to be filmed, starting this summer. The mention of Chris reminds me that his old buddy Charles Platt has apparently been writing in Denvention PR3, among other things describing Chris as “incapable of creative thought”. Don’t ask me for more details – I only joined Denvention six months ago, so they haven’t had time to send me any PRs....

Convention Mentions

Fantasycon VII will be in Birmingham's Grand Hotel, 10-12 July; supp £1/\$3, cheques to "British Fantasy Soc"; 1 Buttery Road, Smethwick, Warley, West Midlands, B67 7NS. **Novacon 11** – Chairman Paul Oldroyd writes "to dispel the vicious and totally unfounded lies perpetrated by Peyton and Morgan in A14. Novacon 11's GoH is to be none other than the *real* Bob Shaw; the con will indeed be held from 30 Oct to 1 Nov. Numbers will, as last year, be limited to 500, as we will be returning to the Angus, and this is its legal limit." (Martin Hoare has been saying how much more traffic it would be for Novacon to move to the Grand Hotel. Martin is now SF Con Consultant to Grand Metropolitan Hotels Ltd, but there can be no connexion.) **Eurocon** has got slightly complicated. The Moscow bid, i.e. the official con, collapsed because the writers' union wasn't allowed adequate hotel space (they'd used up their allowance or something). The backup bid, Hungary, failed because boss Peter Kuczka had heart trouble and had to give up *everything* including his regular job. Luckily there is the backup-backup, Pascal Ducommun's Swiss bid – address Eurocon VII, CCP 23-20234, CH-2300 La Chaux-de-Fonds, Switzerland. Date Sept/Oct 1982, supp 15 att 30 Swiss fr. (provisional – sterling rates to be decided), GoH Pierre Versins (famed for a massive 1972 encyclopaedia as yet untranslated into English) plus planned guests including the Strugatskys. John Brunner strongly commends Pascal D. as a jolly good chap, so all seems well – *except* that new and mighty ructions have occurred in Hungary, where it seems that Kuczka's committee is immensely pissed-off by his unilateral folding of their convention. He didn't have any authority to do so without consultation, they say. **Eurocon 84**: Pascal Ducommun also likes the British bid idea; John Brunner suggests a seaside venue with much cheapo B&B accommodation, and has been trying to get suggestions from the British Travel & Hols Assoc computer, so far without noticeable success. **Space-Ex 1984** – I hear Forrest J Ackerman may be a guest. **Project Starcast** (82) – Steve Green writes: "The creative combo behind Starcast is the same currently organizing the UK Psycons (the next is scheduled for Feb 28) and previously responsible for the highly commercially-orientated Alderaan cons (in reality, extended marts). The guests of honor are still undecided, although Forrest Ackerman and Robert Bloch have 'expressed interest' (and Terry Nation, I believe). Tables will cost around £50, and the fan rooms (i.e. society rooms) will be organized

independently of the 24-hour programme, as is the progress report, which is little more than a fanzine (and not a particularly inspiring one at that).” I’m also told that PR1 is startling for its total lack of information about the con. Famous Ken Mann has written to the BSFA explaining (amid various intimations that the BSFA has no right to express interest in or have opinions on Starcast) that a secret inner circle of “media fans” (to which he presumably belongs) have forced Starcast to shift from the Harrogate centre to a much smaller venue (unspecified). **Yorcon II** has brought out a somewhat belated PR3 with the dread hotel booking forms – scream quickly if by some chance yours hasn’t arrived. Details more or less as last issue; banquet £7 plus VAT, 2p promised off beer prices, train discounts, short story competition etc. One error: p.5 says Brian Stableford says he’s coming. He isn’t. (When I say “one error” I charitably omit the misprints Alan Dorey put into my article whilst typing it blindfolded with his toes at 250 words per minute on a rather jerky bus taking him home from an all-night boozing session at the local Epileptics’ Club....) **Denvention** (Worldcon 81, Denver) have sent a couple of copies of their newsletter *Rocky Mountain Oysters*, which I regret to say is one of the tattiest-looking con publications I’ve ever seen. The tone is still apologetic.... Our own Graham England will be running the con newsletter; the Hugo nomination forms are now out and must be posted back by March 15. Would that I could tell you about the three doubtless magnificent progress reports.... **Australia In 83**: the bidding committee has sent a press release listing nearly sixty committee members and their functions. Ever so many supporters are claimed (among whom is Jan Howard Finder, who in aid of the bid wishes to flog you a very classy Australian SF Calendar 1981 at \$4.75 post free and/or the Aussiecon 5th Anniversary Memorial Fanzine at \$3 pf – both together, \$7.50 pf – PO Box 428, Latham, NY 12110, USA). **Copenhagen In 83** has 600 supporting members and has booked the Sheraton, Copenhagen. One supporter, Ragnar Fyri, mutters that it’s essential to break the US/UK/Australian monopoly (unquote) on worldcons: presumably he means the US/UK/Canadian/Australian/German monopoly.... **Baltimore In 83** has said nowt to me. **Chicon** (Worldcon 82, Chicago) has named A. Bertram Chandler, Kelly Freas and Lee Hoffman (fan) as guests of honour.

Births, Engagements, Deaths, People, Things ...

Graham James, famous *Matrix* editor, and Linda Strickler (US) acquired a daughter called Naomi Elizabeth James during Graham's recent trip to California (7th Jan)... **Greg Pickersgill And Linda Karrh** have announced their intention of getting married ever so soon, as have another sweet young couple whom terrible oaths forbid me to name....

F&SF writer **Doris Pitkin Buck** died in December, as did **Kris Neville**; **H. Warner Munn**, known for *Weird Tales* work and various fantasy novels including *Merlin's Ring*, died in January. German fan **Walter Reinecke** ("Fux" to friends and fans) died in January after nearly 25 years in German fandom; from 1958 to his death he'd been co-editor of Waldemar Kumming's *Munich Round-Up*, and Waldemar adds: "To a large extent, the longevity of the fanzine was made possible by his patient work."

The Yorkshire Ripper gave his godmother a box of nice chocolates for Xmas; when he was arrested she lost her taste for them and gave them away, which is how they came to be eaten with enormous relish by the famous D. WEST ... **Carl Sagan** has seemingly sold an unwritten sf novel for a 6-figure advance plus 7-figure film rights deal, the subject being first contact with aliens....

COA: ALLAN BEATTY (again!), PO Box 1906, Ames, IA 50010, USA • ALAN DOREY (again!), 84 Hartford Avenue, Kenton, Harrow, Middlesex, HA3 8SY • JOHN FAIREY (again!), 12a Claverley House, Grand Parade, Littlestone, Romney, Kent • ANDY FIRTH, 49 Crescent Rd, Wood Green, London, N.22 • HUGH MASCETTI, Room 344, Lillian Penson Hall, London, W4 1TT • KEITH & KRYSZYNA OBORN, 20 Hanwood Close, Woodley, Reading, Berks, RG5 3AB • PAUL OLDROYD, Garforth House, 118 Domestic St, Holbeck, Leeds 1 • Ansible's Law: 20% of the mailing list does 80% of the moving....

Infinitely Improbable

Colin Greenland sadly observes that his salary as Foundation writer in residence is not the exorbitant sum mentioned last issue, but a piffling £6000.... **Rob Holdstock & Chris Evans** have failed despite vast efforts to assemble *Focus 4* on time, meaning the first BSFA mailing of 1981 will be a bit thin.... **Steiv Higgsni**, formerly known to a palpitating universe as Steev

(sic) Higgins, wishes to be addressed in future as Steve Higgins (sic)... **Taff Figures** released by Terry Hughes differ slightly from mine, since Terry allowed one late ballot which increased Stu Shiffman's lead still further; Stu adds that he's changed jobs and is now in ladies' undies (which fact will limit his TAFF trip to a couple of weeks)... **Rob Jackson** pleads for more GUFF votes before closure on Feb 14 (ballots available from me at the Tun or him at Faancon, and of course from the ever-eager candidates who have so inundated fandom with their campaigning); Rob and Coral have tried to send the baby to sleep by reading *Inca* aloud, but "she just screamed and screamed"... **Jim Barker** begs all fans to stop asking him for dead hedgehogs, because he's run out (but hopes to kill a second batch before too long)... **The Brum Group** celebrates its 10th anniversary this year, *probably* with a mini-con/maxi-party in late June: tentative plans involve the Royal Angus hotel, Brian Aldiss and Harry Harrison, 2-300 attendance, cost about £1, minimal programme, souvenir booklets, etc.... **Arthur Hlavaty** writes: "A few years back *F&SF* had a competition to write a misleading blurb for an sf book. Unfortunately the same issue contained an SFBC ad – 'He knew the Martian love secret and it spelled his doom!!! *Stranger In A Strange Land* by Robert A. Heinlein.' None of the entries *F&SF* printed compared." ... **The Hitch-Hiker's Guide To The Galaxy** (TV version) provoked queries from computer magazines about how the BBC managed such fast, bright, sophisticated computer graphics: "Actually we faked them photographically," the BBC explained.... **Maggie Noach**, much-loved agent for millions of British sf authors, has resigned from A.P. Watt Ltd after a long and continuing illness.... **Joan Hanke-Woods**, celebrated US fanartist, will be in and around London for the first half of May and is "most excited at the thought of meeting science fictional fans of the English persuasion" – little does she know (about Welsh ones for example)... **SF News**, an offshoot of *Extro*, runs an all-time-great Freudian misprint in the new issue, twice referring to Ben Bova's *As On A Darling Lain*.... **Anne Page** has again let the cloven hoof of her Trekkiedom show, this time appearing with other curiously clad folk on the unspeakable Russell Harty's TV show and explaining how she likes to dress up. Speaking of which, Radio 4 rang me to ask if I was a Trek enthusiast who'd like to appear on a programme they were planning which would treat the rumoured new *Star Trek* series lightheartedly (i.e. put the boot in). It seemed they had lots of mockers and boot-putter-inners lined up, but were having trouble locating a purebred starry-eyed

Trekkie.... **John Collick Speaks:** “All sf and fantasy games are worthless. They appeal to the lowest denominator.” [sic].... **Hazel’s Language Lessons #5:** when in Greece be sure to seize your opportunity and use the word KOPIAZΩ, meaning “I am full of bedbugs” (John Brunner).... **Taral And/Or Victoria Vayne** are *also* interested in standing in the next US->UK TAFF race....

BSFA Boss Plans To Flee Country: Alan Dorey fancies his chances for TAFF '82.... **Hugo Flaws Revealed:** John Millard explains the sporadic pitting referred to in *A13* – seems the usual trophy makers, English Bros Foundry of California, are apathetic about the small order for Hugo rockets and don’t bother to make them well, or to make them at all unless shouted at loudly and continuously. Their machined castings have varying amounts of pitting; the machined aluminium Hugos used as replacements from 1974-6 are nicer. John suggests that organizing vast supplies of decent-looking Hugos would be a useful function of a permanent Worldcon organization.... **Greg Benford** of *Timescape* fame has succeeded in preventing Pocket Books (US) from mentioning their new “Timescape” imprint in ads without plugging *Timescape* (which will now not be issued as a “Timescape” book from pocket – merely one of their ordinary “Book” books).... MIKE GLICKSOHN is carrying on with *Energumen 16* as a memorial to Susan Wood.... **The 1980 Radio Awards** (UK) had one item of sf relevance: *Hitchhiker* won the category “programme/series for young listeners”.... **Recession Horror** continues with Hamish Hamilton Ltd, nice guys of the publishing world, threatening to bump all authors’ starting royalties from 10% to 7½%.... **Noreascon** is still sending me more and better-produced stuff than Denvention, including incredibly detailed Hugo statistics (at least I beat “No Award” this time) and a \$30 membership refund because I appeared on the programme – good grief!.... **Jan Finder** (address p.2) also wants you to buy *Finder’s Guide to Australterrestrials*, \$6 sea-, \$7.50 airmail, a compendium of noted fanartists and pro authors sold in aid of DUFF.... **Gerry Webb**, gay Lothario of Dateline, introduced me last Tun to a lady he claimed was “the best of three computer runs” – but little does he know that a lady registering for Yorcon has sent in a 4-page denunciation of him which she wants available at the con “for all unsuspecting females”.... **John Brunner** (*A15* Most Mentions Award Winner) offers himself as ex-officio chairman – whatever that may be – for the British Eurocon-84 bid he hopes will take shape at Yorcon.... **Bruce McAllister** wants me to suggest obscure

items for an sf-poetry anthology he's coediting – must send him some clerihews.... **Tom Shippey** is currently chairing (co-chairing) Yorcon from Harvard – you know, that American polytechnic – and tension mounts as the committee wonders if he'll be back in time.... **West Midlands SF Group** has been formed to challenge the all-potent Brum Group: ask Geoff Boswell, 59 Sorrel Walk, Brierley Hill, DY5 2QG.... **SFWA Proved Fannish**: it has been announced that the Spring 1980 issue of *SFWA Bulletin* ought to have been in the mail around the end of that year. Alternatively, Real Soon Now.... **Andy Porter** in *SFC* observes that “*Solar Wind* by Peter Jones is an incredible rip-off of American artists ... steals images from Schoenherr, DiFate, Valigursky, Emsh, Frazetta and literally dozens of other artists. Incredibly, these are usually for British editions of the same books first published in the US.”

Hazel's Language Lessons #6: Advanced Japanese
as taught by **Ian Watson**

sakasa-kurage means

(1) an upside-down jellyfish; (2) a one-night-stand hotel.

(Anyone explaining the connexion will instantly graduate. I.W.)

Solution [next time](#) ... meanwhile, this has been *Ansible* 15 from:

Dave Langford
22 Northumberland Avenue
READING, Berks RG2 7PW, U.K.

Ansible 16

March 1981

ANSIBLE 16 • March 1981

Dave Langford, 22 Northumberland Avenue, READING, Berks., RG2 7PW, UK. Subscriptions: 6/£1 UK, 5/£1 Europe, 4/£1 in funny places; no foreign cheques/currency, or subs over £2, please. See the wondrous Keith Freeman mailing label for your status (***** is Bad). ARTWORK: Rob Hansen [STARFAN strip].

Son of Convention Mentions

Denvention II (1981 Worldcon, Denver): Before my peevish notes of last issue could have reached them, Denvention sent me (a) a belated note of acknowledgement/apology to all Euromembers; (b) *The R*cky M*ountain *yster*, a newsrelease saying such things as that membership reached 2112 attending and 608 supporting by 15th January: nice neat production at last. However, I'm not too pleased to learn that stocks of the first two progress reports have run out so that after waiting six months I won't be getting them: to add insult to injury, *TRM** explains that membership figures are "right on target", meaning presumably that Denvention planned all along to run out of PRs and deprive supporting members of part of what they're paying for. Rats!

Fantasycon VII (Birmingham, 10-12 July) has been "forced" to change its venue from the Grand to the Central Hotel (reason not given): GoHs are Peter Tremayne, Alan Hunter.

Brum Group 10Th Anniversary Party (Royal Angus, 27 June) is definitely on: hotel rates as for Novacon 11 (£10.50/person sharing, £13 single, inc. breakfast, service, VAT), membership £2; 39 Hollybrow, Selly Oak, Birmingham B29 4LX.

Deepsouthcon (Birmingham, Alabama, next August): Bob Shaw shyly

confesses that he'll be there as GoH.

The Ever More Complex Eurocon Muddle: John Brunner writes: “The muddle concerning Eurocon 1982 is infinitely more complicated than indicated in *Ansible 15* for which many thanks. It has turned out that the withdrawal of the Hungarian bid was done without consulting the country's more-than-forty SF fan clubs ... who in the interim had not only held a special meeting to plan the convention, but enlisted the support of the Writers' Union *and* applied for an okay from the Ministry of Culture. Said okay is now to hand!

“We are left lumbered with the hideously embarrassing mix-up resulting from one person falling ill and withdrawing without telling everyone else in the intended host country! Pascal Ducommun (one very nice guy) was so eager to get a Swiss con rolling, he too had organized a preliminary meeting before the news arrived that Mr (Hungarian) Kuczka had neglected to persuade everyone else that without him it wouldn't work. (I am probably libelling the poor guy; I apologize if so, but he oughtn't to have written a letter saying he didn't like fans!) On current evidence, Hungary is the destination....”

Project Starcast (1982) sends its first PR. *Castoff 1*, which does indeed look like a fanzine not as professionally produced as the first page of *Ansible*: the idea of the con is that you pay a lot of money (currently £14 not including PRs), and you get “four simultaneous conventions” (book, comic, Trekkie and film) ... the corollary being that with four main programmes, it's physically impossible for you to get more than a quarter of what you're paying for. Also mentioned are two committee members and no membership figures. Evil reporter Steven Green sends a few vile slurs about the organizers, in particular Brian Clarke and his *Soundzine*; as usual I await developments with vast interest....

Advention 81 (13-15 June; Adelaide, Australia; GoH Frank Herbert) is the Australian national con and will be attended by GUFF winner Joe Nicholas (whose 47 votes defeated Malcolm Edwards's 24 and HOF's 2, not to mention three write-ins – see attached flyer where weight permits) and DUFF winner Joyce Scrivner, who defeated Jon Singer for the US->Oz trip. Apparently DUFF is poverty-stricken just now, since Keith Curtis's trip to Noreascon seems to have consumed close on \$3000 (the basic airfare being

\$1820). I see no reason not to answer queries about how much support TAFF gives to winners: I was authorized to spend £500 from the TAFF kitty on my trip, and Stu Shiffman will get the corresponding \$1200; prospective candidates should remember that there's a kind of moral obligation to raise at least this amount during your spell as Administrator....

Amazing Occurrence at the Royal Festival Hall

On February 19th, as part of a programme of flute and tuba music, renowned American flutist Nancy Ruffer gave the first public performance of "The Caught Breath of Time". Written by 26-year-old Chris Dench, the ten minute long solo piece forms the second movement of his symphonetta "Earthwind", which was inspired (his word) by Rob Holdstock's novel of the same name. From the programme notes: "the novel describes intuitively the sinusoidal space-time line of the planet Aeran ... the temporal wave causes the human colonists to lose their short-term memories; likewise, my piece sheds its detailed melisma gradually, until all that remains is the oscillation...."

The music itself rose above such pretentious claptrap, fast, demanding and uneasily structured in 22-second phrases (slightly longer than short term memory), Nancy Ruffer ably communicated a sense of alienness and loss to your Witness in the audience. Thus something of value was taken from an evening of otherwise unbelievable awfulness. (Your Witness's companion had been undaunted by my warning that the music was likely to be obscure, impenetrable, convoluted and indulgent. It seemed to amuse him greatly to reflect on the appropriateness of selecting *Earthwind* as a source of inspiration. Wonder what he meant?)

To your Witness, music means "melody", "harmony", "rhythm", something to whistle jauntily as you drive home later. Modern Music, as practised by young Modern Musicians, appears to discard melody and rhythm and concentrate on "notes". These notes are rigged together at random, and then played backwards. Each cough, sniff, gasp for breath and rattling expectoration by the performer has been carefully built into the score. The resulting cacophony draws vigorous applause from the audience, who can be overheard making observations upon "the subtlety of tonal decay" and the "amazing control of the resonant quarter-tone glissandi". "The Caught Breath of Time" came perilously close to having a tune, and it is not surprising, then,

that the flutist (“flautist” is frowned upon) “was not sure whether or not she liked it wholly”.

There *were* two other performances of interest, and potential beauty. One, a tuba playing a duet with the taped sound of five or six whales, seemed content to exist for its novelty ... nothing was done with the duet, and the performer communicated only a sense of forlorn foghorns trying to outdo each other for loudness. But the theme of nature was much more successfully demonstrated in the duet for flute and tuba playing the secret songs of British wild life. Transcribed from the slowed-down tape of these (on the whole) ultra-sounds, there was something chilling about the angry cries of a lustful pygmy shrew, or the forlorn grunting of an ageing midwife toad; the birdsongs – played on the tuba – were complex, fascinating, almost moving.

Your Witness’s final feeling was unchanged, however, namely that the compositions of these Modern Musicians make Stockhausen sound like the theme music from *Triangle*; but this cannot hide the fact that there is something curiously flattering about having music inspired by one’s writing. An even greater strangeness (in this case) is that *Earthwind* was strongly influenced by Jon Anderson’s segments of that seminal symphony “Tales from Topographic Oceans”. And yet an even more strange thing is that the sight of Nancy Ruffer shedding her melisma in great 22-second puffs has inspired me with the idea for a story called “The Caught Breath of Time”. One wonders where it will all end. (A. Witness)

(EDITORIAL NOTE: the identity of A. Witness is shrouded in secrecy. He is, however, warned that that famed group The Mekons are even now under orders to base a new single on *Raven, Swordsmistress of Chaos....*)

The Plastic Lefty Column Roz Kaveney

The new collection of [H. Beam] Piper stories – *Federation* – rebukes the *Encyclopaedia of SF* for inadequate scholarship in that it did not think the chronology of Piper’s stories sufficiently clear; two pages later it refers to “Foundation critic Briton John Clute”. Noted Canadian person John Clute is actually quite pleased about this in that it would protect him from a

Pournellian hit squad – if they think he’s a brit all he has to do is open his mouth and they will be convinced that the real Clute is elsewhere.

... Frost, Ryman and I are trying to organize a generalized fannish contribution to the movement for free presses in Poland. It appears that the local branches of Solidarity are crying out for their own duplicators and have been appealing – e.g. at the London Book Fair – for even vaguely friendly Westerners to send them. We tedious plastic Lefties have decided that something ought to be done since the whole of fannishness rests on some sort of commitment to a Free Press. Also, support for the Poles is something that I can agree with say B. Aldiss on – which is too important to pass up a chance for. Could interested people contact me long before the First of May? (29 Ironside House, London, E.9; 01-533-2462) If the tanks roll in before we can get a duplicator out there I guess we’ll send it to El Salvador instead. (Roz Kaveney)

(NB: though basically apolitical, *Ansible* is currying favour with mighty reviewer Kaveney. *Ansible* also suggests we might send the lucky Poles a proven apparatus for making duplicators – namely the famous Alternative Technologist D. West.)

Strange Skiffy Snippets

Savoy Books has gone bust, not apparently as a direct result of the police raid and confiscation last October, although this “didn’t help”. There is a rumour that they’ll be bobbing up again quite soon as “Savoy Editions” or some such subtle alias.... **A Dome Of Many-Colored Glass** may be Bob Shaw’s next big project, since: “I have taken up stained glass work recently as a hobby, and have just installed in my own home what is possibly the world’s first SF stained glass window. It is a 4ft by 3ft job, designed and manufactured by myself, showing a sort of futuristic city with a giant moon rising behind it.” (Stu Shiffman has a stained-glass panel depicting the great god Roscoe, but that’s not quite SF, I suppose).... **Rob Holdstock Sells A Story!** Interviewed in his plush St Alban’s home, Britain’s most famous promising writer laughingly confirmed that “those bastards at F&SF” had for the first time failed to return his submission as being too British. The story is called “Mythago Wood” and is among the finest novelettes written by Rob Holdstock in 1980.... **Carl Sagan Gets \$2,000,000 For His Unwritten Sf**

Novel Contact: with a headline like that, who needs a news item?... **Boskone 18** (Boston, February): “the dullest con I’d ever seen,” reports Pascal Thomas, who blames high room rates and too much local publicity (ie, walk-ins). Pascal adds that he’s now French agent for Scandinavia in ’83, and invites me to “compare the fannish and SF-reading populations of Australia and (say) continental Western or ‘Northern (Scandinavia + Low Countries + Germany) Europe; do you think it appears logical that the Worldcon be held twice in the former against only once in the latter?” I could reply that in terms of accessibility, Eurofans have also had the run of three British Worldcons; only a few lucky Australians have been able to get to more than one Worldcon.... **SCIENCE FICTION DIGEST** is the latest bright idea of Davis Publications (*IASF*, *Analog*): believe it or not, the plan is to boil down three 60,000-word novels in *Readers’ Digest* fashion for each 75,000-word issue. This sounds like one to avoid when it hits the stands in August. A chilling remark appears in *SF Chronicle* on this subject: “Where possible, author approvals of the condensations will be sought”.... **Marriages & Deaths:** last issue I failed to mention that lovely Vernon Brown and Pat Baxter-that-was are now married, while SF author Stephen Tall (whose real name was Compton Crook) died in January.... **World SF** is still struggling to find its feet, and secretary Gerald Bishop (fast wasting away since 90% of his whisky collection is in storage following a recent move) requests that people refrain from sending their £5 membership fee until further notice.... **Remainder Horror:** I was pleased when the NEL paperback of Chris Boyce’s *Extraterrestrial Encounter* carried a quote from my *Vector* review; but since the paperback only appeared in January I was hardly pleased to see marked-down copies (£1.35->80p, mint condition) in our local remainder shop halfway through February. Further inspection disclosed mint, marked-down copies of books currently being pushed as best-sellers in other shops: are publishers genuinely crazed or am I just failing to see the point? ... **Famous Sf Foundation Resident Writer Colin Greenland** is (a) now a doctor of English, his special period being *New Worlds*; (b) not a mere resident writer at the North East London Poly. George adds that he’s arranged something, I know not what, between the Foundation and the ILEA (whatever that may be).... **Chris Priest** is muttering about resigning from the Foundation because they’ve spent money on word-processing which could have paid for the junked Administrator post; Chris also wants to leave the evil Big City for the rustic joys of Okehampton (Devon).... **George R.R. Martin** plans to be in

England around Oct/Nov this year; Lisa Tuttle is here already and plans to stay that long at least; Thomas Disch and Charles Naylor (who'll be sharing Disch's GoH suite at Yorcon) will be around for a couple of months after the con.... **South Of The Moon:** This apa index is run by Denys Howard, 1013 N 36th, Seattle, WA 98103, USA, who "likes to tell everyone that he is a faggot" (Harry Andruschak).... **Penguin Again:** Jack Chalker observes that "a lot of my stuff was bought by Penguin (for good sums) just before Peter Mayer took over and cancelled the SF line. Mayer, you might recall, is the former head of Pocket Books who got canned as a result of SFWA's campaign against his lousy contract. Well, maybe the contracts will expire, I'll keep the money, then sell to somebody else.... Somehow I don't think Mayer would give much promotion to the books of the SFWA Treasurer even if he *did* bring them out. They love me in Germany, though, where I'm selling like mad...." Penguin insist their SF line is continuing, *but* I've still not heard of further scheduled books beyond mid-1982 (i.e. the same state of play as a year ago).... **Pocket Books** are pushing Spinrad's *Songs From The Stars* for a Nebula, and SFWA members have received not only the pb (Jan) but a covering letter quoting *Amazing/Fantastic's* rave review.... **The Encyclopaedia Of Fantasy** is not really a Peter Roberts project (last issue I was merely making mock of SFC's confusion of Roberts with Nicholls); Granada will publish it here *if* an American buyer can be found. Meanwhile, impoverished editor Nicholls is said to be working as a bus conductor.... **Atomic Secrets Revealed?** See John Brosnan's novel of a giant nuclear zeppelin (Hamlyn, April), for which I provided certain misinformation.... **Extro & Ad Astra** have so far failed to publish 1981 issues....

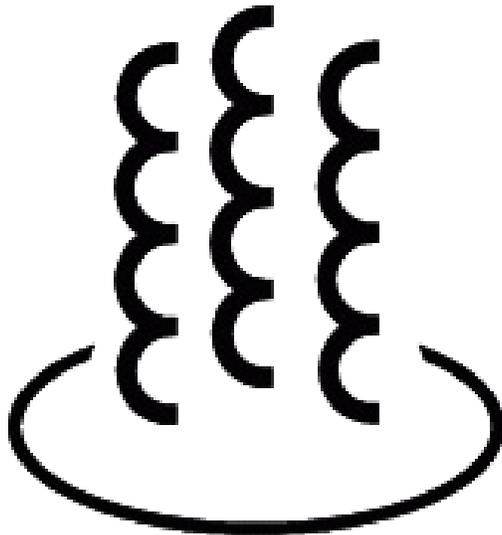
COA

RICHARD BERGERON, Box 5989, Old San Juan, Puerto Rico 00905 USA
• JEAN FROST, 49 Humber Tower, Francis St, Birmingham, B7 4JX •
BRIAN SMITH, 28 Silverston Way, Stanmore, Middlesex • SIMON
OUNSLEY's postcode: LS6 3AE.

Infinitely Improbable

Guilty Update: Of course it wasn't safe to say on p2 that *Ad Astra* wasn't

out, since inevitably #14 hit the stands while p2 was at the printers' (well, they should send me my free copy a bit quicker)... **DUFF Voting Figures** are revealed by Joyce Scrivner: Joyce 80, Jon Singer 40, "Hold Over Funds" 2, "Huge Wombat" and "No Award" 1 each; apparently DUFF's financial problems are also well in hand.... **Gerry Webb** will not now be marrying Lady Diana Whatsit, our reporter was told.... **Ian Watson's Japanese Language Lesson** (why does the same word mean a one-night-stand hotel *and* an upside-down jellyfish?) was attempted by R.I. Barycz: "I believe jellyfish, fresh or dried, is used by the tired Japanese businessman as an aphrodisiac. It refreshes the parts that rhino horns cannot reach ... Sayonara." Ian refutes this: "The connexion, of course, is that naughty post-1945 inns catering to Yanks and their Japanese girlfriends all bore the hot springs sign on their doors, whether they had hot springs or not." ...



Short Stories Magazine was inundated with a flood of two letters from earnest young fans complaining about the mag's use of the tabu term "sci-fi". On page 10 of the current issue, the editor promises not to do it again. On page 109 we find: "*Aries 1 (Sci-Fi)* ed. John Grant".... **Valley Of The Four Winds** (£6.95) is Games Workshop's latest fantasy game: it comes complete with a game-related story to put you in the mood, and *Ansible* is interested to find that this story's characters shout things like "*Twll d'un bob saes*", not to mention swearing by the Oath of the Astral League [sic].... **Weltschmerz Hits BSFA Editor:** Graham James is convinced that fans' work for the BSFA is responsible for Britain's lack of decent fanzines. "Are we all wasting our time in the BSFA? What is the point of churning out all this

garbage?” etc, etc.... **TAFF Winner Stu Shiffman** will be arriving at Heathrow on April 11, and leaving on the 26th: phone me (0734-863453) for minute-by-minute data on his movements. Stu wishes to state that he did not vote for Reagan. Nominations for TAFF '82 (Eurofan->Chicago) will open at Yorcon and close at the end of June: prospective candidates should find 2 American and 3 European nominators and send written nominations, plus a platform of up to 100 words, plus £5 “bond”, plus a promise to go to Chicon if elected, to TAFF's European administrator (oh all right, me).... **Group Gropes:** Jean Frost insists that the West Midlands SF Society is very boring and rude to newcomers; Steve Green plugs the Solihull Soc (Mason's Arms, High St, 2nd Friday); the Brum Group now has informal meetings in Willie's Wine Bar (next to Andromeda Bookshop; 1st Tuesday); **Yorcon** will displace the April BSFA Rutland Arms meeting (3rd Friday) and the Reading Osborne Arms meet (3rd Thursday), moving each one week onward; if anyone wants to report on the Starcast one-day con at UMIST (April 4), I seem to have a ticket.... **Not Hazel's Language Lessons** (since she considers Italian a bit mundane): Paul Kincaid cites an 1873 dictionary giving “*natura* ... 6. the female pudenda; 7. the male organ of generation; 8. God”.... **Other New Magazines** include *Rod Serling's The Twilight Zone Magazine* (first issue out late Feb but dated April: good grief), *Asimov's Isaac Science Fiction Magazine* and *Science Fiction Analog Science Fact* (well, that's what the new logos look like).... **The Tolkien Society** would like a plug for “an evening with the production team of the forthcoming LOTR serialization on Radio 4”. On 5 March. Oh dear.... **Arena**, Geoff Rippington's fanzine, has picked up an Arts Council grant for the second year running: maybe it's time *Ansible* combed its hair and went on the scrounge, since Geoff suspects he has fewer subscribers than I do.... **SFC** reports that Italian neofascists love LOTR, “which is seen as a mythological preface to *Mein Kampf*.” Also you'll have realized that Frazetta artwork depicts cleancut heroes fighting off lefty hordes.... **Filmcon 81** is an sf/fantasy/horror film con (20-22 Nov): SAE to BSFFS, 49 Humber Tower, Francis St, Birmingham, B7 4JX.... **George Hay** as usual has vast plans, this time for limited editions of rare out-of-print books: what would *you* like reprinted?

Scotbits

The ever-lovable Fake Bob Shaw has sent (a) *Rockcon Progress Report 1*,

designed to spread paranoia and dread in Leeds by making Yorcon people think for one fateful page that “as a result of the unanimous decision by the participants in the Albacon Business Meeting, the Easter Sunday 1980 Bidding Session was declared null and void”... (b) the information that Brian Burgess took this codswallop seriously enough to ask to be FGoH, while famous author “Drunken” Duncan Lunan was so incensed at parts of *RPR1* that hideous threats of litigation have been issued by his solicitors.... (c) the Albacon Accounts for possible publication (not unless both the BSFA and Yorcon II fail to publish them, thanks: of course Bob claims they will) – these show a profit of £192 to be used in any way which won’t benefit Yorcon: “To be applied firstly to production of the Albacon Report, thereafter any balance/income will be distributed as decided by the Albacon Committee. Albacon received NO income from any preceding Eastercon.” (d) a badge to wear at Yorcon, saying **See Leeds And Die**.

But let’s return to this yummy potential lawsuit. Duncan is presumably annoyed by references to him and friends, here quoted without prejudice: “ASTRA ... was seen to embrace one daft idea after another.... Lunan had a protege in the form of an ignorant, grasping and mean little person, one Gavin Roberts ... what might be kindly described as a shit! [Duncan] had fallen on hard times after his first book, which sold to Erich von Daniken’s publishers, had been largely debunked ... From a membership of over 100, with good academic support, by 1975 [ASTRA] were down to half a dozen kids ... a result of lies, damn lies and ‘errors of fact’ ... Thanks Duncan.” [RPR1] Whether or not this sort of stuff is actionable, one can only respond with a fit of giggles to the fantastic letter, purporting to come from Duncan’s solicitors, which Bob received recently. I have an almost illegible xerox – apparently these particular solicitors haven’t learnt to put ribbons in their typewriter, yet – and am fascinated by the spelling of “defammatory” (sic, twice) and “cession”, which their finely trained legal minds use when they mean cessation, culminating in a sentence to make legal history:

“This letter should be read as an intimation of claim, and also as a formal request for a session of potentially defammatory communications.” [sic]

I hope Bob and Duncan’s solicitors have a really enjoyable session of defamation....

Number Seven: Nupe

gbàkókó pìtìngi: a salutation for the rank Ndǎèjì [Prime Minister]; literally, a bat's stomach.

Try that one on Mrs Thatcher ... I'll be glad to print the response in the very next issue of:

ANSIBLE (ed. Dave Langford)
22 Northumberland Avenue,
READING, Berks RG2 7PW, U.K.

***Ansible* 17**

April 1981

ANSIBLE 17 (April 1981), the British sf/fannish newsletter which is the only logical successor to *Ansible 16*, comes once again from Dave Langford, 22 Northumberland Avenue, READING, Berkshire, RG2 7PW, UK. (Hot news may be phoned to 0734-863453.) Current sub rates: 6/£1 UK, 5/£1 Europe, 4/£1 elsewhere. No foreign cheques/notes or subs over £2, please. Credit given for nifty news or (this issue) response to polls; trades by infrequent arrangement only. This issue dedicated to Keith Freeman's 5000th mailing label, coming up shortly; propitiate me swiftly should yours say SUB DUE or, worse, *****. Artwork by Pete Lyon. Other artwork by Rob Hansen. Next issue: 4th June '81.

The Award Season Is Here Again

Jim Barker (for it is he!) triumphed over the full-time pros at the recent Cartoonists' Club of Great Britain dinner, where he received a trophy for the best unpublished cartoon of 1981. Unfortunately, his and Bob Shaw's strip for the *News of the World* fell through, though Jim once again lost his fannish virginity by getting paid for the sample material thanks to the efforts of his agent....

The Nebula Awards nominations (for work published in 1980) have been released, and for the second year running I must declare the Awards invalid due to the illicit exclusion of voting members living in 22 Northumberland Avenue. Hell, if I didn't subscribe to *Locus* (as well as paying vast SFWA dues) I wouldn't know who the nominees are:

NOVEL *The Snow Queen* by Joan Vinge; *The Shadow of the Torturer* by Gene Wolfe; *Timescape* by Greg Benford; *Mockingbird* by Walter Tevis; *The Orphan* by Robert Stallman; *Beyond the Blue Event Horizon* by Frederik Pohl. NOVELLA "The Brave Little Toaster" by Tom Disch (*F&SF*); "The Autopsy" by Michael Shea (*F&SF*); "Unicorn Tapestry" by Suzy McKee

Charnas (*New Dimensions*); “There Beneath The Silky-Tree ...” by Avram Davidson (*Other Worlds*); “Lost Dorsai” by Gordon Dickson (*Densities*); “Dangerous Games” by Marta Randall (*F&SF*). NOVELETTE “The Ugly Chickens” by Howard Waldrop (*Universe*); “Strata” by Edward Bryant (*F&SF*); “The Way Station” by Stephen King (*F&SF*); “The Feast of St Janis” by Michael Swanwick (*Triquarterly*); “Beatnik Bayou” by John Varley (*New Voices*). SHORT STORY “Secrets of the Heart” by Charles Grant (*F&SF*); “A Sunday Visit with Great-Grandfather” by Craig Strete (*New Dimensions*); “Window” by Bob Leman (*F&SF*); “Grotto of the Dancing Deer” by Clifford Simak (*Analog*); “The War Beneath the Tree” by Gene Wolfe (*Omni*).

Nebula Notes An extra title can be (and in the first three categories presumably was) slipped into the shortlist by a panel chaired by Terry Carr and including our very own Tom Shippey. Lovers of good SF will be interested to note the waning popularity of *Asimov’s* and *Analog*; lovers of hype may note that although a blitz of free copies of Spinrad’s *Songs from the Stars* failed to get it listed, Pocket books had more luck with the simultaneously-distributed *New Dimensions 11* ... three stories nominated!

The BSFA Award nominations (for work first published in Britain in 1980) are also to hand, with some overlap – NOVEL *Timescape* by Greg Benford; *Transfigurations* by Michael Bishop; *Engine Summer* by John Crowley; *Beyond the Blue Event Horizon* by Frederik Pohl; *Molly Zero* by Keith Roberts; *A World Between* by Norman Spinrad. SHORT “The Web of the Magi” by Richard Cowper (*F&SF*); “Rautavaara’s Chase” by Philip Dick (*Omni*); “The Brave Little Toaster” by Tom Disch (*F&SF*); “The Ink Imp” by R.M. Lamming (*F&SF*); “The Lordly Ones” by Keith Roberts (*F&SF*); “The World SF Convention of 2080” by Ian Watson (*F&SF*). MEDIA *The Empire Strikes Back*, *Dr Who*, *The Flipside of Dominick Hide* (BBC TV), *The Martian Chronicles*, *The Hitch-Hiker’s Guide to the Galaxy 2nd Series* (BBC Radio 4). ARTIST Brian Bolland, Carlos Ezquerra, Peter Goodfellow, Peter Jones, Chris Moore, Tim White.

BSFA Award Notes Final voting at Yorcon; one wonders if the old principle of “give an award to the GoH” will hold. (Note how Ian Watson’s title feebly attempts to cash in on a great and famous book which modesty forbids me to mention.) The short fiction list certainly shows up which mag is Joseph’s – I mean the BSFA membership’s – favourite.... Incidentally, the BSFA

shortlists were released as given, in alphabetical order (by author for novel and short): I cannot fathom the ordering of the Nebulas (by votes?).

The Checkpoint/Ansible Poll, infinitely more important than the above, is now open for fannish doings in the period (just after) Easter '80 to (just after) Easter '81. Forms attached where weight permits; if not, you can still send in up to 5 ranked nominations for best British fanzine (*Ansible* ineligible), fanwriter and fanartist, and up to three unranked nominations for single issue, article/column, fanzine cover and the free-for-all Worst Thing Award. Deadline 30 May 1981. Voting extends *Ansible* subs.

The Extremely Nice Letter Column

These (occasionally condensed) extracts are dedicated to the proposition that fandom is all one great big happy family. Like Sawney Bean's.

Richard Evans: "A quote in *Ansible*[15] caught my eye – the one accusing Peter Jones of ripping off American artists. I know the Americans are prone to chauvinism over SF art, but this is ridiculous. Peter did a lot of jackets for *Futura* when I was there and I can't think of one that bore any relation at all to an American jacket. Of course he is influenced by other artists – just as Boris, for instance, must have looked at a few Frazetta covers in his time. But [Andy] Porter's accusations are crap – have a look at Peter's covers for Tanith Lee's *Birthgrave* and *Storm Lord*, or Larry Niven's *Protector* and *Neutron Star*."

Avedon Carol: "... my friend Fritz's handy tip on how to tell a good Norman Spinrad book from a bad one. Fritz says that if it has one of his lousy cock-sucking scenes in it, it's gonna be a bad one. I must say, Norman does have an amazing facility for writing a bad cock-sucking scene."

Ian Watson: "COSMIC NEWSFLASH! Did not W.B. Yeats remark: 'The intellect of man is forced to choose / Perfection of the life, or of the work; / And if it choose the latter, must refuse / A heavenly mansion, raging in the dark.' I've had enough of raging in the economic dark brought on by the mad Tory monetarists. So in the May election I'm standing as the official Labour Party candidate for Northamptonshire County Council, in the Helmdon division of this fair county – an area which compares to the other electoral divisions rather as Texas to any other state. I am also now Press Officer of

the Towncaster & District Labour Party.

“We shall overcome.

“It is, in fact, very unlikely that I will get in, as Helmdon is an impossible division, full of squires and fox-hunters. But I suspect that life will never be quite the same again.

“And let everyone be aware that the first public utterance by the hotch-potch of Social Democrats was in favour of retaining nuclear weapons.”

The more I mumble about *Ansible* being apolitical, the more this sort of thing creeps in. Abi Frost asks for money (see flyer where weight permits) for suffering Poles (see Roz Kaveney last issue). And then there’s the connexion between Tolkien and Italian neofascists....

Pascal Thomas: “Of course it’s all news to US fans, but it’s a fact of life to Italian fans. Even more so than in France, *everything* is political in Italy ... a left wing fan sent me a photograph of the entrance to the infamous ‘Campo Hobbit’, a sort of holiday-cum-combat training camp used by neofascistic groups.”

Graham England: “It’s understandable that LOTR should be loved by neofascists. It describes an elitist society in which the elite is right to be there, & as they have a lifespan longer than those ruled, it’s a bit difficult to displace them.”

Martin Morse Wooster: “I did sell that history of fandom.... It will be called *Children of the Universe: the social history of science fiction, 1869-1980*, and should be published by Greenwood Press sometime in 1982.”

Ian Watson Again: “Re Albacon accounts: Albacon owes me £15.00 for cancelled hotel reservations. They *agreed* to refund the money, as I cancelled in time – but they have *never* done so, despite repeated pleas to send the money. So, if they show a profit of £192.00, £15.00 of that belongs to *me*. Their financial behaviour is disgraceful.”

Which reminds me that the Bob Shaw who used to chair a convention in Glasgow has been complaining that “Project Starcast” booked rooms and dealer’s tables at the Glasgow “Hitchercon” last year, and to everyone’s annoyance failed to turn up. This particular Bob Shaw, you will remember from last issue, is being sued by Duncan Lunan:

Paul Barnett (Editorial): “Jeez ... now I understand why Duncan Lunan was so enraged with the fake Shaw. I had heard from Duncan about the proposed suit, and had assumed it was just one of those cases where irritation had bred over-reaction. Actually, there may be more to it than meets the eye:

“You see, last year Shaw made a fairly concerted effort to oust Duncan as ASTRA chairman – surprising, in view of his opinion that they were just a bunch of children and nitwits, that Shaw should wish to do so. I gather that his tactics were rather devious. Nevertheless, he signally failed in his enterprise, since most ASTRA members feel a natural, healthy revulsion towards him, and for general malpractice he was booted out of the society. Hell hath no fury like a Shaw spurned, etc. Naturally, Duncan Lunan was rather upset by this attempted coup since, whether or not he is an able chairman of ASTRA (for obvious reasons, I simply don’t know), he has manifestly put a lot of work into it. Moreover, he can’t really be accused of having reduced its membership to ‘half a dozen children’, as Shaw claims – I hardly think the aforementioned six kids could have mounted the exhibition ‘The High Frontier’, which ASTRA put on a while back. So, all in all, I’m firmly on Duncan’s side in this jolly little burst of repartee. Mind you, when it comes to Gavin Roberts....”

I can’t imagine why space-eating controversies which threaten to devour whole fanzines always start in Glasgow. Further proliferation will be Edited with a sharp knife.

Discovered in PRIVATE EYE (13 March ’81) by ace *Ansible* muckraker Michael Ashley. Hoho. [Pasted-in clipping:]

PSEUDS CORNER

In his bag Tom Baker always carries a speech by Solzhenitsyn. Often there is sliced salami and Parma ham too.

DANIEL FARSON
Sunday Telegraph Magazine

With almost no surface, but with infinite depth, *Other People* resembles a geometric conundrum devised by a paranoid mathematician. In an extraordinary way it conveys the actual contours and texture of the uneasy realm wrapped around us by that

ambiguous conspiracy between the universe and our own psyches – everyday reality. Reason attempts to rationalize that reality for us, but like the polite fictions of the bourgeois novel it somehow fails to convince, whereas *Other People* has the authority of a waking nightmare.

J.G. BALLARD
Tatler

3 Across: Nunnery's Charged Particles (11)

Denvention II (Worldcon 1981) has redeemed itself slightly by sending PRs 2 & 3 (while Harry Andruschak says he's sending 1 & 2 – watch for spare Denvention PR2 in a TAFF auction later this year). Some people called Seaforth's Travel have written saying they want to organize group travel from the UK to Worldcons: will report if anything comes of this.

Worldcon 1983: Avedon Carol insists the Baltimore bid is really triffic; Graham England rumours that “when I last heard Scandinavia hadn't got in its nominating papers & no-one knew why not. Should make the ballot shorter.” We shall see. Rune Forsgren reports that the Scandinavian bid has inexplicably changed its address (“cannot figure out why I got the COA: haven't seen a word from them before”) to Box 3054, 220 03 LUND, Sweden. Nowt from Australia.

Novacon 11 (Birmingham, 30 Oct to 1 Nov): the fabled PR1 is out at last. Royal Angus again; £10.50 per person dbl/twin, £13.50 sngl; £5.50 att £2.50 supp; *no conversion from supp to att membership at the con*; 49 Humber Tower, Francis St, Birmingham, B7 4JX. Chris Morgan informs me that this perfectionist PR was typed out thrice by Paul Oldroyd and at least once by Jean Frost.

Fantasycon: the venue change mentioned in A16 is (Chris Morgan thinks) because the Grand Hotel in Birmingham makes a £500 charge for use of its convention facilities, unless the con fills at least half the bedrooms, and Fantasycon is notoriously small....

Beccon (Essex Centre Hotel, Basildon, 31 July to 2 August): the committee of this one complains about lack of *Ansible* coverage, which merely proves

(to everyone's surprise) that I'm not infallible.... £5 att £2 supp, GoH Barry Bayley; 191 The Heights, Northolt, Middlesex.

Future UK Eastercons: at the time of typing I know of no opposition to Channelcon in '82 (4 Fletcher Road, Chiswick, London W4 5AY), a strong-looking bid of fine fannish folk, chaired by Eve Harvey. For '83 there seem to be two incipient bids, one bearing the fearful name of Albacon II and the other a southerly, nameless and at least partially limpwristed affair. You will hear more of this. '84 remains a long way off in Eastercon terms, but not so long when it comes to Eurocon and that possible merger....

Eurocon Flipflops Again: An exasperated John Brunner reports that the Hungarian venue has fallen through *again* – the Hungarian Writers' Union has withdrawn its support, apparently because Hungarian con boss Peter Kuczka (who started the trouble by announcing the con was off simply because *he* had to drop out through illness) has contacted the Union behind the backs of the forty-odd SF clubs who were planning the con, and persuaded said Union that the convention could not succeed without Kuczka in charge. Which, I suppose, takes Eurocon '82 back to Switzerland and long-suffering Pascal Ducommun. Aaaaaaaaaaargh.

Filmcon: "SF/Fantasy horror film convention"; Grand Hotel, Birmingham, 27 – 29 Nov, £5 supp £13 att £14 walk-in: 75 Willows Crescent, Cannon Hill, Birmingham.

Hugecons: Starcast rang to call Ken Mann a liar for saying they'd shifted to a smaller venue. Space-Ex, after a near lawsuit, have paid their debts to Unicon – the 7 month delay in payment being because of "loss of £700 staging a small event called Star One 80...." This rousing stuff lifted from Chris Hughes's *Fantasmagoria*: he gets all the Unicon scoops.

The *Ansible* Literary Supplement by the Dynamic *Focus* (Dec'd) Duo

Rob Holdstock is a) astonished and b) delighted to have sold a collection of his short stories to Faber for Spring 82 publication. The book is tentatively called *In The Valley Of The Statues And Other Stories* (mainly to beat Watson's "The Very Slow Time Machine" by 16 letters, but also to involve

the art department of Fabers in *at least* a day's tedious letrasetting). The volume will contain 8 stories, including "Earth and Stone", "The Graveyard Cross" and "Mythago Wood".

Holdstock recently addressed the Keele U SF Soc on the subject of "Some of the hazards of writing sf for a living". His opening statement that the biggest hazard of writing sf for a living was being "constantly invited to speak to bunches of sodding University students" was not intended to have been read out.

Meanwhile, that ultra-dynamic literary team Holdstock and Edwards are said to be "overwhelmed with excitement and gratitude" at Jeff Frane's rave review of *Tour of the Universe* in the *March Locus*. "The *Immortals of Science Fiction* was bad ... but the worst was *Tour of the Universe*," raved Frane, and went on enthusiastically, "A good idea badly done, with lots of colour pages thrown away on repetitious design...." He ended his review with the highest accolade of all: "Of no interest."

Chris Carlsen, still recovering from a self-inflicted axe wound to the brain, is said to be "irritated as hell" at Sphere Books' decision to revert the rights to his Berserker fantasy series, rather than reprint. Carlsen feels that his savage, lusty, no-holes-spared, anatomically explicit series is an essential counterpart to the present spate of namby-pamby, effete, adolescent, domination-fantasy fiction being forced upon us by such writers as John Norman and ~~Tanith~~ Lee. Meanwhile, the whole Berserker series has sold to German publisher *Bastei Verlag*, first undergoing a process of "debrutalization" which has reduced the total length of the series by nearly 50,000 words to 120,000 words. Copies of the BSFA publication *BERSERKER: The Brutal Bits* will soon be available. (RPH & CC)

Chris Evans: As you know, I've been doing some reading for publishers and literary agents in the last couple of years to help pay the rent. On Saturday a manuscript arrived from an agent, by a writer whose name was unknown to me.... I was immediately intrigued by the author's prefatory note:

"To the complacent General Public, remember, organizations are at work to bring back fear, and rule by death. Whilst having your afternoon tea and cakes there will be a knock at your door, you will have no time to finish, or get your coat, you will be taken away, never to be seen again."

This sent a thrill of fearful anticipation down my spine, even though it was only breakfast-time (poor old General Public, his life's been hell since he was promoted from colonel). By coincidence, the doorbell rang at that moment, and I cowered in the kitchen for a full thirty seconds before I could summon the courage to answer it. Happily there were no dark-suited men on my doorstep ready to cart me off into oblivion; by the time I opened the door, the caller had grown tired of waiting and had moved on, leaving behind a leaflet advising me of the benefits of double-glazing. Some cryptic, sinister code, perhaps?

When I later returned to the novel, I discovered that it was the story of a retired police inspector, Drummond, who becomes embroiled in rooting out Nazi war criminals. On page 3 our hero enters a pub in a Devon town. Unethical though it is, I cannot resist using a xerox of this page for your edification. I should add that the author's intentions are entirely serious....

(the relevant page follows, courtesy of J. Harvey Electrostencils Ltd)

“Mornin sir, what would you like”, asked a ruddy faced landlord, with a grin that stretched right round his head, or it seemed to. “A pint of bitter and a ploughmans lunch, with plenty of onions please”, replied Drummond. Now he could'nt have said anything better, for the Gaffer was a very keen gardener, and prided himself on his onions. “I'll give you an onion likes you hav'nt seen before, cor my old love, you must know that I grow the best onions in the area”. The Gaffer was carried away in sheer delight, giving Drummond his pint, he left the bar to go and organise the ploughmans.

Drummond made himself comfortable in the corner of the bar, picking up a Daily Mail that was lying on a chair, he had a drink of his bitter, and started to read the gloom and doom which is now part of every day life, putting the paper down, he looked across at the only other customer in the bar. He was a small man, with a kindly face, but had very sad eyes, it was the mans eyes that interested Drummond, he had seen the same eyes many many times before, years ago.

“Nothing but gloom in the papers these days”, he said to the man.

The man just looked, and nodded. “It’s about time they started printing stories about nice things, and nice people”, continued Drummond. “Your right there sir, they never print the good things, ah well, here’s your lunch, with one of my special onions”. He put the plate down in front of Drummond, then looking up he said, “You ask old Henry here, if I don’t grow the best onions, he’ll tell you if I’m right or wrong, won’t you Henry”. Henry nodded. Drummond held up his glass, “Put another pint in that, give our friend a drink and have one yourself landlord”. “Thank you sir, Henry will have a bitter, pass your glass Henry, and I’ll have the same”, he refilled the glasses, Henry raised his and said in broken English, “Thank you sir, good health, how do you like Bill’s onions, good ar’nt they, I always have cheese and onions here, and if I keep telling Bill how good his onions are, he gives me some to take home”, Henry was smiling and he seemed more relaxed.

“Yes they are good, in fact they make you very thirsty, I’ll have another pint please, would you care for another drink Henry”, Drummond’s offer was interrupted by Henry. “Yes I will have another drink, but I must pay, it is my turn”. “Put your money away, I’ll do this one”, said the smiling landlord. Drummond had the feeling that it could turn into a session.

One thing you can say about this book: the author certainly knows his onions.
Chris Evans

COA

Graham England, 70 Woodfield Close, Ickenham, Uxbridge, Middlesex (with a probable move back to Germany later in the year) // Abigail Frost, 69 Robin Hood Gardens, Cotton Street, London, E.14 // Rob Hansen, 9a Greenleaf Rd, East Ham, London, E6 1DX // Duncan Lunan, c/o A. Graeme Adam, Solicitor, 158a High St, Irvine, Ayrshire, Scotland, KA12 8AN (which should make Bob [Scot] Shaw cringe)

Infinitely Improbable

R.A. Lafferty sends a letter (with ten signatures to be cut out and tipped into books by him for TAFF sale – other pros please copy) asking “are you one of those sinister persons without a face?” Dunno how he knew about my recent accident with a shaver which nearly.... **PSIFAcon** is a successor to Polycon (Hatfield Poly): GoH Rob Holdstock, £2 att to Mark Bunce, 2 Ryders Ave, Colney Heath, St Albans, Herts. Date 9 May (ends 2am next morning).... **Small Mammal** from Martin Easterbrook calls *Foundation* “the acedenic journal”: I know what he means.... **Pamela Boal** begs a plug for her *ABC of Home Hints* for disabled folk: £1.25 from D. Smaje, 2 Westfield Way, Wantage, Oxon.... **Superman II** has been showing in various countries such as Germany and S Africa, where Nick Shears thought it “more like the comic come to life than the first film, and highly entertaining. I don’t remember Lois going to bed with Superman in the days of DC”.... **Millions Of Books** have been converted into toilet rolls and suchlike in the US, where a 1979 Supreme Court decision has effectively made it uneconomic for publishers to maintain backlists. Reporter Chris Priest adds that his US publishers are remaindering *The Perfect Lover*, and: “This move to turn books into toilet paper is another step along the way to cutting out the middleman altogether. A pioneer in the field was our Harlan, who while in London did one of his writing-in-a-shop-window stunts. Unfortunately for Harlan, the shop he was writing in was a remainder-store, a fact which most people felt was too delicate to point out to the helpless author. Heigh-ho.” ... **Asimov’s & Analog** have lost favour as markets with some US writers who’ve found that their not over-generous rates cover foreign editions of the magazines also, i.e. you get paid once for sales in eight or more languages.... **Births** etc: Eric Mayer and Kathy Malone have had a child, as have David V. Lewis and (actually he doesn’t mention his wife’s name, but the boy’s called Ross). Linda Karrh & Greg Pickersgill were married on 14 March (the lady registrar being baffled by the roars of laughter which ensued when she asked Greg if he thought he’s make a good hubby); Linda Strickler and Graham James will be married ever so soon, as, probably, will Lisa Tuttle and Chris Priest.... **Beneluxcon** (28 – 30 August, Rotterdam, GoHs Pohl, Vance and Wilhelm) costs f35 (40 from 1 May) and is “easier to reach from London than (say) Glasgow” says Roelof Goudriaan. Info from Hans van der Zee, Sneewgans 6, 3435 DK Nieuwegein, Netherlands.... **The Number Of The Beast** (NEL hardback, world first edition, £6.95) has been sighted in Charing Cross Rd, remaindered at 50p.... **Believe It Or Not Section:** Karl Edward Wagner is a psychiatrist. Ben Bova

refused to allow quotation of his praise for the Tuttle/Martin *Windhaven* on the paperback, owing to a grudge he has against not the authors but Pocket Books, the publishers. Spider Robinson (ho ho) now gets invited to so many things as GoH that he now has a printed rejection slip for declining.... (Pause for C. Priest story: when he was in the ops room at Noreascon he overheard a phone call to the effect of “I’m Spider Robinson – just arrived – hear you’ve got an exhibition of the history of SF – I’ve brought my John W Campbell award in case you’d like to exhibit that...”) And it’s rumoured that when first submitted, Donaldson’s *The One Tree* (you know – sequel to *The Wounded Land*) was bounced by Lester Del Rey because it violated Del Rey house style by being written in the first person. Rumoured conversation: “Well, gee, Lester, I’ll just have to take it somewhere else then.” “You do that, Steve, and just out of spite I’ll have all our copies of *The Wounded Land* pulped, bestseller or not.” We gather a compromise was reached.... **The West Midlands SF Group** (to call it a Society is heresy) is – Jean Frost notwithstanding – peculiarly warm and friendly to newcomers, says ringleader Geoff Boswell.... **Hamlyn** paperbacks, egregious as ever, have remaindered 20,000 copies of a romantic novel (at 5p each wholesale) while almost simultaneously the thing has been shortlisted for a romantic fiction award. If it wins that’s an awful lot of guaranteed sales, and they’ll have to reprint, and the remaindering will be seen to have been a Mistake. Thus it is that Hamlyn are hoping one of their books does *not* win a moderately important award.... (By the way, don’t ask Hamlyn when their editions of *Destinies* mag are coming out. They have paid a \$250,000 advance and guaranteed to publish 8/12 issues within 18 months, but they are highly embarrassed when people write and ask what’s happened to *Destinies*.) **Gollancz** have axed both the intro by Delany and the appendices by Disch from their edition of the collection *Fundamental Disch*.... **Brian Aldiss** writes: “... the Aldiss family have moved house again. Our psychiatrist seems powerless to act. As usual I’m in debt to the tax man, as usual I’ve just come back from a trip to the USA, and as usual I’m about to have a novel published. The items involved are usually quoted as £20,000, Florida and *Helliconia*.... Since resigning – more in sorrow than in anger, it’s true – from the boards of SFS and the JWC Memorial Award, I have been invited to become one of the four judges under Malcolm Bradbury for this year’s mundane Booker Prize. There’s a chance for you yet, Langford; slip your book into the NBL with a hefty cheque between pp 100 and 101 and you’ll be

up there with the Goldings and Murdochs.... More fun is the suit brewing over Carl Sagan's \$2m novel, but I expect you know all about that." In fact I know very little, even after several phone calls, about the Sagan affair. The rumour, and it's no more than hearsay, is that S. delivered his fabled novel, and some sharp eyed sf fan got a peep at the MS and said "Wot?" Hardly any of it is by Sagan, goes the rumour; something he and a girlfriend dashed off while at college; girlfriend knew damn all about sf and stole large chunks from Heinlein; writs flying everywhere; sounds too boggling to be true, but more when I hear it.... RIP: Christopher, son of Jennifer Bryce and John Foyster, died shortly after his premature birth on 22 January.... **You Read It In Locus:** "Peter King and Stephen Straub are collaborating on a book".... **Dennis Dobson Ltd** has been placed on the Society of Authors "sick list" after complaints from authors who'd received no royalty statements nor replies to letters for 4 years.... **Public Lending Right:** the first payments to long-suffering British authors are promised for Autumn 1982.... "**Seventh Victim College Craze**" is the *Locus* headline on a stalk-&-pretend-to-kill game running among Florida U students. The police think it could lead to "disaster", apparently because cops will be tempted to shoot suspiciously lurking students. Gerald Lawrence gave me lurid descriptions of a similar game running in Manchester years ago: UK police weren't bothered, being less tempted to pull guns.... **Mervyn Peake Society** now £3/year: 5 Elm Park Gdns, Flat 36, London, SW10 9QQ.... **Stop Press! Yorcon Happens!**

Hazel's Language Lessons #9: Sesuto

malito something which a person lets fall and which his cousin can pick up and keep if the owner does not say *ngaèlè*.

ngaèlè [not listed in dictionary]

ANSIBLE 17 from 22 Northumberland Avenue, READING, Berks, RG2 7PW, UK

***Ansible* 18**

June 1981

ANSIBLE EIGHTEEN • June 1981 • Dave Langford, 22 Northumberland Avenue, READING, Berks, RG2 7PW, UK. Subs 6/£1 UK, 5/£1 Europe, 4/£1 elsewhere (US fans may send \$ equivalent to agents Mary & Bill Burns, 48 Lou Ave, Kings Park, NY 11754). Mailing label (with your sub status) by Keith Freeman; “Starfan” strip by, as usual, Rob Hansen....

***Checkpoint/Ansible* Fan Poll Results (1980-1981)**

38 people voted in this tenth annual British fan poll: – A. Akien, M. Ashley, J. Barker, H. Bell, G. Boswell, S. Brown, B. Day, M. Dickinson, B. Earp, M. Edwards, C. Evans, A. Ferguson, M. Ford, A. Frost, W. Goodall, R. Hansen, S. Higgins, C. Hughes, P. James, R. Kaveney, H. Langford, C. Lewis, E. Lindsay, P. Lyon, P. Mabey, H. McNabb, J. Nicholas, S. Ounsley, P. Palmer, R. Palmer, G. Pickersgill, P. Pinto, A. Richards, D. Rogers, J. Shire, C. Simsa, K. Smith. Thanks.

Best British Fanzine: 29 titles plus “No Award” nominated; 5 points for 1st-place vote, 4 for 2nd, etc. (this system also used for writer & artist); *Ansible* ineligible; last year’s placings in brackets; a few changes this year....

1) TWLL-DDU (80 pts) (1st) ed. me, address as above; 50p or the usual; two issues in 1980-81. Funnyish personalzine. 2) SECOND-HAND WAVE (48 pts)(-) ed. Alan Ferguson & Trev Briggs, 6 Hoecroft Court, How Lane, Enfield, Middlesex; £10/\$20 or polite request; 4 issues in 1980-81. Wildly variable and eccentric genzine; much good artwork. 3) NEW RIVER BLUES (27 pts)(-) ed. Abi Frost & Roz Kaveney; address correspondence to Abi at 69 Robin Hood Gdns, Cotton St, London E.14; usual or 20p; two issues in 1980-81. Unpredictable joint personalzine; superliterate; get it. 4) NO AWARD (20pts)(=10th) Goshwowboyohboy! =5) NABU (19pts)(=10th) ed. Ian & Janice Maule, 5 Beaconsfield Rd, New Malden, Surrey KT3 3HY; usual; two issues in 1980-81. Solid genzine with some fine contributors. =5)

OCELOT (19pts)(9th) ed. Graham James, 12 Fearnville Tce, Oakwood, Leeds LS8 3DU, & Simon Ounsley, 13a Cardigan Rd, Headingley, Leeds LS6 3AE; usual; 2 issues in 1980-81. Enjoyably fannish with much Leeds-centered scurrility. OTHERS WITH 5+pts: Arena (18); Amanita & Matrix (13); Napalm in the Morning (12); Twentythird (8); In Defiance of Medical Opinion & Out of the Blue (7); Dead Hedgehog, Fantasmagoria/Rule 42 & Self Abused But Still Standing (6).

Best British Fanwriter: 31 nominations plus “No Award”. 1) DAVE LANGFORD (100pts) (1st); 2) NO AWARD (25pts)(-); 3) JOSEPH NICHOLAS (23pts)(7th); 4) CHRIS PRIEST (21pts)(4th); =5) SIMON OUNSLEY (19pts)(-) & D. WEST (19pts)(2nd). ALSO: Kevin Smith (18); Michael Ashley (12); Dave Bridges, John Clute & Roz Kaveney (9); John Collick, Alan Dorey, Chris Evans & Bob Shaw (8); Rob Holdstock (8).

Best British Fanartist: 16 nominations plus “No Award.”. 1) PETE LYON (111pts)(-); 2) JIM BARKER (61pts)(1st); 3) D. WEST (59pts)(4th); 4) JOHN COLLICK (32pts)(5th); 5) ROB HANSEN (27pts)(3rd). ALSO: Harry Bell (13); Alan Hunter (1); Arthur Thomson/“Atom” (10).

Best Single Issue: 28 items nominated plus “No Award”. =1) NABU 10 (Ian & Janice Maule) & Twll-Ddu 19 (me) (4 votes); =3) Ocelot 4 (Graham James & Simon Ounsley), “No Award”, Starfan (Rob Hansen), The Tinned Milk of Human Kindness 1 (Michael Ashley) & Twll-Ddu 18 (all 3 votes); 8) One Dead Hedgehog (Jim Barker) (2 votes). NB: an issue of Second-Hand Wave would probably have been placed had I not had to disallow unqualified votes for “SHW 42” ... since all four eligible issues have that number. Sorry!

Best Article/Column: 32 items nominated plus “No Award”. =1) “How to Write Like Joseph Nicholas” (Kevin Smith/*Dot 9*) & “Transatlantic Hearing Aid I” (me/*TD19*) (5 votes); =3) “No Award” & “Symbolism & the 10:10 from the Hearthrug” (Chris Priest/*Nabu 10*) (4 votes); =5) “Captive with a Glass Hand” (Jim Barker/*One Dead Hedgehog*), “The End of the Dream” (Joe Nicholas/*Napalm 3*), “Life on Mars” (Simon Ounsley/*Matrix*), “Vive la Revolucion” (Chris Evans/*Nabu 10*) (all 2 votes). NB: Votes for D. West’s “Ah, Sweet Arrogance” and my “Mouse of Usher” were disallowed since these articles were eligible (and placed) in the previous poll.

Best Fanzine Cover: 27 items nominated plus “No Award”. 1) Pete Lyon/*Matrix 34* (11 votes); =2) John MacFarlane/*Vector 101*, No Award, D.

West/*Matrix 32* (4 votes); =5) Pete Lyon/*SHW pre-Xmas '80*, Taral/*TD18* (3 votes); =7) “Atom”/*Scottishe 80*, Phil James/*Nabu 10*, Pete Lyon/*SHW Easter '81*, D. West/*Ocelot 4* (all 2 votes). NB: maybe I should have disallowed that foreigner Taral, but there again maybe not.

Worst Thing Of 1980-81: 63 nominations, but not “No Award”. 1) Ken Mann (6 votes); 2) Bob (Glasgow) Shaw (4 votes); =3) The Albacon Report, The Aftermath of Albacon, Joseph Nicholas & Greg Pickersgill (all 3 votes); =7) *Matrix 32* cover, Polycon II, *Gross Encounters*, The GUFF Race, Ian Watson’s politicization of Yorcon II, “Dirty But Nice” (Yorcon II band), Jessica Watson & the GPO (all 2 votes).

Other Awards and Things Like That

Nebulas: Novel *Timescape* (Benford), Novella “The Unicorn Tapestry” (Suzy McKee Charnas), Novelette “The Ugly Chickens” (Howard Waldrop), Short “Grotto of the Dancing Deer” (Simak), Grandmaster Fritz Leiber. Also “Pierre Barbet” (Claude Avice) became SFWA Eurorep, with Ian Watson as UK sub-man (or something like that). Voting was not conducted according to the rules; I complained about not getting to vote on the preliminary ballot, and as a reward did not receive the final ballot. Stomp ’em for me, Ian!

BSFA Awards: Novel *Timescape*, Short “The Brave Little Toaster” (Disch), Media *Hitch-Hiker’s Guide* (2nd radio series), Artist Peter Jones. With a track record like this, you’d think *Timescape* had a good chance at the Hugo, eh? Well –

Hugo Nominations: voting spread given in brackets. NOVEL (73-135) *Beyond the Blue Event Horizon* (Pohl), *Lord Valentine’s Castle* (Silverberg), *Ringworld Engineers* (Niven), *The Snow Queen* (Vinge), *Wizard* (Varley). NOVELLA (37-66): “All the Lies That Are My Life” (Ellison)/F&SF), “The Brave Little Toaster” (Disch/F&SF), “Lost Dorsai” (Dickson/*Destinies*), “Nightflyers” (George RR Martin/Analog), “One-Wing” (Martin & Tuttle/Analog). NOVELETTE (25-42) “The Autopsy” (Michael Shea/F&SF), “Beatnik Bayou” (Varley/*New Voices*), “Cloak & Staff” (Dickson/Analog), “The Lordly Ones” (Keith Roberts/F&SF), “Savage Planet” (Barry Bongyear/Analog), “The Ugly Chickens” (Howard Waldrop/*Universe 10*).

SHORT (16-33) “Cold Hands” (Jeff Duntemann/IASFM), “Grotto of the Dancing Deer” (Simak/Analog), “Guardian” (Duntemann/IASFM), “Our Lady of the Sauropods” (Silverberg/Omni), “Spidersong” (Susan C Petrey/F&SF).

NONFICTION (13-59) *Cosmos* (Sagan), *DiFate’s Catalog of SF Hardware*, *Dream Makers* (Platt), *In Joy Still Felt* (Asimov), *Warhoon 28* (Willis ed. Bergeron). [Committee leak: it was *not* the fanzine *Warhoon* – vote for it! – which got the mere 13 nominations.]

EDITOR (66-152) Baen, Carr, Ferman, Schmidt, Scithers.

ARTIST (45-71) diFate, Fabian, Lehr, Maitz, Whelan.

FANZINE (34-80) *File 770*, *Locus*, *SF Chronicle*, *SF Review*, *Starship*.

FANWRITER (20-34) Geis, Glycer, Hlavaty, Langford, Susan Wood.

FANARTIST (21-47) Gilliland, Hanke-Woods, Poyser, Rotsler, Shiffman.

DRAMATIC: *Cosmos*, *The Empire Strikes Back*, *Flash Gordon*, *The Lathe of Heaven*, *The Martian Chronicles*. (40-224)

Footnote: *Ringworld Engineers* appeared in 1979 but was held back for the 1980 Hugos to give people a chance to read it. *Superman II* was released in Australia etc. in 1980 but is being held over till next year so Americans can see it. But when a book comes out in England the year before it comes out in America ... somehow this courtesy is not extended.

Other Awards: JOHN W CAMPBELL AWARD (best new writer) (13-49) Kevin Christensen, Diane Duane, Robert L Forward, Susan C Petrey, Robert Stallman, Somtow Sucharitkul. DOC WEIR AWARD (for general niceness in Britfandom): John Brunner, who wants all fans to know he’s “amazed and delighted”. JB also got a “bronze Porgie Award” for his *Players at the Game of People*. THE CARNEGIE MEDAL (children’s books) went to Peter Dickinson’s *City of Gold* (Gollancz), this factoid noted down between swigs of free wine when I accidentally crashed the presentation ceremony on May 29 (ho ho)....

Yorcon II: 32nd British Eastercon

I have instructions from no less a person than Graham James to say this was a really ace convention: certainly I enjoyed it, and was sufficiently impressed with three of the talks to seek *Drilkjis* reprint rights from Tom Disch (GoH), Bob Shaw and Ian Watson (GoH). Only got Ian’s, though. Now over to a

more self-confessedly impartial reporter....

Kevin Smith: It's strange, the impression I had right from Albacon that the Yorcon II committee was that bit more relaxed than for Yorcon I, that bit more slack, that bit more inclined to think it had done it before and could cope with everything again without effort. There were few real signs – PRs, though better arranged than Albacon's, were nonetheless a little late, for example, but little else. Perhaps it was talking to some of the committee members on frequent occasions through the year that did it. And that impression, it seemed, was exactly right. When I arrived on Friday afternoon the bars were closed; arrangements obviously hadn't been properly made with the hotel. Then the fanroom bar opened and a horde of thirsty fans began *queueing up* for it. It remained the only open bar for some time and effectively destroyed FGoH Dave Langford's talk (on scientific fallacies) in the fan room.... Saturday dragged by a bit, even in the fan room where panels on the BSFA and fanzines failed to sparkle (yes, they were the panels I was on). No-one got properly worked up into the fannish spirit, although the Channelcon room party was pretty damned good with a remarkably low number of cretins and a high percentage of good old boys. But Sunday livened up. Jim Barker found a cartoon of his in the *News of the World* and instantly bought ten copies, pinning one to a convenient notice board. The fanroom began to hum with the Austral League hour (starring Chris Priest and Lisa Tuttle reading out the latest discoveries of the JLAS – and pretty shocking they were too – Pat and Graham Charnock singing Austral League songs and D. West performing with the Austral Pole), the Trufan Factor (in which Dave Langford downed a pint marginally faster than John Harvey to win the playoff for first place, Stu Shiffman [TAFF delegate] overcame natural American reticence for third place and Ian Williams achieved last place after strenuously avoiding effort), and, of course, "Sex Pirates of the Blood Asteroid", a stirring tale of the galactic archfiend Nivek with words by Dave Langford and slides by John Collick. All of it was really terrific. In the con hall Ian Watson politicized the convention by demanding, and getting, a vote on unilateral disarmament: the con proved to be pacifist – or those members in the con hall were, anyway. The fascists, apathetics and drunks were too busy watching potential Trufans doing press-ups. Andrew Stephenson was very upset by all this, but when he protested the validity of the vote he was suppressed by panel chairman Graham James. Thus does politics contaminate all.... But Sunday was a good day. Monday was the last

day of the con, and you know what those are like. Everyone sitting around dazed, the drivers more miserable than most, unable to cure their hangovers with hair of the dog, and everyone thinking “Pretty fair!” in a slow sort of way. So once again, an Eastercon defied the efforts of the committee and gave everyone a good time.

At the Nebula Ceremony

Martin Worse Wooster

... I now fully understand and agree with Chris Priest’s reasons for quitting SFWA; the relentless peacock-strutting of the obscure and not so obscure was more than I could take. (Worst example of flamboyance was Phil Foglio in a tuxedo, complete with spats.) The high point of the evening was the presentation of the featured speakers. Norman Spinrad had decided that the keypoint of this year’s Nebula banquet was to be sf’s respectability in the mundane world, and to that end he had asked Mark Chartrand of the National Space Institute, Marvin Minsky of MIT, and Barbara Marx Hubbard of the Institute for the Future to reassure the anxious audience that sf was ok by the real world.

“This,” Hubbard said, “is only the second event of this sort I’ve attended. The first was a Star Trek convention.” (Groans from the crowd) “You mean Gene Roddenberry isn’t an sf writer?” (Sound of 500 pairs of teeth clamping tightly against one another) “Well, in any case, I was in this room with Majel Barrett and she had an astronaut’s suit with her. I’ve always wanted to find out how, um, astronauts were built, uh, *down there*. So Majel and I found this flap and we unzipped it ... and that was my first close encounter with sf.” Hubbard spoke on “The Normalization of the Miraculous”: we were all living in a horrific process known as “super-exponential speed-up” whereby every event would happen faster and faster. As a result, we would all become supermen. “New laws of nature,” said Hubbard, “are being invented every day!” The high-point of all this was that we would all discover cosmic consciousness; Rev. Jerry Falwell was right when he predicted “something *wonderful* would be coming.” The first sign of the New Jerusalem would be the first baby born in space....

At this point about 50 people in the audience, steeled against the naked and quivering sensawunda that lectured on the stage, fled into the hall. Somtow

Sucharitkul was passing round a cartoon showing a crucified Jesus blasting out into the beyond on a cross-shaped rocket, another exciting issue of *Eucharistic Stories of Super-Science*. Then came Harlan Ellison, his retinue clustered around him as if they were the Secret Service. Inspired, he pointed a finger towards the ceiling and into Infinity. “Jaysus,” said Rev. Harlan, “is comin’! He’s goin’ to change all of *your* chromosomes” ... Also overheard at the Nebulas: Famed trade-paper publisher Andrew Porter was carrying the current *Ansible* [#17] and showing it to Alex Berman, Hero Lawyer of SFWA. Porter points to the item about Bova and *Windhaven*. “How can he get away with printing such *gossip*?” said the former fanzine publisher. “Well, he’s in England, and in England they can print whatever they want,” said Berman.

I’ve been trying to find out the truth behind the Sagan rumours for you. The best and most reliable report I can give: 1) The novel was not written by Carl Sagan but by Ann Druyan, who supplied the mysticism in the series *Cosmos*; 2) Rumour has it that Druyan submitted the story as a series of novelets to *Asimov’s*, all bounced; 3) About the suit: seems no papers have as yet been filed, but up to 6 writers are involved, definitely including Heinlein and Spinrad. The first item has been confirmed, the second has not, the third has all the facts I have....

Meanwhile, A Letter From Brian Aldiss: “I opened my *Times* to find a headline reading SAGAN IN PLAGIARISM CASE. What a coincidence, I thought. But this coincidence was greater than I thought: this Sagan was Carl’s sister, Francoise, of Paris, France. *They’re both at it!*”

[I understand that all these contemporary allegations about dear old Carl Sagan were very properly exploded when Contact finally appeared ... Dave “Nervous” Langford, 1996]

Return of the *Ansible* Literary Supplement

Chris Evans on Yorcon: My most vivid memory of Yorcon II is of a drunken episode late on Sunday night. Earlier that day several people had been speculating on what male person at the convention they would most like to see fornicating with the most desirable female attendee, and £25 had been raised in the hope of enticing the two favourite choices to perform. (Send

cheques for £5, payable to the FIS [Friends in Space], if you want the names.) This project, alas, did not come to fruition, so Greg Pickersgill (to whom the above cheques should be sent) decided that the evening would be livened up by a series of games in the fan room (I use the word “room” loosely).

Now when he wants to be, Greg is an extremely charismatic person, and within minutes he had the assembled audience in the palm of his hand as he explained what would be required of them. First there would be piggy-back fighting, followed by a session of British Bulldog. Now by coincidence, most of Greg’s friends were gathered on one side of the room, with a group of younger fans on the other. With a sweep of his arm, Greg declared that his team would be known as the “Heroes” and the others as the “Cunts”. What surprised me was that the younger fans seemed delighted by their appellation, waving their arms and legs and gleefully proclaiming, “We are the Cunts! We are the Cunts!” So strong was Greg’s personal magnetism at that moment, I suspect that if he had asked them to drop their trousers and pee in one another’s ears, they would have done so.

I didn’t manage to participate much in the actual games myself, collapsing on the floor after a brief and vain attempt to support Greg on my shoulders, my heart pounding so violently that as I lay there I promised myself that I’d give up booze and cigarettes forever only don’t let me die. Eventually I managed to crawl to a chair and was a spectator for the rest of the evening, which was just as well, for I don’t think I would have managed to survive the violence which ensued. Flurries of arms and legs quickly gave way to piles of bodies on the floor. Greg’s team were not doing as well as he had hoped, despite his continual modifications of the rules in an effort to redress the balance. Then he changed the game entirely.

British Bulldog began, with Greg the man in the middle, striving to stop the hordes of bodies who rushed past him. Each person he stopped would in turn help him to stop others. In this role, Greg combined the best attributes of Norman Hunter, Nobby Stiles and Attila the Hun. Gradually the stoppers came to outnumber the runners, but nevertheless Rob Holdstock continued to surge through the defensive line to safety like some latter-day Hercules, effortlessly shrugging off the fifty or so people who were trying to stop him by clinging to every available inch of his body.

My final image is of Harry Bell lying on the floor in the arms of some person

unknown to me. Everyone else had retired from the fray by now, but Harry and this person continued to writhe and roll on the floor for at least ten minutes, glaring intently into one another's eyes as if the fate of the world depended on the outcome of their duel. What was doubly odd was that their spasmodic bouts of movement were interspersed with long periods when they seemed to be just holding one another, sometimes poking out their tongues, sometimes looking as if they were about to kiss. At this point I remember dimly thinking that we were all grown men of above average intelligence. There was some moral to be grasped here, some profound insight into human behaviour. Then I noticed that my pint glass was empty. Knowing that I would need liquid refreshment if I was to grasp the full significance of my realization, I went off to the bar. That's the last thing I remember. (Chris Evans)

Jim Barker on The Channelcon Fan Room: Basically, what I want to do is put on a display with the theme "The Fannish Year: Eastercon to Eastercon". This would cover as many events as possible occurring between Yorcon and Channelcon which would be of fannish interest ... cons, parties, outings, births, marriages, the lot. This would be broken down on a month to month basis, giving everything at least a mention and (at best) providing written reports and photographic coverage of major events. Obviously this is a large undertaking, and since I'm stuck away up here in the land of instant porridge and ten gallon kilts I'm looking for help.... I'm looking for volunteers to write reports on the various conventions being held in Britain throughout the year. Ideally, these should be kept to one A4 side and not be published elsewhere. And if you're planning to take photographs, can I borrow some prints for display purposes? These *will* be returned. These requests also apply to things like 10th Anniversary Parties, Anglo/American marriages and suchlike.... If you think you can be of help, please contact me at the address below. If you see any snippets concerning SF fans, or silly stories about SF in general, in the national or regional press – could you send me a cutting? I particularly want the "Way Out Sci Fi Guys" type of story, and unlikely stories concerning people with names not dissimilar to well-known SF fans. If you or your fan group publish a fanzine, please send me a copy or make sure a committee member gets one: just like the British Library, I'd like to display a copy of every zine published in Britain during the period. There is also a possibility that we'll be producing a Fanzine Index for 1981-82, and we'd like it as complete as possible.

I have various bits and pieces of the fan programme in the works, but I'm always on the lookout for comments, criticisms, suggestions. Is there anything from recent cons you'd like to see repeated or avoided? Again, please get in touch. Volunteers to participate in programme items will be looked on with great favour. *If you can help with any of the above, please contact me at 113 Windsor Rd, Falkirk, Stirlingshire, Central Scotland, FK1 5DB. Telephone 0324-24959 (office hours) or 0324-35452 (after six).* (Jim Barker)

Duncan Lunan on Paul Barnett on Bob (Glasgow) Shaw on Duncan

Lunan: It's very nice of Paul Barnett to come to my defence [[A17](#)] but he has the key facts wrong. My problems with "Glasgow" Bob Shaw go back not to last year but to six years ago, and his campaign against me is still intensifying.... Bob wrote to me in 1973 and subsequently joined ASTRA. His first spoken words to me were "I'm Bob Shaw, I'm going to illustrate your next book." Having established that he couldn't compete with Ed Buckley he made a determined effort to oust Gavin Roberts, all to no purpose since even if I had thought Bob's work was better, Ed, Gavin and I already had a signed agreement.... Over the next three years Bob became increasingly critical of my research into Contact with Other Intelligence, disrupting discussions with filibustering and abuse. Eventually there was a showdown in which he announced to the society that he would disrupt any further meetings at which the subject came up. A full third of the membership then gave me an ultimatum that the rows must cease or they would leave.... I resigned the Vice-Presidency and left. Strangely enough, the rows continued and the President found *he* was now the target – exit Bob. Technically his renewal of subscription for that year was not accepted.... I then rejoined and stood for Treasurer next year, President the year after that. Bob's attacks on me from outside ASTRA have continued without letup.... "Rockcon Progress Report" has been mailed out to a lot of people who know me.... To anyone reading it: Bob's accounts of ASTRA and me can be judged by his statement that he left voluntarily. He was thrown out, in my absence, by unanimous vote of members who could stand no more of it, and that gives an idea how much of the rest can be believed. (Duncan Lunan)

D. West on Yorcon: A few cloudy memories and impressions. At some point – probably Friday – I picked up Ann's trick of putting an inch of Coke in the glass and then diluting it with rum. This is undoubtedly the correct way

to drink such a mixture, but it does have a tendency to lead to a certain level of confusion. Complete strangers kept addressing me with great familiarity, as if they knew me. Am I really famous, or was it just the usual brain damage? Sigh.

Arrival. Talking to Garry and Annette Kilworth I was suddenly seized by nymphet Jessica Watson, who screamed “Daddy! Daddy!” in piercing tones, thus creating doubt and uncertainty in the minds of all those who had thought she was the GoH’s daughter. “Don’t *tell* everybody,” I hissed agitatedly, but to little avail. (I now wish to take this opportunity to state categorically that there is *absolutely no truth* etc.) A child of limited ideas but much persistence, the Watson brat molested several other men in similar fashion, but hurriedly abandoned G. Pickersgill when admonished in a curt bellow to “Get the fuck out of it.”

“What do you think of the Fan Room?” asked John Collick.

I kept an eye open for Scottish fans wearing **See Leeds And Die** badges (as promised by Fake Bob Shaw) but none were in evidence. (I was hoping to catch the moment when they worked.) However, one body was brought back to the hotel by the Police, who apparently instinctively knew that anybody found lying in a City Centre gutter clutching a half-empty bottle of Southern Comfort must belong to the convention.

“What do you think of the Fan Room?” asked John Collick.

The Fake Bob Shaw seemed unusually quiet on the occasions he was sighted, though I understand he became much more animated when informed that neither the Yorcon committee nor anyone else gave much of a fuck about the momentous decisions made at the Albacon Business Meeting (conveniently held on the Easter Monday afternoon, after all the poncy Southerners had cleared off home) concerning the future of all Eastercons till the end of time.

[\[1\]](#)

“What do you think of the Fan Room?” asked John Collick.

Rampant as ever, Famous Berserk Author Chris Carlsen was lustfully eyeing everything which showed promise of being hot, hollow and reasonably receptive. “I wish she’d sit down,” he panted, “then I’d go over and say, ‘Kate, open your mouth,’ and –” Groaning deeply and scattering large droplets of moisture he bounded away in search of further objects of

lewdness.

“What do you think of the Fan Room?” asked John Collick.

The Fancy Dress remained inaccessible and unseen behind walls of quivering and craning bodies. In any case, more interesting were the rather ambiguous black-clad persons with boots, belts, daggers and rayguns who paraded and posed in the bar. Such dedicated narcissism seemed worthy of admiration. Also, as one who believes in recycling, I approved of the way in which much of their intricate webbing had been cunningly fabricated out of old bra straps.

“What do you think of the Fan Room?” asked John Collick.

BSFA Head Waiter Alan Dorey was a stunning sight in full evening dress. I asked him if his bow tie was of the sort which lights up or revolves propellor-fashion. “I shall *hit* the next person who says that,” he rasped through gritted jaws.

“What do you think of the Fan Room?” asked John Collick.

Musical chairs: the lifts of the Dragonara seemed to have an irresistible fascination for simple lovers of furniture and song. Every now and then those in the bar would be disturbed by the opening of lift doors to reveal a banked choir of twenty or so perched on two or three sofas. Ragged but noisy harmonics concerning alleged aberrations of Alan Dorey and/or Isaac Astral would burst forth, then the doors would close. Five minutes later, the same performance (or something slightly more obscene) would be repeated by the same choir from the other lift. [2]

“What do you think of the Fan Room?” asked John Collick.

Sunday night saw scenes of appalling savagery organized by G. Pickersgill, whose machismo (which had been showing signs of breaking out all weekend) finally got loose entirely. “British Bulldog” seems to consist of two groups of deranged persons charging at each other from opposite sides of the room and hitting, kicking, twisting, throttling, gouging and generally molesting each other. Those who survive can probably be regarded as winners. (There is some other purpose, but when asked to explain next day Harry Bell merely groaned.) Despite frequent Pickersgillian screams of reproof and command, team discipline was not entirely perfect. I was sitting in a safe corner, marvelling at Man’s Inhumanity to Man, when an obvious loser was ejected from the fray. Sobbing for breath (having just been kicked

in the gut, kneed in the balls, elbowed in the throat and generally pummelled, thumped and trampled), he painfully hoisted himself upright and cast a piteous glance of reproach and betrayal back to the violently convulsed heap of bodies rolling and crashing on the carpet. “I don’t understand this,” he whimpered, his lip trembling. “They’re not doing it *right*; they seem to have forgotten all the *rules*.”

“Fucking hell, West, what do you think of the fucking Fan Room?” asked John Collick.

Oh, not bad. Mind you, I remember back in 19.... (D. West)

Your Editor Annotates: First, a couple of footnotes to D’s bit.

[1] This refers to the revived notion of an “Eastercon Charter”, something which – if desirable at all – I’d rather see in less formal guise (“Traditional Guidelines” etc.). It had been proposed several times in the past yet never put into practice, possibly owing to the major stumbling block of its unenforceability. Comments would be very welcome: maybe we can try to ignore the minor stumbling block, which is that a lot of fans distrust anything looked on with favour by the Scottish Bob Shaw. (Sorry, Bob!) Probably it would be enough to revive the tradition of a post-con report to be produced cheaply, as soon as possible after the con: the *Albacon Report* contains some useful data but is marred a little by Shavian paranoia (e.g. “the downright hostility of the BSFA” is roughly translatable as “Bob Shaw and Alan Dorey don’t much like each other”) – and a lot by its omission of the figures most useful to the next convention (such usefulness being the supposed *raison d’etre* of the report), e.g. breakdown of income, numbers of registrations received at times through the year, final supporting and attendance figures....

[2] Ah, those lift parties. I am still trying to forget the lift trip during which Kevin Clark – conducting his choir from the top of an inexplicable stepladder – switched from a ditty about Alan Dorey and some penguins to a rousing chorus of “*Bob Shaw is Dave La-a-angford / Dave Langford is Bob Shaw....*”

Other con memories. There was the Collick Omen early on Thursday

morning, when (according to him) he unzipped his fly and at once his Yorcon badge fell into the toilet. There was Ian Williams showing his Pickersgill Wedding photos and inviting unwary neofans to “spot the transsexual” in one nicely-posed threesome: one-third picked Kate Jeary, one-third Roz Kaveney and one-third Lisa Tuttle. *Try Our Futuristic Cocktails*, it said over the hotel bar. *GALACTICA SPACE-WALKER Pernod/Parfait Amour: £1.60. EXTRA-TERRESTRIAL ENERGIZER Blue Curacao/Grenadine/Lemonade: £1.20.* No prizes for guessing there’d been a Trekcon there the week before. In no time at all the notice vanished in a wave of fannish revulsion, though Roz Kaveney thought *Someone Should At Least Try One Of Them*.

COA

MIKE DICKINSON, 111 Potternewton Lane, Leeds LS7 3LW / GRAHAM ENGLAND c/o M. Koch, Steinstr. 7, D-2800 Bremen 1, West Germany / PAUL HURTLEY, 67 Derbyshire, Derby, CT 06418 USA / PAUL KINCAID, 114 Guildhall St, Folestone, Kent, CT20 1ES / DAVE MONTGOMERY, 2 Holkarn Close, Kentwood Close, Tilehurst, Reading, Berks, RG3 6BZ / DAVID ROW, 143 Porter Rd, Brighton Hill, Basingstoke, Hants, RG22 4JT. (One of these isn’t new: sorry again about that, Mike....)

Cons

Channelcon (April 9-12 1982) is the next Eastercon. Metropole Hotel, Brighton, £16+VAT/person/night for rooms (inc breakfast); £3 supp/£6 att (£1 off for presupporters) to 4 Fletcher Rd, Chiswick, London W4 5AY • **Cymrucon** (14-15 Nov 1981); Central Hotel, Cardiff; rooms £13.50 single £20 dbl (inc breakfast, VAT); supp £2 att £5 to 129 City Rd, Cardiff • **Mediacon 82** (March 20 1982): Conway Hall, London (one day only); £1.50 supp to 45 Welby House, Hazelville Rd, London N19; profits to charity (Mediacon 80 gave £250 to MIND). Oops: £3 att. • **Worldcon 83**: the Scandinavians *did* get in their bidding papers, though only after Denvention had prodded them with two letters and a telegram....

Infinitely Improbable

Helmdon Council Election: 2801 votes cast, 14 spoilt; Tattersall (Con) 1860, Ian Watson (Lab) 927. “Not bad for a safe Tory seat,” Ian told our reporter, adding: “The mob chose Barabbas.” • **Vonda McIntyre**, we hear, wrote to Peter Nicholls saying her *Encyclopaedia* entry was sexist since it failed to mention *Dreamsnake* (actually published after the cutoff date), and anyway it was despicable that it should have been written by that well-known sexist J. Clute.... • **Dell** (as you all know) have shut down their sf line; Berkley/Putnam are ceasing to publish sf hardbacks; even “Timescape” Books have been under pressure from Simon & Schuster to halt. British publishing efficiency is exemplified by Futura, who’ve had *Trouble With Tribbles* on their stock list for 2 years yet keep telling Rog Peyton the book’s Out of Stock. A raid on the warehouse disclosed no less than 5000 dusty copies imported years ago.... • **RIP:** Robert Aickman, James Schmitz, Prof Francois Bordes (“Francois Carsac” – another of the generation of writers in France who created a whole body of the SF tradition which we in the Anglophone countries remain largely unacquainted with, says John Brunner.) • **Delphi:** remember that predictive business in JB’s *Shockwave Rider*, whereby you ask millions of people and take the average, or something like that? The Ministry of Defence are trying it, asking lots of experts such as authors of *War in 2080* about future military hardware. Preliminary predictions include operational land-to-air energy beam weapons by 1993 (or 2007 for the UK) ... • **Aldiss Again:** “I have an original book about to be published in a Third World country. Chopmen Enterprises of Singapore will soon bring out *Foreign Bodies*, a collection of short stories with Far East backgrounds written specially for the Singapore audience. I’m proud of this. Another Unprofitable Aldiss Venture....” • **Donaldson & Del Rey:** Joe Nicholas wrote “It’s not that *The One Tree* is told in the first person that caused Del Rey to object to it; it’s that its main protagonist is a woman.” Malcolm Edwards: “The two reasons put forward for our Lester’s displeasure should in fact be conflated – he was annoyed because it was written in the first person by a woman character. In heroic fantasy this is Not On, quoth Del Rey, who knows this to be true because he’s never previously read one in which it was, and as we know innovation is death in genre fiction. My source for this is one Stephen Donaldson, whom I interviewed for *Starburst* when he was over here last year. The reason you haven’t read the interview in *Starburst* is that it was so tedious that I couldn’t bring myself to transcribe it. What a fascinating man.... Another Interesting Fact I learnt about Donaldson

is that his stylistic influences – which should be readily apparent, he said, from an examination of his work – are Conrad, Henry James and Faulkner. You remember all those Conrad fantasy trilogies (*Lord Jim & His Magic Sword?*).... The Priest/Tuttle matrimonial extravaganza [28 April] went off without a hitch (aside from the obvious one), apart from the registrar’s inability to pronounce Lisa’s middle name. Chris’s awful secret (his middle name is McKenzie) was also revealed to a fascinated world....” • **Non-COA:** although Chris and Lisa are living in Devon the Priest/Harrow address still holds and is visited monthly.... • **Erratum** for “Folestone” read “Folkestone” last page.... • **Dupers For Poland** raised £90.94p at Yorcon II (now passed to the TUC Solidarity Assistance Fund ...) and thanks are due to Brian Aldiss, John Brunner, Reg Palmer and lots of others (*Abi Frost*). • **The Faan Awards** (remember them?) appear to be in limbo: though reformed along the enlightened lines of the C/A poll (see p.1) they’ve got no further, partly through committee apathy and partly because Mike Glicksohn – who did most of the actual work – has had to step down as Teller.... • **RIP:** Kit Pedler ... • **TAFF** rolls along, with some £120 raised during and after Yorcon II, and three 1982 candidates declared: Alan Dorey, Kevin Smith and (surprise Greg Pickersgill. More in *Taff Talk 8* and the official ballot, next issue.... • **In The Great Tradition Of Tolkien:** a *Bookseller* ad for some future-war book goes “You sold *World War III*; You sold *War in 2080*; NOW SELL THE FACTS ...” Well, well. Meanwhile, buy *Facts & Fallacies* (Webb & Bower £5.95) and help me and Chris Morgan become capitalists ... • **Film News:** “Ridley Scott is directing *Blade Runner*, from a Phil Dick detective novel (no, I don’t know which one, and nor do the guys I spoke to at Warner-Columbia). Harrison Ford is leaving his Star Wars persona on ice to play the film’s lead character, a private eye in the not-too-distant future.” (*Steve Green* – who wants data for his BSFA clubs column) • **Dark They Were & Golden-Eyed** bookshop is being sold to Marvel (Cadence Industries Inc), rumours Peter Pinto, who also offers a SE LONDON SF GROUP: Southern Stars pub, New Cross Rd (A2): R out of New Cross tube station, L at main road & 3 min walk; 3rd Tuesday of month; ring 01-691-2792 for details.... • **Ladies & Jurgen** at the Gate Theatre is/was “an ingenious – and most excellently done – amalgam of *Jurgen* and other Cabell works ... a British first” (*George Hay*): Cabell fandom (22 Northumberland Ave branch) salutes the Gate theatre.... • **L. Ron Hubbard** has a “massive” sf novel due out within the year in the US, and has written the script for an upcoming sf film

(gosh).... • **Best Dialogue Award:** a poster in *Forbidden Planet* bookshop depicts a noted skiffy author with speech-balloon: “Hi! I’m J.G. Ballard! I’ll be signing copies of my new book *Hello America* here on June 6 ... etc.” The sense of wonder reels.... • **Censors Strike:** (1) the World Fantasy Con wants to ban unicorns from its artshow because they’re commercialized (good reason for banning SF, at that); (2) the Norwescon artshow refused for a long while to hang GoH Rowena Morrill’s painting because it was all sexist and would corrupt innocent fans (i.e. it depicted a naked lady).... • **Worst Thing 1980-81:** a bonus point to the GPO for delivering 5 ballots too late for inclusion. Other late mail impels me to issue the Statement that sayings ascribed to me in *Dot 10* are wholly the invention of K. Smith: personally I thought this was self-evident, but *Ocelot*’s credulity knows no bounds.... (3-6-81)

Hazel’s Language Lessons

Number Ten: Yoruba

konko the sound of a knock on the back of the hand with the shell of the snail.

ANSIBLE 18: from 22 Northumberland Avenue, READING, Berks, RG2 7PW, UK

***Ansible* 19**

July 1981

ANSIBLE NINETEEN: The July 1981 issue of Britain's sf/fan newsletter of true facts and good taste ("It's a riot!" – FOUNDATION). Editor: Dave Langford, 22 Northumberland Avenue, Reading, Berks, RG2 7PW, UK. Sub rates 6/£1 UK, 5/£1 Europe, 4/£1 elsewhere; US fans may send \$ equivalent to Mary & Bill Burns, 48 Lou Ave, Kings Park, NY 11754. Mailing/status labels by Keith "Computer Crime" Freeman; cartoon by D. West. 9 July 1981.

A Sort of Editorial Bit

From time to time people comment on "trends" in *Ansible* coverage, as different issues chance to be more or less fannish, more or less SFish, more or less lousy. This time it's all fannish reports as far as the eye can see, because that's what I have to hand. Next issue, who knows?

It might be all too much for the more serious-minded if I also went on about the Brum Group 10th-anniversary party. It was all good fun and more or less what you'd expect, from a surreal signing session where C. Priest did not sign copies of *Jackie!* (see flyer) but where C. Morgan and I became insupportable after signing our book for H. Harrison ... onward via Peyton auctioneering and Aldiss/Harrison buffoonery to frenzied partying. Good stuff, except that just as your editor was gloating over his lack of hangover next morning he fell down and broke a tooth. This dangled enticingly all day, causing exciting agonies whenever I drank, talked, moved breathed or allowed my heart to beat. In the evening I grappled with some specially thin blancmange, got the spoon tangled with the flapping tooth and (after a few seconds over which we draw a veil) found the tooth and I had parted company. We searched the blancmange but found nothing. Seems I must have swallowed at just the wrong moment.... This is why *Ansible* is late.

Room for a word about Channelcon (1982 Eastercon, Brighton): following a

chance discovery that the Metropole was offering lower room rates to other gatherings, rates were renegotiated to £13.50 single, £12.50/person double/twin (inc breakfast, VAT extra). Better still, Angela Carter has been signed as joint GoH (with John Sladek). Gosh wow.

The Dreamtime Joseph Nicholas in Australia

You read it in the tourist brochures, and you think it's such a cliché that it can't possibly be true; but Australians really are friendly and outgoing and willing to show you around, the fact that you're a Pom notwithstanding; and I was met with unfailing kindness wherever I went during my three (short, too short) week GUFF trip Down Under to attend Adventon 81 in Adelaide over the weekend of 6-8 June. And I had a bloody marvellous time, and given a choice I'd rather still be there than back here.

My GUFF report should (assuming nothing goes wrong) be published within the next couple of months, and if nothing else the effort of writing it should impose some coherency on my jumbled memories. I can remember being struck by the relative smallness of Adventon, with about 250 attending members and thus the size of a British Eastercon of the early 70s, and in consequence much more accessible and congenial than today's hugecons. And I was struck, too, by the relatively high prices charged at hotel bars, which means that Australian fans tend to reserve their drinking for the evenings, when room parties come into their own and they can walk round to the local bottle shop to pick up 4-litre casks of excellent wine for around 4-5 bucks. And, speaking of wine, I remember the trip up the Barossa Valley before the convention, to sample (for free!) the vintage at selected wineries, where GoH Frank Herbert – who looks and sounds as jovial as your childhood image of Santa Claus, and to whom I took an instant liking – proved astonishingly knowledgeable about wine, praising some of it to the skies on one of his radio interviews the next day and thus surprising the interviewer, who obviously expected him to be a typically parochial American whereas he was in fact a pragmatic and widely-travelled cosmopolitan. And although the Barossa Valley may not have much in the way of scenery, there's the 3000-foot high Mt Lofty range behind Adelaide, from where you can see that wonderfully clean and spacious city spread out

along the coast; and also the Blue Mountains inland from Sydney, through which I rode on a train that crawled slowly along the side of some of the sheerest gorges I've ever seen on my way to visit Eric Lindsay and ride on the Katoomba scenic railway, the steepest (70 degrees) elevated line in the world, where I hung on for grim death as it plunged over the lip of the cliff and down into the valley below. And, in complete contrast, there was the 12-hour drive to Melbourne on the day after the convention, across some of the flattest country in the world, with the road just going on and on ahead of us and the parched grasslands stretching out to the horizon on either side: a journey which really brought home to me the sheer size of the country – a size which, with its population of only 15m, accounts for the identifiably distinct regional fan groups centred on the major cities (although, given the distance between them, fanzines are strangely not as important as you might expect; according to Leigh Edmonds, fanzines are in severe decline as the orientation of Australian fandom at large shifts more towards conventions). The cities have characters, too; in addition to Adelaide, there's Melbourne with its quiet parks and clanking old electric trams, and Sydney with its bridge and opera house and harbour ferries (and where it may now be winter, but temperatures are currently higher than they are here); and the pace of life seems easier, less fraught with the angst and paranoia so common to the Ballardian urbania we inhabit, and in comparison with which any other city must seem terminally claustrophobic.

And I remember, of course, all the fans I met: Keith Curtis, with whom I stayed for the first few days of my trip and who greeted me with the words "Welcome to Australia – have you got a cigarette?"; Perry Middlemiss, in charge of the publicity for Advention, who (despite darker hair) bore a striking resemblance to Roy Kettle; John McPharlin, Advention treasurer, with his magnificently insulting off-the-cuff sense of humour; Terry Dowling, author of a recent thesis on Ballard, who knows more rude songs about sheep than you'd think possible; Sally Underwood, Pom expatriate who forgave me for not recognizing her because she was (she said) only a fringe-fan back in 1977; Rob McGough, who conscripted me into the Goon-based "Dune Show" because (he said) I had just the right cultured accent to play Baron Grytepyppe Harkonnen; John Foyster (new shorter-haired model), Advention's Fan GoH, recovering from the recent flooding of his house but as droll and witty as ever; Valma Brown, who told me that we couldn't have GUFF any more if we were going to keep sending out such lovely people as

Chris Priest and myself (!); John Bangsund, seemingly embarrassed at being almost a legend in his own lifetime; Bruce Gillespie, struggling away at a freelance career as a full-time director of Norstrilia Press; Marc Ortlieb, apparently typecast as a genial clown but actually more serious than even I'm sometimes wont to be; Leanne Frahm, who can be ruder about First Fandom and Huge Name SF Authors than I; and Judith Hanna, diminutive redhead, in whose lap I fell asleep during the committee room party and who, primed by Dave Langford's piece about me in the Advention Programme Book, promptly decorated the end of my nose with a red felt pen. And more, more ... I had a great time, all right, and I fully intend to return as soon as I can, because not to sample what Australia and Australian fandom have to offer is to miss out on some of the finer things of life.

Which brings me, more or less, to the hard sell part of this, GUFF, the administrators (John Foyster and I) have decided, will be running the other way in 1982, bringing an Australian fan to sample the joys of British fandom at Channelcon next year – which means, of course, that nominations are now open, and you are all instructed to write to the Australian fan of your choice, persuading them to stand, offering to be their nominators, campaigning on their behalf, etc etc ... the “etc etc” including donations of material for auction and money for the fund and stuff like that. Right? Right. (Joseph Nicholas, 20-7-81)

Editorial note: I am to add that Joe inherited £618.50 GUFF money from pro-tem administrator Rob Jackson: his Apex ticket cost £606. Yorcon auctions brought in £86.48 and Roger Earnshaw donated £7, so the total at the UK end is currently £105.98 towards the next UK->Oz trip (the 1982 trip mentioned above being largely paid for at the Australian end). Support GUFF, folks – and TAFF too. (DRL)

The One Tun • 2 July 1981

Abi Frost

Let other pens dwell on the magnificent traditions embodied in the One Tun; the mingling of aloof giants of First Fandom (whatever that is) with wide-eyed Whoies (whatever they are). I think the reason I go is that in some small way the Tun satisfies my pathetic fantasies about being *really* a wartime Fitzrovia groupie; it isn't easy in this day and age to walk into a pub, not

knowing exactly who you will find there, but certain of meeting a number of people you know quite well on a drinking and conversation level, and probably extending the circle a bit too. But in the couple of years I've been going there, in spite of the transition from unknown girlfriend of littleknown critic to regular London fan, I have never quite lost the impression that really all sorts of exciting deals, feuds, plots and events in general are taking place somehow, without my being let in on it.

This impression of the Tun as an sf *agora* must be that held by the outside world, as witness the regular appearance of people offering flyers about sfish events. This time it was John Joyce, drumming up custom for Ken Campbell's latest at the Riverside – a valuable service in the continued absence of *Time Out*. I once had a memorable argument with him about his vulgar belief that there was a fortune to be made selling badges to fans; but I suppose he was right – *circumspice* if you need confirmation that there's more than one kind of fan. Us snooty non-sf-reading lady literature graduates are a bit thin on the ground.

What made the July Tun truly remarkable, I suppose, was that there was a fanzine about other than *Ansible* (which appeared to have withered away at the first breath of competition). Moreover, it was not bad, judging by a flick through on the bus home; most surprising of all it was edited by Malcolm Edwards, and contained articles by people whose typing fingers had long been assumed to have tragically dropped off. A renaissance of London fandom? Coo ur gosh. An infernally malicious voice (with a brand-new Australian twang, perhaps?) told me that serious critic Malcolm had delayed handing it out until award-winning fan-writer John Clute (who regards fanzines rather as Oliver Cromwell might have regarded the New Romantics) had left. (I had arrived after his departure, having been engaged till 8 in keeping the author and designer of a book on pottery from each others' throats.) Another event was that I and three others sat down at one of the tables, and consequently declared ourselves to be the Manchester, Poplar, Oakhampton and Sidcup Star Trek Criticism Group. Why is there this taboo on realfans sitting down? The fringies are all half our age.

So, another Tun without being admitted to the arcane level on which it all really happens. No doubt the Trekkies, Whoies, Blakies and – er – Hitchies got a lot of constructive conspiring done. What I'd really like to see is a Tun report from one of them. (Abi Frost)

(The Tun gatherings continue, in case anyone actually doesn't know, on the first Thursday of each month – turn right out of Farringdon tube station. Ken Campbell's latest is a dramatized WAR WITH THE NEWTS (Capek): 8 July – 2 August, Hammersmith, 01-748-3354. We choose not to describe the strangled cries of John Clute on seeing [A18](#) with details of his fannish fame....)

The Leaning News Column • D. West

On June 19th at Leeds Registry Office a further instalment in the US conquest of British Fandom was marked by the marriage of Graham Charles James and Linda Ann Strickler. All those members of the Leeds Group who wanted an excuse for not working were in attendance, some of them wearing whole suits of matching clothes for the first time in living memory. Plans to sprinkle the happy couple with confetti made from torn-up BSFA publications had to be abandoned when no-one could lay hands on a recent mailing, but otherwise all went well. After a reception at the James residence (during which several people developed a tendency to stagger but in honour of the occasion no one actually fell over) the party regathered at the West Riding for the usual Friday night Serious Science Fiction Seminar and that's all I remember.

End of Press Release. Change mood. Change style. Change tense.

Feeling rather senile one night so switch on the TV. An unctuous voice makes a remark about Adams. Aha, I think, this must be that thing about evolution or whatever – Dawn of Man, the first oyster, home life in a cave and so on. Sure enough, the strings lay into a few bars of throbbing, Dawn of Man music. The voice rolls out a remark about new clayer gases. (New Clayer gases? Primitive cave latrines?) Then, inexplicably, it switches to blood clods. (Blood clods? Rural BSFA members? David V. Lewis clones?) The picture finally comes on (it's an old TV) and there's this guy standing in the middle of a field mouthing something oracular about trees (trees?) and the new clayer gases (again?) Lightning flashes, and Wagnerian music thunders forth. "In the labraturry ..." intones the voice, as if from the depths of a treacle pudding. In the labraturry this wildeyed character in a white coat is glaring at flasks bubbling with vapour. Another blast of Wagner, suggesting that the very first profan is about to be created. More lightning, and switch

to Disney orchestra doing twiddly bits signifying the Birth of Bambi's First Cell. The voice, now positively flobbering with sincerity, makes a reference to the kuzmoss. Suddenly I realize that verily it is none other than ace scientific popularizer (or publicist, as they used to say) Carl Sagan attempting to explain (or maybe even justify) the existence of Isaac Astral. Decide there are some things man was not meant to know, and switch off. (D. West)

BNF comes out in "bombshell" edition

Herewith a few snippets [*above header included*] from the vast *Ansible Clipping Service*, brought in by our intrepid researchers from the furthestmost shores of space and time. We do not offer any comment whatever on the Texan newsflash below ... how could we? (DRL)

It's still Clute Town decides it likes its odd name

CLUTE (AP) – After several humorous and some not-so-humorous suggestions, citizens once again have decided to leave the name of this Southeast Texas community alone.

Some folks had thought the name just didn't have the right ring, and a few even suggested the sound was so abrasive it kept businesses from moving to this town of 9,500.

"Some have made light of the name and didn't really believe a city could be called Clute. They thought it was a hick town or something," said City Councilman Gene McDaniel. "I just can't put my finger on it. Maybe 'Clute' just sounds backward."

But voters disagreed 577 to 76 Saturday and rejected a proposal that would have changed the name to Brazoswood, as suggested late last year by a City Charter review committee. The name was also voted down in 1970.

Clute was incorporated in 1957 and named after a big landowner.

"It's a single-syllable word and it seems to have some sort of evil connotations to it that I don't understand myself," said Eugene Bright Jr., chairman of the review committee.

News stories provoked a flurry of suggestions from coast to coast. Among them were Cute, Clout, Ameslan, Sweet, Honey Bun and John Wayne City.

The review committee said it appreciated the suggestions but considered Brazoswood the only alternative.

A family named Clute wrote from Hingham, Mass., and told Mayor Bobby Jacobs they had been planning to visit the town for six years but canceled because of the election.

Jacobs said he is uncertain whether the family will reconsider, now that the proposal lost.

Meanwhile, City Manager Bill Pennington breathed a sigh of relief. He would have had to change the city limit signs, city stationary [sic] and other things.

SCIENCE REPORT

Paranoia is linked with deafness

From Clive Cookson of “The Times Higher Education Supplement”, Washington ...

... “If you can’t hear people following you, it probably means they are.” (Leroy Kettle, Astral Master of something of other and Non-Contributing Editor of *True Rat*.)

The Extremely Occasional Letter Column

Joseph in Australia

Marc Ortlieb: “We are pleased to report that Joseph Nicholas, GUFF winner, was indeed the perfect gentleman that we in Her Majesty’s southern dominions have come to expect of Englishmen. Indeed, the impression he created here in the Antipodes was perhaps best summed up by Mrs Christine Ashby, who said ‘Joseph is such a nice boy.’ Mr Nicholas did his best to assure us that he was not the beer-swilling, anti-American lecher that certain US fanzine have painted him, and made constructive but generally approving comments on the works of his favourite author Mr Robert A Heinlein. Indeed, so mild was his temperament that he maintained his composure even when his best suit was soiled by a herd of flying pigs, a common feature of

the Adelaide skyline.”

Paul Stevens: “Well, there I was, an innocent boy fan at [Advention], when I found there was something tugging at my socks. I looked down and I saw this thing ... bleary-eyed, bheer-sodden and obviously in the final stages of decay (both moral and physical). It lay on what was left of the carpet and in its withered claw it held a fanzine. ‘I pass this to you with a curse,’ it muttered, pausing only to drink deeply from a can of Fosters lager. ‘Read the contents and beware ...’ It then turned and made its way unsteadily back into the gloom of the convention activities, the only evidence of its passing a trail of empty beer cans and some stained carpet. I believe this apparition was in fact one Joseph Nicholls [sic], a visiting GUFF fan from the nether regions of British fandom. What he had thrust upon me was in fact *Twll-Ddu*, a fanzine of ill repute and low morals. He had judged his audience wisely.” *Mr Stevens claims to have his DUFF report scheduled for August/September: enquiries to DUFF c/o Space Age Books, 305 Swanston St, Melbourne, Vic 3000, Australia. Meanwhile ...*

Leigh Edmonds: “During the convention Joseph was ... followed around by a host of excitable femmefans equipped with the latest in high technology texta [felt] pens.... The fear of attack seems to have forced sobriety on the poor fellow and I, myself, saw him drinking orange juice at one party. On the other hand, later in the convention I noticed that Joseph had overcome the lack of a decent bar by travelling through the halls and rooms of the event with a glass in one hand and a cask of white wine in the other. And he was still standing, with a more or less vertical inclination, which just goes to show the impressive results of all that prior training at British cons. He also seems to have been keen to sign up unsuspecting Australian fans in the BSFA, whatever that might be...” *Joe replies next issue!*

Ansible Poll Bias Horror?

Roger Weddall: “Have you done any basic stats, or heard of the phrase ‘sample population’?” (Yes. Yes.) “The way the *Ansible* poll is run is that you send out the voting forms to all the people you can think of, more or less – is that correct?” (No. Just *Ansible* subscribers/recipients, plus wads for distribution in some of the more active fan groups.) “Has it occurred to you that, because *you* are responsible for sending out the voting forms, that there is an automatic bias towards *Twll-Ddu* and anything else you publish? ... The

obvious solution is for there to be an addendum attached to the voting form, suggested that it *can* and *should* be as widely circulated and reproduced as possible ... if voters think they may be unknown to the supervisor(s) of the poll they should include a reference to the sf/fandom group they *are* known to ...” *Oh dear. (1) This is supposed to be an informal poll, not a meticulous and infallible system as used for the (coff coff) Hugos. (2) I can say that a very high percentage of active Britfans (the “sample population”) get Ansible and a form; the TD mailing list is rather different. (3) Circulation of ballots in any fanzine produces votes for that zine – unfair [arguably] to zines not circulating ballots. At least A’s ineligible.*

COA

Avedon Carol, 4409 Woodfield Rd, Kensington, MD 20895, USA (the change being to one digit of the zipcode only, god knows why) // Colin Fine, 7 Gifford’s Close, Girton, Cambridge, CB3 0PF // Randal Flynn, 51 Bonnington Sq, Vauxhall, London, SW.8 // Mike Glicksohn, 137 High Park Ave, Toronto, Ontario, M6P 2S3, Canada // Roelof Goudriaan, Postbus 589, Lelystad, The Netherlands // Eve & John Harvey, 43 Harrow Rd, Carshalton, Surrey // Steve Higgins, Room 12, Garden Hall, 11 Princes Gardens, London, SW.7 // Nic Howard, 11 Downs Park, Downley, High Wycombe, Bucks // Paul Hurtle, Flat 7, 2 Oakley Rd, London, N1 3LS // Maxim Jakubowski, 95 Finchley Lane, London, NW.4 // Leroy Kettle & Kath Mitchell, 74 Sydney Rd, London, N.8 // Hugh Mascetti 34 Townhill Rd, Swansea, SA2 0UR // Lianne Norman, 22 Wakefield Rd, Norwich, NR5 8JE // Dave Rowe has married Carolyn Doyle and moved to the US, but doesn’t want you lot to know his address // Nick Shears, 9 Kestrel Close, Downley, High Wycombe, Bucks, HP13 5JN // M.W. Southworth, 67c East Slope, U of Sussex, Falmer, Brighton, Sussex // Phil Stephensen-Payne, c/o Systime Inc, 8980K Route 108, Columbia, Maryland 21045, USA

Infinitely Improbable

Isaac Asimov (as I forgot to mention last issue) has flogged a fourth (unwritten) “Foundation” book to Doubleday for \$50,000+.... **Lawsuit Time:** crime reporter Martin Morse Wooster strikes again – “The lawsuit of the

month comes from the fringes of sf ... a suit filed by R. Reginald of Borgo Press against one Kevin Hancer. Reginald published a *Complete Paperback Index, 1939-1959* some years back. Hancer was compiling a pb price guide ... apparently stole much information from Reginald ... Reginald cleverly inserted a number of fake entries throughout his text ... claims that 59 of these showed up in Hancer's text and is suing Hancer for \$2,000,000." ... **Dark They Were & Golden Eyed** bookshop was selling off all stock at half price for cash early this month: rumours of £100,000 debts and incipient closure have come to my ears.... **Babelcon** (Birmingham Hitcher convention) has collapsed despite a palace coup ousting "incompetent" Joy Hibbert as Chairman: thanks to the committee's "total inability to publicize their plans" (Steve Green), membership was too low for the con to continue. Anyone desperate about this sort of thing can send SAE for details of "Slartibartday" (London, 8 Aug).... **David V. Lewis** says please don't anyone send him more fanzines.... **New SF Market:** top-quality shorts with hard-sf leanings required by M.S. Rohan c/o Eaglemoss Ltd, 7 Cromwell Rd, London, SW7 2HR (more details to follow).... **Silicon 5** is still trundling along: 28-31 Aug, Grosvenor Hotel, Newcastle, membership £3, rooms £9.50 sngl £15.50 dbl/twin – 9 Whitton Ave, Seaton Delaval, Northumberland, NE25 0BJ.... **Robert Conquest** says "he learned all his skills at understanding the Russian mind from his vast knowledge of alien psychology gleaned from 40s issues of *Astounding*" (MMW) ... **Dungeons & Starships**, Lawrence Miller's Brum D&D emporium, has also gone bust.... **Finland Fandom:** "TURUN SF-SEURA is living well with 150 members ... *Spin* is still Finland's only fanzine ... in September Finland will get its second, *Aikakone* (Time Machine) ... both very sercon. Real SF fandom is not discovered in general in Finland yet." (Tom Olander – addresses provided on request if you want to try reading Finnish.) ... **Ditmar Awards** (Australian SF/fandom), courtesy of Joseph: Long SF *The Dreaming Dragons*/Damien Broderick; Short SF "Deus Ex Corpus"/"Passage To Earth"/Leanne Frahm; International SF *Timescape*/Benford; Fanzine Q36/Marc Ortlieb; Fanwriter Ortlieb; Artist Marilyn Pride; William Atheling Award (SF criticism) George Turner.... **Virgin Purging:** Maxim Jakubowski (following rumours in such places as *NME* about contention in the book department) has resigned as Virgin Books managing director owing to "irreconcilable differences". Various projects like the *SF Book of Lists* (with ubiquitous Malcolm Edwards) have left with him; the fate of others like his SF/music anthology is as yet slightly

uncertain.... **SF Quiz Probe:** while psychoanalysing his TV recently, Rob Jackson noted that Mastermind International was won by a David Harvey who knew a lot about Tolkien. “Eureka!” cried Dr J: “This is the famous NZ fan and *Noumenon* contributor!” Meanwhile Andrew Stephenson discloses that Brain of Britain 1981 (BBC Radio) could not match this standard: asked who wrote *Voyage of the Space Beagle*, the 3 contestants said (respectively) Asimov, Bradbury and Heinlein.... RIP: old-time US fans Ed Cagle and Lou Tabakow.... **Worldcon Package Tour:** Seaforths Travel abandoned plans to arrange one for Denvention (having started too late), but are now interested in doing it for Chicon next year: what do you people think? ... **Anglicon** 4-6 Sept, U of East Anglia (Norwich); membership £24 inc B&B, £10 without; GoHs Ian Watson & John Sladek; 32 Gage Rd, Sprowston, Norwich, Norfolk, NR7 8BN.... **1983 Eastercon** bids appear to be Albacon II (I know nothing of this bar its existence), Yorcon III (Graham James has revealed that any criticism of Yorcon II is merely an attempt to discredit this in advance) and The Southerly Con With No Name (with such dubious leaders as me).... **Jim Barker** has had surgeons rummaging inside him looking for hernias; he merely has “varicose veins in the groin” and has shaved off his beard. So has Kev Smith, but Avedon Carol doesn’t mind: “He isn’t the least pretty to begin with, so it doesn’t matter about the beard.” ... **July 4th** saw Alan Dorey’s and Rochelle Reynolds’s (not to mention Graham James’s and Linda Strickler’s – see [above](#)) wedding reception, held in a tasteful temperance hall in Harrow after they’d recovered from their furtive marriage on 4 Feb.... **Marion Dimmer Bradley** has flogged an extremely long unwritten Arthurian fantasy to Ballantine for \$60,000.... **Gerry Webb**, famous eligible bachelor, will be 40 in October (says Jenny Summerfield, who thinks we should be told).... **Jan Howard Finder’s** *Alien Encounters* anthology, scheduled for July and containing sf from famous fans (like ... ahem), has been furtively postponed until autumn by the publishers (Taplinger, US).... **SF Novels** is a forthcoming (August) US mag devoted to serializing (wait for it) sf novels.... **Extro** magazine (the Other British Prozine) is alive and well and even now distributing the November 1980 issue, reports editor Robert Allen (now at 29 Navarre Gdns, Collier Row, Romford, Essex).... **I Have Seen The Future And** – results from that Delphi future-weaponry study are now to hand. Predicted dates: 1995 first routinely used anti-aircraft energy weapon; 2001 UK ditto; 2007 planes with 90% reduction of current IR, radar & visual signatures; 2014 energy weapon deployment reaches 10% of all AA

weaponry; 2048 (as 2007 but 99%); 2099 energy weapons become routine in fanzine reviewing (all right, I'm lying there)... **Late Australian News:** Judith Hanna sends rumours linking Joyce Scrivner with a wombat, denies those linking Joseph with her, and says of Joe: "The erudite syntax he delivered to the end of his microphone absolutely wowed Advention audiences. What was he talking about?" ... **Hype Dept:** Karl Hansen's *War Games* (Playboy) just arrived with instructions to vote it a Nebula. Random look: "*Even through two layers of combat armour, I felt her nipples brush against my back ...*" Gawd. Orson Scott Card thinks it's wonderful. Nuff said. 13/7/81

Hazel's Language Lessons

#11: Finnish For Reviewers

Ansible on pieni englantilainen fanzine, joka ilmestyy luotettavan säännöllisesti.
(SPIN 1/81)

ANSIBLE 19: 22 Northumberland Ave
Reading, Berkshire, RG2 7PW, UK.

***Ansible* 20**

August 1981

ANSIBLE NUMBER 20: August 1981. Dave Langford, 22 Northumberland Ave., Reading, Berks RG2 7PW, UK. Subs 6/£1 UK, 5/£1 Europe, 4/£1 Elsewhere – or \$s to Burns, 48 Lou Ave., Kings Park, NY 11754. Cartoon: Keith Freeman. Mailing label: Jim Barker. Well, er....

Millions of New Skiffy Magazines

Extro Speculative Fiction is the nationwide reincarnation of Robert Allen's ambitious but formerly tatty organ: the print run is said to be 25,000, and Real Distributors will handle the first "new" issue (mid-September). Familiar names connected with this are R. Allen (boss), Randall Flynn (slushpile master), me ("consultant") and Dorothy Davies (Lord High Everything Else). Plans are for monthly publication, 5/6 stories per issue, fiction rates £15-£25/thousand (ask first before submitting nonfiction); official address 3 Cadels Row, Faringdon, Oxon. (DRL)

Interzone is the provisional title of a "quality" mag planned by the Leeds/London junta featuring David Pringle & Malcolm Edwards (originators, I think) plus Clute, Dorey, Greenland, James, Kaveney, Ounsley. Quarterly publication is planned from Spring '82, via subs and specialist dealers; "top rates" (second only to *Omni*) for fiction; free HugeNameAuthor story booklet (Ballard is my guess) if you subscribe in 1981: £5 to Ground Zero Publications c/o 28 Duckett Road, London, N4 1BN. Fiction submissions considered from 1 Oct. After mentioning potential contributors Aldiss, Ballard, Sladek, Moorcock, M.J. Harrison and Bayley, David P. hastily adds that this *won't* be an exhumed *New Worlds*, perish the thought. New writers are to be encouraged. BSFA publicity support has been arranged in exchange for members' sub discounts. Glory, glory. (David Pringle)

The Omni Book of the Future, described by one Langford in *Vector 103*, is a

UK *Omni* spinoff planned as a weekly partwork (assemble five million instalments into sumptuous educational volume, etc.) recycling slightly revamped *Omni* articles. A few pages of fiction should appear weekly – the specs being terrific stories *and* breakable into 2500-3000 word segments to fit the weekly slot *and* accessible to the vast (approx 100,000) planned audience of non-SF readers. In fact possible consultant Langford read all *Omni*'s fiction to date and could report less than two dozen meeting the first criterion, most of these later being scrapped owing to the second and third. With Michael Scott Rohan (de facto fiction boss at the moment), Langford hoped at least to exert enough influence to avoid *SF Monthly*-type grot when new fiction is bought in: but the signs are that fannish hands are being edged further away from the controls. *Analogish* rates if *TOBotF* survives market testing: hardish SF to Mike c/o Eaglemoss, 7 Cromwell Rd, London, SW7 2HR. (R. Tappen)

Ad Astra, still paying only £10/thou despite a circulation of 9,000 (25,000 on ad-rates sheets, coff coff), is late again as I type. Protest to 22 Offerton Rd, London, SW4.

The Patchin Review is Charles Platt's fearless, hard-hitting new fanzine (£5/6 issues: c/o 21 The Village St, Leeds, LS4 2PR). This mocks *Locus* for censoring rumours, then prints a (pseudonymous, yet) article on the Nebula ceremony which charts minor indiscretions and carefully omits that event's Big Gossip – re Carl Sagan's *Contact* and rumoured lawsuit threats following the rumoured delivery of the "not by Sagan" MS. (*Locus*, recording Sagan's extra \$500,000 book-club deal, fearlessly calls the book "unfinished" – maybe my numerous rumour sources are all wet at that?) *PR* also features Malzberg, Ellison and reviews with familiar Plattoid reactions to C. Priest: with one critically impartial bound, *An Infinite Summer* is slagged while the newest dreary offerings of Lee Correy, Jack Williamson and even Jacqueline Lichtenberg are not. (DRL)

More Conventions I Didn't Get To

Fantasycon • Birmingham 10-12 July • Nic Howard

Let's start by comparing it to an Eastercon. For one thing, it's much smaller: approx 60 members. This had its advantages. Hotel facilities were not

overcrowded, and neither was the bar; it seemed possible to get to know everyone personally.

The programme and book room were in adjacent rooms, so there was no need to walk very far. The book room was small, but with plenty of variety, from costly Arkham House books to numerous free badges and magazines – this had advantages for my bank account. The programme itself was interesting. Panels included editors Hugh Lamb, Ramsey Campbell and Francesco Cova talking about letters and unsolicited stories they'd received. When the audience had recovered, Hugh Lamb read a story – “different” to say the least. Ken Bulmer chaired a discussion about world-building in fantasy, during which authors Brian Lumley and David Case said they'd rather like to throw some of the Birmingham rioters through their own broken windows (or words to that effect). Films included the very funny Dracula takeoff *Dance of the Vampires* and the unintentionally hilarious *Hands of Orlac*. Some odd recollections: Ramsey Campbell asking his little daughter about the future of fantasy film ... being buttonholed in the bloomin' 'otel corridor by Ken Bulmer ... Karl Edward Wagner announcing that rumours of his passing away during the night were true ... and much more.

British Fantasy Awards: AUGUST DERLETH (BEST NOVEL) AWARD *To Wake the Dead*/Ramsey Campbell; SHORT “The Stains”/Robert Aickman; FILM *The Empire Strikes Back*; SMALL PRESS *Airgedlamh*/Dave McFerran; ARTIST Dave Carson. (Nic Howard)

Becon • Basildon 31 July - 2 August • Joseph Nicholas

The GoH was Barrington J. Bayley, author of such fine novels as *Collision with Chronos* and *Soul of the Robot*; also present were John Clute, Lionel Fanthorpe and Ian Watson; I'd estimate the attendance at around 150-170. Thus the basic facts; what puzzled me, and other who'd come from further afield (e.g. Scotland, not to mention Denver, USA), was the absence of many London-area fans – who missed a generally relaxed, enjoyable, low-key con with a co-operative hotel and some interesting programme items. Not that I saw them all; most of those I did featured me to some extent – I was, for instance, the chairman of a panel ostensibly about “The Edges of SF”, which floundered until Ian Watson came up with a metaphor for the genre as an iceberg being towed through the waters of mainstream literature, melting slowly at its edges. Everyone else promptly got stuck into the possible future

of SF in an age of declining literacy, and the coming supremacy of electronic media: somewhat off the subject, but the panelists (particularly John Clute) gave of their best and the audience seemed to enjoy it. Ian and I later battled it out in a game of “Just a Minute”, eclipsing the other contestants Fanthorpe and Webb in a cut-throat race to an eventual draw which, incredibly, an eyeball-to-eyeball tiebreaker failed to resolve; and the audience laughed a lot. They also laughed a lot at Philip Strick’s jokes as he introduced the various film-clips he brought, themselves wonderfully mirth-making: *Battlestar Galactica: Conquest of Earth*, for example, in which the Cylons attacked Los Angeles but seemed unable to cause more than minor disruptions to the traffic-flow, plus the incomprehensible *Glen or Glenda*, ludicrous nonsense about transvestism featuring left-over clips of Bela Lugosi and directed by Edward J Wood, the genius behind the incomparably bad *Plan 9 from Outer Space* (also shown in its own right). Other movies screened included *The Power* (from Frank Robinson’s underrated novel of that name), *Demon Seed* and the magnificently camp *Captain Kronos: Vampire Hunter*, set in the 18th century and peppered with such lines as “It is time to make our move – time to kill a vampire,” as though going out and killing vampires were something one did every other evening.

More seriously, there was a panel on the probable impact of science on society over the next 5-10 years – unfortunately bogged down in a lengthy interchange about microprocessors and the liberating power of computers, though enlivened by an argumentative Gerry Webb. Barry Bayley’s GoH speech began with an exposition of Bode’s Law and progressed through the harmonics of planetary conjunctions to the possible freakness of Earth’s existence and the consequence that we may be alone in the universe. This was challenged by more scientifically literate audience members, but the whole provided food for thought – my main doubt being its suitability for a GoH speech: shouldn’t he have used the opportunity to say more about himself and his relationship with SF?

There was a barbecue on Saturday night, pricy but good, and a fireworks display mounted by Hugh Mascetti and other ex-Oxford bombers who, given a legitimate opportunity to play with explosives, took their task ultra-seriously and didn’t blow anyone or anything up. (*Shame! – DRL*) From the auction, GUFF raised £37.25 for its UK fund, and Beccon generously waived its commission on this. And as the con finished on a sunny Sunday afternoon,

England won the Fourth Test: a good end to a good con. (Joseph Nicholas)

Faircon '81 • Glasgow 24-27 July • John Dallman

The Friends of Kilgore Trout have run five cons in the last three years: while many normally active fans still don't attend, Faircon was definitely worth the journey. It moved with manic speed: now, three weeks, two cons and one Tun later, a chronological report is out. Some high spots:

The Vogon poetry, from which over half the contestants were ejected before finishing ... Fandom's Introduction to Ian Sorensen, acerbic pecunilogist* in the planet building panel, which solved the mystery of Haggis ... The Fancy Dress, or rather the wait for the results, when we were treated to the first performance of the "Captive" play: the graphic interrogation scenes were notable for spontaneous dialogue, as not all the cast had scripts ... The Starwurst* awards were also presented, the Oscars of Glasgow fandom mostly going to "The Faircon Strikes Back" (which now has a soundtrack) – a notable exception being John Patterson's award as best actress for "The Novacon Room Party". More forgettable event included the 9.15am fire alarm due to burning toast (*Jim Barker interjects: "It forced 120 bleary-eyed fans on to the pavement watching fire engines and flashing blue lights. And all we could get out of Ron Bennett was 'Six thousand quid's worth of old comics in there ... ALL INSURED!'"*), and John Brunner's GoH speech – or perhaps GoH punstring. "And now you're going to suffer," he warned us after 20 minutes: we did.... The business meeting was surprisingly popular, running considerably over time. Mostly about the next Faircon, with an amazing number of people promising programme items. Faircon '82 has over 50 members already.... (John Dallman)

**if this is a typo it isn't one of mine – DRL.*

The One Tun (July) by One of Them Jonathan Waite

"What I'd really like to see is a Tun report from one of them ['fringies']." (Abi Frost, A19). Oh, all right. Fringie credentials: member of well-known media (fringie) group LPG; looked on with derision by Trekkies, Whoies, Blakies and Hitchies for managing to be all four without falling into mental trap which says if you like one you have to loathe the other three....

The July Tun meeting was exceptional for the fact that it was just as hot outside as inside. Again I suffered from the fact that Famous Fans mentioned in Ansible do not wear beanies with downward-pointing arrows stencilled boldly with their names: Abi Frost, John Joyce and even John Clute might well have leapt nimbly from the path of the brimming cider glass that acts as man-with-red-flag to my horseless carriage. I shall never know. (Or shall I?)

The Infernal Machine seems to have stabilized on “Defender”, a game beyond my capabilities, which was a great relief. Ken Mann came up with a very interesting-looking cover wrapped round a couple of very student examples of Prose From Out There. Becon people added to the fun, wandering heroically around with great huge long cardboard boxes of progress reports.... What? Oh. No, I don’t recall any conspiring as such: most of what fringies talk about is thoroughly open and above board. Plans for our 1982 Mediacon, I gather, went ahead (realfans welcome, native guide and interpreters at reasonable rates) (*see also A18 – DRL*). Slartibartday was unveiled. Affairs of the Free Barony of the Fair Isles (*SCA-ish group, I think – DRL*) were discussed in the stentorian tones vital to Tun conversation (leading to that painful condition known as “tunnitus”). Rubik’s Cubes and Octagonal Prismoids were twiddled. Dungeons were gloatingly described to hapless adventurers. No doubt other subjects were touched on: I believe someone mentioned SF, but of course he was immediately suppressed.

To sum up: I think the reason I go is that in some small measure the Tun satisfies my pathetic fantasies about being *really* an SF fan. But in the couple of years I’ve been going there, in spite of the transition from innocent, clean-cut young displaced yokel to regular London fan, I have never quite lost the impression that really all sort of exciting deals, feuds, plots and events in general are taking place somehow, without my being let in on it.... (Jonathan Waite)

Magical Media Moments from Steve Green

The Empire Strikes Back was named the best SF movie at the recent Academy of SF, Fantasy & Horror Fiction Awards presentations in Los Angeles, as well as receiving awards for best sfx, actor and director.... *Somewhere In Time* was chosen as best fantasy film, with best music and

costume designs.... *Harlequin* received an award for “outstanding achievement”, *Scanners* as best non-US movie, and Angie Dickinson received the best actress for *Dressed to Kill* despite the fact that all her best scenes used a stand-in.

Critics of the recent *Alien* clone *Inseminoid* include actress Judy Geeson, the ill-fated “mother”: “*not* the sort of film I would want to see ... it is science fiction, fantasy, gone mad. I was led to believe that it was going to be far more sensitive, far more involved in relationships. I don’t like it at all....”

Meanwhile, there are unpleasant rumours circulating re the defunct(ish) *Prisoner* society Six of One and its former Number One (if you’ll pardon the phrase), Richard Goodman. Goodman, credited for the palace coup which wrecked the society (he drafted extensive rules that gave him complete control, even enabling him to shut down the group without consulting the membership – exactly what appears to have happened), has now handed the exclusive rights to *Prisoner*-related material (negotiated with ITC by the original leadership of the society) to a lawyer friend with the dubious name of Dave Langford (no joke), the same guy who helped him draft the aforementioned rules (*are you sure we aren’t talking about the Nova Award? – DRL*) and who has now managed to persuade ITC that only the group he has now formed from the ashes of Six of One should be allowed to publish *Prisoner*-inspired material – much to the chagrin of its membership, who want to form their own (fannish) group.... And as if that isn’t enough, *Prisoner* fandom also seems to have been infiltrated by a sinister group calling themselves the Federation. Originally their plans involved the centralization of fandom under one leadership (guess whose?), but when this collapsed they settled on the more limited membership of Six of One, most notably at *Prisoner* conventions.... Is this a case for the Astral League?

RIP: Paddy Chayefsky, author of the Ken Russell movie *Altered States* (credited to “Sidney Aaron” following an acrimonious argument with KR over the treatment of his writing), after a long battle against cancer. (Steve Green)

Ansible: The Newsletter of British SF, Fandom and Joseph Nicholas
LETTERS &c

Joseph Replies To His Critics

“I deny it all. Well, some of it, at least. Just that bit there, actually – the bit where Judith denies the rumours linking me with her. Not so; they’re all true (I first voiced them after all). Definitely unfounded, on the other hand, are those linking me (or perhaps me and Valma Brown, or possibly just Valma) to Christine Ashby’s wheelchair. Or even Vera Lonergan’s cats, for that matter. Not to mention Denny Lien, for it is he who should be linked to a wombat, not Joyce. Never mind the link between Sally Underwood and Chris Evans, or that between Chris Priest and John Foyster, or – but who is the Secret Master of GUFF, and what other hidden dirt does he have on too many people to conveniently name? Rush only LOTS OF MONEY to Joseph Nicholas under the clock at Waterloo Station, and even less will be revealed. Because now I have to go away and invent it all, of course....” (JN)

Judith Hanna adds: “Christine’s comment on Joseph [A19] ... Marc has misquoted. What she actually said, on the post-Advention Barossa Valley tour, was: ‘Joseph is such a nice boy ... I wonder what he’s like when he’s sober.’”

Cultural Studies? Adrian Mellor (12 Streatham Ave, Greenbank Park, Liverpool, L18 1JG) has a weirdly terrifying challenge for you all: “I’m to teach a Sociology of Literature course which has a small SF component, and Macmillan’s have asked me to dust off my research and produce an essay on SF and fandom for a forthcoming textbook for Communications and Cultural Studies students. As a consequence, I’m getting in touch with old friends and trying to make new contacts in an attempt to update my knowledge of the current state of the culture. I’m particularly interested in what’s happened to British fandom in the past few years [and] in anything that comments on the state of British fandom.” *OK, all you budding psychohistorians, this is your Big Chance....*

Spinoff. For moderately boring reasons I recently asked selected Continental fans which authors (UK/US) were popular in their country. *Ansible* readers would just love to hear the replies, I’m sure – *Pascal Thomas (France):* “I’m not sure I can answer with absolute certitude: I’m not privy to the publishers’ sales figures, but I can guess a few things. A.E. van Vogt is certainly the top seller here (he boasts about it in his usual senile way in an introduction to *New Voices 4*, which has nothing whatsoever to do with the subject). After

him, Ray Bradbury (still on the strength of *Martian Chronicles* ...). After them should come Arthur C. Clarke (wave the Union Jack, Philip K. Dick, Isaac Asimov, John Brunner, Philip Jose Farmer and Frank Herbert or Clifford Simak. Not sure about the order, though! ... Now, in terms of 'respect' ... That's a toughie. You know as I do that some critics don't respect anyone (JN being an outstanding example your side of the Channel). Again, a clear winner: Philip K. Dick (although we are starting to wonder if he has not become as senile as AEvV. After that ... J.G. Ballard, Brunner, Silverberg, Herbert, Spinrad, Sturgeon, Farmer. Just a feeling...."

Roelof Goudriaan (Netherlands): "Bestselling foreign Big Heads: Jack Vance, Isaac Asimov; van Vogt, Le Guin, Herbert; Wyndham, Anderson, Heinlein. Jack Vance is, I think, an indisputable number 1, with Astral closely following. After that, things get a bit more shady. Le Guin is very popular right at the moment; some of her newest books are even done in hardcover right away (rare for the Netherlands). Herbert is popular because of his *Dune* (surprise, surprise), which is now available in its 7th printing (rare too in this lowly region).... Maybe Clarke should be mentioned too; I don't think so but others tend to disagree with me (stupid habit). Bradbury is conspicuously missing! Besides this, praise and respect fall to Dick, Disch, Priest, Wilhelm and Sturgeon...." (*Lots of thanks: DRL.*)

COA

Al Fitzpatrick, Clear Lake Village (Apt 1601), 1243 Bay Area Blvd, Houston, Texas 77058, USA // Richard Kennaway, CSA, UEA, Norwich, NR4 7TJ // Chris Lewis, 30 Roberts Road, High Wycombe, Bucks // Peter Singleton, *Ruskin Ward*, Park Lane Special Hospital, Maghull, Liverpool, L3 1HW (ward change only ...)

Cons

Denvention will probably happen even as you read this. The latest release I have contains such staggering information as "There will be a Logan's Run taking place at DVII...." Argh. **Novacon 11:** people worried about non-processing of memberships can now rest easy – the job has been taken over by dynamic Helen Eling from ailing Jean Frost. Still £5.50 full membership,

to Helen at 124 Galton Rd, Smethwick, Warley, West Midlands, B67 5JS. **Eurocon 84:** John Brunner's plans were further discussed at Faircon, the only sour note coming when Bob "The Other" Shaw announced that if Albacon II failed to get the '83 Eastercon, he would have no choice but to bid against the '84 Eastercon/Eurocon (mass cringe from other Glaswegians).... **Toronto In 85** is a possible rumoured Worldcon bid, opposing Madison and (maybe, if they don't win in '83) Australia. Meanwhile, Atlanta is opposing New York and Philadelphia for '86. And in 1984, well....

Infinitely Improbable

You've Read It Everywhere Else, Why Not In Ansible? Yes, another absolutely finally retired writer, Arthur C. Clarke, has been lured by the diminutive charms of Judy-Lynn del Rey and a \$1,000,000 advance (not necessarily in that order) and has contracted to write *2010: Odyssey Two*, a sequel to some book of his which we momentarily forget. (Source: *SFC*, *Locus*, *The Sun*, *The Beano*, etc.) This has greatly grieved Jerry Pournelle, who with Larry Niven had just flogged the unwritten *The Foot* (being the original *Lucifer's Hammer* synopsis, before they took out the aliens) for approx \$600,000 and wanted to claim this as "the highest advance ever for an sf novel" (media stuff by Sagan and horror stuff by King not counting, of course. Meanwhile, *Timescape* continues to win everything except a Hugo nomination – this time the JCW Memorial Award.... RIP: George O. Smith of *Venus Equilateral* fame.... **Births:** Pat & Graham Charnock have produced something weighing 8½ lb and called James Stephen (on 1 August) – a brick, they say, but personally I think it must be a cat.... **Leeds Novacon?** Well, not quite, but the rumour is that the Leeds mob will be ferried in to spare old and tired Brummies the effort of running Novacon 12. "They run everything else, why not Novacon?" commented ashen-faced TAFF candidate Rog Peyton.... **Dammit!** says Judith Hanna, annoyed by Our Joseph's description of her, last issue, as a "diminutive redhead". *Ansible* apologizes to raven-haired Amazon Judith Hanna.... **Lost & Found:** the irrepressibly light-fingered Maules found a carrier-bag in the pub after the Leeds-US wedding reception (4 July): if it was yours, claim your *London A-Z* and *TAFF Talk 8* from them.... **Pan** are spending their entire SF publicity budget on a whopping promotion of *Lord Valentine's Castle* (Oct 9).... **Locus/SFR/Thrust** magazines on the cheap? Such are the plans of indefatigable telephone user Paul Turner, who reckons

20-45% discounts can be got by group buying: write to 75 Horniman Dr, Forest Hill, SE.23.... **Dark They Were & Golden-Eyed** definitely appears to have closed for good.... **The SF Foundation:** the official termination of lovely writer-in-residence Colin Greenland provoked a bit in the *Sunday Times* – a “scurrilous attack” (G. Hay), a “harmless piece ... which went so blasphemously far as to indicate that Colin G had through being housed there helped the Foundation survive and it was a shame he had been sacked” (J. Clute). Anyway, seems *Foundation* is now strong and vital in all ways; though after many Council meetings George Hay “wonders, while listening to the long and painfully intricate discussions of grants, bursaries, library administration, financial cuts, recovery of debts, etc., whether the academics involved ever discovered what SF was actually *about*.” (Some folk, like nice Acting Administrator Charles Barren, are excepted from George’s mockery.) ... **The Winifred Jackson Memorial Perpetual Challenge Cup For The Best Front Flower Garden** was presented at the annual Horticultural Show in Moreton Pinkney (22 Aug) to a proud but humble Ian Watson. Anticlimactically, he’s been commissioned by Channel 4 TV to write the first script (by December) for an original SF series *Mindprobe* devised by I. Watson – and will be commissioned to write more episodes later. *Ansible* would much rather print such joyful news than base rumours of how his novel *Metamorphoses* (the one after *Deathhunter* [Oct 1]) has failed as yet to find a home even with the Old Firm, Gollancz.... **Focus**, the BSFA’s withered organ, is to be stimulated to new life by fairly dynamic fans David Swinden, Chris Bailey and Allen Sutherland.... **Robert Sheckley** resigned as *Omni* fiction editor when B. Bova wouldn’t allow him time off to finish a novel, and has been replaced by universally celebrated SF personality Ellen Datlow.... **Lies, Lies:** Which editor of an SF line producing numerous Marion Zimmer Bradley novels has never yet been able to finish one? Alas, *Ansible* drunkenly promised not to tell.... **Flash! Honesty Momentarily Hits Hugo Rulings!** After Denvention overrode the rules to “hold over” *Superman II* to the 1982 Hugos despite its 1980 appearance (and thus 1981-only eligibility), Chicon ’82 has decided to stick by the book and refuse 1982 eligibility to this overrated film. One fears they will yet back down: such integrity would be more convincing did they not practically beg fandom to overrule them at the Denvention business meeting, and did they not implicitly subscribe to the notion that items prejudged as “important” should be given all possible help to get on the Hugo ballot while “lesser” works (e.g. by British authors)

without “enough of a distribution to allow for informed voting” (their phrase for *Superman II*) should not.... **Australian News** keeps coming: I blame Joseph for this. Try subscribing to the newszine on the spot, *Thyme*: 3/\$2A air, 6/\$2A surface, agent is Joseph (address in GUFF flyer).... **The Free Space Society** sends a wad of bumf: pro-space, naturally; anti-“international zone” laws and especially the UN Moon Treaty; generally eager to get Out There and watch their inferiors snuff it in an “inevitable” WWIII. £10 yearly (or £12.50 if you wish to be a “Space Settler” under the far-seeing Presidency of George Hay); monthly newsletter; SAE/cheque to “Ingleneuk”, Waterside Rd, Kirkintilloch, Glasgow, G66 3HB.... **It Can’t Be Good, It’s SF**: “I do feel that *Solaris* is the least successful of my films because I was never able to eliminate completely the science-fiction association.” (Andrei Tarkovsky, *NFT Bulletin*) ... **Triple First Award**: send your unpublished first novel to the Bodley Head/Penguin/BCA comp before 1982, and I guarantee that if it’s SF it will never even be seen by judge Graham Greene nor published by said three outfits for a £5000 advance. (The award is theoretically wide-open, but Bodley Head’s Max Reinhardt patently wants a best-seller and promises to make sure Green will read “as few as possible” of 2,500 expected entries.) ... **World Fantasy Con** denies censorship, explaining that their phrase “we will not have any unicorns in the artshow” doesn’t mean they won’t have any unicorns in the artshow.

Hazel’s Language Lessons #12

candiru a minute fish in the Amazon river and its tributaries which has been said to dive into the male urethra when one urinates under water while bathing. (*Stedman’s Medical Dictionary*)

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Addendum

[squeezed on to included TAFF flyer]

False Language Lesson: Hazel has formally Disowned the Language Lesson on the back page (inserted by yr humble editor in her absence), for reasons of tedium, excessively good taste, etc. Instead we offer the *real Hazel's Language Lesson #12: Tamachek* (Tuareg to you and me) – *arenneas* a camel with the habit of neighing for joy when it sees something very agreeable; *enerregreg* a camel which roars mournfully when it becomes separated from its master or from another camel with whom it has been grazing.... **Media Mixups:** I know nothing of media doings, and was duly embarrassed when, after intrepid investigative journalist Steve Green's bit on *Blade Runner* (A18 "film ... from a Phil Dick detective story ... don't know which one") it turned out that even *Omni* readers knew the sourcebook was *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (sans sheep in the film). In Steve's bit this issue I cagily altered "novel" to "writing" re Chayefsky: research (looking at the poster) indicates the word is "screenplay"....

Ansible 21

November 1981

Ansible 21 • Editor: Dave Langford, 22 Northumberland Avenue, Reading, Berkshire, RG2 7PW, United Kingdom.

Milford (UK) Writers' Conference 1981

Geoff Ryman

The Yooping Pricket Ate a Rizzarded Snig and Passed a Collet from Its Hypural

Imagine something on your plate that you would not wish to step in if you saw it on the pavement, and which requires only diced carrot to look like a special effect for Ken Russell's *The Devils*: A Milford breakfast. Grey runny powdered egg on greasy bread. God, the food was terrible: too little, too early, breakfast at nine, supper at six. The feeling of debilitation was compounded by the bar arrangements – we just signed for drinks and served ourselves any time day or night, leaching out any remaining trace of vitamins with alternating doses of coffee and booze. The Milford sensation is hollow-eyed, jaded exhaustion from too many late nights, too many words read, too much talk, too much booze and not enough to eat.

There were 120,000 words to read this year – and they really did have to be read at least twice. The standard of criticism was dauntingly high. Flaws in logic, incorrect word usage, gaps in characterization, and mistakes in tone were pounced upon and thoroughly chewed over for the benefit of the writers. My own 10,000 word chunk was admirably digested. But what I really found valuable about Milford was the reading and the criticizing. I found I was out of touch with my own reactions to what I read. I'd shrug off my own boredom during the boring bits, or ignore my own squinting confusion when the logic was faulty. The opportunity to criticize a story while there was still a chance for it to have a constructive effect focused the

mind wonderfully. I had to notice I was bored and come up with a reason why. One thing: I'll never be quite so tolerant of my own stuff again. But enough of that.

George RR Martin, fresh from two Hugos in one year, spent about £50 on the video machine, topping Chris Priest's high score last year of £20. Malcolm Edwards and Chris Evans played something called Macho Pool, the main object of which seemed to be to bash hell out of the balls, preferably against the walls or floor. Edwards played with the cue between his legs, but Evans was clear winner, reducing the tip of his cue to a splintered pulp with one masterful shot. Fans of Milford pool will be distressed to learn that the Cowper Tappens were finally discovered by the Management – those little holes will have to be left unblocked from now on. Someone invented, or simply remembered, a cocktail called the Death Wish, which may or may not have included Guinness and Pernod among its ingredients. Lisa Tuttle, revealing the raunchy Texas Barfly aspect of her personality, did a truly staggering imitation of a large mouthed frog that should have dislocated her jaw. It was also Lisa who slid out of her chair and collapsed onto the floor in a kind of giggling pudding during Call My Bluff. Something about native drums being stitched together out of hymens, with only plastic replicas being now available. Call My Bluff is the perfect Milford game – all those writers digging up ludicrous words or making up even more ludicrous definitions for them. Cambism was defined as cannibalism with your mouth full. A Caccagogue is nothing to do with a synagogue or a demagogue, but is an ointment of alum and honey used to cure constipation. A Pricket was defined as a obnoxious guardsman ... and round and round. Gary Kilworth, however, expended his literary talents on this little piece: *There was a sex dev. on parole/Who went looking for a Black Hole/He'd been sucked before/By both ends of a whore/But he wanted to be swallowed whole.*

In his youth, Rob Holdstock used to paste a little white dot onto the bonnet of his car in order, he told us, to seduce women. Unfortunately, he couldn't remember how on earth a little white dot on the bonnet of his car was any use whatever for that particular purpose. He did, however, in one story session, apprise Marianne Leconte of the obvious. In her story a woman backs away from a strange growth and bumps into a man; the bump is described as being soft. Robert informed Marianne that if she backed into him, "it wouldn't feel soft at all, I can tell you, it would be hard." Marianne, a woman of Gallic

experience, agreed that it probably would. I contributed a blunder of my own while criticizing Pip Maddern's story about a crochety, wrinkled old woman. "Pip," I said, "I get the feeling that this is you a couple of years on." That wasn't quite what I meant to say. It wasn't as bad as Dave Garnett though, who started off on the same story with something like "The old bag doesn't half bang on." Explanations did not do much to muffle the blow. Dave Garnett, dead white of face, covered with lines like the glazing on old pottery, achieved distinction on several levels. First, he ate his appalling Milford apple pie with ketchup. Second, he was without doubt the most durable of the late-nighters, surviving the Edwards/Holdstock beer throwing and soda shooting match to be left drinking alone in the dark at 3am. Third, he was the most direct and honest of the critics: "I thought it was fucking awful," was one terse comment.

Things you wouldn't believe if you read them in a story department: Hazel Langford spent her time *knitting* a Klein bottle – a 3-dimensional object with only one surface. Pip and I tried to turn it inside out and it really did begin to get smaller and smaller in a rather unsettling way. Patrice Duvic presented everyone with brandy after the reading of his excellent, amusing story. Kev Smith and Andrew Stephenson drove me nuts with a stupid game in which I was supposed to decode a "digital" number code that used toothpicks. It turned out I should have counted the number of fingers on the table instead.

Very suddenly, it seemed, everything was over. We all hung around the bar the last day, paying our bills, feeling a bit let down. Lisa Tuttle came in bemused, having found a pair of green rabbit ears attached to what looked like ladies' knicker elastic in her room. Cambrian Chris Evans put them on and stuck out his teeth for a photo. "Is that what you call a Welsh Rabbit?" asked George Martin. And somehow that was that. Kisses on cheeks, shaking of hands, writing of addresses on little bits of paper that would soon be lost. Groups of people began to stagger away. Chris Evans fell asleep on Marianne's maternal lap as Kev Smith drove us home. Oh yes, there was this fellow named Dave Langford there as well, but most of you know about him. (GR)

Denvention II: 39th Worldcon, September 3-7 1981

Joyce Scrivner: Denvention was disorganized, though bits of the con were relaxing and/or fun. Good fannish panels even if they *did* cancel the one on the 1980s. DUFF made \$500 and TAFF \$300 in auctions etc. Sandy Sanderson & his wife (Secretary & Treasurer of the London 1957 Worldcon) showed up from Long Island gaffiation for the first time in 20 years: talk about ancient fans reincarnating. Barry Longyear told tales of how he'd been insulted by pro friends who were sure he was out to take over SFWA. Why he would want to, no-one ever thought.... Jeff Duntemann, dual Hugo nominee this year, is in bad odour with SFWA/Locus due to his promotion of his stories in General Technics fanzines: the low ballot totals don't/didn't help. (*16 nominations were enough to get you one the short-story shortlist: Duntemann was there twice, apparently to the annoyance of the Denvention committee since local author Ed Bryant was thus squeezed out.*) Bruce Pelz will bust a gut if someone doesn't finish a TAFF report soon.... (*Ahem. Change of subject-*)

The Hugo Awards & Suchlike: NOVEL *The Snow Queen*/Joan Vinge; NOVELLA "Lost Dorsai"/Gordon Dickson; NOVELETTE "The Cloak & the Staff"/Dickson; SHORT "Grotto of the Dancing Deer"/ Clifford Simak; NONFICTION BOOK *Cosmos*/Carl Sagan (who did not deign to send anyone to collect it); PRO EDITOR Edward Ferman; PRO ARTIST Michael Whelan; FANZINE *Locus*; FANWRITER Susan Wood; FANARTIST Victoria Poyser; DRAMATIC PRESENTATION *The Empire Strike Back*. (Gorblimey. I'll just reiterate my grumble about how *Timescape* has now won the Nebula, BSFA Award, John W Campbell Memorial Award, Australian Ditmar, etc, without even making the Hugo shortlist; similar comments apply to universal runner-up *The Shadow of the Torturer*; and again we see the ancient principle of giving the GoH – Simak – an award whether or not he's written anything of discernible merit. *Locus* has printed details of the byzantine vote-counting system, with such remarks as that "the Disch story was popular enough to come close to winning, but not popular enough for second or third place". No comments.) **JWC "New Writer" Award:** Somtow Sucharitkul; **Gandalf "Grand Master Of Fantasy":** Catherine L Moore. (The Gandalf had been excluded from the Hugo Ballot, but at the awards ceremony someone called Killus leapt on to the stage and invited the audience to award the thing to GoH Moore by democratically clapping their hands. They did. Gosh wow.)

Worldcon Site Selection: The voting went Baltimore 916, Australia 523, Copenhagen 188, No Preference 37, plus piffle to a total of 1679 ballots. Baltimore announced that their worldcon would be called Constellation, with GoH John Brunner and FGoH Dave “Anyone who likes *New Worlds* isn’t a member of the human race” Kyle. Address: Box 1046, Baltimore, MD 21203, USA. \$10 supp \$15 att to end of year, then \$10 & \$20 to June 1982. Cheques to 41st World SF Convention....

Such overwhelming defeat of foreign bids is pretty discouraging, of course. A Britain in '84 bid masterminded by Malcolm Edwards was kept dark until after the '83 results above were known (in order not to sabotage Australia): as a result, certain UK fans present at Denvention cleverly announced that since they knew nothing of this bid, it was therefore a mere hoax and in any case a rotten idea. Since Australia is bouncing back with a Melbourne in '85 bid, the odds are that Britain will graciously withdraw and urge its supporters to vote for the highly deserving Australian bid (newsletter from David Grigg, 1556 Main Rd, Research, Vic 3095, Australia: subscriptions taken in lieu of pre-supply memberships). '85 opposition is rumoured to be Albuquerque, Louisville, Minneapolis, Madison and Toronto (“This is virtually the one thing that Glicksohn & I both agree on – that there is no group competent to run a Worldcon in Toronto fandom at the moment....” – Taral). And New York, Philadelphia & Atlanta in '86. I can't cope.

Almost Credible Rumours from Martin Morse Wooster

[On no account should anyone read this despicable stuff.]

I've done some digging, and have come up with what is the most probable explanation of the state of the “Carl Sagan” novel *Contact*. The novel, as by Carl Sagan, has not yet been written. Sagan did indeed sign for a \$2,000,000 advance but this is contingent on the production of an outline acceptable to Simon & Schuster. The actual writer of the novel, Sagan's wife Ann Druyan, has been cruelly described as “one of the more prominent of the New York plagiarists, specializing in well-written treatments of other people's books.” It has even been wickedly suggested that the outlines Druyan submits are such blatant plagiarisms that knowledgeable subeditors bounce the outlines and inform the authors whom Druyan has stolen from. Among the books she

would have liked to use were Gunn's *The Listeners* and Spinrad's *Songs From The Stars*. All Sagan has been paid is about \$250,000; it is uncertain when, if ever, the remainder will be paid. I have heard that when senior editors called in Sagan for a conference about the outline, his cosmic mind soared above trivial technical points; he apparently wished to avoid discussion of the novel and discourse about *Cosmos* instead. "It was obvious," I was told, "that Sagan had never read the outline."

It should be noted that neither Dave Hartwell nor his staff at Timescape have anything to do with Carl Cosmos; Sagan has been left in the hands of others more used to books that sell, um, billions and billions of copies. I've also learned that no authors have actually filed suit against Sagan: no manuscript as yet exists for a writer to establish a claim against.

You can't possibly object to Baltimore winning the Worldcon, what with a British author as guest of hono(u)r. But I'm sure *Ansible* readers would like to know exactly why John Brunner was chosen. "Brunner is high-tech," explained chair Michael Walsh. Brunner a techie? "You see," Walsh said, "he fits our theme." What theme was that? "Well, um, we all have to live in the *future*, see, and Brunner helps describe the future for us!" Oh. (Martin Morse Wooster)

Hillcon (Beneluxcon 1981)

Joseph Nicholas

This was held in Rotterdam over the weekend of 28-30 August: GoHs were Jack Vance, Frederik Pohl (attending the WORLD SF meeting held simultaneously) and Kate Wilhelm, with Damon Knight, Chris Priest, Lisa Tuttle, Rob Holdstock and US expatriate (living in Amsterdam) Rachel Pollack also present; plus Dutch authors Wim Gijzen and Tais Teng, editors/translators Anne-Marie Kindt and Werner Fuchs, and many others. It was apparently the largest Beneluxcon to date: during his Saturday stint on the registrations desk Roelof Goudriaan signed in enough walk-ins to take the total over 600 – more than the hotel could comfortably accommodate, the committee not having expected such popularity. But it was successful nevertheless: even with only a meagre knowledge of Dutch (no matter; everyone spoke some English) I thoroughly enjoyed myself, and could only wish that more than a few British fans had been present....

The programme seemed pretty varied, though I only attended the English-language items – apart from the opening address by the Dutch Minister of Culture, which was filmed by a Flemish TV crew putting together a programme about the con (including an interview with Chris Priest, who related the astonishing story of how he'd been paid for it before he'd even said a word). A far cry from the treatment usually accorded to UK Eastercons.... Jack Vance, not noted for saying anything about his relationship to SF, unbent to give us his conception of the literature's nature and purpose which, incredibly, included the statement that it had sprung full-blown from the head of Hugo Gernsback in 1926; at which point I left. Kate Wilhelm predictably praised the increasing importance of women in SF; well and good, up to a point, but the point was passed about halfway through with some remarks about how we wouldn't have had the 60s New Wave if it hadn't been for women SF writers, all so fatuous (and so at odds with the facts) as to stagger credulity. This reverse chauvinism was on full display in the immediately preceding panel "SF Writing By Women", whose only sensible comment was the outraged remark by Marion Zimmer Bradley (on her way back to the USA after being GoH in Stuttgart the weekend before) that it was ridiculous to lump all women SF writers together just because they were all women who happened to write SF. There were items on collaborations, workshopping, and authors reading from their works (English and Dutch); the Dutch-language sessions dealt with Dutch fandom and fantasy, editing, the future of the space programme, and Celtic influences on mediaeval "SF" (which being both $\frac{3}{4}$ -Celt – you didn't know? – and interested in ancient/mediaeval history, I wish I could have understood). Films included *Flash Gordon*, *The Final Programme*, *Close Encounters* and the Italian *Star Wars* ripoff *Star Crash* (featuring Caroline Munro in not very much), plus continuous video presentation of an amateur Dutch film whose sets, modelwork and effects were quite impressive but whose script, from the English summary pinned to the display boards, was unfortunately banal and vonDänikenish. The book room had Ken Slater with a stock of imported paperbacks, and the few Dutch firms who publish SF: their novels may have a lower print-run and a consequently higher price than ours, but the standard of printing and binding was much better ... though most of their cover art seemed to have been looted from UK paperbacks and applied to theirs regardless of the original title. Most of the SF was translations; the feeling about Dutch SF authors seems to be what the Australians call "cultural

cringe”, meaning that it’s no good if it wasn’t written in English: Wim Gijzen’s latest novel has been hailed as so good it could have been written by an American(!). Taste is a variable thing: I remain amazed at the number of Dutch fans who read not only the latest from Priest, Wilhelm, Holdstock *et al*, but also (God help us) the Perry Rhodan weekly magazines.

My only real grouch was the programme delays: despite “multi-tracking” there was continuous slippage throughout the day, so that several items had to be cut short (paradoxically, others were allowed to overrun by anything up to half an hour)... But all the real action, of course, took place in the evenings, in the bar – where ordering a beer gives you a simple choice between Heineken, Heineken and Heineken – and at the room parties – at one of which, so Wim van der Bospoort informed me the next morning, I had *twice* fallen asleep (but the Dutch are as yet unversed in the mystique of felt pen decoration, so there).

It was a good convention: my first Continental one, and certainly not my last. The rest of you should give some thought to investigating them as well....

(Joseph Nicholas)

Serious and Constructive

Shall we have an update on those new SF mags mentioned last issue? *Extro* has had the wonkiest career, the famed first issue slipping from mid-Sept to mid-Nov with an accompanying change of distributors, and now being expected in mid-January. New editorial address c/o Paul Campbell, 27 Cardigan Dr, Belfast, BT14 6LX. Internal disputes as to who owns *Extro*, who edits it, and where all the advertising money has gone, make the power structure a little unclear: Paul Campbell and Robert Allen are bossmen with shadowy figures Langford and Randal Flynn lurking somewhere or other. (Dorothy Davies is no longer connected with the mag.). Expected price: 75p.... *Interzone* has done little overt except to provoke some ire at the revelation that it’s being funded at least in part by a Yorcon II profit said to be in four figures. Alan Dorey mentions that substantial TAFF and GUFF donations will also be made, and that Channelcon declined the offer of financial support. Pressed to reveal appalling secrets in an exclusive telephone interview, David Pringle had no hesitation in saying “The

magazine is still firmly on course”.... **Omni Book of the Future**: fiction rate in the region £20-£40/thou were hinted at by exciting new *BoTF* deputy editor Peter Nicholls, who has replaced boring old Langford and Rohan as Fan Closest To The Heart Of Things. (The non-deputy editor is one Jack Schofield, who has a vast knowledge of SF owing to having once written a thesis on *A Voyage to Arcturus*.) Our Peter also revealed that issue 2 was likely to contain a Reader Questionnaire asking such things as “Do you want SF in future issues?”, the will of the public being taken as law. Issue 1, incidentally, contains an Asimov reprint of sufficient awfulness to be a likely influence on the answers.... Meanwhile, dummy copies of both *BotF* and *Extro* are even now inundating the world’s wastebaskets. Onward, with **New Style** magazine ... but perhaps you hadn’t heard of that one? Neither had I, yet Simon Ounsley informs me that my *Ad Astra* columns have been mysteriously resurfacing in this “romantic” monthly magazine. When quizzed about this *AA* editor James Manning hastily paid some overdue money but otherwise failed to comment. Extended subscriptions for anyone sending a *New Style* containing work by me (even knowing the address would be a start).... **Maxim Jakubowski**’s sf/music anthology, turned out into the snow by cruel Sir Jasper at Virgin, contains millions of famous names (Sladek, Watson, Brunner, Roberts, Moorcock, Silverberg etc) yet is so far homeless: Virgin, meanwhile, have been having fun sending letters to contributors saying “it was all Jakubowski’s fault, we desperately wanted to publish your story but he wouldn’t let us” – a statement somewhat at variance with reality.... **Ian Watson**’s sf/art anthology *Pictures at an Exhibition* is being released at Cymrucon (mid-Nov): it contains many illustrations by filthy pro Pete Lyon and has been set on a word-processor devoid of italics (so HOW is EMPHASIS indicated in the TEXT? You MAY WELL ask).... **J. Mike Barr**, even more famous filthy pro artist and anagram, has been doubling his cartoon output for various comic papers, and may shortly have to resign from the BSFA.... **Chris Priest**, for reasons I cannot reveal, now loathes the BBC with an inexpressible loathing....

Silicon 5: 28-31 Aug

Rob Hansen

Held again at the Grosvenor Hotel in Newcastle, this was the same

minimally-programmed and limited-attendance relaxacon as ever. Youngest attendee was *enfant terrible* Paul Turner; the observation was made that Ian Williams was old enough to be his father. “It hasn’t been that long has it Ian?” I asked, manfully resisting the temptation to tell Paul he ought to change his name to Nicholas.

In the SF quiz the Welsh team won yet again, your reporter discovering he had the embarrassing ability to answer all the questions on Edgar Rice Burroughs, being even able to correct at length a wrong answer given by the questionmaster. By the simple expedient of substituting Alan Dorey for Paul Williams and *Ansible*’s ubiquitous editor, the Welsh team became a Friends In Space team for Fannish Fortunes, a quiz not unlike the TV show of similar name hosted by Bob Monkhouse. They duly won. The statistics required for this quiz were based on questionnaires all Silicon attendees were required to fill out on pain of missing free booze: among other things it produced the hitherto unsuspected information that Kev Smith has the third largest male appendage in fandom. Better things to do with your hormones than push up hair, eh Kev? While I’m talking about appendages I should mention a fascinating innovation at this con called “Famous Appendages of Fandom”. Yet another quiz: small sections of photographs of well-known fans had been taken from context, enlarged and projected onto the screen, leaving the two teams the task of figuring out what they were looking at and who it was attached to. Would you have believed, for instance, that a section of picture showing Graham Charnock’s right nostril and part of his cheek, projected from whatever angle, would look like a shapely and very female left breast? Strange but true, as Ripley might say. At still another quiz – charades this time – a wondrous moment was provided when Jim Barker’s team, wearing caps advertising the film *Outland*, began singing that well-known ditty “Io, Io, it’s off to work we go.”

There was more to Silicon than quizzes, of course – indeed your reporter regards it as the most enjoyable event on the fannish calendar – but since *Ansible* is a serious science fictional newsletter he feels that the stories of sex and violence, of strange goings-on and Ritchie Smith’s sandwiches, are best kept for the less cultured pages of his own fanzine. (Rob Hansen)

(Best moment in “Famous Appendages” concerned a seductive white curve on the screen. “It’s a knee. No, no....” “It’s a tit.” “A left tit” “The team is correct. It is a tit. Now, whose is it?” Long bafflement. At last the complete

photo goes up, a photo from last Silicon where another ludicrous game had enticed fans into boiler suits interestingly stuffed with balloons: “As you see, it is of course Alan Dorey’s left tit.” ... Now, some further snippets from my spies at Hillcon –)

BSFA business manager Ken Eadie alienated millions of people (even hard-to-alienate Martin Hoare) by constant diatribes on the wonderfulness of the BSFA, represented as (or as shortly to be) a wonderful media-oriented organization whose magazines were filled with many an easy-to-read picture, and which offers huge memberships discounts if you introduce new members (a fact unknown to the rest of the committee)... Not content with being the biggest-selling author in Holland, Jack Vance was for three days by far the *biggest*, exceeding even Isaac Astral in girth. Rumours that he speaks from time to time were largely unconfirmed. Marion Zimmer Bradley was noted for “defensive monologues in a loud voice, and a terrible way with blue eye-shadow”.... Les Flood and Pam Bulmer were observed sitting very close together, blushing a trifle too often for discretion’s sake.... Rob Holdstock temporarily lost the sight of one eye and the use of an important organ when attacked by a swarm of mosquitoes.... Joe Nicholas was briefly reported to have fallen in love again “but rumours of lipsalve marks on a mirror tend to discount this”.... Also there: Malcolm Edwards, Gerbish, Naveed Khan, Katy McAuley....

The Silicon Poll

A Silicon programme item (mentioned elsewhere by Rob Hansen) compiled vast amounts of data from a special compulsory questionnaire. Here are the results, as many as I can fit in. The figures are said to be percentages, but don’t always sum to 100.... Many thanks to Sue Williams.

FAVOURITE UK FAN Eve Harvey 20, Greg Pickersgill 15, Roy Kettle 15, Jim Barker 15, John Harvey 15, D. West 10, “Me” 10. FAVOURITE US FAN Terry Hughes 27, Rich Coad/Linda Pickersgill/Rochelle Dorey 9, Avedon Carol/Stu Shiffman/ Alexis Gilliland/Moshe Feder/Joyce Scrivner 6. WORST DRESSED FAN Brian Burgess/ D. West 12, Alun Harries/Greg/Abi Frost/ Peter Roberts/Gerry Webb 6. BEST DRESSED: Joe Nicholas/Chris Atkinson 16, Alan Dorey/Webb 13, Roberts 6. BEST FNZ Twll-Ddu 24, Tappen/Ansible 20, 2nd Hand Wave 16, Dot 12. BEST PRODUCED FNZ

Twll-Ddu 13, *Tappen/Drilkjis/Arena* 10, *Maya(!) / Out of the Blue / 2HW / Locus* 7. WORST PRODUCED *Fanzine Fanatique* 46. MOST LITERATE FAN Langford 34, Nicholas 18, Malcolm Edwards/ Kev Smith 8, Bob Shaw/Roz Kaveney 5. MOST ILLITERATE Pete Presford 21, Ken Man 14, Keith Walker/Dorey 11, “Me” 7. MOST CUDDLY Eve Harvey 16, Barker 11, Harry Bell/Ian Williams 8. MOST LOVABLE Eve 13, Rog Peyton/West/“Me”/Dave Bridges 7. FIRST FMZ THAT COMES TO MIND TD 18, *Stop Breaking Down* 10, *Ansible/Dot/Maya* 8, *Seamonsters/Speculation/Inca-2/True Rat* 5. FIRST CON ATTENDED Tynecon 25, Mancon-5 10, Seacon-75/ Seacon-79/Yorcon-1 7, Novacon-2/Skycon 5. FAVOURITE CON Seacon-79 18, Tynecon 13, Silicon-1/Yorcon-2/Silicon-3 8, Novacon-10/Yorcon-1/Faancon-1 5. LEAST FAVOURITE Mancon 29, Albacon/Yorcon-1/Noreascon-2 9, Seacon-79/Skycon/ Novacon-9/Faancon 6. FAVOURITE CON EVENT Drinking 43, Charades/Disco 9, Bob Shaw Talk 6. BEST FANARTIST Barker 26, Pete Lyon 21, West 16, Rob Hansen 12, Bell 7. BEST FANWRITER Langford 40, Shaw 17, K. Smith 13, Chris Evans 7. WHICH FAN WOULD YOU MOST LIKE TO BE? “Me” 27, “The Richest” 10, Rob Holdstock/West/Greg 7. MOST AWFUL FRINGEFAN GROUP Gannets/ Trekkies 19, Blake’s 7 fans 16, Hitchers 14, Limpwrist/ Cardiff SF Soc 7. WHICH FAN WOULD YOU CHOOSE TO BE MAROONED WITH ON A DESERT ISLAND? Eve 9, Rochelle/Joyce Scrivner (“protein value”)/Chris Atkinson 6. OLDEST ACTIVE FAN Terry Jeeves/Ethel Lindsay/Rog Peyton 12, Bell 9, West/Shaw/ Holdstock 6. FAVOURITE SF WRITER AT AGE 15 Asimov 16, Clarke 13, Bradbury/Capt W.E. Johns/Heinlein/Wells 8, Ballard/C.S. Lewis 5. WORST SF NOVEL EVER *Number of the Beast* 15, *Runts of 61 Cygni C/Any Perry Rhodan/Imperial Earth* 6, *The Troglodytes* 2. WORST FILM *The Black Hole/Plan 9 From Outer Space* 11, *Atomic Submarine/Starcrash/Logan’s Run/Star Trek TMP* 7. WORST SF AUTHOR R.L. Fanthorpe/Ian Williams 9, Doc Smith/ Fred Hoyle 6. WORST TVSF *Space:1999* 21, *Blake’s 7* 16, *Lost In Space/Crossroads* 10. OWNER OF LARGEST MALE FANNISH APPENDAGE Holdstock 52, Ian Williams/Kev Smith 6. LARGEST FEMALE APPENDAGES Pauline Morgan 30, Joy Hibbert 19, Linda Pickersgill/Roz Kaveney 7. FUNNIEST FAN Kettle 41, Holdstock 15, Barker/Langford 9. DRUNKEST FAN Greg 32, Kettle 21, West 18, Bell 8, Langford 5. FAN WHO FALLS OVER MOST West 35, Kettle 27, Greg 8, Maule/Langford/Nicholas 5. SHORTEST

FAN Ian Williams 62, Jean Frost 10, Dulcie Jackson 8, Wendy Cruttenden 5. TALLEST FAN Langford 25*, Chris Hughes 20, K. Smith 14, "Rob Holdstock lying down" 11, West/Andrew Brown 5. DEAFEST Langford 90+. WHICH FAN SHAVES HIS BEARD/MOUSTACHE OFF MOST FREQUENTLY? K. Smith 60, Holdstock/Langford ("Every morning") 6. WORST FNZ EVER *Fanzine Fanatique* 20, *Zealot/Ycz* 13. WRITER OF THE MOST BORING LOCS Joe Nicholas 48, Arnold Akien 11, Harry Andruschak/Ken Mann 7. MOST PRETENTIOUS CURRENT SF OR FAN PUBLICATION *Omni* 24, *Foundation* 16, *Vector* 12, *Asimov's/Interzone* 8.

* I say, don't people have some funny opinions? The TALLEST FAN category in particular offers a useful parable for the Hugo awards, the heights over 6 feet of those placed being respectively about 2½", 8", 3", unknown, zero and 10". Not "tallest" but "tallest I can think of offhand". *Just* like the Hugos....

Cons

Unicon attendance approx 195 (50 less than 1980); the need to book facilities makes it likely that next Unicon will be in '83 rather than '82.... **Becon:** "there will not be a Becon 2" (Jon Cowie).... **Novacon 11:** even the BSFA has published this con's problems. Jean Frost asked to resign as registrations boss; boyfriend Chris Smith (chair of defunct Birmingham SF Fil Soc) shouts abuse at nice Stan Eling and refuses to let him collect membership records; panic; *Ansible 20* to have featured invitation for you all to panic and write in with duplicate membership details; *Ansible* not told after all; Tim "Judge Dredd" Stannard puts screws on Smith (whose obscure grudge apparently had to do with the BSFG's failure to offer massive financial aid to the doomed BSFFS/Filmcon); eleventh-hour rescue of records by Phill Probert (said to be the only BSFG member at whom Smith is not prone to shout abuse); BSFG magnanimously pays £90 Filmcon debts; Novacon saved; Smith threatens lawsuits for anyone (i.e. Steve Green) saying that he lives with J. Frost (the address is but a coincidence) or that there's not enough money to refund all Filmcon memberships; meanwhile, far to the south, Grand Metropolitan Hotels (owners of the Grand in Brum, where Filmcon would have taken place) become cagy about negotiations for an '83 Eastercon, at least temporarily: the moral is that any cancelled con is heap

bad business for fandom at large.... **Metrocon** is the name of the Langford/KSmith/Jackson/Maule/Hoare/Harvey/Stewart/etc Eastercon '83 bid: the general venue should be sufficiently obvious.... **Albacon II** (rival bid) has put out a handsome flyer showing the hotel (Central, Glasgow); both are taking presupporting memberships at £1, and we hope to arrange that presupporters of the losing bid (~~Albacon II~~) will receive at least some discount on membership of the winning bid. Addresses: Metrocon, c/o 5 Beaconsfield Rd, New Malden, Surrey, KT3 3HY; Albacon II, c/o 1/R 39 Partickhill Rd, Glasgow, G11 5BY.... Novacon 12: plans to have this run from Leeds have seemingly been discarded.... **Anglicon** attendance was approx 45, rumours Chris Hughes: "Too many cons".... **Baltimore Worldcon '83**: Avedon Carol promises "I'll do my best to create a place for 'our kind' [fanzine fans] at Constellation, but it can't be guaranteed, and most future US Worldcons won't even have the facilities to *try* it".... **Eurocon 82** date still not finalized by organizer Pascal Ducommun, thus delaying John Brunner's plans for millions of Brits to attend and win **Eurocon 84** for the UK. Possible Eastercon/Eurocon 84 rivalry (hinted at last issue) will have to be resolved at the Channelcon business meeting: can't have someone winning the Eurocon bid in 82 only to be defeated as an Eastercon (current plans being to combine the two) at Eastercon 1983....

Infinitely Improbable

Rob & Sheila Holdstock "are splitting up. No drama, no bad feeling, no hostility.... One of the more trivial things we are hoping can be accepted is that anyone who has a party etc. and would normally have invited us *both* can continue to do so; being in the same room together really *doesn't* induce in us the terrible need to rip out central heating pipes." (RPH) COAs to follow....

Video Disaster: *L'Invasion des Bollardes Enormes*, John Collick's vast video epic subtitled "The Life & Times of D. West", was triumphantly completed and almost immediately stolen, along with Paul Oldroyd's (insured) video recorder, etc. Now we shall never see the D. West Vasectomy Scene, alas.... **Ken Eadie** has been cordially invited to resign from the BSFA committee, have beaten all previous records by making himself universally unpopular in under 6 months.... **The SFWA Needs You**, says UK rep Ian Watson: prospective Nebula log-rollers (3 shorts or one novel sold) should send SAE for membership form to Bay House, Banbury Rd, Moreton

Pinkney, nr Daventry, Northants, NN11 6SQ. We understand that the bug in the SFWA mailing-label system has been corrected, the computer records no longer being liable to be eaten by Somtow Sucharitkul's cat.... **Harlan (yawn) Ellison** is suing Warren Publishing for ever such a lot, editor DuBay having ripped off "A Boy & His Dog" in inadequate disguise.... **John & Marjorie Brunner** would like all sf writers/editors/etc to sign an appeal calling for an end to the arms race: The Square House, Palmer St, S Petherton, Somerset.... **J.S. Cairns** offers free mailing of material for "organizations that I admire" (100-odd copies is the figure mentioned): dunno who he mails it to, but try asking: 15 Brinkburn St, Sunderland, SR4 7RG.... **The Faan Awards** are back, belatedly, with the British bugbear of voting fees gone at last: form enclosed if you can remember what was triffic in 1980. (I'll pass forms on if they're returned to me by 28 Nov).... **Brian Stableford** is taking an evening class in SF every Monday night (7.30-9.30) at Reading U: rush along and learn all about the sociological import of E.E. Smith.... **Dark They Were & Golden Eyed** may have closed forever, but what is this rumour I hear that another Stokes SF enterprise may open in the USA? ... **Denvention** attendance a piffling 3792, incidentally.... **Booker Prize** not awarded to nasty SFish rubbish, as usual, though Priest's *Affirmation* made the shortlist of 12 while Thomas's *White Hotel* and Lessing's *Sirian Experiments* reached the final six. (One wonders whether winner Salman Rushdie [*Midnight's Children*] would have done as well had he taken John Bush's advice and let his first book *Grimus* be published as nasty SF: but he didn't, it wasn't, and it flopped hugely.) ... **The Affirmation** hasn't sold beyond its first edition (a lack of mighty-thewed barbarians and vast dragons being among the alleged reasons for US SFBC rejection), and neither has the new Watson *Deathhunter*: indeed most UK authors are having a very thin time of it, again.... **Not Only Snide But Untruthful**, says Free Space Society boss Andy Nimmo of my plug for him last issue: no doubt he'll say the same of the Glasgow Bob Shaw's insistence that no-one should send cash to Andy.... "**Astral**" hardcore book and film emporia have been spotted by slumming Michael Ashley: "seems like West has finally gotten his cloven hoof into the Soho publishing scene".... **Colin Greenland** has managed to hang on for another year as NELP/ Foundation writer-in-residence and hopes to publish something real soon now, possibly in *Interzone*.... **Yorcon II**, men of their word, just sent a large TAFF donation.... **Old News**: in 1980 Harlan E. foretold his bestsellerdom in '82, doubtless

referring to *Blood's a Rover* (B&HisD novelization, contract now cancelled by Ace for nondelivery)....

Subscriptions rates 6/£1 UK, 5/£1 Europe, 4/£1 elsewhere.

Labels: Keith Freeman.

Hazel's Language Lessons #13: Ibo

okbòkba' handing child to another &
going off to work without saying
“have newborn child to look after (but
cannot stay)”

òlo' clay eaten by pregnant woman

*[omitted: irreproducible accent mark
under the unaccented “o” in each Ibo
word]*

ANSIBLE 21: 22 Northumberland Ave
Reading, Berkshire, RG2 7PW, U.K.

***Ansible* 22**

December 1981

ANSIBLE #22 (December 1981), from Dave Langford, 22 Northumberland Avenue, Reading, Berks, RG2 7PW, UK. Cartoon by D. West, mailing labels by Keith Freeman – if your label says SUB DUE the computer wants money, while if it says ***** you have become an unperson sustained by (infrequent) editorial whim alone. Alas, printing and paper costs mean it's time for another subscription increase: rates are now 5 issues for £1 in the UK and 4 for £1 everywhere else (I spell this out because certain Diplomacy fans cannot decipher the formula 5/£1. Sterling cheques, pound notes or International Money Orders preferred, to the value of not more than £2.... Complaints and warmish news may be telephoned to (0734) 863453; *Ansible* 23 will probably appear in early February. Merry Christmas, etc.

Skiffy Miscellany (You Read It Here Last!)

Gene Wolfe, emerging from the savage hurly-burly of an editorial conference with Dave Hartwell of Pocket Books, has dazedly announced that his “Book of the New Sun” tetralogy will be sprouting a fifth book (delivery Autumn 1982), to be titled *The Urth of the New Sun*....

Sir Fred Hoyle is delivering the 3rd *Omni* lecture (Royal Institution, 12-1-82, tickets free from Andie Burland) on “Evolution from Space” – for refutations of this rather silly theory, see *New Scientist*, *passim*....

Andie Burland herself gets a whole page in the current *Gay News* for her full-time David Bowie look – well, how many of the Darth Vaders at cons wear the same costumes back in their Civil Service jobs?....

Roz Kaveney, not content with being sneered at in *Private Eye* (as “Ros Caveney”) has been working on a *Time Out* article which rips the lid off conventions: thus the fannish infiltration of everywhere continues. Having been asked to insert more quotations from these funny fans, Roz has been

furiously phoning people with requests to say something witty and profound....

Carl Sagan's terrific though unwritten novel *Contact* – see almost any recent *Ansible* for rude comments – did well at the Frankfurt Book Fair, selling French (\$55,000), Spanish (\$100,000), Japanese (\$122,000) and German (\$100,000) rights. Surely this refutes rumours that the synopsis is such that publishers Simon & Schuster dare not show it to anyone? Actually, no: all these sales (reports Maxim Jakubowski) were made on the basis of a “screen treatment” only....

Brian Aldiss declines to comment further on the Booker Prize, of which he was a judge: “Trouble enough is what I think I’ve been in ... [but] nobody could say it hasn’t been fun of a kind, and they got what they asked for by inviting an sf buff in on the act. You probably saw Hermione Lee’s long malevolent piece in the TLS last week, and my pleasant, even angelic, and Olympian response this week. [Dated 7-11-81] I’m afraid that some of these academic types want to keep the novel to themselves – which must not be allowed.... Note that although old pals like Ballard, Moorcock and Priest didn’t get into the finals, there was a distinct science-fictional (or ‘metaphorical-structural’, as we euphemistically say in Booker circles) aura to half the novels in the shortlist. Like: Lessing’s *The Sirian Experiments* is definitely galactic empire stuff, if not a patch on Doc Smith; Thomas’s *The White Hotel* opens with a poem, integral to the novel, which was published in *New Worlds* in its palmier days; and even the winner, Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children*, is about Wyndhamesque telepathic kids....”

Garry Kilworth plans to become a real full-time writer when he achieves redundancy next June: welcome to the poorhouse, Garry....

Maxim Jakubowski is still having fun with Virgin Books, this time with his and Malcolm Edwards’s *Book of SF Lists*: “... sold to Berkley in the USA (for quite a sum, SF-wise) and Granada here. We’re soon to deliver the book, in fact. My relationship with Virgin not having improved after my departure, my successor there – a guy called Devereux appointed barely 48 hours after I’d left, the fact he was Richard Branson’s sister’s boyfriend having of course nothing to do with it – heard about the project and suggested to my London agent that Virgin might be interested in the book. Highly suspicious of this, we declined to submit the outline.... In September, Devereux informs me that

he will no longer be interested in the book (never submitted to him!) in view of the legal battle between Virgin and myself. Malcolm and I then find out in October that Mike Ashley, who was interviewing Devereux on his publishing plans (nil for SF) for *Fantasy Newsletter*, mentions an old project of his in passing and is instantly commissioned by Devereux to do the book on the condition he modifies it and changes the title to ... guess what ... *The SF Book of Lists!* Another great example of the Virgin ethics....”

David Pringle has started publishing a newsletter devoted entirely to J.G. Ballard, titled *News from the Sun*: “Well, if there’s a Jackie Lichtenberg Appreciation Society, why not have something devoted to Jimmy?” Rush two 14p stamps to David at The Terminal Beach, 21 The Village St, Leeds, LS4 2PR....

Steve Gallagher sends lots of data about novels by Steve Gallagher, plus the news that Bob Shaw is the subject of a forthcoming programme in Granada’s *Celebration* arts lots (northwest TV only) – including a 10-minute film adaptation of a Shaw story with additional illustrations (?) by “Adam & the Ants” artperson Brian Talbot. Also: “Kiddies’ corner: *Dr Who* is being moved from its Saturday slot (probably with as much howling and gnashing of teeth as would greet a shifting of the summer solstice) and is to go out twice-weekly in the hole that *Triangle* used to occupy. The *really* good news is that the obnoxious Adric is to be killed off.” *Triangle?* Adric? Langford is out of his depth here....

Colin Greenland (who was hurt by my suggestion that he might publish something in *Interzone*) mentions the imminence of his book on *New Worlds – The Entropy Exhibition* – and has had another plug in the *Sunday Times*: “Dr Greenland has plans to start a quarterly of sci-fi *Interzone* which will be the first such in the country”....

Extro magazine may well be dead, again, after the discovery by financial backer Paul Campbell that although whiz-kid Robert Allen had reported vast distribution agreements with Seymour Press (distributors), Smiths and Menzies, the existence of such agreements appeared to be unknown to Seymour, or Smiths, or Menzies....

R.I. Barycz reports: “They were recruiting extras for *Revenge of the Jedi* last week. £40 a day and all the roast bantha you could eat. Provided of course you were under 4’6”. Jawaana be a Jawa? The resources of Equity were soon

exhausted, so they went round to the Job Centre in Boreham Wood and had a card put in the window and on the boards. There were no replies so they shifted them down a foot or two lower and had over 100 enquiries by the next morning. Well, there is a recession on. Cough. Rumours involving an unfortunate accident with chain-saw and anaesthetized knees at this address should be denied.”

Dave Garnett gloats: “I’ve had a story in *The Best of Mayfair*. Fantasy rather than hard, shall we say, sf. Always knew I’d make it to a ‘Best’ sooner or later...” Encouraged by *Ansible*, Dave has “decided to become a Fan.” Our loss is literature’s gain.

Cymrucon 1981: Cardiff, 14-15 Nov

Brian Stableford

When your editor did me the honour of asking me to compile this report I naturally leapt at the chance to perform some small service in recognition of his generosity in sending me free copies of *Ansible* [1]. Only later did it occur to me that I am not well-qualified to write con reports: I tend to go to bed at midnight, rarely have anything to drink, never attend room parties and spend most of my time either listening to programme items or standing in the nearest betting-shop. For these reasons I tend to miss all the exciting events which such pieces as this are supposed to immortalize for posterity, but I am sure there is no possibility that I will start a trend.

The hotel had the disadvantage of being sited next to the railway [2], and was not what one might call well-appointed. It used to have the compensating advantage of being within walking distance of the Hayes Bookshop, one of the nation’s few four-star second-hand bookshops, but the shop (and, for that matter, the Hayes) was demolished nine months before the con. Such is life. The number of people registered for the con was said to be 250 (many others were turned away, they say) but I never saw more than 30 in any one place at any one time. All programme items were scheduled to last 40 minutes, requiring ingenious timekeeping on the part of the 20 or so people who attended the more popular of them. Rumour has it that there was a continuous filmshow, but the only evidence of this which became available to me was the sound-track of *Star Wars* emanating from behind a sinister curtain

marking the boundary of the hotel restaurant. Centrepiece of the whole affair was the launching of the anthology *Pictures at an Exhibition*, edited by star guest Ian Watson and published by the indefatigable Lionel Fanthorpe under one of his many pseudonyms (“Greystoke Mobray”) [3]. Lionel’s attempt to drink, carouse and organize his way through the whole 48-hour marathon was confounded by an unexpected failure of metabolic endurance about Sunday mid-day. (No wonder he can’t write books the way he used to.) The anthology is remarkable for its italicless typography, its eccentric page numbering and its lack of a title-page. (Well, you can’t remember *everything*, can you?)

Experienced con-goers like Martin Hoare and Roger Peyton (I was going to say “hardened” but thought better of it) declared the affair to be a colossal success, the former placing it in his top five cons and the latter feeling that it had recaptured the spirit of 60s Eastercons [4]. Lionel Fanthorpe was so carried away by it all that he booked the hotel for a re-run next year. A special award for bravery should go to Patricia Fanthorpe, who at one stage overheard her husband described as “a man of few words” and neither fainted nor broke down into hysterical laughter.

The undoubted highlight of the weekend for me was Henry Kissinger winning the Mackeson Gold Cup at 5-1, but what can you expect from a man who doesn’t play Space Invaders? (Brian Stableford)

Editorial Footnote: (1) Occasionally. (2) Earplugs were available at 57p in a nearby chemist’s. Hazel bought some. (3) Anthology also includes Stableford, Fanthorpe, Langford, all that riffraff. Buy it instantly. (4) I suppose Chairman Naveed Khan gets a bit of credit for all this, even if slide-projectors disintegrate in his rough hands.

Eurosnippets

Tom Ölander & Ahrvid Engholm

An English-language edition of a Polish fanzine, Richard P. Jasiński’s *Actual International SF-Magazine*, may be had for 50p/\$1 from Tom (Box 3, SF-00251 Helsinki 25, Finland). This is of special interest to “Dupers for Poland”: Jasiński has to have his fanzine printed in Finland since he’s been

expelled from the Communist-controlled Polish national SF club (OKMFiSF) as a “dangerous agent of the West” – this because he joined the American N3F. The person responsible is active Polish “fan” Andrzej Pruszyński, who according to Tom was also instrumental in booting other fans and SF writers not only from the clubs but from their jobs – on similar grounds. Pruszyński apparently travels to many European cons at government expense; he was voted equal Best European Fan (with good old Waldemar Kumping) at the 1980 Eurocon in Stresa. An independent Polish SF Club has been formed as an alternative to OKMFiSF: SFAN, 00-375 Warsaw, A1. Jerozolimskie 2, Poland.

Novacon 11, 30 Oct - 2 Nov 1981

Malcolm Edwards

Novacon 11 attracted the usual collection of drunken reprobates to the Royal Angus Hotel for the weekend. Attendance was reportedly a little down on last year’s high of 495, but the 450-odd fans present managed to keep up the standards expected of the British: it was reported on Monday that 67 11-gallon beer kegs had been drunk during the convention, which works out at over 12 pints per attendee. It is statistics like this that make one proud to be a fan.

The first evening was overshadowed by the absence of Messrs Chris Evans, Rob Holdstock and Andrew Stephenson, who had failed to arrive on schedule in the car of the last-named. This caused much speculation to the effect that they might all have been mangled in a motorway pile-up, thus depriving Britain of between 0 and 3 (depending on your predilections) of its most promising sf writers. The explanation turned out to be a more mundane breakdown, but all the sombre prediction that it was statistically long past time someone had such a smash going to or from a convention was proved right all too soon the following morning when the car bringing Graham, Linda, and Naomi James, Kate Jeary and Helen Starkey to the convention performed a high-speed reverse triple somersault on the M1 in the vicinity of Barnsley. Luckily only (only!) various broken bones, cuts and bruises resulted [\[1\]](#).

GoH Bob Shaw was his usual entertaining self; his speech was mostly a

succession of well-delivered and funny anecdotes. Other programme highlights (*trans*: the bits I saw) included the humiliation of the Surrey Limpwrist at the hands of the Amazing Channelcon (and Bonzo) side comprising Jim Barker, Paul Kincaid and Modesty Forbids. The prize of a bottle of scotch each proved an unexpected bonus to the latter when his teammates turned out not to touch the stuff. He accepted with equanimity the burden of carrying the lot home. On other occasions [2] the con hall seemed to be filled with D. Langford droning on as usual [3].

The disco was the usual mix of fun and frustration. The former was personified by Harry “Captain Trips” Bell, who turned before our eyes into an inert grinning monolith, chanting “Fun ... fun ... fun.” The latter was brought about by the usual cretinous deejay who responded to a request for more dance music with “The Birdie Song”....

Convention high- (and low-) lights: G.R.R. Martin *finally* discovered a video game he could beat people on, only to have C. Priest wreck it in spectacular style.... C. Atkinson, having been given a cooked breakfast she hadn’t ordered at the same time as her cereal one morning, ventured mildly that it wasn’t what she wanted and anyway would be congealed by the time she’d finished her cornflakes. The waitress proceeded to abuse her for being impossibly awkward and told her to eat what she’d been given and be grateful.... Everyone and their sibling was giving out fanzines, surely a hopeful sign after the long drought.... M. Edwards and C. Evans spent much time in scholarly discussion of such fascinating topics as the different colours and textures of snot.... R. Kaveney raced around looking reportorial, and ace photographer Joyce Agee – on assignment with R.K. – narrowly escaped a fate worse than death when unsuspectingly lured to the room of J.H. Finder. Her descriptions of what ensued cannot defile a family fanzine.... G. Pickersgill and P. Palmer were observed in intense conversation during which G.P. was waving a Swiss army knife under P.P.’s nose. Ex-punk Palmer professed himself delighted to find such dramatic real life in boring old fandom, but shortly afterwards went and changed his silly multi-zippered T-shirt anyway.... C. Atkinson, on a mission to Meet New People, went and struck up a conversation with one respected looking gent, who was most affronted; it turned out that he was the only person at the hotel not with the convention, and took her for the resident hooker.... R. Holdstock said and did nothing, absolutely nothing, worth mentioning [4].... C. Hughes looked as tall

as ever.... Nova Awards went to triffic fan-writer C. Atkinson, fanartist P. Lyon and boring old fanzine *Tappen* [5].... Other famous attendees about whom I have no anecdotes included J. Brunner and H. Harrison.

Usual thanks to committee P. Oldroyd, S. & H. Eling, J. Nicholas, P. Probert. Next year's Novacon to be chaired – just for once – by R. Peyton. Change of venue mooted, as usual. (*M. Edwards*)

EDITORIAL ADDENDA: (1) I gather that Naomi was unhurt, Kate merely bruised; Graham and Linda are recovering from more serious damage at home, and Helen S. is still confined to bed as of last report. Grim news is that police found herbal substances in the wreckage and intend to make themselves unpleasant. (2) Once. (3) Believed to be a subtle reprisal for DRL's failure to dwell unduly on Edwards/Atkinson victories in his Novaconrep in *Tappen*. (4) But see coming Novaconrep in *Tappen*. (5) As usual Nova runners-up were leaked: Hansen 2nd and Barker 3rd as fanartist, Evans (C) and Langford as fanwriter, *Second-Hand Wave* and *Ansible* as fanzine. But the winners did win decisively. (DRL)

The *Ansible* Christmas Supplement: A Special Extra Bit for No Good Reason

Garnett's Dictionary of Science Fiction

A Serial in Twenty-Six Parts by Dave "Sivvens" Garnett

Part One: A!

ACE *American book publisher*

ADVANCE Amount of *money* paid by a *publisher* for a book, so called because it may possibly be paid in advance of publication

AGENT Person who takes 10% of *advance* (or 15% USA, 20% foreign) from the *author*

ALDISS Compiler of *book* on sf art, also *author* of history of sf, *anthologist* and once *co-editor* of an annual *collection* of best sf stories

AMAZING Science fiction *magazine*, inventor of science fiction in 1926

AMERICA Country on the left of Atlantic ocean

AMERICAN Inhabitant of *America*, probably over-weight

AMIS *Author* of one of the first *books* about sf

ANALOG See *Astounding*

ANDROID *Robot* who looks *human* (see *author*)

ANDROMEDA *Anthology* of *original sf stories* (see *obsolete*)

ANONYMOUS Famous poet and pseudonymous *author*

ANSIBLE Winner of 1982 *Award, Hugo*

ANTHOLOGY Collection of sf *stories*, either *reprints*, or if not, not *reprints*

ANTHOLOGIST Person who is editor of *anthology* (see *figurehead*)

ARROW *British book publisher* of quality sf (e.g. *The Darkover Saga*, *The Dumarest Saga*, *Time in Eclipse*, *The Space Eater*)

ARTIST *Illiterate* responsible for irrelevant *book covers* or *illustrations*

ASH *Author* of fully comprehensive “Who’s Who in Science Fiction”, from Asimov to Geston (1966)

ASIMOV’S SF COMIC Collection of sf *stories*, *reprinted* thirteen times a year with a new *cover*

ASTOUNDING See *Analog*

AUTHOR Writer of a *book* or *story* (see *benefit, supplementary*)

AVON *American book publisher*

AWARD, BSFA *Prize* given to any *British author* who hasn’t won anything recently

AWARD, HUGO *Toy rocket* awarded at annual sf *Convention, World*, to *author* of best *novel*, best *novella*, best *novelet*, best *short story*, best *harlan ellison*

AWARD, JOHN W CAMPBELL Given to *best new writer* of the year, or year before, or

AWARD, JWC MEMORIAL Awarded by a secret society whenever they feel like it to best *book* of the year, decade, or century

AWARD, NEBULA Block of perspex, given away annually by *sf writers of America*, similar categories to *Award, Hugo*

AWARD, ORBIT £500 Ian Watson once had *

AZIMOV Well known spelling mistake

NEXT ISSUE: B! – From *Bastard* to *Buttock*

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* footnote for the curious: the Orbit (Futura) Award was awarded only once because (according to rumour) Futura's Anthony Cheetham was peeved that it wasn't won by a Futura (Orbit) book. Similarly, the Robert Hale Award never got off the ground....

Hazel's Special Bumper Language Lesson

Dyirbal (North Queensland)

This language must be particularly fannish, since Hazel calculates that not more than 44 people speak it. An almost random selection from the textbook: –

gugulabad,unṅaru like a real platypus; *gambilbaragara* a person from the tableland, being one of a pair; *bulganbad,unbila* with a really big thing; *midibad,und,arangabunba* with another two really small ones.

bayindayi ṅagid,ir banijnu two people, of whom one is the maternal grandfather of the other, a short way uphill are coming.

yunṅul one; *bulayi* two; *gaḻbu* three; *mundi* a good few (from 4 to about 50 or more); *muṅa* a lot (about 100 or more).

gunaginayginay totally covered with faeces....

[The “d,” combination is a feeble gesture towards a d with a comma-like tail

or cedilla.]

Books Received and Sometimes Even Read

Starblaze (US) have sent numerous books which I dutifully reviewed for *Extro*, the famous stillborn magazine. Potted summaries: *Myth Conceptions* (Robert Asprin, 158pp, \$4.95) is a sequel to the author's *Another Fine Myth*, which possibly used up all the best jokes – this being an attempt at funny fantasy in the de Camp/Pratt vein. Wit and delicacy of touch are needed. Asprin appears to lack both. *The Shrouded Planet* (“Robert Randall”, 146pp, \$4.95): yes, it's the Silverberg/Garrett fix-up from mid-50s *Astounding*, a fact recorded neither on the cover nor the copyright page (though Silverberg blows the gaff in an afterword). The 1981 copyright date seems planned to make casual readers expect the hand of the mature Silverberg rather than a youngster making his first sale to *Astounding*. Simplistic tale of Earthmen (read “CIA”) shoving an alien society (which provides viewpoint characters) along the road to becoming like Earth (read “America”). For completists. *The Moon's Fire-Eating Daughter* (John Myers Myers, 176 pp, \$4.95): a sequel to the author's *Silverlock*, this is good stuff – literate, allegorical, allusive and similar things appealing to elitist Langford. Style infuriatingly affected to begin with, mind you: perseverance required. *Silverlock*, written 40 years earlier, is still the better book; both are literary fantasies featuring millions of famous characters both fictional (*Silverlock*) and historical/literary (sequel). Enjoyed.

Also: *Deathhunter* (Ian Watson, Gollancz, 173 pp, £6.95) – most accessible Watson for years, with some twists seemingly devised for the confusion of his critics. Less ambitious than (say) *God's World* but with some pleasant Dickensian reversals. *Pictures at an Exhibition* (ed. Watson, Greystoke Mobray, £1.25): damned if I review this, but if you want one the address is GM, 129 City Rd, Roath, Cardiff.

COA

MARGARET AUSTIN, 49 Conisborough, Toothill, Swindon, SN5 8ES / R.I.
BARYCZ, 30 Millmark Grove, London, SE.14 / MIKE DICKINSON &
JACKIE GRESHAM, 11 Montpelier, Cliff Rd, Leeds, LS6 2EX / AHRVID

ENGHOLM, Maskinistgatan 9 ö.b., S-117 47 Stockholm, Sweden / KEN MANN, 87 Sillans Rd, Dundee, Scotland, DD3 9LA (temporary, pending a move to the Netherlands).

Cons

Announcement From The Britain In '84 Worldcon Bidding Committee:

“When we formulated our contingency bid for the 1984 Worldcon we were naturally unaware that similar ideas were being mooted in Melbourne, and the announcement of Melbourne in '85 has put us in a quandary. After much deliberation we decided to withdraw, and would urge all our supporters to vote instead for Australia in '85 ... and Britain in – ? Meanwhile, many thanks to all the people who wrote to express support for our bid.” ...

Channelcon (Eastercon '82) has issued a second PR and hotel booking form. Chairman Eve Harvey also sends an ever so formal letter explaining that last issue's reference to Channelcon's being offered money by Yorcon was incorrect.... **Eurocon 82** is finalized at last: 10-15 Aug 82 at La Chaux-de-Fonds, Switzerland. Membership currently 30 Swiss Fr to Pascal Ducommun, Cheminots 23, CH-2300 La Chaux-de-Fonds, Switzerland. Attending membership rises to SwFr 50 in January; supporting SwFr 15. Join and vote for a British **Eurocon 84**, still being organized by John Brunner (Square House, Palmer St, South Petherton, Somerset, TA13 5DB) with the Brighton Metropole (again!) as the planned hotel.... **Beccon**: no repeat in 1982, but a follow-up is planned for 83 – 191 The Heights, Northolt, Middlesex, UB5 4BU.... **Ra Con** will be Edinburgh's first: 4-6 Feb 83, GoH Harry Harrison FGoH Pete Lyon, £3.50 supp £7 att to 77 Baron's Ct Terrace, Edinburgh, EH8 7EN.... **“Herman”**, the Scandinavia-in-83 Worldcon bidding committee, will be running a national convention instead, probably in Lund (south Sweden).... **Space-Ex 1984**, planned hugecon, persists despite the denunciations of such as R. Peyton and K. Slater: a second newsletter is to hand, looking like what the Astral League might produce if loaned a nice typewriter. No word from “Project Starcast” (82?). Small mercies....

Infinitely Improbable

RIP: *Andy Ellsmore* (London fan, congoer 75-79, runner of Compendium

Books' sf section, *Other Times* editor), murdered by stabbing at his home on 21 Nov. Also *Greg Birchall* (Newcastle fan 75-78), following a motorcycle accident.... **Births:** as was not recorded last issue, Rochelle and Alan Dorey are scheduled to become ancestors around May 82.... **AND:** December 11 sees the marriage of Martin "Harkonnen" Hoare and Katie "I was thrown out of Oxford, you know" McAulay.... **Filmcon:** all those membership refunds are now said to have been made (if only to refute the insinuations of Steve Green).... **Brian Hampton** covered himself with glory in September by designing the winning vehicle in a distance trial of amateur-built battery-powered deathwagons.... **CUFF** is the newest of fan funds, and is intended to transport indigent Canadian fans to, actually, Canada.... **Barker To Boston Fund:** remember that? Our Jim has just received at timely \$75 to help him get to Noreascon 1980 (courtesy of Bruce Pelz); overwhelmed by the honour, he's splitting the cash between GUFF and the ever-unpopular TAFF. Speaking of which, Stu Shiffman has sent copies of *Sweetmeats*, a collection of fanwriting by huge name US fan Sandra Miesel: 75p-for-TAFF from me while stocks last. Don't forget to send in your vote for Rog Peyton, Kev Smith or Holdover Funds (who I can reveal is lagging far behind).... **World SF:** Gerald Bishop was bitterly hurt when in March I printed his request that no subscription cheques be sent and referred to World SF as "struggling". This should have read "struggling to open a sterling bank account": one has now been opened and everyone should send their £5 subscriptions instantly, to 2 Cowper Rd, Cambridge, CB1 3SN. New members are invited from the ranks of authors, editors, publishers, filmmakers, translators, artists and even critics professionally involved with sf. The next World SF meeting will be at the 3-day Ars Electronica/Austrian TV symposium: Linz, Austria, Sept 82.... **L. Ron Hubbard's** thrilling sf novel *Man, the Endangered Species* is being inspected by George Hay: apparently this snappily-titled tome runs to 20,000 pages.... **MORE CONS: Novacon 12** is in the Royal Angus (Birmingham) still – 5-7 Nov 82, GoH Harry Harrison; £6 att to c/o Andromeda Book Co (shortly to move but still, I think, at 57 Summer Row, Birmingham, B3 1JJ). **Lexicon** is another new one: Wigston Stage Hotel, Leicester, 28-31 May 1982, GoH Bob Shaw, £8 att to 43 Station Rd, Kirby Muxloe, Leicester LE9 9EL. Lexicon is denounced in the Brum Group newsletter as "a big rip-off" though if you figure Novacon at 2½ days and Lexicon at 4 days the latter is better value for money – why *does* Novacon cost barely less than Eastercons these days?): certainly one hopes it's offering a Lot for that price.... **The**

Metric Tun is a secret alternative fan meeting held in the “Doggetts Coat & Badge” (it says here), S end of Blackfriars bridge, 8pm on the 3rd Wednesday each month – which reminds me that the exiguous Reading meets continue in the Osborne Arms, 8pm on the 3rd Thursday.... **Fantome Press** (720 N Park Ave, Warren, OH 44483, USA) send a catalogue of such joys as “16 scratchboard portraits of mystery authors – \$4.95” (the reproduced art looks dreadful) and single sonnets by such as Poe in tarted-up editions at similar rates. One can imagine what the Brum Group newsletter would say, and so would I.... **Sweden:** the sf mag *Jules Verne Magasinet* recently (August) featured a 16-page fandom section (ed. Andersson/Engholm) which is a fanzine-within-a-prozine. (Inspired by this, James Manning is looking for someone to edit a professional supplement to go in *Ad Astra*.) Lucasfilm threaten to sue Swede Jonan Söderblad for publishing “a pornographic *Star Wars* story” (it was shown them beforehand but they failed to comment). And following certain fabrications by an ex-fan, several Swedish papers have been running stories about Nazi infiltration in local fanclubs. No wonder Swedish fans complain about encirclement.... **Extro Again:** a stop-press letter announces that the problems are entirely the fault of lying distributors, that no announcement about the mag should be made yet (oh damn: ignore those bits, all of you) and that Something May Yet Turn Up.... **World Fantasy Awards:** life achievement C.L. Moore, novel *Shadow of the Torturer*, short “The Ugly Chickens”/Waldrop, anthology *Dark Forces*. 1982 World Fantasy Con to be held in New Haven, Connecticut.... **Eastercon 83:** still two bids going strong, Metrocon (which *Ansible* supports, surprise surprise) with 80-odd presupporting members, and Albacon II (no further data).... **RIP:** G. Ken Chapman (British SF/antiquarian bookdealer), died Oct 9 after a stroke which earlier forced him to close down his business.... **Unmitigated Filth!** Why, at Novacon 11, did John and Eve Harvey sleep in separate single beds while a double bed went to young couple Geoff Rippington and John Fairey? Further revelations will probably not appear in *Ansible 23*. Why was Rob Holdstock barred from *his* Novacon room? Aha.

Hazel’s Language Lessons

Number Fourteen: Dyrbal

[for room parties]

gulgižigulgiži lots of prettily painted men

banana with absolutely no water at all

ANSIBLE 22 ed. Dave Langford
22 Northumberland Avenue, Reading,
Berkshire, RG2 7PW, UK. (3-12-81)

1982

***Ansible* 23**

January/February 1982

ANSIBLE 23 (Jan/Feb 1982) comes from Dave Langford, 22 Northumberland Ave, Reading, Berks, RG2 7PW, UK. Cartoon by Stu Shiffman; mailing labels by Keith Freeman; unctuous thanks to both. SUB DUE or ***** on your label indicate respectively that you are about to become, or have become, a social leper – send healing money at once before important parts (such as your *Ansible* subscription) drop off. £1 for 5 issues (UK) or 4 issues (anywhere else). Dollars to Mary & Bill Burns, 48 Lou Ave, Kings Park, NY, NY 11754, USA (US agents). I devoutly hope that postal increases won't affect *Ansible's* cost for a while: rates go up in four days and Reading post offices still claim ignorance of what overseas postage is going to cost....

Those Wonderful Men in Their Skiffy Magazines

The Omni Book Of The Future, famous UK *Omni* spinoff, will not after all be released nationally as planned for Spring 1982. Five market-testing issues were produced; in a stroke of commercial genius, the decisive test in the West Country took place during the century's worst freeze-up. 'Nuff said. The glum news broke on 21 January, and numerous freelancers more or less immediately got the boot from publishers Eglemoss Ltd: among these was famous deputy editor Peter Nicholls. Future issues had been prepared, up into the double figures, but the material is to be scrapped. One feels most sympathy for the buyers in test areas who will never see issue 6 and may spend their lives in an agony of suspense about the ending of Lem's "The Test" (broken into 3 parts for *BotF* publication). RIP.

Ad Astra: It's five months since the last issue (#16), and ever-reliable entrepreneur Robert Allen whispers a rumour that AA has folded. Certainly James Manning's answering machine appears to speak with a different voice....

Edges is the rumoured title of a rumoured SF magazine being packaged by said R. Allen for (according to rumour) a boxing-magazine proprietor who was overcome by Robert's charm and instantly asked him to do a mag. Gosh wow.

Extro has defied all rumour – it's actually appeared! The first issue of its new and professional incarnation is being or has been distributed by Seymour Press Services; price 75p, cover date Feb/March. Subscriptions £4 for 6 issues (i.e. 1 year) to Specifi Publications, 27 Cardigan Drive, Belfast, BT14 6LX. The first issue looks quite good – but then I have to say that, having wormed my way onto the strength as “nonfiction editor” or some such. The big boss is Paul Campbell, at the above address, and he's looking for good fiction at £15-£25 per thousand words. (Former boss R. Allen walked off with the existing fiction inventory when he left....) First issue contents: (fiction) Priest reprint, Watson, Kilworth etc; (interviews) Watson, Donaldson; (articles) Langford, C. Evans etc.

Interzone continues despite being maligned by Ian Watson in countless letters to *Ansible*: the first issue's appearance has been rescheduled from February to early March thanks to strikes etc. A4 format; cover price £1.25; other details as in previous issues. First issue fiction: A. Carter, M.J. Harrison, Moorcock, K. Roberts and Sladek.

IASFM: George Scithers and his merry crew of assistants (Darrell Schweitzer &c) have all left – an “amiable” separation which can have nothing to do with the 20% drop in circulation towards the end of 1981. New boss is Kathleen Moloney at 380 Lexington Ave, New York, NY 10017, USA.

More Serious and Constructive Matters

Publishing Jobs: Malcolm Edwards has achieved the glorious position of “associate SF editor” at Gollancz. Nick Austin was “shamefully sacked” from Corgi, though, a reflection not on his ability but on the labyrinthine internal politics of Corgi/Transworld. My publishing spy was very unhappy about N. Austin's treatment – in contrast, he/she reveals that when Anthony Cheetham got the boot from Futura, a select gathering of publishing people (many ex-Futura) was held to celebrate the occasion....

RIP (belated notice): D.F. Jones died around midsummer in 1981. And famous comics-censor and fanzine-misapprehender Fredric Wertham died recently (announced 1 Dec 81).

Dark They Were & Golden Eyed: a creditors' meeting for this defunct business was held on 4 January: reporter Malcolm Edwards mentions a figure of £100,000 in unsecured debts. Malcolm is also one of the expert valuers of the liquidated DTW stock, and – no connexion – the UK agent for that thick hardback fanzine *Warhoon* 28 (Bergeron/Willis). Rush £13.50 for your copy to him at 28 Duckett Rd, London, N4 1BN. (It's worth every penny, honest.)

High Fantasy: Allen & Unwin are launching their "Unicorn" high-fantasy imprint in March. Their Tolkien line will be reissued under this label, and also books from Beagle, Cabell (hear! hear!), Dunsany etc. Maxim Jakubowski is editing an anthology for them: *Lands of Never*. 5-6 cents/word for UK anthology rights; address 95 Finchley Lane, London, NW.4; no sword-and-sorcery or horror, he pleads.

Pictures At An Exhibition: dynamic Patricia Fanthorpe has achieved the near-impossible by persuading grotty old WHSmiths to take 1000+ copies of this privately produced work – see last issue for fewer details....

Martin Morse Wooster is still trying to get me into trouble with a certain person's solicitor's: this time I think I'll insert a few asterisks by way of confusion – "You will recall that, when last heard from, C**l S***n was submitting plagiarized outlines written by his wife that were subsequently bounced by knowledgeable sub-editors at Simon & Schuster. My sources tell me that 8 different outlines have now been rejected by the publishers, and that David Hartwell, who publicly denies everything, is involved with C*nt*ct far more than he admits. I have also been advised that Br***n Ald*ss's American agent proposed to S&S that Ald*ss ghostwrite the novel for S***n. This offer was refused...."

Chris Morgan is equally scurrilous: "The only bit of news is that R. Peyton's two English TAFF nominators are no longer on speaking terms. On approximately Xmas Day the phone rang at chez Weston. Pete answered, and it was Malcolm [Edwards], who said something like 'I've always fancied you, Peter, I've always wanted to run my hands over your naked body.' Pete's reply was not recorded for posterity, but he was slightly put out, and it took Eileen only five minutes to get the details out of him. Immediately, she

phoned Malcolm (there was still drunken laughter in the background there) and, when he came to the phone, told him (approximately) that he was a ‘nasty little fart.’ (The noun I can vouch for; it startled me when she repeated it.) Although Malcolm reportedly sounded drunk on the phone I’ve noticed that he frequently does....”

Public Outcry: at last something has provoked a flood of enquiry and protest from readers of my (possibly defunct) *Ad Astra* column. The corruption of SF awards or \$2M advances? Not at all: but millions (well, dozens) of enquiries (well, several) came from readers desperate to be reassured that the massacre of almost the entire *Blake’s 7* cast in the last show did not mean the end of the series. No such luck: Roz Kaveney’s spies say that another series has already been scheduled. If Dr Who can “regenerate”....

World Sf plans an annual volume of 15/20 sf stories from many countries, to be chosen by committee in each country and published (as far as possible) simultaneously in many countries and appropriate languages. Address: see “cons”.

Euronews From Pascal Thomas: “I’ve just been on the phone to Pascal Ducommun (he from the 82 Eurocon). He tells me that Andrzej Pruszyński, much maligned in *A22*, [by Tom Ölander & Ahrvid Engholm], is presently with him, and has applied for political asylum in Switzerland. He just happened to be in the West at the time of the coup.... Andrzej, Pascal and I spent much time together at the last Eurocon in Stresa, and Andrzej never struck me as the dogmatic type. I guess this all shows that it’s never safe to report on fan feuds in a foreign country: you never know where things are going, or how biased the reports you get may be. Well, I can assure you at the least that here in France, we’re not about to call on the military to settle *our* fan feuds....

“Major news is the brutal axing of *Le Masque* and *Le Livre de Poche* by their publisher. Editor Michel Demuth has been put in charge of reselling if possible the French rights to their 50-odd book inventory (all English-language SF), half of which had already been translated! Demuth is still planning to sue them for the severance money they seem reluctant to give him....”

Ian Watson Gloats: “I have just sold a story collection to Gollancz: *Sunstroke and Other Stories*. And Playboy Paperbacks swear blind that a

contract is being typed out this very instant for an entirely rewritten, super new version of *The Woman Factory (Orgasmachine)*, delivery date mid-June.”

Affirmation Sold: After some genuine outrage from fans at the failure of Chris Priest’s *The Affirmation* (“Triffic” – *Ansible*) to sell in paperback, kindly Richard Evans of Arrow has bought the rights. Unfortunately the standard Arrow advance is £2000, of which Faber keep half as their hardback-publisher share, also keeping the other half to reclaim the unearned hardback advance ... but it’s the thought that counts. Who’d be a writer?

The Science In Sf is a colossal Peter Nicholls book to be packaged by Roxby Press (who did the *Encyclopedia of SF*). Owing to Peter’s involvement with *Omni BotF*, the bulk of this 100,000 word compendium of S and SF erudition was sub-contracted to hacks Stableford and Langford. With a fine sense of dramatic timing, Peter was then released from his *BotF* responsibilities (see above) mere days after said hacks had delivered their final bits. Who’d be an editor?

D.M. Thomas “is the latest in the line of British fantasists to leave your country and end up in Washington: he has a writer-in-residence job at the American University here. *The White Hotel* was a bestseller here because it was not marketed as sf or fantasy but as literary pornography, so the pseudos licked it up. [*It’s been a bestseller for some while here too – DRL*] Does the British AAS have as many sf writers invading their cons? Larry Niven wore a press badge at the AAAS, announcing that he was representing ‘Macrostructures Engineering.’ ‘I’ll build you a ringworld,’ said Niven, ‘for a ten per cent down payment....’” (*M.M. Wooster*)

David Pringle, on the first day of his new job in Brighton, fell over and broke his leg in three places. Ouch.

Selected Convention Mentions

I often feel guilty about this occasional list, since it’s a compilation of available stuff rather than hot news (a complaint made about much of *Ansible* by Phil Stephensen-Payne); on the other hand it makes a change from the *Ansible* “drivel” complained of by that master of lucid, analytical prose, Keith Walker....

Scousecon Feb 13-14, Liverpool Centre Hotel, GoH Anne McCaffrey: 77 Selby Rd, Orrell Park, Liverpool, L9 8EB.

Faancon 7 Feb 19-21, Parklands North Hotel, Oxford, £1.50/household (part refundable): no guests, programme, members. Contact me – Reading (0734) 863453 if desperate.

SF Wonderworld Feb 27, UMIST, Manchester; £2 for the day; Chapter One Bookshop, 5 Greengate, Victoria Bus Station, Manchester. This is of peculiar interest since it purports to be organized by one of the two former bosses of “Project Starcast” – Brian Clarke, the front man who was the only visible person in charge. He left Starcast in Aug 1981 owing to “many differences of opinion between myself and the other organizer” (David Hewitt); the UMIST cons were formerly the famous “build-up-to-Starcast” events promised by Project S, but are no longer connected. (10am-6pm)

Mediacon 3 March 20, Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq, London; £2.50 supp/£5 att plus 3 9x4 SAEs for PRs; 45 Welby House, Hazelville Rd, London, N.19. Any profits to charity.

Channelcon April 9-12, Metropole Hotel, Brighton; GOHs Angela Carter, John Sladek; £3 supp/£7 att; rooms £13.50 sngl, £12.50/person dbl/twin (inc breakfast but not VAT); 4 Fletcher Rd, Chiswick, London, W4 5AY. The 33rd British Eastercon; third progress report out approximately now.

Lexicon May 28-31, Wigston Stage Hotel, Leicester, GoH Bob Shaw, £8 (!) att; 43 Station Rd, Kirby Muxloe, Leicester, LE9 9EL.

Colnecon June 26 (10am-2am), Arts Centre, Colchester; GOHs Garry Kilworth, Tim Souster (electronic music composer); £1 supp/£2.50 att/£3 at door; B&B at nearby hotels £6.50-£9.50; “Treetops”, Colchester Rd, Gt Bromley, Essex.

Jerucon 82 June 27-July 2, Binyanei Ha’ooma Convention Centre, Jerusalem; no guests but millions of famous participants (Bester, Bova, Brunner to name only the B’s); registration plus 5 nights’ accommodation \$275/ participant, \$200/guest; PO Box 394, Tel Aviv 61003, Israel. “The First International Integrative Congress on SF, Fantasy and Speculative Science in Jerusalem.” I was delighted though terrified to be asked to submit an abstract, stating (a) specific object of study; (b) methods used; (c) results; (d) conclusions....

Faircon July 23-6, Central Hotel, Glasgow; GoH Harry Harrison; £3 supp/£7 att (£4/£9 after April 15); rooms £17 sngl, £14.50/person twin (£15/£12 without bathroom), inc breakfast, service, VAT; 1/r 39 Partickhill Rd, Glasgow, G11 5BY. “Glasgow’s sixth SF Convention.”

Eurocon Aug 10-15, La Chaux-de-Fonds, Switzerland; Eurocon has various “honored guests” rather than a GoH – Ian Watson writes: “Marjorie Brunner sent me a Eurocon flyer, in which I see that I’ve been invited ... as one of the guests. Hope it’s true. It’s the first I’ve heard of it.” Swiss Fr 50 att/15 supp; Cheminots 23, CH-2300 La Chaux-de-Fonds, Switzerland.

Silicon 6 Aug 27-30, Grosvenor Hotel, Newcastle; £3 att (part refundable – last year you got a free drink rather than a refund); 6 Greta Terrace, Chester Rd, Sunderland, SR4 7RD. No pro GoH but several dozen fan GoHs.

World SF Meeting Sept ??: “held as a part of a 3 day symposium on SF associated with Ars Electronica being run by Austrian TV in Linz, Austria” – Gerald Bishop, 2 Cowper Rd, Cambridge, CB1 3SN. (This is all the info I have.)

Chicon IV Sept 2-6, Hyatt Regency Chicago Hotel; GoHs A. Bertram Chandler, Kelly Freas, Lee Hoffman (fan); \$15 supp/\$40 att (till cutoff date July 15); PO Box A3120, Chicago, IL 60690, USA; EuroAgent Pascal Thomas, 11-bis rue Vasco de Gama, 75015 PARIS, France. 40th Worldcon; membership 3433 as of Jan 8; progress report 3 with Hugo nomination forms should be posted in the first week of February.

Beneluxcon 82/SFancon 12 Sept 3-5, Fabliolahome, Gent, Belgium; data from Andre de Rycke, Eendenplasstraat 64, 9050 Evergem, Belgium. (Recommended by Martin Hoare.)

Unicon 3 Sept 11-12, Keele U; GoHs Richard Cowper, Leroy Kettle (fan); no address yet supplied. This presumably supersedes a previous report that there would be no Unicon 3, and a good thing too.

Milford (UK) SF Writers’ Conference Sept 26-Oct 3, Milford-on-Sea, Hants. Professionals’ “workshop”; details from me, Pip Maddern (chair) or Malcolm Edwards.

Project Starcast Oct 8-11, Harrogate Exhibition Centre; 3rd floor, 121 Princess St, Manchester, M1 7AG; phone 061-236-4612. This “hugecon” has never been popular or well publicized in SF fandom: high rates; grandiose

claims to have invented stunning new ideas like fan participation, reduced room rates, cheap rail fares; ill-produced “progress reports” which report no progress; an general air of mystery about accommodation arrangements; megalomaniac-sounding waffle about “uniting fandom”; forget it, say I. The sole (apparently) organizer David Hewitt may be a nice chap, but he’s out of his depth trying to run something huger than Seacon. Sorry to be negative, but ...

Fandersoncon 82 Oct 8-10, Bloomsbury Centre Hotel, London; data from 88a Thornton Ave, London, W4 1QQ.

Novacon 12 Nov 5-7, Royal Angus Hotel, Birmingham; GoH Harry Harrison; £6 att; c/o Andromeda Bookshop (*see COAs*).

Ra Con Feb 4-6 1983, Grosvenor Square Hotel, Edinburgh; GoH Harry Harrison, FGoH Pete Lyon; £3.50 supp/£7 att until 1 July 82, to 77 Baron’s Ct Terrace, Edinburgh, EH8 7EN. First PR at Easter. Enquiries: 031-667-5151.

Albacon II Easter 1983, Central Hotel, Glasgow ... **Metrocon** Easter 1983, Piccadilly Hotel, London ... one of these will be the 1983 Eastercon. Vote at Channelcon. (*Ansible*, incidentally, favours Metrocon.)

Fantasycon, Cymrucon 2 ... no data to be found today.

The *Ansible* Literary Supplement **Abigail Frost on British Fanzines of 1981**

It may be that history will name 1981 as the Year of the Schism, of the Great Revival, or of the Zombies’ Last Stand; it all depends who’s still around to write it. I’d like to name 1981 the Year of the Phoney War.

War, some have seen, between the promulgators of “newstyle” personalzines and “oldstyle” genzines; there have at least been dark mutterings about “conspiracy theories”. Fandom, though, can’t stoop to mere conspiracies; we have had a supersubtle variant, the semi-detached conspiracy. As far as I know nobody (south of Hadrian’s Wall) has accused anyone else of conspiracy, but several have accused others of accusing them.... Proof, should it have been needed, that fandom is a true *société du spectacle*; and what sort of war is possible in such a society but a phoney one?

The keynote was sung at the Yorcon II fanzine review panel. This rather worthy event suddenly blossomed into a good old-fashioned shouting match, over Greg Pickersgill's refusal to nominate a "fanzine of the year". Instead, he held up the "best fanzine ever" – yes, *SBD*. I found this Machiavellian tactlessness utterly enchanting, but others appeared outraged, and seemed to take the accompanying homily on the Need To Raise Standards as the manifesto of a thousand-year Reich.

Up until then the most controversial offering of the year had been Michael Ashley's *The Tinned Milk of Human Kindness*, in which Ashley demonstrated weariness with the lightweight writing of his elders and betters, admiration for the bright new (!) talents of Higgins and Collick, a distressingly Edwardian desire to write and read about L-L-L-Life, and a pretty fair writing style. Interestingly, he announced his intention of continuing it as a genzine – but it never happened. Tinned milk not the right fuel for a Molotov cocktail, perhaps.

My own favourite "new" personalzine is *23rd*. Various people have seen Jimmy Robertson as some sort of stylistic innovator, though I can't myself. Robertson's style seems to me no more (and no less) than the perfection of fanwriting as printed speech – albeit the speech of a "fictionalized protagonist" (and thank you, Chris Priest, for that concept). The style is entirely appropriate in a fanzine about the contents of the author's head. Robertson is his own man, not flinching to write about his shop steward or what his wife did at a dance if he wants to; he doesn't clutter up the thing with letters from people trying to cap his anecdotes. Each *23rd* is read, enjoyed, and over.

This artistic success is a happy contrast to some of the other personalzines of the year. I seem to have spent six months reading again and again something along the lines of: "Here after a lot of agony is *XXX 1*. I thought I'd do it as it seems the best way to get into Fandom. Sorry it's not very good – please don't show it to Joe Nicholas..." That sort of attitude isn't going to change the world, let alone produce any decent fanzines.

Still, not all the "new" fanzines have been personalzines. The popular success of the year was *Second-Hand Wave*, which is technically a genzine, though it wears the stamp of "editorial personality" like a Lady Di lookalike's cushion. Rightly is it called second-hand – and what hope is there for writing with an

audience which loves it? The Cretinfans' *Drygulch* is a less pretentious essay in the same sort of thing; more original, shorter, and above all less self-satisfied.

Langford, Smith, Nicholas, and the Maules continued their respective mixtures as before: Langford (in *TD*) showing signs of weariness; Smith good and (literally) inconsequential as ever; Nicholas getting more pompous and bolshy and finally losing his marbles all over *Nabu*. The rest of *Nabu* was good solid stuff, making the fuss over *Tappen* seem a little unfair. A rather scraggy *Ocelot* slunk from its northern lair. Alan Dorey tried something new – turning *Gross Encounters* into milk and water for spoonfeeding BSFA members. Wonders will never cease, but I wish this one would.

Warm July brought *Tappen*, greeted at once as the saviour of a nation. “I haven’t seen a fanzine that looks like that since....” somebody said at the Tun. *Tappen* was followed by *Epsilon*, *Stop Breaking Down*, and more *Tappens* and *Epsilons*. *SBD* was followed by *Start Breaking Up*, Atkinson’s and Karrh-Pickersgill’s Novacon substitute. All relied heavily on the same group of contributors – not necessarily bad in itself, if it forces the “newies” to start their own genzines. Somewhere in the middle it of all fell Phil Palmer’s hard-hitting, iconoclastic *Chocolates of Lust*, which failed to live up to Palmer’s intentions, but flew a brave flag for the newies. (Iconoclastic? Bloody hell, it came out about six weeks after the first *Tappen*. But by that time *Tappen* had gained icon status.

Eve Harvey was galvanized into bringing out the year’s second *Wallbanger*, and apart from a slight recruiting-sheet tendency (like *GE*’s) the best ever. It may well be that the greatest benefit to come from the Friends in Space fanzines will be a return to frequent publishing, which allows some sort of dialogue and development to take place, and (almost incidentally) makes fanzine reviewing possible. Chris Priest’s *Deadloss* may have been a first blast of this particular trumpet: good news if it is. It showed up the depths to which fanzine reviewing had sunk in my time.

Tappen and *Epsilon* managed three issues each from July, though *SBD*, as noted above, may have sunk back into limbo. I hope it hasn’t, though, since *Tappen* by the third issue was beginning to look a little ... dull. Malcolm’s own pieces and links are witty, intelligent and all one could desire, Kettle’s gossip column is good value, but, apart from Chris Atkinson’s “Life with the

Loonies” (justly praised all over the place), the articles.... Unmemorable, even at times a trifle boring. So, no doubt, have been most genzine articles since fans first climbed down from the trees, but looking back over the run there is a piquant contrast between reputation and reality. *Epsilon*, on the other hand, has flowered. Hansen lacks Edwards’s confidence with words, and Pickersgill’s with ideas, but if you cut through all the “I may be wrong, but the way I see it is....” in his “Notions” section, you find an uncanny knack of putting a common-sense point that more sophisticated writers have ignored. For general commentary on fannish issues, *Epsilon* is quite hard to beat.

The (qualified, natch) best of the genzines comes last. *Still It Moves* snuck down from Leeds while eyes were on London. Simon Ounsley’s work is strangely unappreciated; along with Kevin Smith he is among the few who simultaneously excel in style and content. An Ounsley piece tells some story or develops some idea, sometimes outrageously; at the same time it is a stylistic experiment or a polished and controlled example of the deceptively familiar “conversational” mode. Ounsley’s main article in *SIM* – interviewing an obsessive collector of trivia, while making a transparent pretence of concealing the subject’s identity – is a superb example. *SIM* is marred, though, by an atrocious piece of juvenilia from – good grief, Michael Ashley. It even has a tedious preamble, reminiscent of the me-too personalzines, about the piece’s failure to be published before....

So, in a whole year’s fanzines, only two get alphas – and one consists entirely of fanzine reviews, the other is a Scotch personalzine. Alpha minus to *SIM* and *Epsilon*, gamma double plus for *GE*, gamma minus query plus for *SHW*. Beta double plus for all other fanzines named: not bad, but must try harder. We Are All Guilty. (*Abi Frost*)

Infinitely Improbable

Nebula Awards Preliminary Ballot just arrived, listing everything with 3 or more nominations: voting on this ballot decides the five items per category (plus one optionally added by committee) on the final ballot. Novel leaders: *The Many-Colored Land* (27 votes – this one was sent to all SFWA members with a hype letter), *Claw of the Conciliator* (18 – not sent to members),

Sucharitkul's *Starship & Haiku* (10), Crowley's *Little, Big* (9) and, all with 8 nominations, Hoban's *Riddley Walker*, Broxon's *Too Long a Sacrifice* and Hansen's godawful *War Games* (also sent to members). Of UK interest: *The Affirmation* appears in =17th place (5), while Cowper's *A Dream of Kinship* and Moorcock's *The War Hound and the World's Pain* appear among those placed =28th (3). Other UK names on the ballot: Holdstock's "Mythago Wood" (=6th novelet, 6), Watson's "Nightmares" (=12th short, 4) ... **Vector** 106 (Feb 82) is the last under Kevin Smith's editorship: a flood of two applications for this highly-unpaid post has been received (one from the omnipresent and pantheistic Robert Allen), but the betting is that the next *Vector* will – like #98 – be produced by a hastily formed BSFA subcommittee.... **Martin Hoare & Katy McAulay** were married on 11 December amid quantities of snow – no feet are visible in the wedding photos, they being concealed in drifts while still more snow streaks down like cosmic confetti. For the second time your editor was best man at Martin's wedding.... **Langford's Physics Lessons**: "Looking on the bright side, snow does bring some benefit to the garden. As it melts it undergoes a molecular transformation which produces deuterium oxide, better known as heavy water. This has a very stimulating effect on plant life." (*Evening Post Advertiser* 15-1-82).... **Shadow Of The Torturer**: I hear the Arrow paperback sales justified their heavy advertising investment; I also hear that the Sidgwick & Jackson hardback sold only 900 copies.... BSFA: future monthly meetings (3rd Friday) are being held in the King of Diamonds, Greville St – just up the road from the Tun.... **Ansible, The Fanzine Of Carl Sagan**: Maxim Jakubowski sends data on Carl Sagan Productions, Inc, whose "visions of profits have collapsed into a black hole of exploding costs and collapsing sales ... LA warehouse jammed with unsold Cosmic Calendars (\$7.95), Cosmospheres (\$19.95) and a book titled *Visions of the Universe* (\$29.95).... To hold costs down, the company tried to sell its products without salesmen. At the Atlanta booksellers' convention in May, [they] set up a booth and promptly turned away a passer-by in blue jeans, believing that she was just looking for free samples. The woman was actually a buyer for Waldenbooks, the nation's largest book-retailing outfit." (*Time* 14-12-81).... **Brum Group**: the newest vibrant chairman is Vernon Brown, and the newest project the Concrete Overcoat Fan Fund – a (TAFF?) fundraiser intended also to provide an accolade for he or she whom the Brum Group votes as, er, most deserving. (My mole Chris Morgan let slip the names of Chris Smith, Steve

Green and Jessica Watson as strong contenders.)... **Freelance Writing** magazine recently published an article by Brian Clarke, late of “Project Starcast”: titled “The Writing of SF”, the piece recommends *Omni* and *Ad Astra* as leading international markets – other suggested sf markets including *New Scientist* and *New Statesman*.... **TAFF**: 84 ballots have come in and the fund stands at £1000+ here, \$3000+ in the US – latest big donation is £50 from Novacon 11, for which many thanks.... **Worldcon Plans**: there are no organized British Worldcon plans any more, not that I know of – Malcolm Edwards, man behind the 84/87/8? schemings, no longer has time for world domination. Probably not relevant is a clipping sent by Andrew Stephenson: “Malcolm Edwards ... is on a rather long charity walk for the year of the disabled. As the walk is going to take him all around the country he decided to take a pram with him for company....” (*Citizens’ Band* Jan ’82) Another *Interzoner* is fingered in a clipping on “Pringle the Penguin ... the new arrival at Chessington Zoo”: the photograph may be inspected by adults only at Channelcon.... **False Alarm**: despite G. Ken Chapman’s death last year, his book business is still being run by Mrs Chapman.... **DNQ**: the much-mentioned Robert Allen now asks me not to print anything on *Edges* (see p.1) yet – a request which comes a bit late, especially as he’s been telling full details to anyone in London who will listen. Every hour on the hour someone phones in the rumour that *Edges’* fiction budget is £1500 per issue, being 40,000 words at £15/thou with the rest going to Robert.... **More From The Press**: Roz Kaveney’s Novacon report in *Time Out* made it clear that fandom was a seething mass of left-wing politics (“I had to say that if I wanted to sell it, didn’t I?” she told our reporter), while on 5 Dec the *Grauniad* reported that “in the tangled, specialist world of Fanzines, the samizdat magazine culture of SF lovers, you can’t move for the Brunner [anti-nuke] appeal”. Have I been missing something? ... **Future Life** magazine folded with the December issue.... **50s Fanthology**: Eric Bentcliffe is assembling a collection of great 50s fanwriting or alternatively writing by great 50s fans.... **Per Anhalter In All** is being broadcast in Germany now, to reactions varying from “bafflement to laughter” (Graham England). Rough translation of title: “Hitchhiking in Space”. Need I say more? ... **The Fanarchist Party Of Australia** is contemplating official censure of Aussiefan Marc Ortlieb for admitting, while in America, that “most Aussie zines are boring”. Censure could mean the end of Marc’s career, we are told.... **Chuck Connor Reveals**: “Pete Lyon’s beginning to feel the cold shoulder from the rest of the Leeds

group. He was, of course, Ringo Mole and, seeing as the little poisoned dwarf has gone to Holland, I can add that the London Connection was Ken Mann.” (Something to do with premature leaks about Yorcon profits, I suppose: yawnnn.) ... **IPC** say they’re republishing *Eagle* in March.... **How Omni Works:** “Ben Bova commissioned an article on the Sighthill megalith for £750 but didn’t specify what he wanted. They sent Kathleen McAuliffe over to sort out the problem and then decided that to justify the expense she’d have to write the article, and all I got was a kill fee.” (Duncan Lunan)... **Leroy Kettle Wins Nobel Prize:** well, the next best thing – Civil Service spies report his promotion to Higher Executive Officer.... **Spawnings:** Jack & Eva Chalker produced a David on Dec 19; Jim Frenkel & Joan Vinge contrived a Jessica the same day; Paul Oldroyd and Chris Donaldson will strike sometime this year.... **Space Voyager** is an even newer unlaunched UK mag....

Hazel’s Language Lessons #15: Zulu

*inkulungwane namakhulu ayisikhombisa
namashumi ayisishiyagalolunye
nantathu: 1,793*

ANSIBLE TWENTY-THREE

Editor: Dave Langford
22 Northumberland Avenue, Reading,
Berkshire, RG2 7PW, UK. (29-1-82)

***Ansible* 24**

March 1982

ANSIBLE #24 (March 82) from Dave Langford, 22 Northumberland Ave, Reading, Berks, RG2 7PW. Subs 5/£1 UK, 4/£1 elsewhere. Cartoon: Rob Hansen. [STARFAN strip] Mailing labels: Keith Freeman (please renew if yours says SUB DUE or *****). \$US to Burns, 48 Lou Ave, NY, NY 11754, USA. Technical aid: John Harvey. Next issue will appear at Channelcon....

Return of the BSFA Award

Once again the ever-lovely BSFA has announced its award shortlist, compiled by vote of an undisclosed number of BSFA members. All members, and all Channelcon members, can now vote on the final ballot. Results at Channelcon itself. NOVEL: J.G. Ballard – *Hello America* (Cape), Rob Holdstock – *Where Time Winds Blow* (Faber), Chris Priest, *The Affirmation* (Faber), Gene Wolfe, *The Shadow of the Torturer* (Sidgwick, Arrow). Wolfe’s *The Claw of the Conciliator* also received enough votes to reach the final ballot, but was withdrawn by Wolfe; it wasn’t replaced on the ballot since the next three novels have an equal number of nominations and “seven novels on one ballot is a bit too much, really.” SHORT: Rob Holdstock – “Mythago Wood” (F&SF Sept), Keith Roberts – “The Checkout” (F&SF Sept), Edward Shaver – “The Killing Thought” (F&SF;May), Lisa Tuttle, “Treading the Maze” (F&SF Nov), Ian Watson – “A Cage for Death” (Omni Jan). MEDIA: *Blake’s 7* (BBC), *Dr Who* (BBC), *Excalibur* (Boorman/Warner), *Stalker* (Tarkovski/Mosfilm), *Time Bandits* (Gilliam/Handmade Films). “As ever, mediocrity rules in the media category,” remarks informant Joe Nicholas. COVER ARTIST: Chris Achilleos, Pete Lyon, Chris Moore, Bruce Pennington, Tim White. All these awards are for doings in 1981 only.

Cosmic Stuff on the Publishing Front

Hamish Hamilton and Beaver Books are sponsoring a Junior Fiction Competition, and no doubt many skiffy authors will be raising their sights to try a “well written contemporary adventure story for 8 to 11 year olds” – rush your 25,000 to 30,000 words to HH by June 30. (Details: Michelle Oberman, HH, Garden House, 57-59 Long Acre, WC2). **Tandy Corp.** (Radio Shack) have “announced the signing of the world famous science writer Isaac Asimov for extensive advertising and product promotion” (*Everyday Electronics*) – I hardly dare turn on my Tandy grotcomputer now, for fear that That Face will leer out of it at me.... **Wall-To-Wall Aldiss:** the author of *Helliconia Spring* has also been extensively advertised over the last week of February, bursting on the helpless public via numerous radio programmes and BBC-TV’s Omnibus, while even Radio 4’s Kaleidoscope broke its own stern rule by giving a good review of this sf book – not so surprising when you hear that the reviewer was P. Nicholls. *Ansible* is not running a colour picture of Mr Aldiss, out of pique at the *Sunday Times* mag for doing so first. Reports on the book’s sales are so far confined to gloating noises from Rog Peyton, who flogged about £100 worth to fans still dazed from an Aldiss talk in Brum.... **However:** Science fiction is completely dead now, explained Kingsley Amis in the *Radio Times* (6-12 Feb) – anything, I suppose, rather than bring *New Maps of Hell* up to date.... **Fanzine™:** an italian firm, Fiorucci, has successfully filed to use the word “fanzine” as a trademark in the US and Italy (at least). The law is apparently enough of an ass that the only way to oppose this grabbing of an established English-language word (cf. *Concise OED*, 1976 onward) is to spend thousands of dollars. Rob Hansen, who passed on the item, is off to copyright the word “leg.” **Meanwhile,** still in *Comics Journal*, the \$2M lawsuit continues, with Michael (cretin) Fleisher suing CJ owing to – on balance – lavishly complimentary remarks passed about Fleisher by Harlan Ellison. Ellison himself has now been let out of the case because “the New York court did not have jurisdiction over Ellison, a resident of California.” Good grief.... **Hype:** “Dear SFWA member, In writing this letter to all of you, I am doing something I have done but rarely in my long career as a science fiction editor. [Most hype letters start like this for some reason.] I am asking you, directly, to pay attention to a book that my house has published. The book is *The Sardonyx Net* by Elizabeth A. Lynn, which Putnam published in hardcover in December 1981. [Bad time of year for the Hugo and Nebula, y’know.] I feel that because of the small printings and lack of exposure that most hardcover

sf engenders, this book may be overlooked by potential readers.... [Synopsis of next few paragraphs: ‘Triffic book’.] I wish I could offer reading copies to those of you who are unable to buy or borrow a copy from friend or library. [sic] Unfortunately (though it is a positive thing) the entire printing from Putnam has sold out, and there are virtually no copies available to us at this time. I hope you will make an effort to find yourself to one of the best reads of the year.... Best regards, Victoria Schochet, Editor-in-Chief, Science Fiction, Berkley/Jove”. This is hype on the cheap: the publishers of *The Many-Colored Land* printed extra copies for SFWA members, nice hardbacks suitable for resale.... (NB: TSN is among the works placed 17th on the preliminary Nebula ballot, with 5 votes.) **Space Voyager**: only half a line was given to this new mag last issue, it having come into my hands rather too late. The trial issue costs 95p and has been cobbled together by Model & Allied Publications Ltd: the only external contribution appears to be some routine Patrick Moore material. Unsurprisingly, *SV* approaches sf from the scale-modelling viewpoint (“The [Alien’s] saliva is formed from any clear adhesive with a tendency to string and the dribbles from dollops of epoxy”) – but one piece of (mediocre) fiction is included.... **Nameless D&D Magazine**: TSR Hobbies have been looking for a dynamic, go-ahead, hyperefficient organizer and editor for the appalling task of setting up their new UK games magazine from scratch. What princely salary is offered, you ask, panting hotly? £5500, that’s what, *and* the poor sod has to move to Cambridge.... **John Sladek** writes: “The second volume of *Roderick* is now called *Roderick at Random*; I’m hoping to sell a few copies to any Smollett scholars who happen to be buying books in a hurry”.... **RIP**: another delayed death notice. Harry Bates, the first editor of *Astounding SF*, died last September aged 80.... **RIP, Sort Of**: *Starburst* columnist “John Bowles” – who has been known to write under the name Malcolm Edwards – expired in a blaze of glory and *Extro/Interzone* plugs in *Starburst* 43. Mr. B. is going into publishing (see also the top of A23’s front page) instead.... **The Patchin Review** has gone quarterly with its third issue, editor C. Platt being unable to cope with the bimonthly schedule. It’s improved since my (negative) comments on #1: its latest gossip column reports weird things like a forthcoming Samuel Delany *fanzine*, a Playboy Press “sci-fi porn series (to be ghosted by Andy Offutt)” called “Of Alien Bondage”, and the story behind the Jove “No Frills” generic-sf book. The last wasn’t mentioned here because even I couldn’t credit the publication of a paperback whose plan cover says only “No-Frills Book: SCIENCE

FICTION. Complete with everything: Aliens, Giant Ants, Space Cadets, Robots, One Plucky Girl”. The 20,000 appalling words within were dashed off by former Jove editor John Silbersack for “a pittance (and no royalties)”.... No kidding.

Scousecon 1: Liverpool 12-14 Feb Rog Peyton

A multi-media con with Anne McCaffrey as Guest of Honour. After the lousy winter and the gigantic chore of moving shop, I needed a break – what better than a con? They’d invited me to do the traditional auction; it would be nice to see familiar faces and have a quiet weekend socializing.... I first suspected that the con would be somewhat chaotic two weeks before the event, when I discovered no-one had booked me into the hotel. Apparently the committee had done nothing up to that date, and Dot Owens – who has organized more than her fair share of Star Trek cons – had decided to step in at the last moment to salvage what she could. Meanwhile the remnants of the committee were doing something ... but weren’t telling anybody. The chairman had decided that the numbers were too low, so went and got publicity on local radio. This explained why, on Friday evening, there were almost no familiar faces around. But I had an interesting evening, I think – hell, I *must* have done; I forgot to eat! During breakfast on Saturday I discovered that the programme was to be totally revised – Dot’s new committee had found several things in it that wouldn’t work, like more than one item scheduled in the same room at the same time. Seasoned con-goers will realize that this is not a Good Thing. Later I noticed that the new programme had slotted in my auction at 10am Saturday morning! *That* was changed. The book room was opened and we waited for customers ... and waited ... and waited. A few trickled in and walked out without buying. I’d taken loads of *Star Trek* material thinking the Trekkers would be there in force – I sold ten ST paperbacks and one copy of this year’s calendar. This was going to be a great con. I sat there getting more depressed, waiting for evening when I could have some fun. The bar didn’t open till 12.30 Saturday lunchtime, which threw me into an even bigger depression. But then came the Fancy Dress and the Disco – this was going to be a Great Evening! Hah. The fancy dress was fun, but led into one of those unannounced displays that

occur far too frequently these days: this one was just a *little* different. Typical stormtrooper-type raid and battle against another troop of blaster-equipped ~~mercenaries~~ mercenaries. But this time, the clever little sods decided to go for *realism*. Bags of watered-down tomato ketchup had been strapped inside shirts with tiny charges inside them: when the blasters were fired, the charges went off, exploding “blood” from the victim’s stomach all over the disco floor. Exploding guts, simulated rape scenes and general violence followed. Somewhere there was a script but no-one could hear it. After the initial shock of the entrance, there was one violent act after another. Members of the audience were showered with “blood” (and I’m not sure Brian Burgess’s lights weren’t in there somewhere): they started reacting. One girl near me suddenly went into hysterics; within minutes others followed; a chap went into shock and seriously thought he was having a heart attack. The “act” finished and left. Most of the audience applauded; apparently the cases had been isolated. Suddenly people came rushing into the con hall, grabbing fire extinguishers while the fire alarm rang. With all this going on, no-one moved. It was only when a committee member took the mike and announced that this was for real that anyone got out of the room. So there we were, fans in skimpy fancy dress, others dressed in light clothing for the disco – all herded out of the hotel into cold, dreary Liverpool. Blue lights flashing everywhere from police cars and fire engines, while we were left to freeze for 15-20 minutes as the hotel was checked over. Apparently one charge from the ketchup act had failed to explode and had been taken to one of the bedrooms to be defused. It then exploded, producing lots of smoke, immediately under a smoke-detector.... Needless to say, this finished many people for the evening – only a handful stayed for the disco. Most must have needed a stiff drink by then – more than one drink each, I’d imagine, as the committee had to apologize to the hotel staff the next morning for the amount of vomit on the carpets. Sunday was, mercifully, a fairly uneventful day; the convention closed in the evening. The chairman and the committee did *not* get a vote of thanks, though Dot Owens did. And *still* the chairman stood up and announced that Scousecon 2 will take place next year!!! See you there? (Rog Peyton)

BSFA Meetings and Other Unlawful Assemblies

Eve Harvey Reveals All! “New Year is traditionally the time to turn over a new leaf, and January 1982 saw the birth of the new-style BSFA monthly meetings. Not only are they under new management (me), they have moved to a new, informal venue in the Cellar Bar of the King of Diamonds [which in Doreyspeak translates to the Ace of Hearts – cf. Chairman Dorey’s *Matrix* 40 column], Greville St (Tube: Chancery Lane/Farringdon). A very pleasurable birth it was too, with 30 midwives (5 attending for the first time) and a lively discussion – ably assisted by Malcolm Edwards – on British SF magazines past and present. It emerged that many readers today do not feel the lack of such magazines: having arrived after the demise of *New Worlds*, they’ve had no experience of an sf magazine with high literary standards. The publication of *Extro* and *Interzone* does represent a reawakening of the British literary sf magazine; the general conclusion of the meeting was that we should all buy these two to give them a fair trial and, if we like them, help ensure their success. Perhaps then the large publishers and distributors will sit up and take notice of what the reader wants.” (Eve Harvey) • **BSFA Meetings 1982:** March 19 “What It’s Like to Be a Deaf Fan” – mumbling Dave Langford puts you all through the experience; April 16 “The Human Race vs Alan Dorey” – open forum on the BSFA; May 1 BSFA Mastermind; June 18 “Disco SF or Is Robert Silverberg Really a BeeGee?” – Chris Priest; Aug 20 “Why I Hired Malcolm Edwards” – Gollancz managing director John Bush speaks out; Nov 19 “No Longer a Virgin” – Maxim Jakubowski tells it like it is, or was. (R. Tappen)

And now some updates to last issue’s con list: –

Scousecon has happened, as noted by Rog Peyton: Anne Page was also in touch and painted a less grim picture – e.g. the fire alarm debacle was the fault of the *hotel*, who’d been asked to turn off smoke detectors for a certain period but reactivated them rather too soon. H’m.

Fantasycon VII July 2-4, Grand Hotel, Birmingham; GoH Tanith Lee, “guest artist” Eddie Jones. “Pre registration”, whatever that may be, £1.50/\$3 – cheques to British Fantasy Conventions c/o 53 Glencoe St, Anlaby Rd, Hull, N. Humberside, HU3 6HR. I always find it mysteriously difficult to get information on Fantasycon. Mole this time: Chris Morgan.

At The Edge Of The World Aug 7-8, The Bull, Upper Richmond Rd W, East Sheen, London, SW.14. Blake’s 7 affair. £8 att to 26 Stanlake Rd,

Shepherd's Bush, London, W1 7HP (cheques to con name); four 9x6 SAEs for PRs demanded.

Galileocon Aug 27-29, Newcastle; GoHs Theodore Sturgeon, Judy Blish; Star Trek con. Details: Tina Pole, 11F Priors Terrace, Tynemouth, North Shields, Tyne & Wear, NE30 4BE, phone 0632-596850. Note that this clashes with –

Silicon 6 Aug 27-30, data as before except that the £3 rose after Silicon 5, and is now £3.50. PR1 out around now.

Beneluxcon 82/SFancon 12 Sept 3-5; most data as before. GoHs include Colin Wilson and Herbert W Franke; 350 Fr (Belgian) att, ditto nightly for B&B; send no money yet.

Unicon 3, Sept 10-12, Keele U; £6 att £3 supp to Unicon 3 c/o 18a Ivel Gdns, Biggleswade, Beds, SG18 0AN; rooms £8/person/night (provisional) without breakfast. "Third and final SF con to be held at the University of Keele."

Cymrucon 2 Nov 26-8, Central Hotel, Cardiff; GoH Lionel Fanthorpe (celebrating the anniversary of his first sale), also Brian Stableford, Ian Watson, me (FGoH!); £5 att £2 supp to Dale McCarthy, 28 Claud Rd, Roath, Cardiff; no memberships will be taken at the door.

Xmascon Dec 24-6 (???): the inarguable Naveed Khan has muttered of this idea for diverting 200 fans from the bosoms or otherwise of their families, but no solid information, like the name of the hotel, has emerged. GoH: Santa.

SF/Comics Marts: Simon Bostock enthuses about "Creation Convention" events in the Central Hotel, New St, Brum: noon to 5pm, 20p; Mar 20, May 2, July 17, Sept 18, Nov 6. Nothing but dealers, I gather, although a bar is promised.

COA

KEN MANN, Jennerlaan 9, 5644 DT Eindhoven, The Netherlands /
PATRICK & TERESA NIELSEN HAYDEN, 4714 36th Ave NE, Seattle,
WA 98105, USA / DAVE RIKE, Box 11, Crockett, CA 94525, USA / DAVE
& HAZEL LANGFORD: this year, maybe.

More Cons

Jerucon (Israel, June/July) will not be featuring most of the famous guests listed in its flier. Chairman Sheldon Teitelbaum complains that he's been let down by rotten pros who went back on their word; John Brunner, one such rotter, observes that it's one thing to accept the invitation to be a guest, but another to find oneself expected to attend entirely at one's own expense. **The 3rd International Conference On The Fantastic In The Arts** (Florida, March) was even more inept: an invitation sent to SFWA members neglected to mention the date of the event. When I wrote to ask this, I got a form letter explaining that the fame and glory should be enough, without money. Soon after came a letter asking for the title of the work I planned to read, plus a list of featured authors which included me.... **Eurocon 84 Bid:** a flyer is enclosed where postage permits, and a discussion is scheduled for Channelcon. A British minibus to Eurocon 82 in Switzerland is envisaged. John Brunner (reeling after correcting 848 of 1700 pages of copyedited MS for the Ballantine publication of his *Steamboats on the River*) is worried by reports that many UK fans are hostile to the notion of combining Eastercon with Eurocon. "For the price of 2-3 pints of beer at a hotel bar, we can reasonably expect the chance to see foreign sf films never likely to be released on Britain (even on TV); to see the work of foreign sf artists and the products of foreign sf publishers; to meet and talk with a great many new friends most of whom have learnt to speak English in order to read UK and US sf [...] and, in sum, to broaden our horizons in every direction. [...] Of course, there are people who had set their hearts on a 1984 Eastercon perhaps even before this project was mooted. There are also some for whom the world stops at the Channel coast, or the North Sea, or the Atlantic...." (JB) **Pre-Supporting Memberships:** what happens to the money (writes Jeremy Crampton)? As far as I'm concerned, the idea is that presupporters endorse a convention bid and help pay for bidding publicity. Back a loser and, in general, you lose your quid. (Though Albacon II and Metrocon have more or less agreed that the losing bid will pass spare money to defray the memberships of presupporters who "backed a loser".) Unicon 3 had "presupporters" who refused to reclaim their room-key deposits at Unicon 2, in the hope that Unicon 3 would be organized; I don't understand why Ra Con in Edinburgh has "presupporters" when there was never a question of bidding against some rival Edinburgh convention.

Infinitely Improbable

Bob Shaw has an offer you can't refuse: "YOU WANT TO MAKE MONEY FROM WRITING? I WILL PAY YOU £20/£30 PER PARAGRAPH! ... If you want to make quick cash by writing, forget about *Omni*. Forget about those 253 publications to which Dave Langford is consulting editor...." For some while Bob has been writing storylines for European Disney comics (slightly more adult than the US originals); having swiped the plots of his own books and millions of others in Disneyland form, he needs yet more ideas – paragraphs suitable for expansion into two-page storylines. Contact him directly for further details (3pp closely typed). "Better than catching your pudenda in a rat trap," he observes. Meanwhile, an amateur drama group called The Artisans (Ongar-based) is adapting Bob's *Who Goes Here?* as their 1983 summer production.... **Pete Lyon** also has an appeal, and has bribed me with artwork donations for TAFF to insert a request that owners of Lyon paintings contact him to say what they've got (2 New Row, Old Micklefield, Leeds, LS25 4AJ) – publishers are making "interested noises" but he's lost track of some works.... **The Dorian Calendar:** Which BSFA chairman, in which *recent* Matrix, scheduled a BSFA envelope-stuffing session in Reading at the same time as Channelcon in Brighton? My lips are sealed.... **Roz Kaveney**, it says in *Books & Bookmen* (after her glowing review of the unforgettable *Helliconia Whatsit*), is working on a history of sf.... **Faircon 82** has scored something of a coup by luring Naomi Mitchison along as a special guest (her first con, though she attended a Dublin SF writers' conference in the late 70s).... **Patrick Nielsen Hayden** has finalized the contents of his fanthology of 1981 writing, which will contain at least one British item.... **Geoff Rippington** has lost his Arts Council grant for *Arena SF* (reason: "government cutbacks"); he'll be doing an issue of Channelcon with a smaller print run, and may well take over as editor of *Vector*.... **Comical Matters:** "The *Daily Star* were so happy with the Saturday *Judge Dredd* strip (from 2000 AD) that they've renewed their contract for another year; *Eagle* returns March 20 at 20p, initial print run 340,000...." (Simon Bostock – whose apa is folding with the next mailing).... **Ratcon** purports to be an Australian Worldcon bid for 2002, and publicity manager James Styles (342 Barkly St, Ararat, Vic 3377) has been asked to expand his knowledge of overseas fandom: This Means You.... **Joe Nicholas**, our expert on, er, Australian affairs, is distributing Melbourne in 85 literature – he's now UK

agent. He'd like you to send him the equivalent of A\$10 as a two-year sub to *The Antipodean Announcer* (newsletter on the wonders of Aussie fandom) and *Kanga Ruse* (detailed bid info) – Rm 9, 94 St George's Sq, Pimlico, SW1Y 3QY.... **TAFF** has approx £1050 in the UK kitty; deadline is still 17 April and an announcement of the victor will follow shortly after.... **DUFF** (Oz – >US) is also running currently, with famed Aussie fans Derrick Ashby, Damian Brennan, Daryl Mannell and Peter Toluzzi all on the ballot.... **Cyril Simsa**'s lack of activity in fandom is because he's found true happiness playing the synthesizer in a band called Somewhere a Voice (devoted, no doubt, to the Eric Frank Russell sound). Cyril would like you to buy a studio compilation album with a track by his mob, £2.50 plus p&p from him at 18 Muswell Ave, N10 2EG – but he warns that their track is the only good one.... **Joyce Scrivner** (who with Fran Skene should be at Channelcon) reveals that even as G. Scithers left *IASFM* at great speed, his pals Barry Longyear, Sharon Webb and Jeff Duntemann all left the Cult apa. "It's enough to make a fan wonder," says Joyce.... **Key In 357489805 On Prestel** to see the first fruits of George Hay's "mapping system for microtechnology education", says George.... **Avedon Carol** is feeling unwell ("Hashimoto's Thyroiditis.... I feel like a little old lady or something ... can't walk on my left leg half the time either") but would like to hear from British fans who may attend the 83 worldcon – 4409 Woodfield Rd, Kensington, MD 20895, USA. **Extro** persists, and has fiction from Bob Shaw, Richard Cowper, Brian Aldiss, John Sladek and many more.... **Millington Folds?** Their BSFA mailing came back: "gone away". **Stop Press:** Philip Dick died on 2/3 March in California, aged 53. RIP. (*Steve Green*)

The Ansible Late Supplement • Thursday 4 March 1982

Dave Langford, 22 Northumberland Ave, Reading, Berks, RG2 7PW, UK. – I didn't know, when I typed the "stop press" item yesterday, that I'd add this sheet today. An extra word, then, about Philip Dick. It's particularly sad that a writer should die when his talent was still alive, his work evolving and changing: that, all the same, is a good epitaph for any writer – and in addition, Dick's mastery was recognized in his own lifetime. Graham James, I understand, plans a special memorial feature in *Matrix*: good for him. Onward....

Nebula Awards Final Ballot: the awards will be presented at the Nebula

Banquet in Berkeley, California, on 24 April 1982. Voting deadline is 31 March or earlier.

NOVEL: *Radix* – A.A. Attanasio; *The Vampire Tapestry* – Suzy McKee Charnas; *Little, Big* – John Crowley; *Riddley Walker* – Russell Hoban; *The Many-Colored Land* – Julian May; *The Claw of the Conciliator* – Gene Wolfe.

NOVELLA: “The Saturn Game” – Poul Anderson (*Analog* Feb); “Swarmer, Skimmer” – Greg Benford (*SFD* Oct/Nov); “Amnesia” Jack Dann (*Berkley Showcase* 3); “In the Western Tradition” – Phyllis Eisenstein (*F&SF* Mar); “True Names” – Vernor Vinge (*Binary Stars* 5); “The Winter Beach” – Kate Wilhelm (*Listen, Listen*).

NOVELETTE: “The Quickening” – Michael Bishop (*Universe* 11); “Sea Changeling” – Mildred Downey Broxon (*IASFM* Aug); “The Thermals of August” – Ed Bryant (*F&SF* May); “The Fire When It Comes” – Parke Godwin (*F&SF* May); “Mummer Kiss” – Michael Swanwick (*Universe* 11); “Lirios: A Tale of the Quintana Roo” – James Tiptree Jr (*IASFM* Sept).

SHORT STORY: “Going Under” – Jack Dann (*Omni* Sept); “Disciples” – Gardner Dozois (*Penthouse* Nov); “The Quiet” – George Florance-Guthridge (*F&SF* July); “Johnny Mnemonic” – William Gibson (*Omni* May); “Venice Drowned” – Kim Stanley Robinson (*Universe* 11); “Zeke” – Timothy R. Sullivan (*Twilight Zone* Oct); “The Bone Flute” – Lisa Tuttle (*F&SF* May); “The Pusher” – John Varley (*F&SF* Oct).

NOTES: (1) Don’t blame me: almost everything I voted for has been ignored by other SFWA fools; (2) A tie is responsible for the plethora of short stories. (DRL)

Hazel’s Language Lessons

Number Sixteen: Esperanto

(contributed by John Brunner)

fibopatriningo: a container into which you insert one end of an unpleasant mother-in-law.

ANSIBLE TWENTY-FOUR

Editor: Dave Langford

22 Northumberland Avenue, Reading,
Berkshire, RG2 7PW, UK. (3-3-82)

***Ansible* 25**

April 1982

ANSIBLE 25 (April 1982) from Dave Langford, 22 Northumberland Avenue, Reading, Berkshire, RG2 7PW, UK. Subscriptions £1 for 5 issues in UK, 4 elsewhere. Heading [“Post-Seventies News for Post-Sixties Fans!”] by Dan Steffan. Mailing label by Keith Freeman; the runes SUB DUE or ***** indicate a hideous curse which may be lifted only by sending me money. \$US to Burns, 48 Lou Ave, NY, NY 11754, USA. This bumper 25th issue is distinguished by being still more ordinary than usual. It appears at Channelcon, where readers are invited to vote for the Metrocon bid for the 1983 Eastercon – and also to vote in TAFF if you haven’t already. TAFF deadline is 17 April.... (5-4-82)

Meetings with Remarkable Letter-Writers

Lisa Tuttle (carbon of note to Nebula boss Frank Catalano): “I’m sorry this letter is late – it would have been helpful if the SFWA had bothered to inform me that a story of mine was being considered for a Nebula Award. Late as it is, I must ask you to remove my story ‘The Bone Flute’ from consideration....

“I made this decision after discovering that another writer in the short story category, George Florance-Guthridge, has sent around copies of his nominated story to SFWA members with a covering letter written by *F&SF* editor Ed Ferman at his request. Florance-Guthridge’s letter put Ed in the awkward position of seeming to favour one short story of the three published by his magazine which received nominations; I learned about this when Ed wrote to me offering to ‘even things out’ by writing a similar covering letter for ‘The Bone Flute.’ I refused his friendly offer; I don’t know what John Varley did.

“I don’t approve of this kind of campaigning for an award which is presented *as if* it were a prize for the best work in the field, but which in fact is battled out like any election. If everyone involved campaigned – sending out copies

of their work or bumper stickers saying ‘vote for me’ – that would be one thing; the situation as it stands now is unfair and calls into question the validity of those works which will win....”

And on 4 April Lisa phoned to add that, actually, “The Bone Flute” had *won* the short-story Nebula before her (31 March) withdrawal arrived. As a result it appears that no Nebula in this category will be awarded. George F-G’s “The Quiet” came in second; the other notably hyped work, May’s novel *The Many-Colored Land*, also failed to win in its category. Ho No other details as I type this bit, but Lisa adds: “I don’t go along with Chris [Priest] in thinking the Nebula should be abolished, but I do think that, as it exists now, it is pretty much a farce.”

Ian Watson: “Big Mal [Edwards] has been leaning on me a bit recently, using the Gollancz franking meter to send me letters saying why don’t I come to heel over *Interzonk*, and pointing out that he is now working for Gollancz again, otherwise known as presiding over my livelihood. Unabashed, I wrote back and said that I didn’t intend to have anything to do with *Interzonk* while the Greenland virus infected it, and referred Big Mal to Aldiss’s letter in *Matrix* denying that he had ever had communion with G’s first novel (even in the form of a soundless hum). Aldiss, I said, is covering his tracks, and referred Mal to Maxim Jakubowski with whom he is currently collaborating. A year ago Maxim J told us that the first opus of Dr G was received at Virgin together with a glowing letter of recommendation by BA. Three months ago Maxim, scenting trouble, had muted this to ‘a sort of reader’s report by BA.’ When Mal asked him, Maxim developed total amnesia, and said he thought maybe Dr G may have said to him on the phone that BA had read it and liked it, but couldn’t remember clearly. (We, on the other hand, could remember perfectly clearly what he had said in both descending versions.) Anyway, came back this gem from Big Mal: ‘If this were so, it wouldn’t necessarily mean that Brian *had* read it: Colin might simply have been lying to [Maxim] in the hope of getting him to consider the thing. Which would not be unusual. Prospective authors say a lot of things.... But I think whatever I say you will continue to view Colin’s activities in the worst possible light....’ Oh ha, very ha. Colin might SIMPLY have been LYING.... I bet you phoned round all the publishers in London about your first novel, lying that Arthur Clarke had just read it with ravished delight, so that they would print it instantly.

“And what if it is *true* that BA had never even seen the book, and G was

simply lying? That means the only SF author involved in handing out the Arts Council public funds did so without even bothering to glance at the only manuscript evidence of Dr G's literary worth.... A bloody disgrace.”

Oh dear. Though I have no notion of who may have fibbed to whom on whatever occasion, I should add that (1) Whatever murkiness surrounded Colin's original appointment to the Creative Writing Fellowship at the NELP, the selection procedure was hardly his fault – or *Interzone's*; (2) Everybody seems to have forgotten the other “MS evidence of Dr G's literary worth” – his forthcoming book on *New Worlds*. Might Brian not have glanced at that?

Interzone 1 is now out, and has a powerful flavor of *New Worlds Quarterly*; copies may be had from Big Mal (28 Duckett Rd, N4 1BN) for £1.40 post free. After Graham James's suspicion that I was getting at him in an *SF Chronicle* snippet wherein his name appeared as “Graham Jones”, I was interested to note that the *Interzone* masthead ... yes, you've guessed it. The ever-contentious Graham also takes up the cudgels against the “rival” magazine *Extro* in *Matrix 41*; having given the impression that the first issue contains only three items, he explains that it's poor value for money since all the thousands of potential readers will already have seen my article in *Drilkjis* or *Vector* (though it was completely rewritten for *Extro*), and read the Watson interview in *SFR* (UK circulation minimal). It would be snide to inform Graham that his very own *Interzone* contains an edited chunk of an already published Moorcock novel, or that the famed Ballard presentation booklet is reprinted from *Ambit* (making all the portentous apparatus of a lettered/numbered/signed limited edition seem a bit silly).

Brian Aldiss: “I did of course look at the latest *Vector* and its accompanying litter [including *Matrix* with Ian Watson's assault on BA, CG etc]; on that score, all I can say is how delighted I am by the announcement that the Brunners and the Watsons – male and female made He them – will be spending Christmas together. They deserve each other.... Meanwhile, I'm somewhat demented by small success (sample enclosed [*Helliconia Spring* listed as National Book League #1 fiction bestseller; BA presenting £18,000 worth of literary awards at Soc of Authors reception 16 June]) and am boning up to be on ‘Desert Island Discs’ – the Seal of Respectability which will alienate all self-respecting fans. Beethoven's Ninth or I Wish I Could Shimmy Like My Sister Kate? It is a problem. However, on – more or less – with Vol. II. Still recovering from Aggiecon XIII, Texas – 4000 guests....

Now President of World SF, so watch it.”

Jim Barker: “As of 5.00pm on Friday 19 March, I am not a number ... I am a freelance artist. I took a voluntary redundancy and, after months of talking about it, have actually taken the plunge. My immediate plans are to recover from the hangover incurred at the farewell party thrown for me at the old office, and then trying to get my act together so I can knock on a few doors when I’m down in London after Channelcon. Long term plans are to try selling strips to IPC or D.C. Thomson and to work with Chris Evans on turning Elmer T. Hack into a newspaper strip (lotta potential there). Anyway, that’s it done. It still hasn’t sunk in that I’ve actually done it. It probably will when I sign on the dole on Monday after which I’ll probably be helluva depressed but for the moment ... by God I feel *GREAT!*”

Ramsey Campbell: “Yes, Millington has gone bust (‘ceased trading’) as of 12 February. As for Scousecon, I really ought to have warned people about it. I thought of doing so when they asked me to be one of the GoHs and then forgot they had, but I decided a warning might look more pique. By the time I saw their handwritten press release which referred to, if I recall correctly, ‘the film debut of Michael Moorerøftcock’, it was too late. Mind you, from Rog Peyton’s description, it sounds like the sort of event I’d have loved to attend ... without paying.

“Anne McCaffrey is to be Master, or whatever the term is, of ceremonies at Fantasycon.”

R.I. Barycz: “There’s an old joke about the four most useless things in the world – the Pope’s balls, etc. – and to them I am tempted to add another pair: the publicity bods for *Revenge of the Jedi*. They started on 11 Jan and since then nothing.... (A lot of mags in the States seem to think it is going to be called *RETURN of the Jedi*. *Revenge* it most certainly is ...)” [As a working title, but it got changed and Return of the Jedi it most certainly was – Ed.]

[By coincidence, the official *Star Wars* fan club boss appeared at the March One Tun: Maureen Garrett, who seemed a little surprised that we provincials had heard of such delights of civilization as the Los Angeles SF Soc. She seemed rather miffed by Barycz/*Ansible* coverage of *ROTJ*, and muttered something about not much publicity being wanted yet....]

“No publicity wanted so far? This is a red rag to the proverbial.... SIR ALEC

GUINNESS has read the script for *ROTJ* and *he'll be back!* (According to producer Howard Kazanjian.) Not just as a nifty bit of double exposure. In the flesh no less. Puts a whole new slant to the proverb 'Death does not release you'.... RED FACES AT THE BBC! On 'Multicoloured Swap Shop' someone offered a video cassette of *Star Wars*. Not the 'Making of ...' video but the actual feature: stolen goods, in fact.... SALKINDS TO COMMIT FINANCIAL SUICIDE IN 1983! Chris 'Superman' Reeve says he expects to wear his underpants over his tights this summer in *Soooperman III* for release in Summer 1983. *ROTJ* comes out then.... FINANCIAL REVELATIONS! By the grace of the Companies Act and the microfilm library in the City Rd. The last time I looked at the file for the company that made SW, though the film may have took half a *billion* \$\$\$ worldwide (*Variety* estimate), the accounts lodged by the company as made it show that they carried a loss of 37.00 (thirty-seven pounds) forward into the next commercial year.... I think it is about time they moved onto location work – I've read German and N Africa as places where they'll be going – and that should make for more information. English newspapers sit and wait for the news to come through their Associated Press telex printer; foreigners go out and dig it up. With photos and all."

Martin Morse Wooster (see COA): "While I've heard no more about the epic novel *Contact*, Carl Sagan Productions and the Cosmos Store have definitely gone bankrupt, the tremors of imploding cosmic minds even reaching the outskirts of Washington. Local fan Dick Preston, who runs a network of high-school science clubs, asked Cosmos Central if he could possibly have a few calendars as premiums for club organizers. 'Oh, would you like 5000 of them?' I have a copy of 'The Cosmic Calendar: 1982' before me now: it comes complete with 'The Cosmic Calendar Concept', which informs the reader that 'In the tapestry of cosmic time, human beings are very young....' Gosh wow.

"D.M. Thomas lasted in Washington a grand total of 5 days, fleeing town after he found out that Pocket Books was preparing to sell zillions of copies of *The White Hotel*. [Their initial print run: 1,000,000!] After disappearing for 2 months in shock-horror, leaving in Washington – according to the local paper – 'a trail of rotting fruit' as well as a role as star attraction in a marathon reading of *Ulysses* for the Joyce centennial, he has eventually emerged to do a limited amount of promotion – and *not* in Washington.

“Lawsuit of the month comes from one June R. Pritchard, who claims that ‘intimate social details’ of her life were told to a psychiatrist, who allegedly informed Stephen King, who allegedly then wrote *The Shining*. Pritchard wants \$75 million in damages.... And lastly, a Media Note: the latest sci-fi spectacle to disgrace US television is *The Phoenix*, an ancient astronaut resurrected to become a New Age superman. We learn in the first episode that the ancients possessed Dark Secrets that moderns have forgotten: ‘They had numbers with 1 followed by fifteen zeroes ... bigger than any computer!’ Now you know.”

D. West: “Only event of note is the discovery that a Swedish fanzine has been pirating my cartoons for *Matrix*. (Also Pete Lyon’s.) Joseph Nicholas in Swedish actually looks funnier than the original, though one wonders what the Swedes think of it. Strange.... Bi-yearly denunciation of absolutely everybody due this summer, with T. White in leading role. Level of general idiocy seems to be rising again. We have enough foolishness of our own without importing the American variety. Another great step backward for international peace and harmony.”

Patrick Nielsen Hayden: “Just got back from Norwescon 5: Bob Shaw was a great hit as GoH; the play of *The Enchanted Duplicator* was a smash hit to a packed audience and provoked several tour offers all of which will probably be ignored by the exhausted cast; Doug Faunt brought a 200-lb canister of compressed nitrous oxide on which large chunks of Seattle and Bay Area fandom floated away for much of the weekend; and oh yes, Tom Disch was fine too. (‘This is great! Thomas M. Disch *and* nitrous oxide!’ – Carl Juarez, while observing the interaction of the aforementioned items, one affecting the other).... [Good grief. Patrick is preparing an anthology of Best 1981 Fanwriting or thereabouts:] *Five* British contributions, against five Americans and one Aussie. ‘Yorcon II Photo Album’ & ‘Life with the Loonies’ by Atkinson, ‘Oh Dear What Can the Matter Be’ by Priest, ‘Group Dynamics of Conventional Assemblies’ by Langford, ‘Dot Fiction Supplement’ by Smith, and yet another quoting of Malcolm’s paragraph on why we shud rite good in fanzeens, just in case some fan somewhere being let out of maximum-security imprisonment hasn’t seen it. Other contents include stuff from Benford, Carol, White, Mayer, ‘Alais Adverse’ and Bangsund.”

Pascal Thomas: “Grand Prix de la Science Fiction Francaise – the best

publicized of awards for French SF, awarded by a jury of 11 critics and writers – for 1981: BEST NOVEL *Le silence de la cité* by Elizabeth Vonarburg; BEST SHORT ‘Gélatine’ by Jean-Pierre Hubert (*Mouvance 5* semi-pro anthology); BEST JUVENILE NOVEL *La fée et le géomètre* by Jean-Pierre Andrevon; SPECIAL AWARD to ‘Compagnie des Glaces’ series by G.J. Arnaud – 7 novels 1980-82 – impressive, highly imaginative hackwork.”

Anonymous French Rumormonger: “The Prix Apollo, for which translated works are eligible, hasn’t been decided yet – but the first three books in the preliminary selection are said to be Ballard’s *Hello America*, Wolfe’s *The Shadow of the Torturer* and Priest’s *The Affirmation* (in that order).

“Shake-up at *Fiction* (French edition of *F&SF*): Michel Ferloni, boss of Opta (the publisher), who does not know anything about sf, took offence at the ‘tone’ of the magazine’s departments, reviews, etc. After various discussions and confused declarations, the upshot seems to be that Alain Doremieux, *Fiction*’s editor, will be discharged as editor of the departments but remain as fiction editor – while the contributors whose work caused the upheaval will be kept on if they will agree to be more ... subdued.”

Colin Wilson: “At the moment I am wildly overworked. I am writing a quarter of a million word *World History of Crime* after which I have to do an *Encyclopaedia of Murder* (vol. 1) then a book on psychic detectives, then a biography of a poet friend that I have agreed to do much against my will....”

WAHF: Robert Allen (whose magazine *Edges*, planned to sweep *Extro* off the market, mysteriously folded before publication: his even newer *SF Journal* will no doubt sweep *Locus*, *SFC* and *Ansible* off the market – send £2 to him at 74 Bonnington Sq, Vauxhall, SW8 1TG, he begs); Jane Doe (who rumours that following their purchase of *Amazing SF*, the Gyax D&D empire is trying to lure famous George Scithers as editor); A.N. Other: “Everyone assumed Ian W would get the Foundation job until he came into the interview room and they heard him talk.”

What’s On at the ICA

On March 20 the ICA featured a one-day “Focus on Fiction” conference, attended by someone whom *The Bookseller* describes as “a splendidly

iconoclastic SF writer.” “Don’t take too much notice of the smell,” said Marghanita Laski (Arts Council Literature Panel chair), referring not to said writer’s fags but to the aftermath of a recent fire at the ICA. Let’s steal ever such a lot of reportage from *The Bookseller*, verbatim....

“The star turn of this session was Mr Watson. He thought the morning’s offerings ‘rampant twee,’ he lambasted reviewers – ‘they have no power to make things sell, only to stop things selling’ – people who use the term sci-fi, the British who underrated science fiction and its practitioners and, much worse, deferred to the Americans. Later, still exuding a powerhouse of energy, he marched off to the loo, pulling down doors and partition walls as he went – at least that’s what it sounded like.” (Horace Bent)

Ian himself adds: “I was down at the ICA a couple of weeks ago to be Skiffyman in a conference on Fiction High & Low, and one of the ICA staffers told me that one Aldiss had been doing a gig on *Helliconia Spring* a couple of weeks earlier, and his gaze had alighted on announcements that the Skiffyman’s name was Watson, had inveighed thus: ‘What have you got him for? You don’t want him! You want *me!*’ Thus related the ICA staffer, bemusedly.”

An interesting fact mentioned by *The Bookseller* in passing is that Salman Rushdie, of *Midnight’s Children* fame, is the recipient of an Arts Council bursary. It’s nice to know that if you’re a struggling young writer with a novel firmly entrenched in the bestseller lists, plus a large Booker Prize cheque in your pocket, the Arts Council will be sure to rally round with £7500 worth of aid.

Serious and Constructive

Prix Apollo Update: Pascal Thomas has arrived at the Langford hovel with the news that this award has gone to *L’Idiot-Roi* by one Scott Baker, being the French translation of his internationally famous novel *Symbiote’s Crown*. How, I asked, did Baker come to the top of the distinguished shortlist mentioned earlier in *Ansible*? “Well, he’s an American but he lives in Paris, you see....” **The Hall of Fame:** Administrators and publicists of literary prizes are begged to send data on winners, henceforth, to the Book Info Service, National Book League, Book House, SW.18. I’m sure that as well as

the BSFA award they'd love to hear about the Hugos, FAAns, Nebulas, Ditmars, Nova, Pong poll, Ansible poll and the rest.... **Bug Dave Kyle:** Jan Howard Finder, due to become a famous skiffy anthologist in June, wants to make an embarrassing speech about D. Kyle at Rivercon (July), where the latter will be FGoH. Send your appalling Kyle anecdotes and lies to Jan at PO Box 428, Latham, NY 12110, USA.... *Lands Of Never*, Maxim Jakubowski's fantasy anthology, now has tales by those inseparables Aldiss and Watson, plus Cherry Wilder, Jane Gaskell, Joy Chant and J.G. Ballard, with Burgess and Amis also hoped for. Your reporter too has been promised the chance to acquire yet more of Maxim's finely crafted rejection slips before the closing date (end of July).... **And Speaking of Rejections** – hopes that *Asimov's* might become more open-minded with the departure of George Scithers seem to have been over-optimistic. Executive Editor Kathleen Maloney, not content with bouncing a Langford epic which I modestly think is quite good, proceeded to denounce it for its terrible defect of having a non-rosy ending. "Bleak and futile." The hand is the hand of Maloney, but the voice is the voice of Scithers.... **Philip Dick** Memorial Symposium now scheduled for the evening of 11 June, somewhere in London. Brian Aldiss will lead the discussion; Ridley Scott (director of *Blade Runner*, the *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* film due out in June – script enthused over by Dick earlier this year) may also attend. Details from Colin Greenland at the SF Foundation (01-590-7722 ext 2177) (*Matrix*).... **Chicon IV**, the 1980 Worldcon to be held in Chicago this summer, had to extend the Hugo nominations deadline from 15 to 31 March owing to "a computer problem": this information is now of no use to anybody at all. Joyce Scrivner (2528 15th Avenue S, Minneapolis, MN 55404, USA) would like to hear from Brits likely to attend Chicon, in order to arrange Fan Funnish Things during and after the con – stop her at Channelcon and enquire.... **Judith Hanna**, staying with Joseph Nicholas u.f.n., reminds me to include something about the Australian Ditmar nominations, the fanwriting category of which I have by me here, handwritten from memory by **Judith Hanna**, nominees being Eric Lindsay, Leigh Edmonds, Marc Ortlieb and **Judith Hanna**. In the non-Australian novel category the finalists are *The Affirmation*, *The Claw of the Conciliator*, *Radix* and *The Sirian Experiments*. (Thanks to *Thyme* and to **Judith Hanna**.) **SFWA Elections:** Though the voting deadline is not until 22 April, the prescient *Ansible* news service is not afraid to declare that Marta Randall will win as President, Charles L. Grant as vice-president, John F.

Carr as treasurer and David Brin as secretary – not to mention Greg Benford as western regional director. There are no other candidates. Who cares? Why vote?

Money! Money!

There was an excellent response to the mini book-sale catalogue circulated with British copies of *Ansible* 24 ... many thanks. Items sold as of now are numbers 2-4, 8, 9, 14, 22, 24, 33-36, 39, 41-2, 44-5, 48-9 and 51-4. The most popular item of all was the James Branch Cabell study (good taste you lot have), perhaps because of the Poictesme map: I've made some "quality" photocopies of this as a consolation, available for a 12½p stamp plus 10x8 SAE (or another stamp if you don't mind taking your chance with whatever grotty old envelope I can dig up. Also: David and Charles plan to remainder my triffic UFO book *An Account of a Meeting with Denizens of Another World, 1871* (1979 hardcover first edition). Signed (or not, as you prefer) copies shortly available for 2.50 or \$5.00 post free. Help this man become a capitalist.

Me

Perhaps, after all ... 25 issues ... a little something extra ... a special editorial feature? All right, I'll admit it. We have here what is known in publishers' argot as a bloody great empty space which needs filling. Manifestly there is not room for a complete index to every semicolon yet published in *Ansible*; moreover, I'm too lazy for the task. (Volunteers start here: ;;;;)

I worry sometimes about this newszine format. Rather than spreading my eversomble opinions across page after opulent page, I have to squeeze them into tiny slots – and distort them in the process. Even when the facts are all there and all correct, the tone of voice tends to slip off-key in the general strain of trying for concision plus a modicum of entertainment. Example: looking at page 1 again, I seem to have come down harder than intended on dear old Graham James. Better example: in answering Greg Pickersgill's TAFF criticisms a while ago, I duly tackled those of his points which could be dealt with economically ("anybody can afford to fly to America" etc.), but not the more subtle ideological points ("there are no worthy candidates" etc.).

It would have needed more space: and so something which ought to have been said was skipped. – Still, I’m solidly in favor of TAFF. It’s so much easier *not* to be in favor of things, to slip into *Private Eye* nihilism, to raise smiles by slick and snide comments adding up to the view that everything, really, is contemptible. Signs of this are occasionally visible in *Ansible*: and it’s another distortion of the truth. As a newszine editor, I’m theoretically in the truth business....

But I’ve been duplicating the penultimate sheet of *Ansible*, and I must go and wash my hands. (Next issue: Why Wittgenstein Is Fannish.)

COA

PHIL JAMES, 38 Tyne End, Broadwater, Stevenage, Herts / PHIL PALMER, 62 Beaufort Mansions, Beaufort St, Chelsea, London / RON SALOMON, 49 Centre St, Natick, MA 01760, USA / MARTIN MORSE WOOSTER, Box 8093, Silver Spring, MD 20907, USA / THE LANGFORDS: in the near future, but only to far-off Reading....

CONS

Mediacon 3 (scheduled for March 20) was cancelled at the beginning of March since there were only 13 registrations.... **Fantasycon VIII** (July 2-4) is reported to need 200 registrations and in early March had 35 (nobody’s worried, publicity having only just begun “unusually early”).... **Eurocon 7** (Aug 10-15, Switzerland) has Ian Watson as a GoH; also invited are Lem and the Strugatskys; Ian sends a page from *Soviet Weekly* (April 3) with a Strugatsky story extract.... **9th French National Con** (Quetigny, Dijon, Sept 3-5 1982): att Fr 50 to April 30, Fr 70 thereafter, to Club SF de la MJC, Rue des Prairies, 21800 QUETIGNY, France.... **Beccon ’83** (July 29-31 1983): Essex Crest Hotel, Basildon; GoH to be announced; £3 supp £7 att to Beccon, 191 The Heights, Northolt, Middlesex, UB5 4BU.... **Galacticon** (Oct ?? 1983): media con, accent on *Blake’s 7* & *Battlestar Grot*; Gt Eastern Hotel, Liverpool St, London; £4 supp £10 att apparently rising after April 25; option to send £2 deposit now with balance 8 weeks before con; send SAE for notification of date and PR1; “we will ask you to send SAEs for subsequent progress reports etc etc” (I intensely dislike this practice, by the way); 171

Heath Rd, Hounslow, Middlesex.... **Piss Off Eurocon!** is the unofficial slogan of C. Atkinson, both Charnocks, M. Edwards, C. Evans, R. Hansen, R. Holdstock and L. Kettle: this committee plans to bid for Eastercon '84 and to oppose John Brunner's plan to combine said Eastercon with Eurocon 8 (MJE).... **Birmingham Comics Marts** (Centre Hotel, May 22 and other dates as in A24) are pretty dire, reports Simon Bostock, who could only stand the March event for an hour: no bar....

Infinitely Improbable

Ad Astra Lives, Almost: Ace investigator Ian Watson, the title story of whose collection *Sunstroke & Other Stories* (July 22) was to appear in the non-appearing *Ad Astra*, has been informed by reclusive AA editor James Manning that the magazine is Not Dead But Sleeping.... **RIP:** Edmund Cooper died on 11 March, age 55, and (having reviewed for them for 15 years) received an obituary in the *Sunday Times*. Philip Dick's death – on 2 March after a series of strokes and coma since 18 Feb – was largely ignored by British newspapers, though a long and worthwhile obituary by Maxim Jakubowski and Malcolm Edwards appeared in *New Musical Express*....

Comic Mystery: A recent series in the *2000 AD* comic was set in Reading, featuring a sinister house in Tilehurst Road from which spurious radio signals emanate. Martin Hoare, a radio amateur living in a sinister house in Tilehurst Rd, feels paranoid. Now another *2000 AD* series has introduced a peculiarly convex hotel security robot called Hoskins. Words cannot describe the feelings of Martin, who happens to work for the computerized-hotel-booking-systems firm Hoskyns. *Ansible* waits tensely for the appearance of a sinister house in Northumberland Avenue, from which spurious pamphlets emanate.... **Pong Poll:** Britons featured extensively in this US fan poll – best fanwriter Chris Atkinson, fanartist Dan Steffan, faneditor Malcolm Edwards, best new fan Chris A., single issue *Pong* 25, “fugghead” Joe Nicholas, “#1 Fan Face” Dan Steffan. More Brits appear as runners-up in every category but the penultimate one.... **The Science Fiction Epic That Began Where Everything Ended Continues!** – this toothsome Del Rey blurb lingers in the mind though the actual book doesn't.... **China Story:** sf is booming in China, strangely, and the local Arthur C. Clarke surrogate (52-year-old astronomer Zheng Wenguang) can rely on a 100,000 copy edition of his latest book selling out within a week. As for foreign devils, an anthology of non-Chinese

SF sold 420,000 copies in a similar period. Quick, somebody, translate my new book into Chinese! (L.A. Times/K. Smith) **SF People Everywhere:** On Radio 4's *PM* (12 March), a letter from exciting Marjorie Brunner was read out, deploring Pres. Raygun – followed, to the alarm of informant Chris Fowler, by another letter deploring El Salvador from a Mrs Watson! But not, after all, *the* Mrs Watson.... Meanwhile, in Glasgow, the Extremely Silly Party contested the Hillhead by-election with the slogan “Woysa Ranker” – I forget the candidate's name, but the whole was rendered suspiciously fannish by the fact that ESP press releases appeared to emanate from the fake Bob Shaw's typewriter. Lovely Andie Burland, meanwhile, is being interviewed by trendy *I/D* magazine, while Tanith Lee was a winner of the Folio Society's misprimed-book-title competition (“*The Habbit*: a penetrating study of drug addiction amongst dwarves. The hallucinations described, such as those of having furry feet, and travelling on water in a barrel, are quite startling.”) Among the runners-up was a Mrs Andrew De Lory, believed by experts to be the alias of famed literary agent Maggie Noach (now recovered from long illness and back in business). Brian Aldiss crashed the fame barrier in late Feb and made it into *Private Eye*'s prestigious “Pseud's Corner”: “Joyce is generally regarded as a writer who did extraordinary things with the language and the novel. Yet this Torquemada of tale-telling began as an insipid poet:

Lean out of the window
Goldenhair.
I heard you singing
A merry air.

Whether or not the first word was a misprint for ‘leap’ has been disputed.” (*Grauniad*).... **Are Steel-Collar Workers Threatening Your Job?** raves the Jehovah's Witness organ *Awake!*, awakening long after everyone else to the realization that industrial robots exist despite not being mentioned in the Old Testament.... **Conan the Barbarian** (you yawned at the book, now snore through the film) was released in Chicago early in March – poster art by yet another Frazetta imitator, “presented” by Dino de Laurentiis, starring A. Schwarzenegger (that unfortunate guy who's barely able to move owing to these great swollen muscles all over him – Hire The Handicapped, etc).... **The London Book Fair** (6-8 April) was extraordinarily plush in its new venue at the Barbican Centre, but featured a curious dearth of sf. Arrow Books utterly failed to devote a huge display to the forthcoming Langford

novel, or even to mention it; Neville Spearman Ltd cheerily explained that the hardback *Necronomicon* was out of print and wouldn't be reissued until an American hardback house chose to buy rights; Poplar Press were trying hard to flog the SFWA book on how to write sf (another of their titles is – honestly – *How To Write "How To" Books*); the ever-open bar was a welcome con feature (Langford, over beer: "All right, so I managed to fiddle a publisher's name badge – but I haven't got a stand." Paul Barnett, with a gesture taking in the whole bar: "But *this* is your stand."); Cape refused to part with their show copy of *Helliconia Thing*, so bang go Brian A's chances of a rave review here; the Ashgrove Press stand sported a negative ion generator and asked to be lectured by *Ansible's* physicist on how it worked, or didn't; inside data about Brian Ash's *Visual Encyclopaedia of SF* were whispered ("Ash was drunk *all* the time, which made it hard to work with him ... there was an attempt to tape an interview with him for millions of local radio stations, but we junked 20/30 tapes because every time he started to feel up the nubile interviewperson..."); only the Dutch buyers seemed to have enough money actually to buy book rights.... (8-6-82)

Hazel's Language Lessons #17: Arabic

nāmuayyu kūhli: he's a heavy sleeper
– literally, "his mosquito net is dark
blue"

(contributed by Keith Oborn)

ANSIBLE 25 from DAVE LANGFORD
22 Northumberland Avenue, Reading,
Berkshire, RG2 7PW, UK. (CoA soon)

[An Insert:]

The 1981-82 Checkpoint/Ansible Fan Poll – Voting Form

This form is being distributed with *Ansible 25* and at Channelcon: the poll covers fannish doings in Britain from just after Easter 1981 to just after Easter 1982. All fans may vote. *Ansible* itself remains ineligible in the Best Fanzine and Best Single Issue categories. See overleaf for the categories: in

the left-hand column, 5 points are awarded for a first-place vote and so on down to 1 for a fifth-place vote; categories in the right-hand column allow up to three *unranked* votes. Nice voters avoid either voting for their own work or in categories where their minds are essentially a blank (if you only read two fanzines and vote for one of them out of the depths of your vast experience, you are not being much help in determining Informed Fannish Opinion). Please return this form – or votes on a separate piece of paper, as you prefer – to Dave Langford, 22 Northumberland Ave, Readings, Berks, RG2 7PW, UK. DEADLINE is FRIDAY MAY 28 1982. Be assured that your votes will remain ever so confidential.

All fannish traditions tend to be questioned from time to time. Michael Ashley (for it is he!) launched a mini-denunciation of this poll in a recent *Matrix*, generously allowing that the standard of poll winners was good and high, but frowning on the fact that the poll is conducted “amongst a relatively small and select group of British fandom”. Well: it is and it isn’t. More than 250 fans receive *Ansible* and the poll from: unfortunately a select group of elitist sods choose to set themselves apart from the multitude – quite indefensibly, of course – by actually voting. There were 38 of them last year (a bit over 15% of the “voting pool”, as compared to 12% of Denvention members who last year nominated for the Hugos). Meanwhile, Peter Roberts writes: “I was always expecting some bored and truculent an editor to ‘expose’ the whole thing and suggest that I was fiddling with the results or some such wickedness. That’s one reason why I didn’t want to turn it into something more grandiose, with awards, and scrolls, and presentations, and what have you.... The main virtue of the poll is that it works.” Let’s hope so. It works, I think, as a low-key and fannish thing: Michael A. seems to overrate its influence and esteem for strategic reasons, so he can complain that such a grandiose institution depends on the votes of a few “select” fans.... Please do vote.

[Categories]

BEST BRITISH FANZINE
BEST BRITISH FANWRITER
BEST BRITISH FANARTIST
BEST SINGLE ISSUE
BEST ARTICLE OR COLUMN
BEST FANZINE COVER

WORST THING OF 1981-2

Ansible 26

June 1982

ANSIBLE 26 (June 1982) comes from Dave Langford, 22 Northumberland Ave, Reading, Berks RG2 7PW; A27 will come from the address at top right [94 London Road, Reading, Berks, RG1 5AU], to be occupied in late June and already valid for non-urgent mail. Subs still £1 for 5 issues UK, 4 elsewhere, \$US equivalent to Burns, 48 Lou Ave, Kings Park, NY, NY 11754 USA. Ritual thanks to Stu Shiffman (art), John Harvey (e-stencils) and Keith Freeman (mailing labels with menacing SUB DUE or ***** annotations – take heed). 1-6-82.

After A25 I was Public Enemy #1. **Malcolm Edwards** ticked me off for Ian Watson's letter, the quotation of his private correspondence in which he'd vetoed verbally (deaf twit fails in comprehension *again*): "Ian was quoting out of context one paragraph from a lengthy correspondence; he knew perfectly well that the hypothesis he threw such a fit of moral indignation over had no validity; I have not used my position at Gollancz to exert any kind of pressure on him, and could not even if I should want to (which I don't)... The only reason for the correspondence (asking Ian to contribute to *Interzone*) is that I like the daft bugger's stories." **Malcolm and Rob Holdstock** resented the "Piss Off Eurocon" joke caption to their deeply serious Eastercon '84 bid; says Rob, "I *wholeheartedly support* the bid to get the European convention to England in 1984.... It is the *combination* of Eastercon and Eurocon that we believe to be *unworkable, ill-conceived, and doomed to fall well short of success.*" **John Brunner** was miffed by the journalistic shorthand "John Brunner's Eurocon", which *should* read "The Eurocon Bid Planned By A Committee Of More Than 20 People Of Whom John Brunner Is But One". (Short nickname needed, folks.) Apologies to all those wronged in my selfless quest for truth and smut.

Once Again, the Huge and Knobblies (Etc)....

The Ansible Poll, most influential of them all, is delayed because not enough of you have voted. This is my punishment either for hubris or for not mentioning last issue that A Poll Vote Extends Your Ansible Subscription. New deadline 25 June 1982. Please vote on the form from A25 or a separate sheet, based on fanwork in the year up to the day after Easter 1982. Categories are (up to 5 votes, ranked): fanzine, fanwriter, fanartist; (up to 3 nominations) single issue, article/column, cover art, Worst Thing. Only British work is eligible; *Ansible* isn't. Stop laughing, Ashley!

TAFF: flyer enclosed where weight permits. Voting summary: Rog Peyton 63, Kev Smith 80, HOF 15, Brian Burgess 1. There were also 6 “no preference” votes and (correction to flyer, which only gives the 4 British ones) 8 invalid ballots – 173 ballots all told. Kevin wins and will attend the Chicago Worldcon this summer. He has already taken over as TAFF's European administrator: I've passed the final kitty of £1220.97p to him, which includes a welcome £50 donation from Channelcon. Nominations now open for the 1983 trip!

Nebula Awards: These were presented on 24 April, though with genial ineptitude the SFWA released details to *Publishers Weekly* beforehand, and they were printed there days before the presentation.... **NOVEL:** *The Claw of the Conciliator* by Gene Wolfe. **NOVELLA:** “The Saturn Game” by Poul Anderson. **NOVELETTE:** “The Quickening” by Michael Bishop. **SHORT STORY:** “The Bone Flute” by Lisa Tuttle ... wait a minute. What about that stuff in A25 about Lisa's withdrawal? Over to her: “When you last heard from me, I'd written to withdraw my short story from consideration for a Nebula, in protest at the way the thing is run, and in the hope that my protest might move the Nebula Committee to institute a few simple rules (like, either making sure that *all* items up for consideration are sent around to all the voters; or else disqualifying works which are campaigned for by either the authors or the editors) which would make the whole Nebula system less of a farce. Hardly had my letter gone off to SFWA (in the person of Frank Catalano) than I got a phone call from him informing me – more than 3 weeks before the official announcements – that my short story had won. I told him I'd withdrawn it, and therefore would have to refuse the award. He passed this problem along to others in the SFWA hierarchy, and soon I got a phone call from Charles Grant. I explained my position; he told me that I'd still won the award, which was already made up with my name on it. I said,

too bad, I was still refusing it ... finally he said he wasn't sure what would be done at the Nebula banquet, except that it would *not* be given to anyone else. I said I thought they should either announce no award – and then explain that the winner had withdrawn the story before knowing it had won – or they could go into detail as to *why* I had withdrawn the story and refused the award, and either use my name or not as they chose. Basically, I felt that since I wasn't going to be at the Banquet to make a speech, it was up to them how they handled it – but I definitely wanted my reasons for refusing known ... as, after all, that was the whole point. Charlie said (I remember this very clearly) 'Don't worry, your reasons *will* be made known.' ... Two days ago [*i.e. on 29 April*] I got a telegram from John Douglas of Pocket Books congratulating me on having won the Nebula – 'letter and award to follow'. I phoned him in New York and learnt that he had accepted the Nebula for me.... Not a word had been said about my refusal, never mind the reasons for it." (*Lisa Tuttle*) The dynamic response of SFWA to Lisa and her complaints consists of a letter in *Locus* from Vice-President Marta Randall, who by use of the axiom "Everything not forbidden is compulsory" deduces from the Nebula rules that it was impossible and wicked for Lisa to withdraw her story in the first place. *Ansible's* editor is unable to comment: although in his third year of SFWA membership, he has not yet been privileged to receive a copy of the Nebula rules (or the 1981 membership directory, etc etc). Meanwhile George Florance-Guthridge, who started all this with his Nebula campaign, has published a letter in *Locus* which publicly answers purported queries from numerous fans about the wonderfulness of his Nebula- (and now Hugo-) nominated short story. Thinks: "Dear *Locus*, Millions of fans have written asking when my novel *The Space Eater* will be published by Arrow (so they can avoid the bookshops). I would like to tell them all that the date is 21 June...."

The Hugo Nominations have also been released, with a nice sense of social grading: thus *Locus* gets detailed statistics, *Ansible* gets a plain list of finalists, and British fanwriters first hear of their nominations from *File 770*. 648 ballots received; final ballot deadline 15 July; voting spread for each category in brackets; only four finalists in some categories owing to a new rule demanding that an item must receive 5% of the nominations in its category in order to make the final ballot. Read and weep –

NOVEL (53-139) *Downbelow Station*, C. J. Cherryh; *Little, Big*, John

Crowley; *The Many-Colored Land*, Julian May; *Project Pope*, Clifford Simak; *The Claw of the Conciliator*, Gene Wolfe.

NOVELLA (58-96) “The Saturn Game”, Poul Anderson; “In The Western Tradition”, Phyllis Eisenstein; “Emergence”, David R. Palmer; “Blue Champagne”, John Varley; “True Names”, Vernor Vinge; “With Thimbles, With Forks and Hope”, Kate Wilhelm.

NOVELETTE (39-74) “The Quickening”, Michael Bishop; “The Thermals of August”, Edward Bryant; “The Fire When It Comes”, Parke Godwin; “Guardians”, George R. R. Martin; “Unicorn Variations”, Roger Zelazny.

SHORT (42-87) “The Quiet”, George Florance-Guthridge; “Absent Thee from Felicity Awhile”, Somtow Sucharitkul; “The Pusher”, John Varley; “The Woman the Unicorn Loved”, Gene Wolfe.

NONFICTION (22-80) *Anatomy of Wonder* 2nd ed, ed Neil Barron; *After Man*, Dougal Dixon; *Danse Macabre*, Stephen King; *The Grand Tour*, Ron Miller & William Hartman; *The Art of Leo & Diane Dillon* ed. (why?) Byron Preiss.

PRO EDITOR (96-240) Terry Carr, Edward Ferman, David Hartwell, Stanley Schmidt, George Scithers.

PRO ARTIST (47-168) Vincent DiFate, Carl Lundgren, Don Maitz, Rowena Morrill, Michael Whelan.

DRAMATIC (68-242) *Dragonslayer*, *Excalibur*, *Outland*, *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, *Time Bandits*. (*Superman II* would have made the final ballot but was declared ineligible since it had been shown in 1980 – correct decision, say I.)

FANZINE (70-159) *File 770*, *Locus*, *SF Chronicle*, *SFR*.

FANWRITER (30-57) Dick Geis, Mike Glycer, Arthur Hlavaty, Dave Langford.

FANARTIST (32-62) Alexis Gilliland, Joan Hanke-Woods, Victoria Poyser, William Rotsler, Stu Shiffman. (Note that it’s easier to get a professional nonfiction nomination than to compete in the fan categories. Odd.)

JOHN W CAMPBELL AWARD FOR BEST NEW WRITER: David Brin, Alexis Gilliland, Robert Stallman (dec’d), Michael Swanwick, Paul O. Williams. (Not a Hugo, remember.)

Australian “Ditmar” Awards 1982 – Winners include AUSTRALASIAN NOVEL *The Man Who Loved Morlocks*, David Lake; INTERNATIONAL SF/FANTASY *The Affirmation* Chris Priest; VARIOUS FAN AWARDS Marc Ortlieb. (Thyme)

DUFF (Australia – > US): Peter Toluzzi goes to Chicon.

Channelcon: 33rd British Eastercon

Judith Hanna

So what are British conventions like? After random testing of a sample of one – Channelcon – the answer seems to be not exactly like Australian conventions, but pretty similar. The similarities lie in the people – different faces, variant names, funny accents, but otherwise disconcertingly familiar in behavior, interests, and expressions (we too speak basic Python, Goon, Trekkie-bashing, hate-Heinlein and computer-bore) – and in the standard convention structure of programme items interspersed with standing around chatting (or vice versa) followed until very late by parties. Since the most important ingredients are a programme to criticize and the people you grumble about it with, I felt immediately at home and enjoyed it all thoroughly. As the people were all new to me I paid more attention to them than to the programme, and spent more time urging numerous generous souls to “buy a badge for Melbourne in ’85” [1] than in the traditional running-down of events. With 800+ attendees (compared to a likely 300-odd at an Australian national con) Channelcon should have felt frightfully huge, but didn’t, perhaps because of the function space available to spread through – foyer, bar, con hall, bar, fanroom, bar, bookroom, not to mention art and video shows tucked away underground – or perhaps because, once a few faces are recognized in any room, one simply overlooks clumps of anonymous bods while homing in on acquaintances. It was easy enough to adapt to such peculiarly British customs as the divisions of the programme into serious stuff in the main hall, silly fannish stuff in the fanroom and bars, or the fact that one’s not considered properly dressed with out a glass (however small [2]) of alcohol in one’s hand: I doubt the average British fan would adapt as easily to the absence of bars from Australian cons. [3]

So much for the gestalt; what of the actual events which distinguished

Channelcon from any other – or at least that part of them included in my random sampling? What to drag out first from the mush of memory? The high-toned serious stuff, discussions of SF as literature: the “Writers and Critics” panel dominated by Roz Kaveney’s measured erudition, Josephine Saxton’s shaking intensity and Angela Carter’s understated mischief while Kev Smith and Joseph Nicholas, mere males, struggled to slip in the occasional word; John Sladek’s GoH speech asserting that reality is a mere intellectual construct – clever, but flawed by his failure to acknowledge either the inescapable impact of raw sensory input or how much intellectualization must conform to the conditions imposed by physical environment; Angela Carter’s GoH speech exulting in the disreputability and freedom she found in the genristic ghetto of SF where people actually read for enjoyment rather than with morbid snobbery. The fannishly silly segments: Joyce Scrivner and I, instead of providing profound sociological insights into Australian and US fandoms, gossiping about what Joseph did on his GUFF trip while Joyce was on her DUFF trip [4], now and then taking breath to allow Pascal Thomas (representing Europe) to talk about French fandom; the Fan Turn Challenge competition, based on all the silly TV games you never wanted to know about [5], in which the Scots and the Surrey Limpwrist showed themselves as silly as each other and sillier than the Gannets and Brummies; the TAFF duel where Kev Smith and Rog Peyton competed to read a book, sell a book and then sell each other; Joseph and Chris Priest encouraging enthusiasm for GUFF by telling horror stories of how their planes nearly crashed on the way back from Australia. Against disappointing opposition, Joseph carried off the SF Mastermind title (now I have to believe him when he says he’s really clever). At the BoSFA AGM, Ken Eadie gave an exemplary display of fuckwitted obduracy, insisting on a technicality – against the manifest will of the meeting – that though unwilling to work in co-operation with the rest of the BSFA Council he had the right to remain Business Manager. [6] At the other business meeting, Albacon II triumphed over Metrocon. [7] Before the banquet we counted the BSFA award votes, Priest and Wolfe neck-and-neck in the novel section, but the local boy’s *The Affirmation* lost by a narrow margin to Wolfe’s *Shadow of the Torturer*; Rob Holdstock’s “Mythago Wood” took the short story award; the other winners were *Time Bandits* (media) and Bruce Pennington (artist). Events I missed but got told all about several times: the abortive “This Is Your Life” inflicted on Bob Shaw [8], and Nick Lowe’s “Black Wine of Thentis” lecture, which has given rise to a new

critical standard to be incorporated into the *Inferno* armoury – the “Thentis rating” of the amount of coffee pointlessly consumed within its pages, a rating in inverse correlation with literary merit: *Oath of Fealty*, for instance, scores phenomenally high on Thentis content.

So it went: a weekend of cheerful bedlam, 800 different congoing experiences loosely united by attendance at or avoidance of a common programme at a certain hotel once the site of a Worldcon. A sort of *deja vu* nostalgia for '79 seemed to permeate natives' perception of Channelcon as it went on around them. For myself, change a few of the details, like location, programme, names and faces, well almost all the details really, and it could have been an Australian con. As it was, it was just like being at home.

THE EDITOR GETS HIS OAR IN:

Can't resist adding a few footnotes to Judith's piece as follows –

[1] Joseph (address as in GUFF flyer) is UK rep for Melbourne's 1985 Worldcon bid. He notes that “Sydney Cove in '88” flyers emanating from Oakland, California – albeit with an Australian return address – are “definitely a hoax bid (the barely decipherable signature of ‘Adam Selene’ on the flyer gives as much away), but one could which do a lot of damage to the 1985 one if it isn't stomped on very firmly”.

[2] Judith's favorite glass to date is the 5cc beaker offered her in Reading.

[3] Too right, cobber.

[4] Several paragraphs omitted; A is a family magazine.

[5] Blame Jim Barker for this.

[6] Graham James at BSFA meeting: “Since continuation of this internal strife can only harm the BSFA, will Mr Eadie not consider resigning – without prejudice to his re-election prospects – in the best interests of the organization?” Mr Eadie: “NO!” Sound of thumbs-down from millions of BSFA members....

[7] Albacon 222 votes, Metrocon 199: I blame this shocking miscarriage of justice on ———.

[8] This, alas, was for me the low point of Channelcon. Con-worn Eve Harvey simply couldn't handle the witty, rapid-fire presentation demanded for “Bob Shaw: This Is Your Life”; the result was interminable and (I fear) embarrassing. (DRL)

Making the Best of It: January-April Fanzines

Abi Frost

“Fanzines do need to appear frequently for the enthusiasm they can engender to become self-sustaining” – Malcolm Edwards, *Tappen 3*.

Give the man a coconut – so where was no.4? Frost’s record as tipster lies all dragged in some Brighton gutter. Some people (such as Ounsley, Hansen, James and the magnificent Cretins) did their bit toward the return of frequent publishing; rather more did not. As to the revival of fanzine reviewing, I am having to do it all by myself. (Though West’s biennial Denunciation of Everyone is promised soonest; Everyone includes me this time, he says. *Andromache, je pense a vous....*)

Channelcon did bring a fair number of new fanzines (at least ones new to me) and newish writers. Confronted by all these, one starts off on deep thoughts about the nature of editing and the impulses that drive people to this fanzine lark in the first place. *Ansible*, to the reader’s undisguised relief, provides no space for deep-structural analysis, so here goes with the abridged version: –

One can always tell a crudzine because ... well, maybe not. Never mind, one can always tell them. Terry Hill’s *Microwave* amazed me. Internal evidence suggests that it’s based on the fanzines of pre-*Fouler* days; remind me never to tease Kettle or Pickersgill again. The cover is a rebus which does not take pronunciation into account; the inside is littered with jokes from those graffiti books. Hill intends, apparently, to start a column called “Cunning Stunts”; I don’t object to “that kind of language” in fanzines, but a certain feminist theatre group might sniff a bit.... One of the true stigmata of the crudzine is its editor’s assumption that he is the first person ever to have heard these jokes, or (perhaps) that they have some kind of ritualistic Ur-funniness. Another is the cheery bit by spouse about the editor’s obsession with rocketships; yes, kids, there’s one here too. Still, *Microwave*’s faults seem to stem from utter naivete, a disease which tends to cure itself. The productions of what the ever-felicitous Leeds Mob call “university shitheads” are far more culpable. Two of these are to hand...

NME III comes from the Imperial College skiffysoc – the bunch Steve Higgins doesn’t want to be associated with. One can see why. *Sodd’s Lore* is produced by nine shitheads from various universities (two from Oxford, oh

shame). Yer actual Imperial shithead types his fanzine on a computer thingy. This is triffically scientific, and adds the “professional touch” – justified lines. One would ask if it were worth the total sacrifice of legibility, were there the slightest reason to believe the content was of any interest. Who really needs the history of Dr Who *and* Blake’s 7, or “scientific” (and leaden and sexist) *jeux d’esprit*, or very very short stories? (One is about people on a spaceship drowning in excrement. How appropriate – but even I know they freeze-dry the stuff.) Your Sodd is above fanfiction, but not above poetry. If I say anything about the poetry, they will no doubt say it’s *meant* to be that bad. (I confess I don’t understand these cultish jokes.) *NME*’s ultimate function is to keep the club members off the streets, but *Sodd’s Lore* has pretensions to being a real fanzine. An arrogant, patronizing fanzine, whose arrogance is the worse for being unmerited. Hill’s error (“fans very isolated; won’t have heard of this”) is repeated on a grand scale. A boring plot-summary begins: “Flaubert’s *Salammbô* ... remains almost unknown.” (It’s been known to turn up as an A-level set book.) “Look out, world, here we come!” screams every page; world turns languidly, sips laudanum, and snores.

Let’s move on to those for whom there is hope. Christina Lake, in *Music from a fire*, manages a 22-page personalzine without wailing about the difficulties of writing once. Her material (media sf, whither sf?) is neither wildly original nor promising, but she can write, though she needs a bit of strict discipline from a decent editor – which as things are, she’s unlikely to get. I think she should stop trying to contribute to an imaginary debate on the function of sf, and use the resources of her own mind more; articles on Radio Caroline and “12th-century fandom” suggest that these resources exist.

The junior members of established fan groups should have a better chance of editorial licking-into-shape. Down in Surrey, some are doing better than others. Phil Palmer is coming on fine; it’s immediately obvious how much better his reviews in *Nabu 12* read than *TCOL* did (though that was not bad at all). You may think it’s time and chance, but I think it’s Ian Maule. Martyn Taylor’s progress is slower and steadier. In three issues *RAA* has gone from being perhaps the most boring fanzine ever to something pretty creditable. Taylor has now got off his chest all the deep psychological stuff about violence, and is having to cast his cold and serious eye on lighter matters; the combination makes for a pleasant irony. *RAA* is in the process of turning

from personalzine to genzine, which I think should be encouraged; Taylor may well be the person to edit the more solid work of the newer writers. Another advantage of frequent publishing (RAA's three issues took about six months) is that editors learn quickly that way.

Roy Macinski's got a lot to learn, and is taking his time about it. According to the ritual apology, which is all he manages, *Through the Lense* (sic)[1] is the product of six months' agony and only half a fanzine anyway. Apart from this page of editorial whimpers, it contains Taylor at his most turgid (I freely admit that my inability to read long screeds about Russian sf films is *my* fault) and Eve Harvey on Angela Carter. Words do not often fail me, but quarto pages do, so I'll restrict myself to saying that I regard this article as an insult to Ms Carter, and suggesting that a long-established fanzine editor should have known better than to begin with a tedious paragraph about the banal circumstances of the article's commissioning. Why do people continually apologize for their work? If it warrants apology (and this certainly does) it shouldn't be put out in the first place....

Still, there's hope for the new chaps in Leeds. Not content with being our Greatest Living Fanwriter, Simon Ounsley is visibly learning how to edit. Both issues of *Still It Moves* have featured the work of fairly new writers (alongside cynical old hacks like West). Their contributions to the first seem to have been more promising in themselves, but Ounsley's subbing is improving – the apologetic note has vanished. I suspect he's only gradually shedding a nervousness with the surgeon's knife which derives from his own past as a rejected novelist. Slash 'em, kid and shut your ears to their howls. If Edwards can sub J.I.M. Stewart, you can take the "yours truly"s out of Helen Starkey.

Be that as it may, with any luck in a year's time we'll have four good genzines. Any takers on that one? (Abi Frost)

Boring Footnotes From Your Editor

I don't seem to have received the very wonderful *Sodd*, *NME*, or *Music* (outmoded member of a bygone fandom bewails his isolation to sound of faint violins): but here are some addresses:

Microwave – Terry Hill, 41 Western Rd, Maidstone, Kent, ME16 8NE (usual, 20p in stamps). *Music from a Fire* – Christina Lake, 2 Shepherds

Green, Chislehurst, Kent, BR7 6PA. *Nabu* – Ian Maule, 5 Beaconsfield Rd, New Malden, Surrey, KT3 3HY (usual). RAA – Martyn Taylor, 5 Kimpton Rd, Camberwell, London, SE5 7EA (usual, request, “money”). [1] *Through the Lens* (not sic, but the spelling on the front cover should be credited to the very creative Jim Barker) – Roy Macinski, 2 Frogmill Cottages, Hurley, nr Maidenhead, Berks, SL6 5NH (usual, or 16½p in stamps). *Still It Moves* – Simon Ounsley; see COA dept. (Usual or hagiographical smut, etc.)

The fact that Simon in SIM adds a sensible word or two to the “politics in fandom” logomachy reminds me that, while other fans have argued, I and Chris Morgan have been influencing the politics of the USA! Let me explain. Our book *Facts & Fallacies: A Book of Definitive Mistakes & Misguided Predictions* (out from Corgi this month – buy several) includes the following incidental quotation, attributed to Mike Curb (then president of MGM Records): “Watergate is just an attack by the niggers and the Jews and the Commies on Nixon.” A constant succession of slavering Californian journalists have been ringing and/or writing to beg for details, context, etc – since Curb seems to be campaigning for the post of CA State Governor, and the American edition of F&F is causing a mild sensation. Ho ho. Californian readers are informed that we lifted the line from *The Book of Rock Quotes* – Jonathon Green, Omnibus Press, 1980, p.36.) Chris and I are uncertain of whether to topple the Argentine government next, or merely to take on the BSFA....

Next, a change from *Ansible* coverage of UK Milfords. (By the way, Roelof Goudriaan reports a Dutch Milford held 6-7 March 82: future contact address Augustalaan 15, 4615 Hm Bergen op Zoom, The Netherlands.) Remember the DIY writers’ meeting whose silly name has embarrassed members since being devised by A. Stephenson in 1973 ...?

The Pieria Mob Goes West Again

Kevin Smith

Pieria 33 was held during the week of May 1-8 in Polzeath, Cornwall. That much is certain. What is not so certain is whether it came in two parts – one on Sunday 2 and one on Thursday 6 – or whether the Thursday meeting was *really* Pieria 34. It was held in a different place – “Rock Pipit”, New

Polzeath, as opposed to “Pentor”, Polzeath – and had a different host and chairman – Dave Langford rather than Diana Reed – which in times past have been considered adequate reasons for differentiation of Pierias. It is also certain that it would annoy Andrew Stephenson more than twice as much to have missed to meetings and not just one; which was held by the assembled company to be even more reason to call the second meeting “Pieria 34”.... The answer will not be known for certain until Mike Rohan, next host and chairman, sends out his invitations: will he call it 34 or 35?

People there included Judith Hanna, Dave Langford, Hazel Langford, Joseph Nicholas, Diana Reed, Deb Rohan, Mike Rohan, Allan Scott and Kevin Smith, and no one else. Nine of us in all, an appropriate number for Pieria – though I’m not convinced of the authenticity of muses of cookery and washing up.

Pieria 33 had only two stories. Dave’s was about a computer driving a hack novelist nearly to suicide; it showed a remarkable grasp of the subject, and had already been sold to a computer hobby magazine. Judith’s was a twisted fairy story in which the dragon came to a business arrangement with the king, and sprang from Judith’s intense structuralist analysis of fairy tales carried out as post-graduate research. The rest of us, unable to compete, merely expounded upon what we’d started and would definitely complete that week. Dave had another story idea to work on, but Judith declined, preferring to play tourist, Deb and Hazel, wiser than the others, took no part at all in this writing.

At Rock Pipit, Dave worked on his promised second story, 5500 words completed four minutes before we assembled for Pieria 34 (as it might have been), and Joe dragged Judith in to help him with his plotting, the two of them inventing “combat collaboration” in the process. Each day Allan walked across the beach to Pentor, where he and Mike independently invented combat collaboration whilst working on their joint novel. Allan’s electric typewriter rattled and clattered and spewed out sheets of typescript at an alarming rate; Allan crossed out half the words he’d typed and passed them to Mike, who crossed out the other half. Discussions (hem hem) ensued, following which Allan retyped everything, and so on. Diana retreated to Pentor’s furnished but chilly attic and shook the house with her tiny portable typewriter, on the pretext of writing a play. I sat in the warm kitchen, occasionally stoking the boiler fire, and scribbled impeccable first drafts with

a very loud propelling pencil. After 2000 words of what I'd said I'd be working on I got blocked and bored, and started something else, which I didn't finish. So much for good intentions.

The critical sessions were compact (i.e. small) with only five people to express criticism, but pretty similar to other Pierias: lots of superbly cogent critical thought completely ruined by inarticulate delivery. We knew this was so because Allan had brought along a video camera, recorder and other paraphernalia to record the events of the week. "Try to pretend I'm not here," he said, and we tried – oh, how we tried! But in the playbacks we still stammered and stuttered our critical assessments.

Deb, Mike and Allan all wanted to leave on Friday, so Dave and Hazel had to leave to, since although Dave was driving he was driving Allan's car. Joe and Judith moved to Pentor for Friday night, and the three of us departed next afternoon, leaving Diana to lock up.

I never know how to say goodbye after a week like that.

(Kevin Smith)

COA

ROB ALLEN c/o Martyn Taylor (see p.4) • JOHN FAIREY, 78 Somerset Rd, Folkestone, Kent, CT19 4NW • MIKE FORD, 45 Harold Mt, Leeds, LS6 1PW • NAVEED KHAN, 3 Holmes House Avenue, Winstanley, Wigan, WN3 6EA (late June) • PAUL OLDROYD, 46 Colwyn Road, Beeston, Leeds, LS11 6PY • SIMON OUNSLEY, 21 The Village St, Leeds, LS4 2PR • MICKY POLAND, 2 Sqn, 21 Signal Regt, BFPO 42 • DAVID PRINGLE, c/o 58 Cliveden Ct, London Rd, Brighton, E Sussex • JOYCE SCRIVNER, 2732 14th Ave South, Lower Minneapolis, MN 55404, USA • PHIL STEPHENSON-PAYNE, c/o "Longmead", 15 Wilmerhatch Lane, Epsom, Surrey, KT18 7EQ • MARTIN TUDOR, 845 Alum Rock Rd, Ward End, Birmingham, B8 2AG • and don't forget the one on the front cover, folks....

Cons

Yugoslavia In 1988? Another Worldcon bid: main address c/o SFera,

Ivanicgradska 41a, 4100 ZAGREB, Yugoslavia; UK rep Gerry Webb, 67 Shakespeare Rd, Hanwell, London W.7 – £1 presupposing bid to him. Even if this proves a good bid (the flyer’s amateurish, but I blame Gerry for that) it faces two huge tactical problems: first, the reluctance of Americans to let the Worldcon go so soon after the hoped victory of Australia for ’85; second, the relative obscurity of Yugoslav fandom (the much more active and conspicuous Swedes got nowhere with their Worldcon bid).... **Birmingham ’85?** Rumour whispers that the Brum Group contemplate an Eastercon bid – “twenty years on” from Brumcon ’65.... **Economy/Shoestringcon 4** 10-11 October 82 at Animal (sorry) The Elephant House, Hatfield Poly: £3 supp/£4 att, c/o 4 Ryders Ave, Colney Heath, nr Hatfield, St Albans, Herts.... **Lexicon** (28-31 May) never happened, we hear; the hotel refused to go ahead owing to lack of advance memberships.... **Philadelphia ’86 Worldcon:** Lew Wolkoff (c/o them, PO Box 5814, Philadelphia, PA 19128, USA) is looking for a UK rep, a famous fan to sell memberships, run parties, &c. Volunteers? **Colnecon** has issued a PR/booking for which mentions no dates at all, so I’ll just remind you it’s on 26 June.... **Albacon II** (1-4 April ’83) is, gnash gnash, the next Eastercon. Central Station Hotel, Glasgow; £3 supp/£7 att to 1 July, then £4/£8; rooms £12.50/person/night sngl, £10 dbl/twin, £9 triple (bathroom: add £2.50, but none in triples), inc VAT and full Eng.Break.; c/o 1/R Partickhill Rd, Glasgow, G11 5BY.... **1984:** TEBPBACOMT20POWJBIBO (see p.1) has met with good response from the Brighton Metropole, whose manager likes fans and has offered to organize ultra-cheap overflows for the impoverished. The loyal opposition (Malcolm Edwards and his merry men, “sympathy and/or support, but *no* money yet, please.”) is unattributably rumoured to be investigating the brand-new Metropole up in Blackpool.... **Novacon** has never made anywhere near £1000; Novacon 11 will make £3-£400, writes P. Oldroyd, hurt by Kev Smith’s estimated Novacon accounts in *Drilkjis* 6. (“Will make” = “has made”.)

Infinitely Improbable

Not The Least Bit True, Says Carl Sagan! So says the great man in an “interview” sent by Ahrvid Engholm, who reports that he generously showed CS numerous rumour-crammed copies of *Ansible*. “I have a MS 120 pages long, that Anne Druyan and I wrote together, the basis on which Simon &

Schuster bought the novel.” Exit the great man, clutching *Ansibles*; and so (unless Ahrvid is hoaxing again) perish rumours of rampant plagiarism, “unacceptable” synopses, zero participation by Sagan, etc – “rumours that, because of their frequency and sources, I believe to be true,” persists Martin Norse Wooster.... **Playmate of the Month** in the June *Playboy* is a Hawaiian lady whose favorite authors are ERB, MZB, Moorcock, Tolkien, and John Norman – reports Maxim Jakubowski, who in *NME* says: “This is the first time I’ve told anyone: I masturbated to Robert A. Heinlein!” He adds that Dave Britton of Savoy Books was jugged for 28 days on 24 May, for the fearful crime of publishing Charles Platt. (Oh, and Delany too.).... **Ian Watson**: “I’ve been reliably told that Salman Rushdie, already equipped with a book in the bestseller list and his Booker Prize money, tried to *turn down* the Arts Council handout; but the Arts Council in its wisdom refused to let him.” (Gosh, just like the SFWA.) Ian reports at great length on an Alan Dorey cock-up whereby Gregory Feeley’s interview with Jack Dann, submitted to *Interzone*, ended up in Alan’s stopgap issue of *Vector*: Feeley: “annoyed”, Dann “mad as hell.... wanted interview to coincide somewhat with publication of his *The Man Who Melted*”, features ed. of *Foundation* (GF’s second choice for submission) says tut-tut charitably.... **Rochelle (And Of Course Alan) Dorey** now has an offspring as of 2019 hrs 17-5-82: Amanda Shirley Anne Dorey, delivered after complications & a Caesarian. Rochelle is doing fine, says **Graham James**, who reports his resignation from the *Interzone* collective owing to “editorial differences ... I have severed *all* connections.” He’s also giving up *Matrix* in October.... Status symbol among the publishing elite is to have read the new Asimov, says Roz Kaveney: “Not only a *Foundation* novel, but also a robot novel, *and* an Eternity novel.” Silence greeted my repartee of “Well I’ve read the new Heinlein and it’s not as bad as *TNOTB*, only it’s got this heroine who gets raped a lot and decides she quite likes it really, except when done by chaps with bad breath”.... **Chris Priest**, ashen-faced, confesses that poverty may drive him back to London from his Devon retreat.... **Dick Commemoration**: 7pm 9-6-82, City Lit, Stukeley St, WC2, admission free. **Sf Evening** with Stableford, Watson, Angela Carter: 23 June, Rm 109, Palmer Bldg, Reading U, 7.30pm, admission £1.... **Clippings**: “Verdict: death from chronic alcoholism” was Edmund Cooper’s epitaph at the inquest in April (*Brighton Evening Argus*); “Somtow Sucharitkul, the Old Etonian chairman of the Thailand Composers Association” – yes, the same one – was plugged in the

Grauniad for transcribing/arranging symphonies whistled (yes) by the strange US politician “J.W. Middendorf II”.... **R.L. Fanthorpe**’s book on the “mystery of Rennes-le-Chateau” has been flogged for a reported \$50,000 advance to Newcastle (US), who “have decided to call it *The Holy Grail Revealed* even though the grail is only mentioned in the last chapter – at their express wish, I believe” (*Naveed Khan*).... **Jim Barker** has sold his “MacHinery” strip to IPC, retitled “Bleep!” for use in a new kids’ comic called *Wow!*.... **Peter Nicholls** is now editorial director of “an imprint called Multimedia 2000”, preparing books for “future possibilities both good and bad ... early titles to include urban design, brain chemistry, warfare....” Hmmm, *War in 2000?* **Fencon**, 16 Oct, The University Centre, Cambridge: £3 to them at 27 Newmarket Rd, Cambridge, CB3 8EG. Organized by people like Nick Lowe.... **George Scithers** is indeed editor of the Gygax-owned *Amazing*, and is bringing most of his staff and all of his rejections slips from *Asimov’s* (oh futility).... **Ray Bradbury** is writing a deep-space opera (real opera) about “a great white comet that comes round once every 40 years and a space captain whose eyes were burned out by the comet.... I dedicated it to Herman Melville”.... **Doc Weir Award** not presented at Channelcon as a result of recent dissatisfaction; a BSFA working party is supposed to be working toward Electoral Reform.... **Albacon II** generously gave Metrocon presupporters full credit (equivalent to Albacon presupporters) for membership of Albacon: Metrocon funds remaining will thus go to Albacon.... **Jane Doe Reports** that the new John Jakes hardback bestseller (US) was ghosted by almost famous SF hack David Bischoff from Jakes’s outline.... **Pascal Thomas** complains at being listed as Chicon’s European agent after volunteering as French agent only (it is of course harder to send sterling to France than to the US).... **Extro 3** out soon! Force your newsagent to order it (via Seymour Press Ltd)! I have copies of #1, 95p post free.

ANSIBLE TWENTY-SIX

22 Northumberland Avenue, Reading
Berkshire, RG2 7PW UK (to end June)
94 London Road, Reading, Berkshire,
RG1 5AU, UK (CoA thereafter)

Ansible 27

July 1982

ANSIBLE 27 is the newest outbreak from DAVE LANGFORD, now firmly established at 94 LONDON ROAD, READING, BERKSHIRE, RG1 5AU, UK – write it down if you haven't already. New telephone number: READING (0734) 665804. Expunge the old address and phone number from your records. Subscriptions: £1 for 5 issues in UK or 4 airmailed abroad; \$US equivalent to Burns, 48 Lou Ave, Kings Park, NY, NY 11754, USA. Credits this issue go to Pete Lyon (cartoon), John Harvey (e-stencils), Keith Freeman (mailing labels as ever), Presto Print (unsung producers of many page ones) and Hazel (unsung preserver of sanity and solvency). SUB DUE on your label means “tut-tut”; ***** means “bloody hell!” July 82.

Who Will Rid Me of These Turbulent Awards?

People with names like Smith and Doe send unattributable rumours: that, for example, lovable Jerry Pournelle got all angry at the absence of *Oath of Fealty* from the Hugo novel list, and was only mollified by the premature release of the information that it had split the Niven-collaboration vote with *Dream Park* in positions 6 and 7. That the people responsible for sending Hugo data to “newszines” were equally miffed since Hugo counter Bob Hillis leaked the final ballot data to *Locus* before anyone else on the committee got to hear about it (so good ol' Charlie Brown of *Locus* was able to congratulate people on the nominations as early as the Nebula ceremony, weeks before Chicon's press release). That despite an official denial from SFWA, the extra story added (independent of actual voting) to the novella ballot by the Nebula Jury (chaired by Greg Benford) was indeed “Swarmer, Skimmer” (by Greg Benford). Which brings us to Lisa Tuttle's unloved Nebula and an “Open Letter to SFWA” from George R.R. Martin, extracts from which follow: –

“I must protest – loudly – the way SFWA has handled Lisa Tuttle's protest and withdrawal.... I don't really agree with Lisa, mind you ... all this hype

and electioneering threatens to cheapen the award, but I don't think the problem is quite as serious as Lisa does, and I think the fact that Lisa herself won over a self-promoted story, and that Gene Wolfe won over the aggressively-hyped *Many-Colored Land*, indicates that the situation has not yet reached a terminal stage.... I would not withdraw my own story from the Nebula ballot. I think Lisa was mistaken in doing so.... SFWA did act correctly, in my estimation, in giving the Nebula to Lisa *despite* her withdrawal, since the votes were already in and she had won by the time her letter of withdrawal was received.... What was wrong, I think, was to totally ignore the fact that Lisa, informed of her victory, *refused the Nebula*.

“That’s exactly what she has done. SFWA knows it. Lisa informed not one but *two* SFWA officers, in person, weeks before the banquet.... But SFWA’s official press release makes no mention of this fact. And those who attended the banquet tell me that no mention was made of it there either. ‘The Bone Flute’ was announced as winner in its category, and the award was ‘accepted’ on Lisa’s behalf, even though several officers knew Lisa wouldn’t be accepting it at all.... She has made a difficult and considerable sacrifice on grounds of principle, and while I might disagree with her, I feel very strongly that she had a right to be heard. The whole point of her action was to draw attention to a problem. By making no mention of her withdrawal at the banquet, or in its press releases, SFWA effectively made her action pointless.

“Right or wrong, foolish or principled, Lisa’s stand was a public one, and SFWA owed it to her to see it made public. Like every other award in this or any field, the Nebula is flawed. But it is strong enough to withstand scrutiny, discussion, and yes, even controversy. What it cannot stand is silence and a pretence of ‘business as usual’ when that is not, in fact, the case.” (*GRRM, mutilated by DRL.*)

This is no news to *Ansible* readers, but it’s nice to see an American and prominent SFWA member breaking that unnatural silence on the topic over there. I merely add that Ed Ferman Himself reportedly advised Lisa that she had now made her point and ought to accept the thing: oh yeah?

Reverting to the Hugos, readers will be delighted to hear that the SECRET nominations printout, which has fallen into my hands, features such items as “Rowley, John”, “Sucharitkul, Somtrow”, “Time Bandit”, “Excaliber”, and “Geiss, Richard” (all *sic*), plus annotations making it clear that the ballot

expert had no idea about JWC award eligibility: neither presumably did any other committee member, since he had to ask Charlie Brown.... A last word on the JWC award comes from *Thyme* and is worth quoting: "I thought that this was an encouragement award. For the last two years Robert Stallman, admittedly a good writer, has been on the final ballot, and Susan Petrey was on the 1981 ballot. The problem here is that they are both dead. What's the point of encouraging dead writers?" (Justin Ackroyd) Mind you, more than one Campbell winner is numbered among the walking dead.

At Last, the 1948 Show! Or: the *Ansible* Poll

38 people, the same number as last year, voted in the tenth annual *Checkpoint/Ansible* poll, covering UK fan doings in 1981-82. Voters: A. Akien, S. Bostock, S. Brown, J. Darroch, R. Day, D. Ellis, A. Frost, W. Goodall, R. Goudriaan, M. Greener, R. Hansen, A. Harries, D. Hicks, K. Hoare, C. Hughes, G. James, R. Kaveney, N. Khan, C. Lake, H. Langford, N. Lowe, P. Lyon, M. Mackulin, H. McNabb, J. Nicholas, S. Ounsley, P. Palmer, D. Pardoe, M. Poland, K. Rattan, D. Redd, A. Rose, J. Scrivner, M. Taylor, P. Turner, J. Wallace, D. West, O. Whiteoak. A free issue of *Ansible* to one and all, with thanks.

Best British Fanzine: *35 titles nominated, plus "No Award" and TWLL-DDU (ineligible through nonappearance). 5 points for 1st-place vote, 4 for 2nd, etc (same system in next two categories); Ansible ineligible; last year's positions given in brackets; I'm unreliable on numbers of issues published since my fanzines are still packed in boxes.*

1) TAPPEN (74 pts)(-): Malcolm Edwards, 28 Duckett Road, London N4 1BN; available by whim; three issues in 1981-82 and none previously. Won the Nova award and featured this year's favourite fanwriter and article: what more can I add?

2) STILL IT MOVES (55 points)(-): Simon Ounsley, 21 The Village St, Leeds, LS4 2PR; usual; two issues in 1981-82 and none previously. Personalzine modulating to genzine from "our greatest living fanwriter" (quoth Abi Frost in A26).

3) TWENTYTHIRD (37 pts)(11th): Jimmy Robertson, 64 Hamilton Rd, Bellshill, Lanarks, ML4 1AG; erratically available;

several issues published. Personalzine with near-cult status, thanks to Jimmy's energy and unpredictability, etc....

4) EPSILON (31 pts)(-): Rob Hansen, 9a Greenleaf Rd, East Ham, London, E6 1DX; usual; several issues. Personalzine with occasional contributions; a Best Buy for comment on current fannish controversies by Rob himself.

5) DRILKJIS (27 pts)(-): me (address above) and Kevin Smith (address fuzzy); usual/50p; one issue, the first in two years. Irritatingly infrequent genzine redeemed only by the great brilliance of writing, editing, production, etc.

Also with 5+ points: START BREAKING UP (26); DRYGULCH cum INDIAN SCOUT (23); NEW RIVER BLUES (21); CRYSTAL SHIP (19); DOT (18); SECOND HAND WAVE and WALLBANGER (15); VECTOR (13); ARENA (12); DEADLOSS (11); "No Award" (10); THE CHOCOLATES OF LUST and NABU (9); FORTH (8); MATRIX (7); STOP BREAKING DOWN (6).

Best British Fanwriter: 37 nominations recorded ... 1) CHRIS ATKINSON (86 pts)(-); 2) DAVE LANGFORD (69 pts)(1st) – deposed at last! 3) JIMMY ROBERTSON (45 pts)(-); 4) SIMON OUNSLEY (43 pts)(=5th); 5) KEVIN SMITH (32 pts)(6th).

Also: Chris Evans (27); Chris Priest (20); Abi Frost & Joe Nicholas (15); Rob Hansen & Linda Pickersgill (10); Malcolm Edwards & D. West (8); Phil Palmer, Steve Sneyd & Owen Whiteoak (7); Martyn Taylor (6).

BEST BRITISH FANARTIST: 19 nominations plus "No Award". 1) PETE LYON (98 pts)(1st); 2) ROB HANSEN (85 pts)(5th); 3) JIM BARKER (78 pts)(2nd); 4) D. WEST (67 pts)(3rd); 5) HARRY BELL (25 pts)(6th).

Also: Martin Helsdon (13); John Collick (12); John McFarlane (10); Steve Lines (9); Ian Byers (8); "No Award" (7); Alan Hunter & Jon Langford (6).

Best Single Issue: 30 items (3 ineligible, having appeared in the previous year) nominated, plus "No Award". 1) Start Breaking Up(Chris Atkinson/Linda Pickersgill)(10 votes); 2) Indian Scout (*the Cretins*) (9); 3) Tappen 2 (*Malcolm Edwards*)(7); (=4) Still It Moves 1 & 2 (*Simon Ounsley*) & Drilkjis 6 (*DRL & Kevin Smith*)(each 6).

Also: DOT 11 & TAPPEN 3 (4); CRYSTAL SHIP 5 (3); THE CHOCOLATES OF LUST, A COOL HEAD, DEADLOSS 3, STOMACH PUMP 3 & WALLBANGER 5 (all 2).

Best Fanzine Article/Column: *38 items plus “No Award”. 1) “Life with the Loonies I” (Chris Atkinson/Tappen)(11); 2) “The Transatlantic Hearing Aid” (Langford TAFF report/Nabu 11)(5); 3) “You Must Be Mad” (Alan Ferguson/SIM 2); =4) “Confessions of a Collector” (Simon Ounsley/SIM 1), “Towards a Critical Standard” series (Kevin Smith/Vector) & “What Do They Do With The Money?” (Smith/Drilkjis 6) (all 3).*

Also: “A Day of Lies” (Evans/SBU), “Deep Cuts” (Ounsley/MATRIX), “Desert Island Disco” (Atkinson/TAPPEN), “Fandom Stranger” (Pickersgill/SBD), “Of Feet and Madness” (Priest/TAPPEN), “Sphincters at Dawn” (Kettle/EPSILON) (all 2).

Best Fanzine Cover: *41 items plus “No Award”. 1) John Macfarlane/Indian Scout (6); =2) Harry Bell/Stop Breaking Down 7, Pete Lyon/Forth (Hamster Pie) 3 (each 5); =4) Bell/Out of the Blue 3, Rob Hansen/Epsilon 8, Hansen/Tappen 2, Hansen/Wallbanger 5, Lyon/Supernova 4 (all 3).*

Also: Hansen/MATRIX 40, Hansen/STOMACH PUMP 3, Hansen/TAPPEN 1, Steve Lines/CRYSTAL SHIP 5, Jon Langford/DRILKJIS 6, Lyon/SHW (Autumn), Lyon/SIM 1 (all with 2). NB: if the Hansen triptych of the first 3 TAPPEN covers is counted as one item, it places =1st. Overall Rob’s work received 20 votes (and Pete Lyon’s 14), in this category, illustrating the dangers of self-competition.

Worst Thing Of 1981-2: *as always the most difficult to count, with 53 nominations (plus “Hold Over Funds”) and a welter of overlapping hates. Two of my favourites with only one vote apiece were “The US attempt to get Nicholas – foreigners shooting at our fox” and “The campaign of slander and innuendo against really super people like Chuck Connor and Paul Turner”. On with the presentations –*

1) PAUL TURNER (6 votes); 2) KEITH WALKER’S Brighton Rock (5); 3) Graham James (4½); 4) CHUCK CONNOR (3½); =5) EVE HARVEY AT CHANNELCON and THE POSTAL RATES and IAN WATSON (3).

Also: The Victory of Albacon II over Metrocon, The Fake Bob Shaw’s ROCKCON PR (each 2). Again, regrouping would alter things hugely: 10

votes went to various aspects of *MATRIX (Most Controversial Fanzine!)*, 9 to various aspects of *Channelcon (e.g. the beer)*, 5 to the Watson family, etc.

Mythcon 1982 • 2-4 July, Birmingham

Chris Morgan

I thought I was attending Fantasycon VIII at the Grand Hotel, but my name badge told me otherwise. This title change was not wholly unconnected with the fact that the con committee received “very unhelpful advice” from the British Fantasy Society and seem to have broken off diplomatic relations with them. Mythcon’s committee represented a considerable decorative improvement over any con I can recall: it consisted of the delectable Anne Page and the scarcely less delectable Penny Hill, both of whom were observed to be wearing provocative costumes and carrying whips. Lust aside, this was too small a number to control things adequately: several programme items finished lamely with no committee member to propose thanks or lead applause.

The main programme items that I saw reached the heights of mediocrity. Some might have been better without being drowned by the intermittent rumble of passing buses; and some, conceivably, worse. Champion male chauvinist Chris Chivers chaired a panel on heroines, and was roundly condemned for his views by Ken Bulmer, Tanith Lee and Anne McCaffrey. “I felt like a prick,” Chris said to me afterwards. “You looked like one,” I said comfortingly. GoH Tanith Lee was wearing black and had fingernails bright with what might have been uncongealed blood. In a short autobiographical speech she described herself as an “arrogant, nervous drunk with notes”. She told us she often makes revisions to her novels through being unable to read her original longhand, and explained how she came to cause several Israeli wars, an Italian earthquake and the invasion of the Falklands. Later on the Saturday afternoon she left to catch a train while they still existed. Other speakers included Eddie Jones (who extolled the virtues of Hannes Bok), Marsha Jones (who listed her favourite juvenile fantasy books) and the irrepressible Lionel Fanthorpe (who once again explained the mysteries of Rennes-le-Chateau, to publicize his and Patricia’s recently published book on the subject, *The Holy Grail Revealed* – Newcastle \$5.95. [*The advance on this book, falsely reported by evil Naveed Khan last issue to*

be \$50,000, was in fact \$0.00 – royalties only. Bloody hell, Badger Books used to pay £25 a novel....]).

There was a small-con ambience, due partly to the people dissuaded from coming by the impending rail strike and partly to the fact that about 40 people seemed perpetually wedged into the smallish video room. Main programme audiences were small: the only time more than 50 assembled was on Saturday evening to watch a heroic playlet wherein a half-naked Anne Page (as Vanilla, the ice cream princess) killed sundry varlets with her magic wand in order to save the race of hedgehogs. The clichéd non-sequiturs which passed for a script might have been produced by a youthful L. Fanthorpe on a bad day. And it was possible to smell the tomato ketchup ten feet away. When this was followed by a session of “Call My Bluff” I felt an overwhelming urge to slip away to the bar. I returned an hour later to find the game still in progress. (Amazingly high pain threshold these fantasy fans have.) Later on there was a proper SF-type room party hosted by true-fan Colin Fine, with live music, cheese, rum and the traditional smashing of glasses.

For a small con there were hordes of genre professionals. Those not so far mentioned included Ramsey Campbell, Peter Tremayne, Brian Lumley – who looks and sounds less like a writer than anybody I’ve come across – Les Flood and Dennis Etchison. The book room was disappointing. The art show was small but full of quality: watch out for talented newcomer Sue Mason, who won a prize for best amateur artist. Several other prizes were handed out, for playing D&D or being a GoH, but no British Fantasy Awards were announced. There’s a threat of its all happening again (end of June 83).
(CJKM)

The Fabulous Filler Column

Brian Aldiss has suffered the rewards of hubris after setting his “mini-saga” competition in the *Telegraph* magazine; a mini-saga was defined as a story no more nor less than 50 words long, making the judging look relatively light work: but there were 33,000 entries.... One, about phantom horses, came from Princess Margaret and failed through being only 49 words long. Meanwhile millions of copies of the hardback *Hand-Reared Boy* and *A Rude*

Awakening have been remaindered at “an insulting price” by Weidenfeld & Nicolson.... **Isaac Asimov**’s doubtless triffic *Foundation’s Edge* has sold to Granada over here for £82,500 (peanuts to the £500,000 reserve price for the US auction – Del Rey bagged the book and the first three as well). Our Gollancz spy reports the existence of an Asimovian afterword explaining how *FE* is the key novel linking all his previous ones, which should therefore all be reprinted for the benefit of students, in hardback.... **Chris Priest & Lisa Tuttle** “now have a secondhand-book stall on the side of the A30 in Lewdown, which we set up every Saturday morning it doesn’t rain.... We have discovered that the average British holidaymaker feels embarrassed and compromised by the presence of books in his chosen lay-by. There were we sitting and looking at several hundred feet of empty parking space, just opposite us, while meantime 40 cars were cramming themselves into the crowded far ends....” No list available, but this great British enterprise will continue till the end of summer, when “everything will be dumped at an auction”.... **Joe Nicholas Gives Candid Opinion Of Langford’s First Sf Novel, Now Available At Junkshops Everywhere!** “This book (*cont p.94*)

Ian Watson

A collection of miscellaneous snippets from our most indefatigable Ansible correspondent....

[13 April 1982]

Scandal! Graham James-Jones has WAHFeD me in *Matrix*: “a heart-felt story about the possible closing of a Museum in Yverdon ...” In actual fact this is or was big news, that is now getting seriously out of date, and which I hoped the BSFA would feel vitally concerned about, not least those members who are going to Eurocon this summer. In January Maxim Jakubowski passed me a letter from Pierre Versins, dated 31 Oct 81, announcing that as of 20 Oct he had retired from being Curator of the Maison d’Ailleurs, the Musée de l’Utopie, des Voyages Extraordinaires, et de la Science-Fiction. The Maison is encyclopaedist Versins’ lifelong and unique SF collection which he presented to his home town of Yverdon, with himself as first Curator. Versins is deeply concerned that his successor won’t be properly qualified, probably won’t be nominated by the town authorities of Yverdon for another 2 years,

and that until then the Maison is likely to remain closed. Versins' open letter requests all authors, researchers and editors to write to him (Rue du Four 5, 1400 Yverdon, Switzerland) so he can pass letters on to the town authorities; said letters hopefully expressing horror that this unique collection should be closed, albeit provisionally, and desire that Versins' successor should be someone of whom he approves, who would maintain the unique character of the Maison, namely, "ouverture à la conjecture romanesque rationnelle, et à elle seule, de tous temps et lieux; vision claire des domaine qu'elle embrasse" – -the alternative being what, I wonder? A sort of Fantasy Star Wars Disneyland? An irrational romp? A *Skiffy* Museum?

Well, I wrote a letter of support to Versins, and informed SFWA *Forum* too, and wrote to *Matrix* as I thought this should be of concern to members of the BSFA, not least those going to Eurocon, since Yverdon is only a short way from La Chaux-de-Fonds, and it seemed likely that some people might plan a day trip to this unique SF collection and could reasonably expect to find it open.

[Written, obviously, before the cancellation of Eurocon 82 in La C-de-F, and mislaid for Ansible 26: *mea culpa*, etc. DRL]

I note the gross discrepancy between the hysteria in *Matrix* over "saving" the SF Foundation by bombarding the NE London Poly with letters of support for Dr Greenland (when these two things had nothing to do with each other), and simply WAHFing news of the imminent demise of the Maison d'Ailleurs. "A museum in Yverdon" indeed! That's really telling the readers, isn't it?

Just sold my next novel to Gollancz for probably Jan 83 publication – title, *Chekhov's Journey*, an SF novel about Anton Chekhov, not Chekov of the Enterprise, though if thousands of Trekkies jump to that conclusion, who am I to complain?

[7 June 1982]

The George Florance-Guthridge story [in *Jan Finder's Taplinger anthology Alien Encounters*, which sports two Watson stories, another by Modesty Forbids, and a cover reprinted from Spang Blah (*Dave Hardy*)] took me by storm. "It's a dreadful disease.... They call it *Benziis*. Usually only the very young and the very old are afflicted. But the majority suffer from it

sometime, and few survive.” I’m still tussling with the profound enigma of those two sentences, which have given me a whole new outlook on mortality.... Hope you caught Lionel Fanthorpe’s radio first on *Midweek* (Radio 4, 2 June): arm-wrestling on the air! [*Lionel lost to the UK arm-wrestling champ after a titanic struggle. He also offered to repeat his youthful feat of dictating an entire SF novel in mere hours – but only if someone promised, in advance, to publish it.*] Just been elected Secretary of Moreton Pinkney Village Hall, and thus will have awesome responsibilities....

I’ve delivered the brilliantly rewritten *The Woman Factory* to Playboy Paperbacks, to be greeted with the jolly tidings that PP are up for sale and no new books are being acquired – though whether mine is a new book or one in the pipeline, since I have a contract for it, is an indeterminate point. Pray for me, or something....

STOP PRESS POSTSCRIPT: Typescript read, and publication going ahead. New title, for a number of reasons (*my* reasons): *The Woman Plant*. Should be out in 83.

[29 June 1982]

Berkley/Jove have acquired not only Playboy Paperbacks *but also* Ace Books. (Source: Sharon Jarvis, Senior Ed at PP.) This is of course most grotty news for all writers, since it means that the new empire now has an enormous list, and backlist stretching to infinity, so their desire to acquire new titles in the next few years might be minimal....

[25 June 1982]

The latest about the Final Dangerous Visions! Ian Watson, having deposited a story with said anthology six years ago, rashly decided that he would like to see it in print, so wrote to Harlan Ellison saying that he intended to withdraw the story in 3 months’ time if there wasn’t some distant hint of publication by then. Mere days later, Ian was woken at dead of night by HE calling from California. “Ian Watson, you schmoo,” cried a voice, “now you’ve moved somewhere called Moreton Pinkney. I’ve been trying to locate you for years. There are gonna be *two* offers by major publishers *tomorrow* for the anthology. Those are — and —, but don’t tell anyone.” Amazed at the coincidence of his letter arriving at this momentous juncture, Ian still had the

wit to say: “That’s funny. I sent you a change of address, and I’ve already had at least one DV circular from you here.” “Listen, Ian, I’ve got *thirteen* people looking after the letter W alone.” “Thirteen, Harlan? That’s unlucky.” “Okay, I’ve shot one of them. Listen, you ingrate, I’ve spent years schlepping your books around America.” “Gosh,” said Ian. “I buy them all with my own money from Gollancz!” proclaimed HE. “I’ll sign them all for you,” promised Ian, overwhelmed. “You coming over here?” queried HE. “No,” said Ian, “you put them all in a suitcase and fly over.” “Ian, I couldn’t *do* that to Moreton Pinkney. What, Harlan *Ellison* hit a sleepy little village?” “That’s okay,” Ian assured him, “we like aggro, violence, and disorder.” “Um,” said HE, “you still married to that lady with the red hair?” (Obviously remembering how Judy Watson challenged him to combat at a Millington reception in 1976. Or perhaps remembering deadly Jessica Watson, also present, aged 3 in her pushchair.) “Sure,” said Ian, “but her hair’s blonde.” “I’m sure it was red,” said Harlan. “That’s because you were looking at her chest,” riposted Ian. (Sounds of crowd applause, that had been accompanying phone call so far in background of Ellisonian apartment, grew muted.) “I ... I ... I....” gasped Harlan meekly. “I’m not like that.” (IW)

Next, our other most indefatigable correspondent:

Joseph Nicholas at “The Strange Pilgrimage” A Commemoration For Philip K. Dick (1928- 1982)

At the June Tun only days before, I’d remarked to Colin Greenland that following ads in *Time Out* and such, it could be a very crowded meeting indeed; he suspected otherwise, and was proved right by the event’s drawing an audience that only just filled the City Lit in Stukely St on the evening of 9 June 1982 – which, given the humid weather, was just as well, else we might all have suffocated. It was worse up on the platform, where jackets were shed almost instantly; the first thing chairman Maurice Goldsmith (Science Policy Foundation) did when he rose to his feet was to ask for the spotlights to be turned down. With little introduction he launched into an explanation of what science policy research was all about, and threatened one of those dull [*and here staggeringly irrelevant – DRL*] old perorations about how SF helps predict the future, but mercifully he handed over to Peter Nicholls, who

began by confessing that although he'd hoped to ad-lib from a few notes he'd had an attack of cowardice and written it all down instead.[1] Most of it revolved around his intermittent correspondence with Dick in the mid-70s and the ambivalent response it provoked in him: attracted by the man's obvious warmth and humanity yet simultaneously repelled by his hysteria and paranoia, he sometimes couldn't tell whether he was talking to Dick or his alter-ego Horselover Fat. (Pause to address the audience: "How many of you haven't read *Valis*?" A good half of the 100-odd present raised their hands, and I could only wonder what on earth they thought they were doing there.) He finally met Dick at an SF conference, in Metz, France, in 1978, and like everyone else there was severely embarrassed by the long harangue Dick delivered in place of a speech; at breakfast next morning, Dick asked Nicholls whether he had "successfully achieved sexual intercourse last night? I need to know how it's done." "But what was the *answer*?" interrupted Brian Aldiss a few sentences later, causing us all to fall about; but none was forthcoming....

Aldiss's own contribution began with the tongue-in-cheek observation that it was perhaps us who'd died or been whisked off into an alternate reality "run by Brezhnev, Thatcher, Reagan and the Argentinian junta – while Phil Dick remains where he always was, in Santa Ana, fighting entropy and kipple, with his 8th or 9th wife by his side...." More laughter, setting the tone for what followed. Centred around a spirited reading from *A Scanner Darkly*, it was devoted primarily to an appreciation of Dick's fiction, pointing the vein of black humor that underlay much of it and being by turns sober and amusing, using as a metaphor for Dick's approach the U-bend of the toilet: whereas that tended to filter out the smell of the septic tank, Dick had found a way to bypass it and get down to the "really fertile" things most of us preferred to ignore. Aldiss concluded with excerpts from tributes in the May *Locus*, most notably a completely incomprehensible sentence by Roger Zelazny and an anecdote from Grania Davis about how Dick left her to swelter in a closet for several hours when one of his ex-wives called.

After a taped reading from John Brunner, Philip Strick rose to deliver the text of an article he'd written about the forthcoming movie *Bladerunner*, based on *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, which Dick's death had given him the opportunity to augment with material about its author's life. It seems that the film has a different script from that over which Dick enthused, and may

be much worse than feared: Strick ended with the hope that it would nevertheless spark interest in Dick's work amongst a wider audience – a laudable but probably misplaced sentiment, as I feel Dick is simply too unsettling, perhaps even too specialized, for the cinema-going public.

And that – following a reading from Peter Nicholls of Tom Disch's "Cantata 82: an Ode to the Death of Philip Dick" (containing the clever lines "[Hollywood] did/Its level best to level his best book") – was almost it. A few (rather dispensable) "spontaneous tributes" from the floor, from such as Andy McKillip (his editor at Granada) and Les Flood, and we were filing out into the still-humid evening.[2] It had been a good and interesting commemoration: the three main speakers had known what they wanted to say and had said it well, with wit and style, rendering the proceedings less of a funeral service than a wake, and a highly enjoyable one to boot.

Even so, no one should be in any doubt that SF has lost one of its greatest talents. (JN)

[1] The Nicholls piece has since appeared in *Tappen 4*; the Aldiss is scheduled for *Foundation*; the Brunner merely repeated the introduction to *The Best Of PKD*. [2] To the pub. ALDISS: Evening, George. HAY: Hello Brian, I'm about to write you a very long letter. ALDISS: Please don't, George.

Now, Australia's sexiest fan (Thyme poll result):

Judith Hanna at the One Tun (June 1982)

Were whispered plots hatched in heated corners? I didn't detect any – there seemed to be more perspiring than conspiring in the air; any Australian knows all about the correlation between heat and apathy; it is after all the key to our national character. And a bloody good imitation of muggy Sydney weather it was too; just the weather for an ice-cold lager (if you like that sort of thing), far too hot to plot. Was anything going on except complaints about the heat? So far as I could see, nothing but determined drinking and desultory gossip. Clumps of people inside in the warm, just as many outside trying to cool off, Brian Smith and Andrew Stephenson wearing jackets to protect them from the weather. Bits of paper were passed around – Shoestringcon

flyer; another for the Foundation's Phil Dick memorial gathering; a *Small Mammal* materialized and Joseph says there must have been a Martin Easterbrook behind it. Rob Hansen took a break from handing out *Epsilon 11* to expound to a maniacally-grinning TAFF winner the difference between the bodily profiles of British and US fen – the former typically long and stringy but for a bulge at the tum, the latter all bulge from ankles to eyeballs: hair is, of course, optional; proof of the hair-variance postulate perambulated in the forms of the shorter-haired Phil (Piglet) Palmer – mown to a monotone summer lawn; Steve Higgins – still silver streaked; Joseph's new cherubic choirboy bob; not to mention Martyn Taylor minus not only wisdom teeth but also beard, the latter sacrificed in order to reduce weight (yes, that's what he said). The only sign of conspiring was up the stairs, where all the hot air rises, in the salubrious lobby outside the bogs, a certain ferociously mumbling *Ansible* editor waylaid all comers, exacting tribute of gossip or promise of Tun report before he'd let any pass. The dread conspirator of the Tun unmasked ...? (Judith Hanna)

COA

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HELEN STARKEY, 37 Chatsworth Rd, Kilburn, London, NW.2 • In addition KEV SMITH and THE DOREYS are moving soon to Manchester and NIC HOWARD is living in Basingstoke while buying a house in Reading.

Cons

Chicon (82 Worldcon) provoked me to an erratum on p.1, where “Bob Hillis” should read “Bill Evans” as on the Hugo ballot egregiously enclosed (only modesty and poverty preventing the further enclosure of a \$15 International Money Order and detailed voting instructions with each copy). Spies report that nice Andy Porter called up to withdraw his semi-pro fanzine *Starship* from the ballot and was put out to learn it hadn’t got there....

Eurocon 1982 Cancelled! The Swiss Eurocon proved to be entirely a one-man show from Pascal Ducommun who, unable to get any help whatever, suffered a nervous collapse. Films, art, Eurocon business meeting (the latter important to supporters of the British 1984 bid) all transferred to the German “Festival der Fantastik” in Mönchengladbach (rather nearer than La Chaux-de-Fonds) on 20-22 August. Though not officially a Eurocon, this event looks the next best thing for ’82: Marjorie and John Brunner, who reckon the weekend to cost DM200-300 depending on extravagance (at DM4.26 per £ as of late June), have PRs and tourist data: if you’re interested send SAE *quickly* to them at The Square House, Palmer St, S Petherton, Somerset, TA13 5DB.... **Colnecon** (26 June) suffered grotty attendance due to the rail/tube strikes.... **Mythcon**: a late Nic Howard report praises the “Dunkirk spirit” at the event, deplores the nonappearance of the British Fantasy Awards despite their already having been voted on (next year Nic is a co-administrator and *Ansible* will get the facts real fast – won’t it?), and mysteriously alludes to the “unexpurgated version” of the feud between con and BFS: “different from *both* other versions”. Which other versions? **Faircon** (July 23-6, Glasgow) has arranged lower room rates: £12.50 sngl, £10/person dbl, £15 and £14 with bath.... **Albacon II**: PR1 now due, and last issue my brain must have rotted – forgot to mention GoHs Tanith Lee & James White, FGoH *Avedon* TAFF winner.

Infinitely Improbable

TAFF slate USA –>Albacon now finalized: Grant Canfield, Larry Carmody, A*V*E*D*O*N C*A*R*O*L and Taral. Need I add that now I’m no longer an administrator, *Ansible* is no longer impartial? ... **Brian Aldiss**, overcome by too many comparisons of Dick with Dickens, remarked at the City Lit that “maybe we’ll all be here in a few years likening Christopher Priest to J.B. Priestley.” Meanwhile, CP’s books-for-sale may be viewed by appointment in Lewdown (see p.2): dial 01-864-1957 and hope he’s in Harrow. This phone number also appears, fascinatingly, in the 15 July *New York Review of Books*: there’s this ad offering “SECLUSION IN BEAUTIFUL DEVON COUNTRYSIDE. 17th century cottage ... full of books.” Only £300/month, too: surely not another Platt hoax? ... **Very Boring**: “We the undersigned feel that Chuck Connor, as a member of the BSFA, is entitled to the right of reply in *Matrix*, a society journal, when he is attacked in *M* by other society members....” 30 people, most of those to whom it was sent, signed this petition “to show dissatisfaction with G. James’s handling of the affair”, says Bernard Earp, who begs this last public mention before (controversy having cooled) the thing is forgotten.... **Shards Of Babel** is Roelof Goudriaan’s Euronewsine, \$2 for 4 issues to Postbus 589, 8200 AN Lelystad, Netherlands: excellent Continental coverage.... **Eurocon 7** is (since last page) officially incorporated into the German “Festival” with the possibility of an extra Eurocon Day being added beforehand (19 Aug) to fit in spare programme items. DM30 att, DM15 supp to Walter Jost, Nordstr. 110, D-4050 Mönchengladbach 2, West Germany.... **Skiffy Film Evening** 24 July (11pm-8am) at ABC, London Rd, W Croydon: *Forbidden Planet*, *Andromeda Strain* etc plus snack, all £5.... **Pzyche** is Faber’s latest, from one Amanda Hemingway (26): Dave Garnett asks why unlike her I didn’t have my novel launched at a party from the Mayor of Lewes (her dad). This sf novel, quoth Amanda, was “like having a trial ski run before attempting Mont Blanc. My next book will be a serious work of contemporary fiction.” Gorbliney.... **Extro 3** (highly professional with an ISSN) is out, as is *Interzone 2* (a mere fanzine with no ISSN, observes Pete Lyon – just kidding, folks): *E1,2,3* available from me at 95p each, post free.... **Best Of The Bushel** (Bob Shaw’s selected articles) now out of print from Rob Jackson; “Eastercon Speeches” still available.... **Frankenstein In Love** recently appeared at the Cockpit Theatre, London, directed by someone called Malcolm Edwards.... **Salman Rushdie’s Masterpiece**, Booker Prize or no, is according to R.I. Barycz his cream bun slogan: “Naughty, But Nice.” ...

Hugo Nominations: “interesting to note in which categories it is *most* difficult to get on the ballot: 1) Pro Editor; 2) Best Fanzine; 3) Dramatic Presentation. So much for that old SF stuff, eh!” (John Foyster)... **Balrog Award** went to Kurtz’s *Camber the Heretic*, if anyone cares.... **Living Deaths:** no longer involved in fandom are Trev Briggs (data: Alan Ferguson), Victoria Vayne (Taral) and, so he says, Greg Pickersgill (“It took me 14 years to realize the great truth – you can get out”). Jimmy Robertson reports an exciting marital breakup and Dick Bergeron a financial crisis delaying *Warhoon* 29 (this, from a man whose working overhead I always believed to consist of 50 Picassos?).... **SF Poetry Association** is devoted to usual SF activities of publishing each other’s work and giving one another awards (the “Rhysling”, for goodness’ sake!): \$6/year to 1772 N Mariposa #1, LA, CA 90027, USA.... **Pete Lyon** was last seen struggling to “reproduce 4 Poussin Paintings complete with semi naked shepherdesses, satyrs, grapes and general bacchanalian goings on” in time for R.L. Fanthorpe’s “cosmic conspiracy theory involving Knights Templar, batty frog priests and buried treasure” (see p.2).... **Charlie Brown Is A Big Time Capitalist**, reports almost famous US person Joe de Bolt, who told us that on his trip to Russia the *Locus* editor was regarded with awe as one who *employed* people: as we might look at one who owned human slaves.... **Angela Carter**, at a recent Reading skiffy evening, was horrified to hear Ian Watson’s *Chekhov’s Journey* involved, as did a short story she was working on, the Siberian explosion all those years ago.... **A27** delayed by move and GPO: sorry.

Hazel’s Language Lessons #18: Malay

tahi tikus: mustard. (Literally: mouse-turd.)
– *English-Malay Dictionary*, Sir Richard Winstedt, ’52.

Ansible Twenty-Seven (13 July 1982)
Dave Langford, 94 London Road,
Reading, Berkshire, RG1 5AU, UK

***Ansible* 28**

August/September 1982

ANSIBLE 28 comes to you from 94 LONDON ROAD, READING, BERKSHIRE, RG1 5AU, UK – an exciting new address which several of you have not yet assimilated. Editor: Dave Langford. Subs £1 for 5 issues (UK), 4 airmailed abroad – sterling cheques/cash/POs to me, Girobank transfer to account no. 24 523 0408, \$US equivalent to Mary & Bill Burns, 48 Lou Ave, Kings Park, NY, NY 11754. Cartoon Editor: Pete Lyon. Mailing Labels Editor: Keith Freeman. Typewriter Transport To And From Repair Shop Editors: Keith Oborn & Martin Hoare. Life-Support Editor: Hazel. Non-Fiction Editor: you may well ask. *Ansible* supports whatshername for TAFF. Aug/Sept.

Stone Cold Dead in the Market

Lots of exciting movement in the SF market, mostly downwards. Yet another planned UK mag is ***World Tomorrow***, to be edited by Martin Ince of *Engineering Today* and Victoria Hutchings of *New Statesman*: as you might imagine from these data, it's more technological uplift than SF. But SF coverage is planned; two SF stories are wanted for issue 1, one from Ballard being to hand and another of around 3-5000 words being sought, and this is where I'd urge you to send your stories in but for the pilot issue's postponement from October (as planned) to Spring – because, says M. Ince, "Smiths, Menzies etc seem to operate on longer planning horizons than the supreme Soviet." Watch this space. An incidental side effect is that James Manning, last in all the civilized universe, now acknowledges that *Ad Astra* is quite dead: some of the extant AA adverts are being transferred to *WT*, or were before the new exciting delay.

Omni's UK edition has got the chop, and ditto UK editor Bernard Dixon (as gloatingly reported by his old *New Scientist* mates, who possibly envied the *Omni* salary): but lovable Andie Burland is still working for the NY editor

from the London office, and promises sordid revelations on request. (I requested, honest, but she didn't reveal.)

Extro will almost certainly not reach a fourth issue, though the material is all ready for printing. Editor Paul Campbell suffered a change of bank manager in mid-August; the new chap instantly dishonoured the agreed overdraft limit and that was that for *Extro*; a pity, since the supreme W.H. Smenzies Soviet had nearly been persuaded to take on the mag.... No more submissions, fans; Paul is trying to raise money to refund subscriptions and so on.

New Voyager is the result of that *Space Voyager* sf/modelling/media pilot which lurked so long on the bookstands and apparently sold 37,000 copies. *NV* appears quarterly from 30 Sept and sends a vast amount of info, not including the print run. Contents: "Lots of exciting articles about *Blake's 7* and UFOs – but no fiction. Kindly old editor Ray Rimell explains: 'Regular use of SF stories is not an essential requirement.' Average age of the target audience is 17...." (*Alex Stewart*) This lack of enthusiasm probably stems from market testing: the lousy staff-written SF tale in the pilot could hardly have evoked a good response.

Interzone: there is no news about *IZ*, but it deserves a respectful mention as a last bastion of UK fiction (even *Short Stories Mag* is said to have folded). *IZ*, quoth Colin Greenland, is as ever "looking for money" – rush your fiver subscription to them c/o 28 Duckett Rd, London, N4 1BN.

Faircon '82 Nice Words from Colin Fine

For a Faircon, it made a pretty good Eastercon. With over 400 members, a spacious and old-fashioned hotel, the traditional heavy programming, and a Jim Barker fanroom, only by examination of the faces present could one readily tell that this was not, say, Channelcon.

It seems to me that traditions are converging. The peripheral pursuits – computer room, full video programme, etc – which Faircon was among the first to mount, have been adopted widely by other cons. Each year sees more bold souls creeping up from the South to diminish the separation. But up to last year, there was one quality Faircons had which set them apart: the Ingram

Hotel and especially its manager Martin Woolfe. The Ingram was cramped, but events were all close together; the staff used to get involved in con activities. Mr Woolfe wandered about keeping an eye on things, but generally obeyed his maxim: “Let them take over.” The Central is a bit different. The staff may come to enjoy cons – they became noticeably less nervous over the weekend – but the building is enormous and grandiose. The main staircase surely beats that of the Metropole, but much of the place has an air of not having been decorated for about 50 years. And it’s *big*. Semi-infinite corridors link the palatial public rooms, whose light-fittings are clearly the work of a demented market-gardener.

And the con? Well, no surprises. Naomi Mitchison’s speech was fairly political; it’ll be interesting to see if it evokes the same storm as Ian Watson’s at Yorcon. High point for me of the programme was Nick Lowe’s “[The Well-Tempered Plot Device](#)”; I shan’t mention the disgraceful reception accorded Ian Sorensen and me when we provided some authentic Vogon music to round off the Vogon Poetry competition. Low point of the con was when severe disagreements between members of the committee were trumpeted loudly in public, having been up till then not noticeable to the ordinary fan. The Wise will realize that they are unlikely to be in possession of enough information and will avoid taking sides. (*See also below – DRL*)

And the prospect for Albacon, to be held at the same hotel? Very fine, I should say. The larger numbers will not bounce about quite so much in the vast spaces, and will also be better able to afford to lose so many to the wargaming, computer, Star Trek etc. rooms. I trust they’ll maintain the reasonable bar-prices, and get in some real ale again; and I hope they’ll drop the snack-prices a little. If so, it should be a comfortable and enjoyable con. And at the time of writing the single fare to Glasgow from London on a BR Nightrider is only £12. (*Colin Fine*)

Boring Editorial Footnote

Those tactfully unspecified “disagreements” have since escalated, affecting Albacon II itself and causing loud gibbering noises from Glasgow. Faircon’s disputes apparently involved certain committee members versus the Glasgow Bob Shaw (for it is he!), culminating in a shouting match about various such folk being listed as paid-up Albacon II members when according to Bob they

were not. Bob demanded that chairman Joan Paterson resign if the remaining committee wanted Bob to do the huge amount of publications work which – arguably – only he could handle. “OK” said the committee; Bob did the work and at the con found that Joan was still chairman; he left “seeing things through a red and bloody haze” and returned two days later with a fanzine hideously insulting practically everyone connected with Faircon – and hence, owing to committee overlap, Albacon II also. Quoth Bob: “Albacon II now hangs in the balance. Glasgow fandom can’t do it without me.... There’d better be some coming to heel damn quick or there’d better be a new Eastercon.”

Bob deserves credit for starting and playing a major part in Glasgow’s cons, and perhaps naturally he regards them as “his” – you’ll search in vain through his Albacon flyers and PR1 for any hint that Bob Jewett is and was chairman, though the name BOB SHAW always figures prominently. Hence a certain, er, dichotomy. Bob Jewett explains that the Albacon II committee, as seen bidding at Channelcon, is carrying on happily with the solitary exception of Bob Shaw: “We’ve got the hotel, the mailing list and the bank account all safe.” PR1 was duly mailed with an added note saying that Bob Shaw had left the committee and that all communications bar hotel bookings should go to Albacon II c/o Doug McCallum, B/L Highburgh Rd, Glasgow, G12 9YD – Albacon’s general address as before. Bob Shaw, conversely, explains that the activities of (Bob Jewett’s) rebellious “rump” committee make it unlikely that Albacon II will take place (he advises that Metrocon be revived – no possibility of this, folks), that he is trying to freeze the Albacon II bank account and has opened a further account for monies sent to Albacon c/o him ... an unknown number of PR1s having been mailed with Bob’s added note asking that *all* communications go to Bob Shaw. Oh dear. Jim Barker – to whom Bob recently offered the post of Albacon II chairman but who declined since Albacon II already has a chairman – reports that the “Shaw Albacon” is a one-man show without support or approval from other Glasgow conrunning fans. Without Bob, Albacon II will be poorer – especially its publications – but Bob alone can’t possibly cope with an Eastercon of the anticipated size.

Thus, despite our Faircon reporter’s fine advice to avoid taking sides, *Ansible* urges that you carry on using the “real” Albacon address, as given above, and send no Albacon missives to our lovable but overwrought Bob Shaw. Also *Ansible* utterly condemns Dave Langford for even *thinking* of saying “I told

you, you should have voted for....”

Letters: in No Particular Order ...

Pascal Thomas: “Update on Ian Watson’s comments about La Maison d’Ailleurs: Pierre Versins now has a successor, who is none other than Pascal Ducommun; which is a good thing since he was Versins’ choice, and had worked with him for several years.... He has already been issuing communiqués giving among other things the museum’s opening hours: from 3 to 6 pm once every fortnight, which is not much (he gives some reasons for it).” (See A27 for Ian’s worries about this Swiss SF museum in question.) “On the subject of cancelled conventions, I’m just back from a touristic trip in Israel which I took in lieu of Jerucon. A conversation with Sheldon Teitelbaum revealed that the convention, being organized (financed) by the Peltours travel agency, was cancelled by them when it appeared that the foreign memberships, all 16 of them, were not going to make them break even. They refused to take into account the likelihood of Israeli fans showing up in large numbers. Sheldon T. has numerous other complaints about Peltours – not the least being the telegram they sent to members which boldly assured Jerucon would be held next year. None of the committee has any such intent, and they plan to concentrate now on national Israeli cons (the first one having been surprisingly successful). ‘It would probably have been cancelled anyway, with the war’ philosophically concluded Teitelbaum.’ (Merv Binns added: “Harry Harrison is after our blood. I reprinted the bit about Jerucon and Brunner’s complaint about no expenses being paid. Harry said that Brunner is up to ‘his old wrecking tricks again’ and that if all the rich authors had said they would go Jerucon would not have been cancelled....” What rich authors?)

Ian Watson: “URSULA LE GUIN IN BREACH OF CONTRACT! UKLG sold and was paid for an original story (‘The Wife’s Story’) in Watson/Bishop metamorphoses anthology *Changes*, due from Ace in late July 82.* Ace were so excited about an original UKLG oeuvre therein that they were heard to murmur ‘That’s an extra 15,000 copies sold’ and bannered across the cover the info: ‘Contains a completely new story by ...’ In early July 82 appeared Le Guin’s new collection *The Compass Rose ...* containing ‘The Wife’s Story’, credit reading ‘... appears for the first time in this

volume'. The incensed editors of *Changes* wonder indignantly at the bland ignoring of their contract warranting that the story hadn't previously been published in any form and wouldn't be until 12 months after *Changes* except with prior written permission. The *Changes* editors were never even asked. Le Guin's agent Virginia Kidd responded to expostulations thus: 'one purchaser in 10,000 will give a tinker's damn'. The editors do. And are deeply offended. And wonder why they forked out original rates for what is now a reprint story....

"By the way, do you know that in addition to acquiring Playboy Paperbacks and Ace, Berkley/Jove are also buying up the Dell backlist of such as Varley, Orson Scott Card? Susan Allison at Ace is rumoured to be renting bulldozers to keep on top of the editorial work."

* Alas, Ace have now bulldozed *Changes* into 1983 at least: "too few advance orders".

Ramsey Campbell: "The Fantasycon, or Mythcon as it came to be known, declared its independence of the BFS this year, and its committee forbade me to present the British Fantasy Awards as part of the programme. It would be interesting to know what was said about this at the post-mortem which was the last item on the programme: quite a few of the attendees seemed to be waiting for the ceremony when I left on Sunday afternoon. The winners were – ARTIST Dave Carson; SMALL PRESS *Fantasy Tales*; FILM *Raiders of the Lost Ark*; SHORT STORY 'The Dark Country', Dennis Etchison; NOVEL *Cujo*, Stephen King." (*Gosh, and I thought Cujo was all about a rabid dog and not fantasy at all. Meanwhile, re awards: Russell Hoban's Riddley Walker (1980) has been given the John W. Campbell Memorial Award as most triffic sf novel of 1981 [sic]....*)

Peter Roberts Lives! "The only snippet to come my way is the much-postponed folding of the SF Book Club. The last reprint selection will be in November, though members may be offered backlist books for some time after that. The Sportsmans BC is due to go as well, and the Country and Readers Union BCs have already gone. All four are (or were) reprint clubs, requiring members to buy a specific reprinted title every month or so, and that's basically an outmoded idea." (*These are of course the UK clubs run by David & Charles, the people who are remaindering War In 2080.... Peter's 3 volumes of British Fanzine Bibliography (1936-70) are still available from him, albeit with rusty staples ("so much for healthy Devon air")*): 75p the

set.)

Charles N. Brown: “Millions of fans have written asking how my fanzine *Locus* can be voted for on the Hugo ballot. I would like to tell them all that the box to tick is the second from the top in the right-hand column on the reverse side of the ballot form.” (*Always glad to be of service!*)

***Ansible* Goes to the Movies**

Andrew Stephenson

To judge *Star Trek* as other than a continuing story is to misjudge it badly: like *The Motion Picture*, this new film really forms one more element in a long-term entertainment phenomenon.

Naturally, in the 14-years-plus since ST began on TV there have been more than mere mechanical changes. Most significantly, the cast have aged. Now one must wonder how much longer they can keep going, an important question because the enormous following of fans cares passionately what happens to the main characters. In *The Wrath of Khan*, it is evident the producers are preparing for ST’s survival. Developments (at which I will only hint, out of kindness to those who have, as yet, no idea what transpires) suggest it will survive – with changes. No doubt many of the old faces will stay, for the moment; but one cannot help feeling this will prove to be the last of the old-style stories.

The plot continues one of the TV episodes, in which a group of genetically improved human criminals were imprisoned on an isolated planet. Re-discovered, they escape; and their leader, the eponymous Khan, seeks revenge on Kirk, who stranded him. There are other wrinkles, too, such as a splendidly super-scientific world-building gadget, the Genesis Device, which could easily double as a universal Doomsday Machine.

That the allegedly brilliant Khan would make all the foolish mistakes shown is questionable. Still, he offers Kirk a worthy opponent; the story has interesting developments; and special effects give several sequences of striking beauty and grandeur.

Characterization is consistent with the TV series, although this in itself could be classed as a weakness, since it opens the way to rather too many scenes

wherein Kirk agonizes over personal defects, Spock declares logical conclusions, and McCoy does his usual party trick of deflating all handy egos. The aroma of in-group cliché is almost offensively powerful in parts. Furthermore, many exchanges are transparent attempts to play to the gallery: stock dialogue known to appeal to the fans.

There is also more than one instance of the film taking itself far too seriously. For me, the scene that will live long (and prosper) as an example of wild miscalculation includes certain bagpipe music, which at our preview caused scattered and horribly inopportune laughter. (However, the scene is saved.) Bathetic clanger-dropping seems an oddly American talent; but, to be fair, this is a tightrope act which many have failed to pull off.

For all that, *ST2:TWOK* is an honest film. It works within its established format, yet develops it; it offers a solid story which, despite incidental flaws, deals with credible people (well, people-and-others); and it does not shrink from tackling important ethical questions. Moreover, its constructive optimism contradicts today's fashionable cynicism. All of these were strengths of the TV series. With luck, we will see more sequels; and, with even more luck, they will not become over-blown and portentous again, as happened in *ST:TM(less)P*.

Some have dismissed this as an expanded TV episode. Maybe so; but see my opening remarks. Speaking as one whose loyalty dates back to the first BBC TV showings, I recommend *ST2:TWOK* as an enjoyable way to spend 113 minutes.

Facts and Fallacies

Avedon Carol (for whom you should vote in TAFF) tells more about how Somtow Sucharitkul “transcribes and arranges” symphonies “whistled” by US politico “J.W. Middendorf II”, as mentioned in the *Grauniad* and *A26*: “As Somtow describes it, he works for a man ‘who hums’. He walks up to Somtow and says he has written a song, and he hums one line. Almost invariably, the one line is painfully familiar. ‘Like this,’ says Somtow to me, ‘dum, dum dum dum, dum!’ And I say, ‘My, that sounds suspiciously like *Pomp and Circumstance* with one note changed.’ And he says, ‘Yes, it is, and it’s also Mittendorf’s latest composition.’ ‘Composition.’ Actually, the one or

two lines he hums to Somtow are the sum total of his composing – after that, Somtow ‘arranges’ the piece, which means he ghost-composes the whole thing. So the exposé is that Somtow is a ghost-composer, and the new music that Mittendorf wrote for Reagan’s inauguration was actually by our own Somtow. He tells everyone in WSFA all about this quite proudly....”

Pete Lyon: “I am now working hard (like a 15hr day!!! – honest) on designs for fruit machine panels/facias. The company seem mesmerized by my eccentricities and have foolishly accepted an idea for a machine called ‘Serendipity’ – this promises to be the only fruit machine ever to have a quote from Horace Walpole on its front. It is to be an unnatural coupling of regency and wedgewood styles and will have the maximum amount of glitter, flashing lights and gloopy noises....”

Andy Porter: “Your rumour is completely wrong. *Starship* was in fact nominated for the Hugo, but I withdrew it. No other zine made the new 5% cut-off, which is why there are only four nominees in the Best Fanzine. • Yes, I too was thoroughly pissed off when *Locus* received the vote breakdown on the Hugo nominees, especially as I’d asked for the information, and been told it was not available. I did receive the information [*i.e. other than vote breakdown*] the weekend of April 24, and thus got it into the issue that mailed early in May. This was something like 2-3 weeks before the official notification went out. Incidentally, I corrected such information as publisher of *After Man* (St Martin’s, not Macmillan), and of course they fucked it up anyway. Typical of Chicon, it seems....” (*Macmillan was the UK and St M’s the US publisher: well-organized Hugo people like Noreascon’s, or Seacon’s, would have mentioned both.*) “I am now on Harlan Ellison’s shit-list, along with many other people, and have the finely designed and printed ‘Fuck-off’ warning from Ellison to prove it.”

Dick Smith: “My *Uncle Dick’s Little Thing* has been nominated for the Hogu (sick!) for Worst Fmz Title.... Other nominees in MY category: *Private Heat*, *Intergalactic Starbarn*, *Intermediate Vector Bosons*, *The Dillinger Relic* and *Enemaster*. Brit references – ‘Argentina vs. Britain’ is up for Best New Feud; ‘Argentina’s Fleecing the Falklands’ for Best Traumatic Presentation. The Fanzine Hugos are nominated (is?) for Best Hoax Award. Not much else that sounds worth retyping.”

Ted White: “My friend, the American sf hack, Dave Bischoff (known as

‘The Bisch’ to his intimates) and I were standing somewhere in Alexis and Doll Gilliland’s house when someone remarked to The Bisch that a rumour was going round the British Isles to the effect that he, David Bischoff, had ghosted the latest John Jakes bestseller. ‘Gosh,’ said Dave, ‘I wish I had.’ We repaired to Alexis’ library where a copy of *Ansible 26* was unearthed and the rumour itself laid before The Bisch’s startled eyes. ‘It’s not true, of course,’ he said. ‘You did *something* for Jakes,’ I said. ‘Oh, yeah – that historical fantasy,’ The Bisch said. I think he said the title was *Excalibur* or something like that. Shortly after that we joined a bunch of people for a stroll to a nearby park where we smoked illegal substances amid playground equipment and watched the fireflies twinkling in the trees overhead....” (*Hang on, I thought this was supposed to be a terse newszine.*)

Martin Morse Wooster: “Although I know that no more rumours about C*rl S*g*n are to be printed (oh, well) rumours persist about *Contact*. The latest lie about this deathless epic is that the chapters have now been farmed out to ‘beviies of graduate students’ and that, for some mysterious reason, continuity between chapters is nonexistent while chapters have been printed typed on different colours of paper, with different typers....” (*Our Swedish Sagan expert Ahrvid Engholm, last seen lending the great man a wad of old Ansibles, made a special trip to Reading in August to collect duplicates of said issues – which the great man had despite fulsome promises failed to return.*) “DUFF: Candidates to stand for the 1983 US->Oz race are expected to be Fran Skene, Jerry Kaufman and Jan Howard Finder. JHF, confident that his efforts for Australia in 83 85 will propel him to certain victory, already insists that he will need \$1000 in his own funds to supplement the meagre DUFF dole in order to see Australia properly. (Melbourne has a lock on the 1985 Worldcon, at the time of writing – no other serious bidders. Meanwhile, the plan preferred by leading members of the Constellation [Worldcon 83] committee is to vote this year for the following 84 sites: [1] No Award [2] Bermuda [3] to be decided by WSFS business meeting [4] Los Angeles....) • Ever wonder why Bob Guccione got interested in sf in the first place? According to the comely Kathy Keeton, vice-president of Omni International (i.e. Ben Bova’s boss), ‘We think science is fun, and we decided to put in other fun stuff – you know, science fiction, cartoons, that sort of thing....’” (*At this point Mr Wooster made an excuse and left: “to fulfil my chief function in life (as revealed in the pages of Pong) and crash Jeff Schalles’s parties so that I can drip pus on all his friends.” Avedon mysteriously confides*

that MMW's Washington (WSFA) nickname is "Martin Moose Worship".*)

* A genuine Langford hearing error for the more correct "Martian Moose Worship" – 1995.

Ahrvid Engholm: "A Swedish Hitch-Hiker fanclub has been founded. The Swedish Pan-Galactic Gargle Blaster Drinking Soc has around 20 members so far and will begin meeting in Stockholm this autumn. Interest in the *HH* series is high in Sweden now, the first book having just been released as *Liftarens Guide Till Galaxen* and well reviewed. (SPGGBDS c/o A. Engholm, Maskinistgatan 9 öb, S-117 47 Stockholm, Sweden.) • Swedish fan Tony Eriksson deserves a note in future works of fanhistorical research. This spring/summer he published the only (?) daily fanzine to reach more than 100 issues. *Tjottabängarn* – its title – reached 124 daily issues before lapsing into irregularity; it's in Swedish, 1-2 pages per issue. (T. Eriksson, Ekenhillsvägen 1 D, S-632 39 Eskilstuna, Sweden.)" (*Help....*)

Chris Priest: "I'm running a weekend course on the writing of sf (whatever that means, etc etc) next January – Friday 21 to Sunday 23. The course is being operated by Dillington House in Somerset, and is a sort of follow-up to the successful course run by John Brunner earlier this year. Except, of course, next year's will be even better. Dillington House is an extremely beautiful Elizabethan mansion, standing in a huge tract of parkland.... The course is residential and promises a long and enjoyable weekend. People who attend will be expected to produce samples of their own (recent) writing, which does not *have* to be sf by any rigid definition, but which should have recognizable links with modern speculative writing." (Course fee £39.50; all welcome; rush a £5 deposit – cheque/PO payable to SOMERSET COUNTY COUNCIL – to Booking Secretary, Dillington Ho.Coll., Ilminster, Somerset, TA19 9DT, asking for CP's course on Jackie Lichtenberg Modern Speculative Writing.)

George Hay: "SF Foundation meeting – Chris Priest maundered on about how everything was terrible, and why didn't we fold up? Charles Barren [*Acting Administrator*] felt it necessary to draw the line here.... Cuts or no cuts, quite a bit *is* happening – future events etc – and *Foundation* is at its best ever. Best event of the meeting was brisk series of fundraising etc suggestions from someone new: a librarian from N London Poly. Most were suggestions I'd been putting up for years, but as he was 'one of the lads' our own academics found it harder to refute them...."

COA

Alan & Rochelle Dorey, 22 Summerfield Drive, Middleton, Greater Manchester, M24 2WW // Al Fitzpatrick, 631 Coral Drive, LaPorte, TX 77571, USA // Nic Howard, Basement Flat, 2 George St, Reading, Berks, RG1 7NT // Chris Lewis, Flat 24D, 48 Grange Rd, Cambridge // Duncan Lunan [has moved but now prefers the common herd not to know where] // Pete Lyon, 33 Heddon Place, Leeds, LS4 2JU // Peter Roberts, 36 Western Rd, St Marychurch, Torquay, TQ1 4RL // Mike Scantlebury, 35 Landcross Rd, Fallowfield, Manchester, M14 6LZ // Dick Smith, 710 S Scoville, Oak Park, IL 60304, USA // Kevin Smith [see TAFF ballot: permanent Manchester address RSN] // Jeff Suter, 24A Beech Rd, Bowes Park, London, N.11 [still home of Pam Wells too]

Infinitely Improbable

Chris Priest will feature in the Spring 1983 follow-up to the Book Marketing Council's "Best of British" promotion – "Best of *Young* British" authors. His only worries are (a) the presence of loathed Martin Amis on the list, and (b) whether he can remain a Young British Author that long.... **Con Stuff** arrives from various directions, including Albacon II (two near-identical PR1s as mentioned), Channelcon (PR5 with useful data: 815 final attendance, £1322 profit liable to be spent – after TAFF/GUFF donations etc – on equipment such as artshow screens for future Eastercons), Cambridge's Fencon (promising ideas in a PR1 which breaks all the rules by offering literacy on a low budget), Edinburgh's Ra Con (PR2 confirms films like *Gas-s-s*, *Alphaville*, *Final Countdown*), Cymrucon (flyer probably enclosed), Faircon (no Faircon 83 schedules owing to Albacon II; Bob [fake] Shaw mutters of putting together a committee for 84, but whether anyone else will be on it is open to doubt) and Chicon (saying little but anticipating 5000 attendees). Colnecon, despite poor turnout, made £100+ profit, passed to the Foundation for Study of Sudden Infant Deaths. (Alex Stewart: "There's no truth to the rumour that we're hoping for some hints about Jessica Watson.") **Nebula Awards Nominations** have begun again: leading novels so far are *Sword of the Lictor* (6 votes) and Bishop's *No Enemy But Time* (5).... **Brain Of Britain** (radio) lately featured strange questions – eg about "*Reindeers of the Lost Ark*" – and strange answers also. "*Billion Year Spree. New Maps of Hell.*

What do these books have in common?” “Er ... Drug addiction.” Too right....

DUFF: add Bill Bowers to the names opposite (*Thyme*).... **Fanthologies:** Patrick Nielsen Hayden’s “best of 81” is out (66pp, contents as in A25) and costs a mere \$2.50 or “rough equivalent in funny foreign cash” from him at 4714 36th Ave NE, Seattle, WA 98105. Eric Bentcliffe’s “best of the 50s”, *When Yngvi Was A Louse*, mingles reprints with new stuff by 50s BNFs: Ashworth, Clarke (V.), Shaw, Needham, “Hurstmonceaux & Faversham”, Berry, Tubb, Jeeves (50+pp, now in production). £1 or equivalent to Eric, 17 Riverside Cres, Holmes Chapel, Cheshire, CW4 7NR. Profits from both to fan funds.... **The Golden Age Of SF**, Amis’s anthology whose introduction explains that *New Maps of Hell* (1960) remains definitive since no good sf has been written since its publication, appears on the Arrow Books schedule for October. Little did Arrow know that even as they took up their first option on the book, parent company Hutchinson were merrily selling it to Penguin. Many rude interoffice memos later, the Arrow schedule has been made False.... **Ken Mann Banned In Peckham!** A more than usually illegible postcard from the former BSFA Bane conveys that a small-press outfit has censored him for rape and bigotry, or perhaps merely for writing about these things. He says we should all complain to the Peckham Publishing Co (address unreadable).... **Status Symbols:** Bob [real] Shaw sends an ad offering cars with registration numbers *1 SF* and *SF 1*, a snip at £23,000 (minimum offer). Someone tell Douglas Adams; but then he says he doesn’t write sf. He also says the most recent plans for a US tv series of *HH* fell through for “financial reasons” and that he’s undecided about writing further books.... **Library News:** it is official that C.S. Lewis is an sf author while Doris Lessing isn’t. Likewise Lymington but not Holdstock, Priest but not Kilworth, Disch but not Sladek, Stableford but not Stapledon. These factoids all from a Bromley Library guide to Real SF, unearthed by Kev Smith, who wonders if our own fannish librarian Ian Williams similarly divides sheep from goats.... **Not The Mekons:** continuing fnz references to my little brother’s quasi-musical outfit remind me to mention that it’s dead/transfigured and that he now gets his egoboo on the John Peel show as one of “The 3 Jons”.... **Asimov Snigs Contract:** if Dr.A had seen that headline he would presumably have gone and shortened some baby eels; the actual misprimp in his DAW antho contract said he’d be paid on singing the contract, and he did, all of it, in the DAW office, to his own tune, and eventually they paid him and he went away. Does Andy Porter make these

things up? (*SFC*).... **IASFM:** the even newer editor is Shawna McCarthy, famous as editor of the seemingly doomed *SF Digest* (publication of 6th issue – after Sept/Oct issue 4/5 – postponed pending assessment of sales figures, and we all know what that means). It is not known whether she favours the George Scithers critical vocabulary of “bleak ... futile ... too difficult for the under-twelves” etc: we wait agog.... **SF Journal**, Rob Allen’s answer to *Locus*, *SFC*, *TLS*, etc, will not appear owing to lack of money, inclination, enthusiasm (Charlie Brown can breathe easy again).... **Reading SF:** as well as serious litcrit discussions on 3rd Thursday of month in the Osborne Arms, a weekly breakaway group can usually be found in the Pheasant (Whitley St) of a Sunday night: phone me (665804) first.... **Concrete Overcoat Fan Fund** has 81 votes (buy as many votes as you like, 10p each to Kev Clarke, 438 Station Rd, Dorridge, Solihull, W Midlands – proceeds to TAFF etc) with Sandy Brown and Bob [fake] Shaw most favoured for a concrete overcoat.... **AC Projects Inc** (Authors’ Co-op Publishing Co) send an envelope blazoned *Photo-compositing * Writing * Publishing * Land Surveying * Dance Club * Dulcimer Band*. This is Perry (remember him?) Chapdelaine’s outfit, which sells remaindered books by Chapdelaine (pride of place), Le Guin, etc, and promises to publish the PC/George Hay-edited *John W Campbell Letters* and to cure your arthritis: details AC, Rt 4, Box 137, Franklin, TN 37064, USA.... **Steve Green The Sometimes Infallible** reports two bids for Unicon 4 (Joy Hibbert & the Stokefolk vs. Colchester), the abandonment of Brum groupzine plans, a restaging of the “abysmal” radio *Earthsearch* on BBC-TV plus a new kiddy series *Captain Zap*.... **Tron:** seen thanks to Preview Tickets Editor K. Freeman. Visually triffic Disneyfilm set largely “inside” computer net; division between live action/animation/classy computer graphics cleverly blurred by “unreal” sets, neon-lit costumes (latter by Jean “Moebius” Giraud – pity they sometimes blur distinctions between characters); animation leaps back 30 years for climactic appearance of all-potent but badly-drawn Master Control Program, or MCP (“I knew the MCP when it was just a chess program!”); in-jokes include *Klaatu Barada Nikto* poster and a “Pacman” gobbler lurking in MCP’s display; least likely plot device is computer terminal thoughtfully sited in path of experimental laser beam; same actors play “real” people and their programs in the computer, to the confusion of some, including Brian Aldiss in *New Sci* review; corny, illogical and too loud, but spectacular fun. Leicester Sq, Oct 21. **TAFF:** I’ll pass on votes/donations sent with *Ansible* subs – honest.... [26-8-82]

Hazel's Language Lessons #19

Piman (from Peter Roberts)

ba'agchuth: causing to become an eagle.

ANSIBLE TWENTY-EIGHT

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End of Line

Ansible 29

October 1982

ANSIBLE 29, delayed by fire, flood, poverty, Milford and nonappearance of certain promised contributions, emerges fully armed from the forehead of DAVE LANGFORD, 94 London Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 5AU, UK ... an address still unknown to the mailing labels of Mike Glyer. Phone (0734) 665804. SUBSCRIPTIONS up again owing to swollen printing costs: at the moment it's 4 issues for £1 anywhere in the world. Sterling cheques/cash/POs to me, Girobank transfer to a/c 24 523 0408, \$US equivalent to Mary & Bill Burns, 48 Lou Ave, Kings Park, NY, NY 11754 (quick, before they move). Cartoons by D. West [above] and Steve Stiles [TAFF cartoon below], mailing labels by Keith Freeman, threats (SUB DUE) and last warnings (*****) by Keith's Computer. Reverting to subscriptions, please note: (a) despite the increase, existing subs will be honoured in full; (b) for moderately obvious reasons, sub payments in excess of £2 are discouraged; (c) non-UK copies continue to be airmailed, at least for the present; (d) your sub may be excitingly prolonged by hot news contributions if adequately non-tepid – as they say, "ASIMOV'S Rejects Story" isn't news but "Asimov Story Rejected" is. High-class cartoons/logos also welcomed. October 1982.

Atom's two cartoons commenting on the Brunner/Harrison dust-up in this issue originally appeared in issue 30, but I can't resist including them here – DRL

Better Never Than Late

The Boring Awards Column

The 40th worldcon, Chicon IV, raged unchecked from 2-6 Sept in Chicago (4325 attending out of 5900 members): "I had a great time," enthused British TAFF delegate Kev Smith as preliminary to his Chicon report, not yet received.... Los Angeles got the 1984 worldcon (unopposed), with Gordon

Dickson as GoH and Dick Eney as FGoH: rush your \$30 membership to LA Con II, Box 8442, Van Nuys, CA 91409, USA. And:

Hugo Awards: NOVEL *Downbelow Station* (C.J. Cherryh), NOVELLA “The Saturn Game” (Poul Anderson), NOVELETTE “Unicorn Variation” (Zelazny), SHORT “The Pusher” (Varley), NONFICTION *Dance Macabre* (King), EDITOR Edwards Ferman, ARTIST Michael Whelan, DRAMATIC *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, FANWRITER Dick Geis, FANARTIST Victoria Poyser.

Oddments: Also at Chicon, the John W. Campbell Award for best new writer went to Alexis Gilliland; “Japanese Hugos” for translated SF went to *The Genesis Machine* (Hogan – must have gained in translation) and “The Brave Little Toaster” (Disch); the mysterious and arbitrary Pat Terry Award For Humour In SF went to Randall Garrett (who, it was announced, has permanently lost his memory); the unloved Gandalf Award didn’t appear; the special Mike Glyer award was –

World Fantasy Awards Nominations: NOVEL *The Claw of the Conciliator* (Wolfe), *Little, Big* (Crowley), *The Nameless* (Ramsey Campbell), *The War Hound and the World’s Pain* (Moorcock), *The White Hotel* (need I tell you?). LIFE ACHIEVEMENT – Italo Calvino (an unexpected touch of class), de Camp, Andre Norton and Vance. Other categories contain nothing of UK interest – *ouch* – oh, all right, Rob – except the famous Holdstock “Mythago Wood” on the Novella shortlist. Triffic.

Festival Der Fantastik/Eurocon VII: “The Eurocon Awards: some were decided by the business meeting, and some by Pierre Barbet the day after – just before the official presentation – when he walked round and talked with the ESFS representatives one by one. ‘I think we forgot something, would you support an award to X because of Y?’ Sure babe, who cares who gets the awards! Anyway, they went to: publishing houses Heyne (W Germany) and Kaw (Poland) for excellence in publishing; to the Strugatskys for lifetime achievement; to Jacques Sadoul for fiction and SF history, and John Brunner for fiction and efforts for European SF; to the fanzine *Shards of Babel* to ‘thank Roelof Goudriaan for the initiative’ ... I hope we don’t have another Lisa Tuttle story here, but during the business meeting Roelof withdrew *SoB*, saying it would be ridiculous to give an award to a newsletter only 4 months old....” (Ahrvid Engholm)

Grandson of Convention Mentions

Albacon II (1-4 April 83, Central Station Hotel, Glasgow): £8 attending membership to – I repeat – c/o Doug McCallum, B/L 8 Highburgh Rd, Glasgow, G12 9YD. An open letter from the majority of the committee as seen at Channelcon begins, “In the light of certain confusion caused by a former committee member we, the undersigned, wish to make our position quite clear ... we hold both bank accounts and all hotel bookings ... cannot accept responsibility for any mail or monies sent to any address other than our official contact address (this does not affect hotel bookings ... should still be sent direct to the hotel)...” They seem to be doing their best. Bob (Glasgow) Shaw has sent various confusing and self-serving letters attempting to prove by statistics that the Albacon committee does not really exist; since his figures don’t add up and since several people listed by him as “uncommitted” or “resigned from the committee” have made it clear to me that they support Albacon II as above, I can no longer credit anything emanating from him. And if, as he implies, he’s still sitting on Albacon II membership monies sent in good faith to him, he really should be placed in a sack. It’s presumably no coincidence that amid this Glasgow aggro, the Bob Shaw/Neil Craig “Photon Books” empire has reportedly split, Neil keeping the old shop while Bob gets the new one.... Strange.

Festival Der Fantastik/Eurocon VII (Mönchengladbach 20-22 Aug): “This wasn’t a great con. Even John Brunner spoke German. The programme didn’t take much notice of the programme booklet, and at 10pm each night the con closed altogether; they didn’t even have a bar. The only thing I enjoyed was to meet a lot of nice people and after the con’s closing go out for a beer or two.... Among those present were the Foysters, Roelof Goudriaan, Pascal Thomas and Pascal Ducommun; the only British fan there – as far as I remember – was Christina Lake. Most East European fans didn’t come, though there was a small delegation from Poland and some authors. I met people from Luxembourg, two Danes, one Canadian and three fans from Oregon (now living in Switzerland); the Swedish delegation was me and 3 others; the rest were Germans, I’d guess around 300. The concom claimed 1000 visitors to the con, but concomms always exaggerate. (Let’s say there are two at the registration desk. One to count the number of people entering the doors, and one to walk in and out all the time....) In a fannish football game

on Sunday my team won 7-0; afterwards a German TV team doing an SF documentary interviewed me! With no Sam J. Lundwall present it was easy to persuade chairman Pierre Barbet that I should be Swedish rep at the Euro SF Soc business meeting: it was boring, though, and held in French, but John Brunner acted as interpreter. I bet he speaks Swahili too.” (Ahrvid “Germans have a sense of sercon” Engholm)

Eastercon 1984: The Eurocon VII business meeting voted the next Eurocon to Britain in 84 – i.e. to the bid sometimes (erroneously) called “John Brunner’s Eurocon”. Initially, at Mönchengladbach, the undertaking was to arrange a combined Eurocon/Eastercon if this could be agreed at Albacon II; if not, to hold a smaller Eurocon later in the year; and in ultimate emergency, to shift Eurocon 84 to the Beneluxcon in Ghent. Subsequently a Eurocon 84 UK spokesman has declared that Eurocons only appear to be successful when combined with the host country’s national con: therefore if the Eastercon bid is lost it is likely that Eurocon 84 will go to Ghent at once. **The Other 1984 Bid** has meanwhile issued a flyer announcing a committee change (Linda Pickersgill replaces Pat Charnock) and a venue: the brand-new Pembroke Hotel, Blackpool. It sleeps over 400 people; its manager was on the Brighton Metropole team for Seacon ’79; room rates are being negotiated. A flyer detailing further glories is going the rounds, and pre-supp memberships may still be had for £1 (28 Duckett Rd, London, N4 1BN). There is some confusion as to whether Eurocon 84 UK is still taking pre-supps (£1 to 39 Hollybrow, Selly Oak, Birmingham, B29 4LX): the BSFG newsletter from that address seems to think that pre-supps are a thing of the past since the bid’s been “successful”, but since it needs to succeed next Easter as well I suspect that your quids will still be welcomed...

Unicon (10-12 Sept): “Surprised once again at the number of old-guard fannish types at Unicon, which I rather expect to be a fringy type of thing. Peter Roberts was there: seems like years since he’s been at anything (though I’m told it was Unicon 2). Some worthwhile innovations on the programme: the ‘Can you identify this liquid’ game; the ‘Science in SF’ panel – see below; and Alex Stewart’s spaceship quiz worked better than at Colnecon. Barry Bayley gave another idiosyncratic talk, this time on the Tarot.

“The ‘Science in SF’ panel was an extremely good idea, somewhat marred by misorganization. They grabbed four lecturers at the university and gave them each an excerpt from some SF book. (Computer scientist: *Roderick*.

Physicist: *Timescape*. Biologist: *The Florians*. Psychologist: *The Terminal Man*.) The they asked them to talk on the scientific plausibility. The mistake was in giving them excerpts rather than the whole book (perhaps the victims wouldn't have agreed to this). In two cases the section chosen was patently inappropriate, and anyway, it's the whole scientific content of a book that must stand or fall, not an extract in isolation. This was amply demonstrated by the physicist, who observed that the tachyons in his excerpt did not have the same properties as the postulated particles of the same name and therefore the excerpt was rubbish. What they should have had him talking on was the plausibility of the scientific research in the book...." (*Colin Fine*)

There will after all be a Unicon 4 (9-11 Sept 83), from Alex Stewart's U of Colchester mob – details soon, I hope.

Silicon 6 (27-30 Aug, Newcastle; Judith Hanna reports): "This year's Silicon lived up to its name – particularly when it came to silly games. Fancy being asked to munch two dry crackers, blow a pingpong ball across the room with a straw, slaloming it round three ashtrays on the way, throw a dart and answer a question about skiffy (the higher the dartscore the easier the question), flap a kipper, wiggle a ring spanner round a bent wire loop which screams when the spanner touches it, being timed all the way with a 3-second penalty each time the wire shrieked – what an introduction to Silicons! And I let the team down badly by doing it fast. But the rest of the Aussie team – John Foyster (ex-GUFF and Melbourne in 85 guru), Joseph (British ditto and ditto) and Krystyna Oborn (working in Aussie Embassy, Cairo) made up nobly: we succeeded in amassing the most time and so winning elimination from the next round. Downing the crackers was the hardest part: you either took your time trying to be not totally disgusting, crunching them then failing to suck up enough saliva to swallow them down, then blowing out crumbs all around the course; or you used the Pickersgill/Langford method of simply shoving them down the gullet ('But Dave always eats like that,' Hazel murmured). Only Pickersgill (G.) spat the sodden remains out at the end. Round II of 'Not the Silicon Charades' was a pop culture quiz; less strain on the teams, instead the audience suffered; it sent me back to the laid-back ambience of the bar. (*Harry Bell's hours-long marathon of bloody boring taped music questions sent me back to the bar too – and I was on the team.... Ed*) The Scots, winners of the silly games at Channelcon, once again proved supreme in silliness. 'Silicon vs Dostoevsky' was the silliest game of all –

since it won John Jarrold the Sili Award, it must have been. It involved miming the missing part of a record of Basil Rathbone in *The Brothers Karamazov*, with points given for accent, style, passion and overall – Linda Pickersgill carried off the latter as the only contestant wearing overalls, but John J.’s impassioned gesticulations in a welter of accents (Mexican, the Fonz, Cagney ...) secured his victory. After that what the programme called ‘Proverbs’ was a let-down; each member of one team, in order, was given one word of a four-word book title; one member of the other team asked each a question the answer to which had to use the word given. The game could have been subtitled ‘The Loquacious vs The Laconic’; the former (Hansen, Nicholas, Langford, Hanna) overwhelmed with verbiage the latter (Eling, Ellis, Cockfield, Green), and not only that but D. Langford guessed all their book titles. It wasn’t fair and it was with deep shame that we took our ill-won wine. Less silly were the pool, darts and video tournaments, and the Saturday night Great Pakistani Pig-in at Alfredo’s*, a game with only one rule: ‘no leftovers’. The rest was silliness *ad Lib*: D. West falling over and taking the manager’s favourite picture down with him; Joseph’s occasional atrocious aussie accent; the Great Beermat Battle on Saturday night, an allegory of arms escalation from potshots to megaweapon cluster bombs. And on the train home, Phil James won two Hugos at the Melbourne in 85 FANAC game (*ad*: order your copy now, £5 from J. Nicholas)....” (Judith Hanna)

* The Al Firdous restaurant – unlimited Pakistani nosh at a set price plus cheap real beer, etc – had several people talking of moving the con there with an infrequent Sleep Programme back at the hotel.

The Garnett Report • David S. Garnett

“In your list of Brit fiction magazines you miss out the magnificent *Fiction Magazine* (5 Jeffreys St, London NW1 9PS) – *Interzone* format, £1,25. I bought the second issue a couple of weeks ago; if the longest two stories in the issue aren’t included the average length of the other ten ‘fictions’ (‘cos they sure ain’t stories) is about 2000 words. It also includes ‘Adelaide Writers’ Week by Chris Priest’ and ‘In Conversation: Brian Aldiss and D.M. Thomas’. And in my own words (copyright D.S. Garnett 1981) as immortalized by Geoff Ryman and *Ansible* I think it’s a fucking awful magazine. The ‘stories’ are appalling, just exercises in stringing words

together. You get better writing in your average copy of *Men Only*. Which reminds me, 'tother day I was flicking through my mags and came across a *Club International* with such a great line-up: Me (of course), Jack Trevor Story, D.M. Thomas, as well as Inge and Bonny and Emmeline and Gayle and Bianca and Abbey.

“Joan Vinge in her afterword to ‘To Bell the Cat’ in her collection *Eyes of Amber* says: ‘I know people who have gotten into arguments because most of them had never seen it, and swore I’d never written a story by that name.’ Only last week I was having an argument in the pub with this bunch of punks who fucking swore that Joan D. Vinge had never written a story called ‘To Bell the Cat’. But she has, I refuted. They didn’t believe me, so I crashed my mug against the bar, leaving a nice jagged lip and then ... well, I won’t go into all the gory details.”

Let Us Now Praise Famous Men The *Ansible* Controversy

There’s always something. In *A28* Merv Binns quoted a Harry Harrison letter, and since then my life has seemed more complicated. Over to **John Brunner**: –

“Thanks to *A28*, I learned that Harry Harrison has been publicly accusing me of being up to ‘my old wrecking tricks’ (whatever they may be), and subsequently I’ve found out that in *Australian SF news* – whence Merv Binns took the quote you reprinted – he has been even more derogatory. It all has something to do with this abortive affair called Jerucon, which was apparently cancelled by the travel agency (not the fan group) running it. I can only say that it breaks my heart to discover that a guy like Harry, with all his advantages – his commercial success, his tax-haven in Ireland, his popularity with the readership, all the factors one might assume to make for a sense of confidence in a writer – is capable of pouring out as much venomous spleen in his correspondence as some insecure neo-fan blowing his top because his first-ever article has been unfavourably reviewed.

“But for one important consideration, I wouldn’t bother to reply to so essentially silly an attack. Currently, though, I am co-president of the Eurocon committee in two senses: not only the Eurocon itself, but also the

group of fans who want to bring Eurocon to Britain in 1984. Not everybody who will be voting (for us, I trust!) at Glasgow knows me personally well enough to realize that Harry's charges are unfounded in any reality bar the private version he appears to have retreated into. And such people could well conclude from what he said that, in the interests of furthering a con I have a personal stake in, I regularly try to 'wreck' other people's....

"Nothing could be more distant from the truth. So I'm bound to call on Harry to 'put up or shut up' – i.e. produce evidence for his charges, or eat humble pie very publicly indeed. I owe this much, at least, to all the people who are working far harder than I am to make Eurocon 84 in Britain a possibility.

"I take, for further reference, particular note of the fact that he chose to publish his insults not in a British but in an Australian fanzine, so that but for you and Merv they might never have come to my attention. Thanks, as they say, for pulling my coat!" (JB, 11 Sept 82)

The foregoing is John's letter for publication, written after seeing Harry's letter in ASFN. An earlier JB letter based on the A28 quotation only was dated 6 Sept: this is the one to which Harry's response below is addressed; there are minor differences in detail, but the message of the earlier note is much the same.

Harry Harrison: "Read it? Do you know what he is talking about? I mean aside from his Brunner-ish waffling? (I am not pleased with typical examples like 'You'll sit tight in the immunity of your Irish tax-haven....' Immunity from what? And when did I ever tell you, or make public the fact, that I am in Ireland because it is a 'tax-haven'? Watch that big mouth, Brunner, or you'll be hit with lawsuits that will keep your solicitors busy for years. I won't permit someone like you pass sly remarks about his betters.) Where was I? Oh, yes. Laughing hysterically at the jughead pomposity of this impudent fellow, chortling my head off at his jejune threats. 'Obliged to challenge ... committed libel ... deny at your expense....' Oh dear, oh dear. You have me so frightened Brunner that I am near to fainting. What is it you want me to do? You want me to publicly deny (at my own expense) that I have ever said 'Brunner is up to his old wrecking tricks again.' Not only won't I deny that I wrote those words, but I will repeat them in public whenever and wherever I please. Why? Because what I said is true. For the record then, in the hopes that no more will be heard of this stupid affair.

“Wrecking Trick One. A few years back I organized a professional SF convention in Dublin, with the cooperation of the Irish government and the following government departments: Bord Failte, the tourist board; CIE, travel and transportation; the Irish Arts Council. It was very successful – and a lot of fun. Lots of hard work. I did all of the organizing myself, aided only by my son. Full time for about a half a year. I did all the PR, my son mailed out receipts and membership cards. I personally answered all letters received. It was a great con. Except for Brunner. He joined up, then sent a deposit for travel and hotel to the CIE who were handling discounted travel arrangements for those who wanted. But somewhere along the line he decided to back out. He never wrote to me about this, or to the convention, as a true gentleman would. Not on your nelly. That would have been too simple and civilized to do. Instead he wrote to the *government agency* complaining about how bad the committee was, how bad the arrangements were, how he had heard nothing, how he was forced to resign from membership because of the committee’s incompetence – and he wanted his money back. If that is not wrecking – what is? There was no truth in anything in the letter. Therefore one can only surmise that he wrote it to cause me trouble. *I* was the committee, no one else, and he knew that. The CIE acted like gentlemen and turned the letter over to me without comment. I instructed them to return his money, then placed the name Brunner on the top of my personal list of undesirables.

“Wrecking Trick Two. The Jerucon was to have been a most important event, the first SF con ever in Israel. I gave advice on organization from the beginning, did a lot of correspondence to help them, and was surprised and pleased when I was invited to be joint Guest of Honour. At *not time* did I expect to be reimbursed in any way; I was paying all expenses for myself and my wife. At *no time* did any member or guest expect payment of any kind. There were no funds available for this. And I know for a fact that the following Brunner statement is out-and-out nonsense. ‘At Stresa in 1980 Marjorie and I were asked whether we would “like to be invited to it” [Jerucon], in terms that would imply reimbursement of expenses ...’ Untrue. You have forgotten that I was there, Brunner. At that time the con was just a glimmer in Stanley Einstein’s eye. He was seeking information about how he might *someday* organize some kind of SF con in Israel. No invitations could have been extended since there was no con.

“That’s two and that’s enough. Wrecking tricks. Plural. Brunner published a letter in *Ansible* whining about not being paid money by the Jerucon, Merv Binns quoted it in *ASFN*. I was offended by this worldwide coverage of Brunner’s gratuitous attacks on friends so I wrote to set the record straight. I stand by everything I wrote.

“Over to you, Brunner. Lawsuits in Britain, a punchup in Ireland, duelling pistols at dawn in Hyde Park (beware – I’m a crack shot), what comes next is up to you. You do realize, don’t you, that you are making an awful fool of yourself?”

(Dated 10 Sept 82) I asked Harry if he’d prefer to alter his letter in view of the fact that John’s letter-for-publication was not the one he’d replied to: –

Harry Harrison 28 Sept 82 (extract): “I devoted a good deal of time to my response to his original thing so please print my answer as writ.... I do believe that my first letter ‘puts up’ so I shan’t ‘shut up’. As to the British bid for Eurocon 84 I say Hurrah! and good luck. I’ll do whatever I can to help; they have but to ask. As member 150 of BSFA I think my enthusiasm for British fandom has been long and enduring.... I read [*the last paragraph of JB’s letter*] to imply that I published in Australia to hide my letter, fearful of some brunnerish wrath. Not quite true. I read brunner’s statement in *ASFN* – so sent my response there. Simple enough. I also asked the editor if he’d picked up the item from another source – and if he did to let me know so I could send a copy of my response there as well. So much for secrecy. Can we please stop this now and return to more adult pursuits?” (HH)



John Brunner 11 Oct 82: “You’ve been kind enough to copy to me a letter from Harry Harrison date 10 Sept, which I gather he intended for publication regardless of the offence it must cause. I’m sorry to waste your space and my time, but (disregarding the long lecture he once gave me and Marjorie on the tax advantages of being domiciled in Eire and commuting to Britain for as much of the year as possible) he’s wrong!

“To justify his claim that I indulge in ‘wrecking tactics’ he seems to be trying to blame *me* for the cancellation of Jerucon. Under my hand, I have the relevant correspondence, because Marjorie keeps meticulous files for us.
Quote:

“Brunner to Stan Einstein 12 Dec 80: ‘... At Stresa [Eurocon 80] I did, I believe, state that we would be most interested in attending, but that this was contingent on our being invited. It is highly unlikely in present financial circumstance that we, or even I myself, could attend except on an expenses-paid basis. If this can be arranged, than I shall be very happy to give a lecture, lead a discussion, organize a workshop, or even all three and something else as well!’

“Einstein to Brunner 2 Feb 81 (from Jerusalem): ‘... Unfortunately, due to budgetary limitations and lack of supporting funds, we are unable to offer any financial aid at this time, and I do not know what 1982 will bring....’

“Sheldon Teitelbaum to Brunner 9 Feb 82 (from Jerusalem): ‘... I was somewhat puzzled by lack of written confirmation in the Jerucon files, but accepted their explanation that a verbal agreement is just as binding.... At Denvention, however, it became apparent that a serious breakdown in communication had occurred.... Ellison was adamant that Ben Yehuda had indeed offered him a flight ticket. Upon my return, however, Ben Yehuda vehemently denied having offered anybody anything.... I suppose that there are a lot of angry writers who are currently put off by Jerucon and Israel, and that is a shame....’

“Brunner to Teitelbaum 22 Feb 82: ‘... I pretty well guessed this was the way things got fouled up; it isn’t only in academic circles, of course, that people assume a delegate to an international conference will find some organization to underwrite his costs.... It’s a shame, nonetheless, that the first Jerucon should have run into such trouble through no more than an access of over-enthusiasm. Perhaps a little more research might have made it clearer to the organizers that over the past decade, especially in the USA, there have been a number of projects for major SF jamborees that were called off at short notice ... (one, I recall, scheduled for New York, lured me from Britain and Jack Chandler all the way from Australia before being cancelled!)’

“One might also add that in *SFR 42*, Spring 82, there’s a detailed letter from Sheldon Teitelbaum regarding Jerucon and the confusion apparently caused by Ben Yehuda at the convention in Denver. Furthermore, in *Ansible 28* and *Shards of Babel 3* one finds reports from Pascal Thomas, who revealed (after meeting Teitelbaum) that ‘the convention being organized (financed) by the Peltours Travel Agency was cancelled *by them* when it appeared that the foreign memberships, *all 16 of them*, were not going to make them break even.’ [*JKHB’s emphases*]

“I’m extremely sorry that Harry didn’t get the chance to be its joint GoH; I feel his gesture in offering to go there entirely at his own expense was munificent, and I wish we could have matched it, as we have so often done in the past. Maybe some other time, if luck smiles our way again! But I think that disposes of the charge that *I* wrecked Jerucon. His other accusation, concerning the first World SF meeting in Dublin, may take up more space, but is of longer standing and, if possible, still more offensive and untrue. Forgive me for quoting correspondence *in extenso* and the letter Harry specifically refers to *in toto* ... but his memory cannot possibly be as reliable

as a carbon copy. We still have the original flyer for the Dublin meeting. We have the first progress report too. We also have letters:

“Brunner to CIE Tours (Dublin) 16 Jul 76: ‘... Please let me have details of flights from somewhere handier (Bristol, for example)... And send me also, please, anything you may have concerning your other official language: Erse, or Irish Gaelic.... I would at least like to be able to read the alphabet and make a shot at pronouncing signs and placenames on my first visit to your country.’

“Brunner to Harrison 27 Jul 76: ‘Dear Harry, As usual it was fun talking to you at Liège – it lightened what might now and then have been our darkness ...! And on returning home I find the Progress report, which you referred to concerning the SF Writers’ Conference, and which – as I gathered – you thought I would already have had before leaving home. Well, I didn’t. And ... [*Objurgation omitted!*] It says that YOUR RECEIPT is enclosed, and has your registration number on it. The hell you say. Even though I sent fifteen quid, I have *not* had a receipt, and I have *not* been given a number, and so far the only thing I’m invited to during the Conference is a banquet for which I have to pay extra.... I will not send another £6.50 for a banquet until I have a receipt for the £15 I already sent! ... Is nothing else on the menu? Are there no lectures – panel discussions – addresses by internationally respected authors ...? It’s all I’ve been told about. And the due date is in two months’ time.... Marjorie says hello, and we both hope Joan’s dentist treated her kindly and efficiently!’

“Harrison to Brunner 31 Jul 76: ‘... You know that Harry is true-blue, straight-as-a-die and honest beyond belief. The same is true unto the second generation. My son, Todd, is doing all the account keeping and records for the conference....’ (Encl. copy of statement saying I’d only paid £3 – I had in fact paid the £15 mentioned, but to CIE Tours, as instructed, who didn’t present the cheque until 9 Aug.)

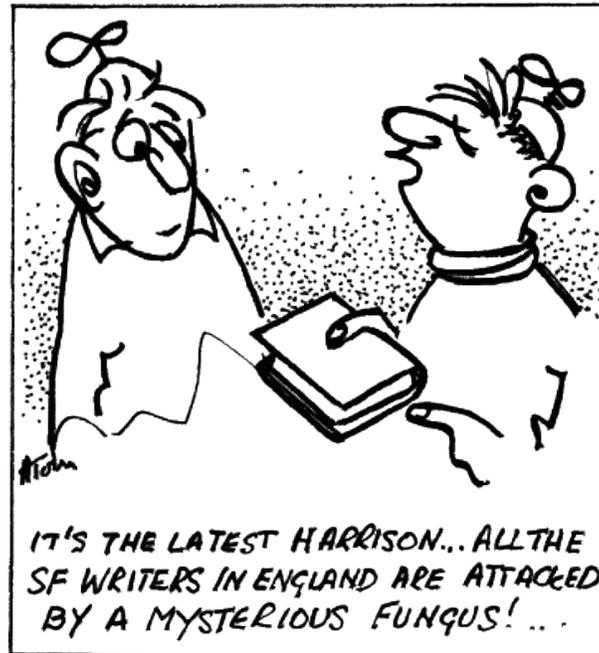
“JB to HH 4 Aug 76: confirmation of willingness to attend, repeating that the alleged receipt did *not* reach us. JB to CIE 4 Aug 76: covering letter with £78.50 cheque for trip and four nights’ accommodation. (Nothing from Harrison. Nothing from Harrison. Nothing....) Brunner to CIE 10 Sept 76, following a visit from BBC Bristol who had decided to make a ½-hour TV programme about me and my work, and who had a very tight schedule

obliging me to cancel at least one engagement in the following two months:

“In toto: ‘Dear Mr Hegarty, Pressure on my working time has become unexpectedly intense for the foreseeable future, and with great regret I find myself compelled to abandon my intention of participating in the SF Writers’ Conference later this month. I realize this cancellation is at rather short notice, and if you deduct a reasonable administrative fee from the money I already paid before making me a refund, I shall find this entirely justifiable. [They did, and it was reasonable – JKHB] But perhaps you would try and find a way of intimating to the conference organizers that a major factor in my decision is this: the fact that the conference is scheduled to begin two weeks from today, and I have thus far received no programme, not even a draft version; no literature apart from publicity flyers; no list of participants (except mention of a few in a personal letter from Mr Harrison); and in sum none of the documentation which I would ordinarily regard as indicative of a properly planned and carefully thought-out project. I’d like to stay on good terms with the parties responsible – they’re colleagues of mine and have for many years been friendly acquaintances, if not intimates. But had I at least been sent a programme by now I think I might well have hewn to my original course. As things stand ... no, I’m afraid this commitment is the one which has to be sacrificed.’

“That’s the actual record. I’m content to be judged thereby.” (JKHB)

This correspondence is now ... gasp ... (DRL, whose typing fingers just dropped off)



Beneluxcon/Sfancon 13 • Sept 3-5, Gent, Belgium

Judith Hanna Again:

“You won’t have any trouble with the language, everyone speaks English,” Joseph promised. And they did. Not only were they happy to practise their English on us, but Dutch and Flemish fans spoke English with the Germans. (There were no Walloons present – they’d headed for the French Natcon at Dijon that weekend.) It was only with the programme that we might have had difficulty had we not yielded to the general feeling that a Gent-con is a relaxacon, and been happy to lounge around in the bar helping Anne-Marie Kindt sell Melbourne in 85 badges, discussing Celtic art and literature with Helmut Pesch, or film, semiotics, politics and structuralism with Luk de Vos; or to lounge in the sun on the lawn outside sharing with Roelof Goudriaan (whose name we learned to pronounce) Belgium’s national dish of “friturs” – chips and mayonnaise eaten with a small plastic fork – while Tom Hendriks, who is one-third of Luxembourg fandom, tried to interview him. We even talked to British fans – Martin and Katy Hoare, Ken and Joyce Slater, Martin Tudor, and American Karin Bennedsen. We didn’t ignore the programme completely. I said several nasty things about the videos which showed an

admirable selection of films in a variety of languages, but far too loud and too close for conversational comfort. After his welcome speech in four languages, chairman Andre de Rijke (Belgian agent) called on Joseph (British agent) to make a speech about Melbourne in 85 which Anne-Marie (Dutch agent) translated. (Waldemar Kuming, German agent, was also present.) Colin Wilson gave a GoH speech about superman and “Factor X” which many found objectionable and others laughable. Luk de Vos delivered a paper in the semiotics of *Zardoz*, far more heavily academic than his talk in Dutch that morning on *Blade Runner* and *Mad Max II* as bundles of advertising clichés. Eddie Bertin, in flamboyant top-hat, conducted an “SF Quiz Mundial” in such rapid-fire style that even the questions in Dutch were entertaining – Joseph entered but was eliminated by the eventual winner, Irishman Graham Andrews (associated with *Extro*), now moved to Brussels. In the lazy afternoons we slipped away touring to St Bavo’s Cathedral, the mediaeval town and the old Castle of the Counts of Flanders (where Chretien de Troyes, before dying, wrote his 9,000 verses of *Perceval*) which now houses a collection of “Justice Implements” – swords, guillotines, branding irons, thumbscrews and inscrutable apparatus all labelled in Dutch whose purposes we could only guess at.... In the evening, the Festival of Flanders filled a nearby street with musicians, and it was “mosselen” (“small rubbery sea creatures”) season, and giant mosquitoes drifted up from the canals to puncture the tender British flesh of Martin Hoare and Joseph.... (*JH, whose sentences keep growing*)

Brian Aldiss: “Since *Ansible* has become the *Private Eye* of the field, you may welcome the enclosed, from the pages of *Tribune*....”

The enclosed was no less than a letter from our very own Judy Watson, complaining that “when it gets to SF, *Tribune* seems to leave its politics at home ... *Lord Valentine’s Castle* – a purely commercial extravaganza, in praise (for heaven’s sake) of the divine right of kings – was recently being hailed as ‘a magnificent behemoth’. Now a showy extravaganza by Right-wing author Brian Aldiss is praised as a ‘tour de force’, while Ian Watson’s latest story collection is ticked off for having ideas in it rather than narrative entertainment.... And then there is a puff for the reactionary cliquish new SF magazine *Interzone*, with no mention of the other new SF magazine *Extro* which has actually been on sale to the public and actually publishes new writers.” Ah, *Extro*; ah, nostalgia. Back to Brian:

“Oh, the bile that runs in the Watson family! Here you see Mrs Watson reduced to puffing her husband’s unsuccessful books, and asking that in future literary criticism should confine itself to analysis of political content.” *Mr Aldiss invites me to ask* “challenging questions, which will strip away my socialist facade and reveal the naked Tory underneath.” *Real soon now, boss.* *Quoth Malcolm Edwards:* “D. Pringle, member of both the IZ collective and the Labour Party, was heard to mutter ‘reactionary?’ in puzzled tones.”

Whatever Happened to GUFF?

UK Administrator Reveals All!

Isn’t it about time the GUFF ballots were distributed? you may or may not be asking yourselves. Well, yes.... but we no longer have a race. Right up to the end of August, John Foyster and I thought that we did, with two candidates ready to go – but then gaffiation struck down Andrew Brown and a recurrence of something called spondylitis (a back complaint intolerant of long plane journeys) laid out Bruce Gillespie, and we’re right back where we were a year ago, with nothing but expressions of firm intent to stand “next time” and new houses to support/inability to get leave from new jobs/courses of study to finish/etc preventing anyone from making the trip to Albacon in 1983 (John’s attempts at replacements notwithstanding.)

So it’s over to us. Can we get a race together here? Is there anyone who fancies a free trip to next June’s Syncon (in Sydney’s red light district of King’s Cross)? It’s short notice, and it plays hell with the reciprocity that normally governs fan fund exchanges, but if anyone is interested then they should contact the UK administrator (22 Denbigh St, Pimlico, London, SW1V 2ER) as soon as possible. If by mid-November two candidates have not been forthcoming, then ... we’ll have to abandon this idea and consider, for example, the direction and even viability of the 1984 race, and whether GUFF has a future. If anyone has any ideas on the subject right now, or on UK/Aussie fan contact generally, then please write to me. Your views will be collated and forwarded to the Australian administrator (J. Foyster) for dissemination throughout Australian fandom. (*Joseph Nicholas*)

News on the March

Martin Morse Wooster

Sci-Fi Scribe's Wife Becomes Media Superstar: One hot summer night in a local pizza parlour, Eva Whitley, Wife of JACK L. CHALKER, was nursing David Whitley Chalker, Son of JACK L. CHALKER. The spectacle of Eva Whitley's naked breast so unnerved the local bartender that the Chalkers were given the boot. Eva, determined to have her revenge, filed a grievance with the Maryland Human Relations Commission. Vigilant media, ever searching for violations of human rights, reported the story and Eva was interviewed in the *Washington Post*, plus NBC and ABC radio. One small glitch: because Eva uses her original name, the media hacks, instead of prominently mentioning JACK L. CHALKER, kept referring to "Jack Whitley, husband of Eva Whitley...."

A Fate Worse Than Dinner With Jacqueline Lichtenberg (which I did do at a Philcon once, just to see what Jackie was like; she spent the entire evening chatting about indigestion): Saturday night at Chicon I ran into Meri Lichtenberg, the ... Daughter of Jacqueline Lichtenberg. (Sounds like a bad Hammer film.) "Oh, I'm an associate member of the Jacqueline Lichtenberg Appreciation Society," I said. "They won't allow me to be a full member yet, because I haven't read all of Jackie's books." "That's all right," she said: "You know what you'll get when they let you into my mom's club? *This*," pointing to a peculiarly illegible button. "Oh," I said brightly, "what does that button say?" "That's an *official Sime Button*," said Meri Lichtenberg, prancing out of the elevator....

Hugo Conspiracy Horror Revealed: It should be noted that Alexis Gilliland is the *third* member of WSFA [Washington SF something] to win the John W. Campbell award, succeeding Somtow Sucharitkul and JACK L. CHALKER.... (MMW)

Shocking Revelations About Steve Green, Boy Reporter

Chris Suslowicz: "Mr Steve Green, who is apparently known as 'Scoop!' at the newspaper office where he works ... wearied by the small membership of his personal SF group [Solihull] appears to have persuaded one of his brother *Birmingham Mail* hacks to give a free plug – see enclosed." (*I shall spare you the cutting, merely quoting "SCI FI FANS GO INTO PRINT ... their own*

magazine with stories ... of outer space....”) “Possibly fortunately, the wrong date was given for the meeting.... I returned the next week, when it should have been held, to again find no SSFG.... Has the Solihull SF group performed a mass gaffiation or are they in hiding somewhere?”

More Cons

Novacon 12: famous David Hardy has left the committee after being rolled upon by Rog Peyton (*BSFGN* rumour), or more probably because he’s spending at least two months in Munich doing production art for a fantasy film based on Michael’s Ende’s bestselling (at least in Germany, Spain, Japan) *The Never-Ending Story*, due from Allen Lane in 83....

Cymrucon (27-28 Nov, Cardiff) is still on despite erratic publicity, e.g. flyers distributed *after* the Aug 1 rate increase, and no actual mailing to members of Cymrucon 1: the main hotel is apparently full up, to the annoyance of guest speaker Chris Morgan, who left his room booking to the committee and ... you guessed. Ring (0222) 493590 for more data....

Invention (23-25 Sept 83, Central Hotel, Glasgow): GoH Chris Boyce, FGoH Jim Barker (whose latest pro appearance will be with a motif marking text divisions in the Brunner epic *Steamboats on the River*, due soon); £9 att (till Easter) to 10 Woodlands Gdns, Bothwell, Glasgow, G71 8NU....

Silicon 7 (Grosvenor Hotel, Newcastle, Aug Bank Hol 83) will be held, membership £3.50 to Sue Hepple; no address to hand....

Milford (UK) Writers’ Conference (26 Sept-2 Oct, Milford-on-Sea) saw the usual literary mayhem and bizarre doings: this year’s attendees were the omnipresent John Brunner (whose puns worsen like some fearsome gorgonzola with each passing year), Malcolm Edwards (who was able to issue on-the-spot *Interzone* rejections but this year did not liken me to Jerry Pournelle), Dave Garnett (who distinguished himself by introducing the word “shitepoke” into a “Call My Bluff” game, and was almost served as the end-of-the-week banquet), Richard [Arrow] Evans (who should be writing this report), Colin Greenland (whom Hazel decided was nice), Maxim Jakubowski (deeply alarmed by the prospect of Milford reports appearing in the gutter press), Gary Kilworth (whose mild exterior conceals the filthiest repertoire of jokes I’ve met, plus the ability to beat everyone at “Meteoroids”

with irritating casualness), me (no revelations whatever), Marianne Leconte (who let out the secret of the Milford Group Marriage to alarmed end-of-week visitor R. Holdstock), Pip Maddern (who ruthlessly and dominantly chaired Milford, and who plans to flee back to Australia before next year's), Rachel Pollack ("much nicer than Roz Kaveney but not so tall", said an anonymous Devon source), David "Judge" Redd (who sent the Milford Comite a testimonial and who therefore will not be embarrassed by any mention of his public nakedness here) and Lisa Tuttle (who not only repeated her fabulous "Big-Mouthed Frog" narration but was incautious enough to mention to Rob Holdstock on Saturday that she'd had a bath. Said Rob: "You've been having a bath with Marianne?" No comment). The heart of Milford, the critical sessions, are indescribable here (Maxim can breathe easy again); the week finished with the usual party/dinner with a few odd guests (Rob H., C. Evans, Hoares), speeches, and ritual drinking of new Chairman D. Garnett's blood. Professional authors interested in attending Milford 83 should contact the secretary (me)....

Project Starcast (Harrogate Centre, 8-11 Oct 82, if you believe that) should recently have happened, a multimedia event planned to be the biggest UK SF thing ever. *Ansible* would be fascinated to hear from anyone who attended, anyone who saw any publicity, anyone who paid money for membership, anyone who got any money back....

Space-Ex 1984: anyone heard from *this* multimoney extravaganza since their last flyer in Jan 1981?

Infinitely Improbable

Nicholls Strikes Again: the epic *Science in Science Fiction* is out soon (Michael Joseph RSN or now, Knopf [US] Jan/Feb), and intrepid collaborators Langford and Stableford – who actually wrote most of the thing – are mightily pissed off to learn that front-cover credits will only mention Peter Nicholls, because, say the publishers with that strange folk wisdom of theirs, "multiple credits lower sales". Wax image time again.... **Extro:** from the grave comes Paul Campbell's voice saying thanks to those who supported the defunct mag with more than "dubious sighs of encouragement": contributors, subscribers (who'll get their money back), advertisers (especially Pan and NEL) and booksellers (though "you'd be surprised at

some invoices to bookshops that have met with no, absolutely no, response – despite the fact that the mags have been sold, and reordered, and reordered”). Estimated size of financial hole: £7000. But what is this rumour in London of *yet another* planned UK-SF mag? Stay tuned.... **Rampant Sexism:** I blush to reveal that Linda Pickersgill and Chris Atkinson are running an APA restricted to women, all of whom should get in touch with Linda and demand admission (7a Lawrence Rd, S Ealing, W5).... **The Brave Little Toaster Goes To Mars:** this planned sequel to *TBLT* is even now emerging from Disch’s typewriter, and an animated film of *TBLT* itself is in production (MMW – “No, no,” says Avedon Carol, “it’s *Martian* Moose Worship”).... **Thyme:** abandoned by original editors A. Brown and I. Hirsh, the Aussie newszine has narrowly escaped the talons of Marc Ortlieb and found a home with Roger Weddall (106 Rathdowne St, Carlton, 3053 Australia). Speaking of music gafiates (Andrew Brown is going off to be a star): Cyril Simsa enigmatically reports that his lot “Somewhere a Voice” have made their debut album “Love, Logic & Ego” (Peyote Records via Rough Trade, order now, etc) and that he’s promptly given up music. And speaking of newszines, which we were, **Roelof Goudriaan** is extending his intergalactic fame by becoming *Ansible*’s Euroagent – shower money on him at Postbus 589, 8200 AN Lelystad, Netherlands. And speaking of Marc Ortlieb, he sends data on **MAFF** (Mid-Atlantic Fan Fund), which will award its deep-sea trip to one of: Jack Herman, Justin Ackroyd, Peter Toluzzi, Paul Stevens. The latter (“Anti-Fan”) has announced his disgusting Stop The Melbourne In 85 Bid campaign and offers anti-Melbourne adverts to interested fans (“all have a strong anti-American bias and should prove popular in the UK”): c/o 305-307 Swanston St, Melbourne, Vic 3000 if you’d like to publish one.... **Pong** is no more: “arrivaderci aroma,” says Bob Shaw.... **WAHF:** Jessica Amanda Salmonson, who thought Ian Watson’s UKLeG IN BREACH OF CONTRACT headline “too big a slam against a great lady who for whatever reasons is fond of a bad agent [Virginia Kidd]”; Ian himself – “Not so pleased to see Aldiss’s court jester, the vulgarian of the universe, H. Harrison Esq, being abusive about the decent Mr Brunner.... Meanwhile, Philip José Farmer is ‘sorely pissed off’ with ‘that lush-Lothario-lictuvian’ Gerry Webb, who [*appalling disclosure omitted*]....”; Greg Benford sends a complimentary postcard from Italy, praising Britfanwriting’s “quick and bizarre, glinting intelligence. Too much laidbackism in the ol’ USA, methinks. You have to be *hungry* to write good fan....” H’m.... **Paul And Chris Oldroyd** have spawned a daughter (10 Sept;

Zoltana?)... **SF Film Awards** (Academy of SF, F & H Films) to *Raiders of the Lost Coathanger* (F), *Superman II* (SF), *An American Werewolf in South Ealing* (H)... **Fencon Happens!** More soon....

Hazel's Language Lessons #20

English circa 1811 (J. Brunner)

nimgimmer physician/surgeon, particularly those who cure the venereal disease; *owlers* those who smuggle wool over to France; *cobler's punch* urine with a cinder in it; *silver-laced* covered with lice; *ansible* a low newszine from

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***Ansible* 30**

November 1982

ANSIBLE 30 is the 30th issue of *Ansible* (this has been the True Fact Of The Month) and is brilliantly edited (we had to run out of true facts sometime) by DAVE LANGFORD from 94 LONDON ROAD, READING, BERKSHIRE, RG1 5AU, UK – telephone (0734) 665804. Subscriptions held stable despite rising costs for 6 whole weeks now: £1 for 4 issues anywhere on Earth or £2 for 8 if you like – don't send more than £2, please. Sterling cheques/cash/POs to me, Girobank transfer to a/c 24 523 0408, \$US equivalent to US agents Mary and Bill Burns at their *new address* 23 Kensington Ct, Hempstead, NY 11550, Euromoney to Euroagent Roelof Goudriaan, Postbus 589, 8200 AN Lelystad, Netherlands. Rush money if your mailing label, exquisitely crafted by traditional native Keith Freeman, bears a Politely Complaining Reminder (SUB DUE) or, worse, a Discreet Cough Of Forthcoming Severance (*****). All artwork by ATOM; all typos courtesy of Sperry-Remington; all interjections of “Have a triffic Christmas” by the editor and Hazel. Next issue in 1983....

Novacon 12 • Birmingham 5-8 Nov

Joseph Nicholas

[Editorial bits in this typeface (here indicated by indentation – 1999) are interspersed with these highlights from Joe's 50,000 word draft Novacon report – DRL]

These days a Novacon is much like all other Novacons, held in the same hotel (Royal Angus) and city so that memories of them blur together and one has difficulty remembering not only what happened but when, and in which order, but also whether one enjoyed it... I didn't see anything of Friday evening's silly games and films, and instead seemed to spend hours running to and from my room to dispose of the mounds of fanzines everyone was giving out. Vague flashes of (in no particular order) Kev Smith telling me

what a nice guy Ted White is really, Mickey Poland giving me a collection of BAOR photos of Lynx & Puma helicopters, Eve Harvey falling off a table and spilling her drink down my trousers (you may wonder what she was doing on the table in the first place. Me too), and Tim Illingworth giving me the number of the Cambridge room party, which I then forgot until Judith came to lead me away to bed and it was too late....

[As usual Jim Barker was to blame for the silly games. What is his weird charismatic power, that at his bidding respectable fans will stand on their heads telling Irish jokes while miming 97-word book titles and playing the kazoo? I think we should be told. Novacon 12's programme was deliberately "slender", notes the Brum Group's own newsletter, fine for fans but "perhaps not for newcomers". My own neo-ish desire to see *Time Bandits* at last was thwarted by scheduling that film to clash with Saturday's breakfast – because, say my spies, "Rog Peyton doesn't like it."]

Judith was the star of Saturday's fanzine panel, nominally chaired by committee member Eunice Pearson, who was obviously too traumatized by the experience to say much. The discussion floundered for 15 minutes, with D. West in the audience growing visibly more bored: when he left (I imply no causal connexion) it suddenly got better. Abi Frost, also in the audience, clobbered panel members Christina Lake and Lilian Edwards over the artwork presentation in their fanzine; Judith clobbered Eunice for publishing a fiction fanzine at all, and kept talking for the rest of the hour, as a result of which she was invited to chair a similar panel at Albacon. Subtle moral lesson to be learned here.... Afternoon brought another Phil Strick compilation of clips from Really Bad films, out of which Chris Priest walked muttering that it was too easy to get laughs from such material. Toby Roxburgh's "The Economics of SF Publishing" answered traditional auctorial moans with the publisher's moans instead – given his quoted figures, it does seem mad to hope for any profit at all from publishing. "An excellent demonstration of why bumblebees can't fly," said Jack Cohen from the audience; and GoH Harry Harrison, and Brian Aldiss, rose repeatedly to respond with tales from their own experiences. "The bumblebee is about to fly again," reassured Roxburgh, plunging into the mysteries of inflation and interest rates: his talk was intelligent, amusing and insightful, probably the best item of the entire weekend.

[The Aldiss horror-story concerned Tom Maschler of Cape who bullied BA into abandoning *Helliconia Summer* to spend 6 weeks compiling – with Margaret Aldiss – an anthology of mini-sagas. The mini-saga format [a 50-word story, no more or less – see A27] was invented by BA and sparked a *Telegraph* competition receiving 33,000 entries of which the 300 best form the anthology ... which has now seized up thanks to furious copyright disputes between Cape and the *Telegraph*, making the planned Spring publication a hollow mockery and leaving the Aldisses with, so far, a return for their labours of £0.00p. Logomachy continues. Watch this space!]

After a gap (it's the drink, squire, the drink) came the auction with R. Peyton in fine form, flogging yards of Brian Stableford at £6-£7 the throw for GUFF, and I'd thought I'd have to pay people to take them away. Star item was a mystery package which went for a staggering £3.40 – staggering when you realize that everyone else dropped out at the £2 mark, the remaining cretin (er ... bidder) ignoring Peyton cries of “Stop bidding – stop – it's rubbish” while being given 10p bits by his friends to carry on and secure.. four copies of Eando Binder's *Night Of The Saucers*.

Another gap (the drink, squire) and it was time for the disco (out of which Chris Priest walked muttering that he came to cons to avoid such mundane crap): I discovered that several years of not dancing had turned my limbs to wood – Judith could bounce with the best of them while I had trouble even waving my arms coherently, until the rather inept DJ played an old Stones number and I too began leaping up and down, thrashing away at an imaginary guitar and landing on my head with every third chord. All I remember after is a fascinating conversation with Eric Bentcliffe about fan history and tradition, and, much later, stepping out of the lift en route to bed and tripping over a G. Webb pekinese.

[But there was an uproar in the bar as famous Prof. Tom Shippey let down his lack of hair. “I liked your book on Tolkien,” said your editor to Tom. “But I noticed a couple of mistakes,” I continued boldly. “Aargh,” I interrupted as Prof. Shippey seized my ear in steely fingers and twisted it round and round. Later, the highest brow in British fandom lurched on a trail of mayhem and molestation [Eileen Weston was reported to be deeply unamused]

while fans soothed the bar staff with such unconvincing remarks as, “It’s all right, he’s a Professor of Mediaeval Literature ...”]

Sunday was the usual blur. I found time to watch *Closet Cases Of The Nerd Kind*, and *Hardware Wars*, two triffic spoofs which would have raised more laughs if shown in reverse order – *HW*, it’s irons and toasters and eggwhisks screeching through space on wires borrowed from Dr. Who, was obviously the cruder with less structure and impact, whereas *CCNK* had sophistication and a larger budget. Also on Sunday ... D. West approached Judith asking her to become one of his groupies, making me wonder if he’d suddenly given up on pretty young men: but all he wanted was a drink. Geoff Rippington handed me a heap of *Vector* review copies containing a James Michener novel so heavy and so horrible that I had to run away and hide it before everyone started laughing. Judith did not appear to lead me to bed, having returned to London to face the dread spectre of work on Monday morning, and at some godawful early hour of same I fell asleep in a corner of the bar, waking to find Tony Berry had decorated my hands with a red felt pen and was just about to start on my face.... I had a good time; roll on next year. (JN)

[Since I too left early, it seems unfair that I should have to insert coverage of Sunday Night’s award ceremony. The Nova awards went to Rob Hansen (fanartist – rumoured runners-up Lyon and Barker), Chris Atkinson (fanwriter – r.r.u. Hansen and Ounsley), and Hansen’s *Epsilon* (fanzine – r.r.u. *Ansible* and *Tappen*). Kevin Smith gloated at length over the power of his Nova recommendation in the progress reports. The COFF – Concrete Overcoat Fan Fund – trophy went to the fake Bob Shaw, who had precognitively donned a three-piece suit and tie to accept it. He got 62 votes; runners-up were Steve Green (56) and just about every other British fan, down to folk like Joseph (2) and Martin Hoare (1). Even I got several votes after annoying ***** at Channelcon. Artshow award to Fangorn [Chris Baker] ... DRL]

With Rod & Gun Through the Savage World of Skiffy

The BSFA (Ltd.) On The Brink: A Final Notice to the directors of the BSFA has come from the jolly Registrar of Companies, who speaks

soothingly of overdue annual returns and accounts, of directors' (i.e. council members') personal responsibility, of fines up to £1000 all round ... "I can sort it all out," said ashen-faced company secretary Kevin Smith, leaving Novacon hastily and prematurely ...

More Threats have been arriving on Faircon committee members' doorsteps, from Golds, solicitors of Bob (fake) Shaw (who says he got the idea from Duncan Lunan). Since the Fairconcom folk were "party to a fraudulent pretence whereby our client was wickedly misled into diverting his considerable effort and energies into this event" (i.e. since the committee failed to come to heel when instructed by Bob to jettison chairman Joan Paterson – see A28), they are now being threatened with proceedings unless they cough up £300 apiece, or possibly £300 between them. The legal term for this is, I believe, "trying it on". Our Bob has meanwhile issued a preliminary Faircon 84 Progress Report which rather mysteriously requests "presupporting memberships" at £5 a head – presumably a pre-emptive strike lest other members of the Faircon 82 committee get ideas about carrying on to run the 1984 event....

Canadian SF & Fantasy Award: voted in some manner not described in the release, the single annual award can be (rather bizarrely) presented for a story, novel, antho, mag, artwork, film or litcrit item – 1982's went to Phyllis Gottlieb for her novel *Judgement Of Dragons* and also for lifetime contributions to SF. Meanwhile, the egregious Spider Robinson constantly demands to be made eligible for the CSFFA on grounds of Canadian residence (while refusing to abandon the advantages of US citizenship)....

Ben Bova left *Omni* some while ago, a news item so tedious that I forgot it until reading in *Patchin Review* 5 that "when *Locus* printed Ben's report that he'd *Resigned*, many people were confused and surprised – not least, at *Omni*..."

Maxim Jakubowski, overlord of "Zomba Books" (to be launched in Spring or so), will be publishing all manner of strange things – e.g. a Moorcock nonfiction work under the mysterious Zomba imprint "Bee In Bonnet". Maxim's Allen&Unwin fantasy anthologies *Lands Of Never/ Beyond The Lands Of Never* (June/Sept 83) are now closed, with stories by (his ordering!): Langford, Silverberg, Kilworth, Holdstock, Pollack, Jakubowski, Ableman, Ballard, Chant, Chilson, Horwood, Lee, Gaskell, Salmonson,

Carter (not Lin), Evans (C), Tem, Grant, Aldiss and Watson.

Extro Post-Mortem: Paul Campbell tried recently to collect the £1100 or so owed him by Seymour, the distributors, for copies sold. He reports a phone conversation: “Seymour’s clerk – “Yes there is money here for you. No, I don’t know when it’ll be through. Give me two minutes. (...) Yes, there’s money there alright. But they say down in accounts that it’ll have to go up to the circulation manager for decision. I’ll check with him. Give me two minutes. (...) Dear me, but he says you won’t be getting anything. In fact you might owe us money. That’s a joke. No, whatever you get it won’t be worth waiting for. You know how it is when you go broke. (Whine, whine) It isn’t my fault.’ That’s the bare bones, fairly verbatim. Scandalous, criminal; but verbal, unwitnessed and unpublishable. They followed up with a statement of account saying *Yo Ho Ho, Look At How Many Copies Of Extro We’ve Just Destroyed*. I’ve a sneaking suspicion that when I’ve got round to sorting out all my accounts, I’ll find that Seymours destroyed more copies of the magazine than I ever sent them.... Lots of sympathy cards, by the way, but none with large cheques from millionaires saying *I’ve Been A Fan Of Sf Since I Was A Child. Will This Help? ... Know anyone who needs a reviewer?*” (PC)

Arthur C. Clarke Writes: well, merely his secretary Paul Heskett. “Granada’s proof copy of *2010: Odyssey Two* was bloody appalling, littered with mistakes and *painful* to read. Del Rey have done a far better job ... ACC says ‘it’s the best thing I’ve done’: from personal experience he’s said that about two other works of his. Frankly, I was disappointed with *2010*. It has some inspired moments but the characterization is weak.” *Ansible* found some super misprints in the final Granada edition, like “feather” for “feature” and “intelligent” for “unintelligent”; the book’s weakness comes partially from the fact that *2001* ended on the brink of Truly Cosmic Developments which no sequel could quite deliver – *2010* scores such planet-busting points as it can and for want of a better ending stops rather abruptly on another and more familiar brink. (Less disappointing than *Foundation’s Edge*, wherein liberalized Asimov modifies his Politically Unsound Imperial Goals to the extent of converting the Foundation trilogy to a chronicle of misguidedness.) Also to hand is “the most important thing I’ve ever done” (ACC), a speech to the UN committee on Disarmament – subsequently entered into the US Congressional Record – calling for a “Peacesat” International Satellite

Monitoring Agency to promote global togetherness. Meanwhile ACC would “like to go back to Russia”; Russia may be less keen, 2010 being part-dedicated to the persecuted physicist Sakharov....

Join Wooster As He Stalks The Streets Of New Haven With The Men Who Make Your Nightmares! Thus the US newspaper syndicate ad for Martin Morse W’s World Fantasycon story, now released unexpurgated: “800 attendees. Winners of ‘Howard’ awards included: NOVEL *Little, Big* (perhaps in gratitude for Bantam Books providing con attendees with free copies), NOVELLA ‘The Fire When It Comes’ (Godwin), SHORT ‘The Dark Country’ (Etchison)/‘Do The Dead Sing?’, LIFE ACHIEVEMENT Italo Calvino.... A cross between a Nebula Banquet and a Worldcon, the con had 100+ pros in attendance, including marginal fantasy writers like historical hack Morgan Llweyyn (*Conceivably Llewellyn? DRL*), Ronald Reagan’s Favourite Novelist: ‘Hey don’t hold it against me,’ she says. High points included the preview of *Creepshow*, an unmitigated comedy of grave-robbing, birthday cakes and supernatural comics, and the Ace party, which metamorphosed into a Berkley party at suspicious intervals. Here everyone’s favourite midAtlantic fan, tastefully black-leather-clad Mr. Charles Platt, proceeded to shake up a can of beer and douse Miss Ellen Datlow, Hero Fiction Editor, *Omni*, with foamy brew. As Mr. Platt was given the boot by Susan Allison, Savage Lord of the Berkley Empire, Datlow was overheard to say: ‘I think we won’t see Platt’s work in *Omni* for quite some time ...’ Also overheard: ‘Yes, I liked *Helliconia Spring*, but it won’t even be nominated for a Nebula.’ ‘Why not?’ ‘Look at the cover. It’s got a 16th century painting on it, and SFWA members won’t vote for things they can’t understand.’” (MMW) **Alexis Gilliland**, recently praised in the *Washington Post* as a writer of Bureaucratic SF, refutes Mr. Wooster’s [A29](#) “assertion that I am the *third* WSFAn (A as in Association) to win the John W Campbell Award, after Sucharitul and Chalker. Martin, who aspires to be a fan-historian, is incorrect. Chalker was nominated in 78 and 79, but did not in fact win the award ...” (AAG)

Rabbit Hole is the mind-numbing Newsletter of the Harlan Ellison Record Collection, containing several words about records and whole pages covering HE’s amazing acts of philanthropy, huge advances, failure to get *LDV* into print, remaindered books for sale at vast prices, etc. – ostensibly written by Shelley Levinson, Director of the Collection, but in prose strangely

reminiscent of HE himself. After all, who's better qualified to eulogize Ellison than ...?

Imagine(TM), conceivably pronounced "Imaginet'm", is the British TSR (TM) mag about D&D (R): assistant editor Paul Cockburn (TM) is offering up to £30/thousand words for related fiction (but ask first), subject to such constraints as the appalling TSR (TM) CODE (R), a document written by Gary Gygax([episcopal cross]) warning that (e.g.) no TSR (TM) publication may depict the defeat of authorised law enforcement officers. Register your name as a trademark and contact TSR (TM) (UK) Ltd, The Mill, Rathmore Rd, Cambridge, CB1 4AD. Launch in Spring (R).

[MOVED TO [ISSUE 29](#) WHERE THEY'RE MORE RELEVANT:
TWO "ATOM" CARTOONS OF ONE FAN IMPARTING HIS
OPINION OF A BOOK TO ANOTHER FAN.

CAPTION OF 1ST: IT'S THE LATEST BRUNNER ... ALL THE
AMERICAN SF AUTHORS IN IRELAND ARE STRUCK
DOWN BY AN ALIEN VIRUS.

CAPTION OF 2ND: IT'S THE LATEST HARRISON ... ALL
THE SF WRITERS IN ENGLAND ARE ATTACKED BY A
MYSTERIOUS FUNGUS! ...]

Fencon • Cambridge 16 October **Judith Hanna**

It was an upstairs, downstairs sort of con. Real stairs, not lifts. Upstairs on the 3rd floor was the main hall where important events were held. Downstairs (1st floor) were the bar, bookselling tables and a smaller programme area. In between were cafe and coffee lounge. The 200 members distributed themselves more or less randomly among the levels.

Highlights ... The Celebrity Panel, with Brian Aldiss on the trauma of having some idiot bump into his car en route, Charles Platt opening up his heart to us all and frankly confessing that he'd returned to SF because he'd discovered while interviewing for *Who Writes SF* that "I really liked all these people ... I just love you all out there ... Quote me on that." Asked about the recent fantasy upsurge, he suggested it arose from "nut-cults" of the 60s "hippy

revolution”. Fred Pohl disagreed: “Books are written by individuals, not the times,” a reasonable-seeming assertion which however implies that writers aren’t affected by the times they live in.

Nick Lowe expounded “[The Well-Tempered Plot Device](#)”, a theory which bids fair to rival the Thentis factor in critical discourse, opening with a round of “clench-search” (4 people hold 4 Covenant books, on the word opening them at random and start skimming in search of the word “clench” – the game seldom takes long). A plot device is of course something like a Ring or Staff of Law: a device which gets and keeps the plot moving. There are also “plot coupons” – wishes, special gifts, red kryptonite – which may be brought into play like wild cards to get the plot moving again when it’s ground to a dead end. My own contribution to this theory is that trading-in plot coupons is like playing Finchley Central – the longer you delay, the more finesse.

“So You Fancy Yourself A Writer”, chaired by Steve Knight, with contestants Joseph, Colin Greenland, Phil Masters and Geoff Ryman, was a game in eight rounds: invent a first sentence, a last sentence, padding, bluffing, overwriting (Colin: “This beer is so tasteless that given the chance it’d watch *Crossroads*”), retitling (the Bible – Colin: “Universe of Shame”; *The Sex Goblins* – Joseph: “Micro-servants of the Wankh”), alien gastronomy, last and by no means easiest a complete SF story in eight words (Phil: “And God said, ‘I don’t think I’ll bother.’”). One of the best con games I’ve seen, but hell to score: with all contestants within .01 of a virtual Smartie of each other, J. Nicholas was declared winner.

There were three particular eccentricities: the Space-Time Masquerade – 4 devilishly complex pictures providing clues to where and when one might catch the “Fenc” – someone did figure it out and wore a placard proclaiming “I found the Fenc” for the rest of the day; there was “Spot the Wandering Alien”, later admitted to be an entity which transferred between committee members when they came into contact, the clue being a sideways jump. Spotting Spot was confused by local CUSFS members settling in circles on the floor to play Sprodzoom, a game which required them to perform numerous alien contortions.

Yes – it is possible to work up a con “high” in just one day, and it debilitates the fannish organism less than the usual weekend-long immersion. Fencon was a good thing. (JH)

Science Fiction Unlimited: Brighton 23 October

... a collation of reports from Joseph Nicholas and, distinguished by typeface and indenting, David S. Garnett. Another *Ansible* first ...?

DG: Brighton Museum are holding an exhibition imaginatively titled “Out Of This World” during October and November, and in conjunction with this a one day seminar/forum/whatever was held in the Royal Pavilion – which is an old building near the sea front which ought to have been pulled down and replaced with something useful like a multistorey car park, but probably never will be because it was built by some king or other. (No he didn’t build it himself. He had this gang of Irish labourers, but he got all the credit.)

JN: Drawing about 200 people, it was held in the William IV room of the Royal Pavilion, a perhaps incongruous site for an SF event ...

At 10.30 there was supposed to be a talk on “Dan Dare and His Creator” by Paul Clark, followed an hour later by “Saviours From Space – or Cosmic Conmen? The Enigma of Alien Visitors” a talk by Hilary Evans of the Society for Psychical Research. I missed them both.

Judith and I arrived late, missing chairman David Pringle’s welcome and the first 15 minutes of Hilary Evans’s “critical survey of the various types of contact that are claimed with alien visitors”. Critical it certainly was: Evans is concerned as much with exposing the fraud and self-deception surrounding such phenomena as with convincing us that there may be some truth to them; his lecture was devoted to both the absurdity of the purported aliens’ behaviour and the quasi-religious fervour with which “contactees” expound their experiences. Such literature, he remarked, tells more about the psychology of its writers than anything else – for them it’s science fact rather than SF. For us, it’s not even SF; but in passing Evans drew attention to a story, “The Green Man” (*Amazing* 1946), which is the prototype of all contact experiences – silvery cigar-shaped ship, beams of energy which stop car engines, a glowing visitor who tells a lone traveller that he’s been chosen as the aliens’ Earthly representative. Another brick in the wall of SF’s past misdemeanours, eh what?

Another audiovisual presentation followed: graphic designer Paul Clarke on Dan Dare. This started well with an account of the strange genesis of the *Eagle* and the working practices of Frank Hampson's team, but declined into interminable gosh-wowing over an equally interminable succession of slides as Clark's enthusiasm got the better of him. Nostalgia suffused him, superlatives fell from his lips ... Personally I think it's time the Dare enthusiasts stopped simply eulogizing their hero and made way for sociologists and anthropologists to decode the strip's subtext and demonstrate how and to what extent it embodied the hopes and fears of British Society in the 50s.

During the lunch-break there was time to visit the museum exhibition. I didn't quite manage to get there, but I'll quote a couple of Famous People "It's very pop – Daleks, K-9, movie stills, R2D2, lots of antique toy robots, lots of Dan Dare stuff." (Colin Greenland) "Lots of paintings from Rob Holdstock and Malcolm Edwards books" (Malcolm Edwards). Colin opened the afternoon proceedings, and he should have been speaking on "The Meaning of SF", and that's what it might have been, as I arrived just as he was finishing. (The night before, Friday, was a mate's last night in the UK and we went out for one or twelve drinks. I know there were at least five pubs.... And so Saturday morning I leapt out of bed bright and early, then went back to bed again; got up, threw up, retired once again. Third time lucky and I succeeded, drawn by the promise of an *Interzone* cheque waiting for me in Brighton.)

Colin Greenland spoke on "Multiplied Visions: The Meaning of SF", contending that by virtue of the different perspectives of ourselves and our world that SF offers it is capable of enhancing and multiplying our visions of same – and demonstrating that SF is so ramified and multiplied, and has become so integral a part of our culture, that it's now almost impossible to speak of a "thing" called SF.

I sneaked into the Pavilion's William IV room around 3.20pm. Or I thought I sneaked in, but I'd been spotted by the eagle eye (the left one I think) of chairman and *Foundation* supremo D. Pringle, who pointed me out to the assembled throng (around 100) as a pretext for advertising *Interzone*. Must have worked, as all copies were sold and I even had to surrender one of my own which young

Malcolm had given me wrapped in a cheque.... I did see the next talk, which was supposed to be John Brunner talking about John Brunner – and wasn't. Or not much. John is mellowing.

John Brunner, the fourth and final speaker, delivered a short anecdotal piece on his early days in SF ... the day closed with a short film called *The Tom Machine*, made by a National Film School graduate, with almost the same theme as Dick's *Time Out Of Joint*. The performances are a little wooden and the revelations somewhat cryptic and drawn-out, but it's an excellent, unpretentious film which should go down well at conventions. All in all, it was a good and enjoyable day. I wonder if anyone's thinking of a similar such seminar next year? (JN)

The best Brighton SF event was back in May '68, as part of the Brighton Festival, when they invited the whole *New Worlds* crew down for 2 days. There were about 20 people on the stage and a similar number in the audience (which included Ted Tubb and Ken Bulmer). On Saturday night everyone went to Henekeys ... but got thrown out, which could have had something to do with pouring drinks from the balcony on the multitudes below. Tom Disch threw his drink in the manager's crotch, and when the police arrived he got in the Black Maria as he said he wanted to be arrested. We all wandered off to another pub, The Heart & Hand and Brian Aldiss ordered 20 halves of bitter, and there was change out of a pound note. Those were the days! (DG)

From Our Own Correspondents ...

Peter Nicholls: “Old much-loved and much-loathed girl friend and ex-fiancee Janet Pollak gave birth to a 5.5 week premature baby Thomas weighing in at 5lb 4oz three weeks ago (letter dated end Sept). I have temporarily (only) moved in with her to give moral support by being kept awake every night. The child is clearly mine, as its saturnine expression and grotesquely huge big toes makes quite obvious. I am hoping to bring him up to be a pawnbroker, or to work in some other substantial money-making career. Anything other than writing.

“Multimedia flourishes in the usual racketsy manner of packagers. Haven't got

round to commissioning anything from you yet, and maybe never, because of insistence on big names. Big names captured so far are not really suited for a good 5-a-side team – Harold Evans, Peter Medawar, Sir Edmund Hillary, Bernard Dixon, Frank Barnaby (the latter two being more your middle sized sort of name). Am currently working on Lord Lever. Everybody loves a Lord. Once you are Lord Langford (with 3 lovely daughters if possible) all sorts of doors, including my own, will open to you. Love and kisses –”

Ian Watson: “How quaint of Brian Aldiss to figure (in [A29](#)) on a certain letter in *Tribune*, a political newspaper, which was of course the point of the letter. Now who was it who wrote to *Foundation*, journal of general criticism, a while ago in a vein of bile to browbeat ‘this stropky little man’ Brian Stableford for presuming to criticize that visionary socialist tract *Enemies Of The System* and to puff another forthcoming long political novel by the same author which might likewise be in danger of maltreatment by the humourless, hubristic bindweed? Oh yes, I remember. Brian Aldiss himself. Don’t do as I do; do as I say.”

Joyce Scrivner: “DUFF candidates this year are Alexis Gilliland, Charlotte Proctor, Jan Howard Finder & Jerry Kaufman. It should be a great race.

“I found Chicon exhausting – collapsed during the Hugos and wasn’t seen again ’til Monday. On the ‘Two Ocean Fanzine Panel’ (J. Foyster, K. Smith, T. White, I & J.H. Finder) we played ‘keep the mike from Jan’, shouted ‘DIM, DIM, DIM!’ while holding a JLAS sign, and with Kevin’s help were absurd. At Plergbcon the next weekend Kevin revealed his camouflage green jockey shorts while four women massaged him; Peter Toluzzi (DUFF winner) revealed black silk bikini shorts while five women worked on him; the infamous group shower incident followed ...” (More!)

The *Ansible* Convention Supplement

Fencon (p.3) has happened, but Lilian Edwards also sent a report: “...It’s no bad thing when the worst criticism levelled against a con is that the programme was so good; people kept having massive identity crises over which items to miss. It was indeed the basic excellence of both the conception and execution of the programme which made the event so cohesive and friendly; most people spent most of their time in close

proximity.... Some mention MUST be given to the So You Think You're A Writer panel, where C. Greenland became an instant star with his SF-story-in-less-than-8-words (*Aliens disguised as typewriters? What non-*); the Ultimate Questions panel where scientists and philosophers vied to explain the Mysteries of Life, flummoxing the entire con with the deceptively simple problem of a man trying to get past his mirror image in a narrow doorway (try it); the Total SF Quiz, simply the funniest ever devised, whose cosmic absurdity was reflected in the result being decided by the number of orange Smarties each side ended up with.... No real plans for a Fencon 2; we live in hope...." (LE, cut by DRL because JH got there first). Only Brian Aldiss was less than enthusiastic about Fencon, apparently only because of its all being over in a single day.

Cymrucon (27-28 Nov, Cardiff) will be happening, or over, when you read this: having utterly failed to produce any progress reports, the committee has apparently subsided altogether (22 Nov), leaving "GoH" Lionel Fanthorpe to rush out apologies to all other guests for the con's mysterious inability to print guests' urgently solicited stories and articles in the programme book. Good grief....

Santacon (14-16 Dec, Leeds Dragonara) purports to be a Trekkie/media/humour event: SAE to 10 Langford Rd, Heaton Chapel, Stockport, Cheshire, SK4 5BR.

Faancon would theoretically fall in February 1983, but it seems that no one wants to organize it: this tiny no-programme event has probably has probably outlived its usefulness thanks to today's rash of conventions. Bye-bye, Faancon ...?

Ra Con (4-6 Feb 83, Grosvenor Centre Hotel, Edinburgh): GoH Harry Harrison, FGoH Pete Lyon, £4 supp £8 att; 77 Baron's Ct Tce, Edinburgh, EH8 7EN.

Albacon II (1-4 April; Central Hotel, Glasgow): 1983 Eastercon. GoH Jim White & Tanith Lee, FGoH TAFF delegate (don't forget to vote for Avedon Carol before the 18 Dec deadline), toastmaster D. Langford (wow). £4 supp £8 att to 1 Dec, £5/£9 to 20 March, £10 att thereafter: c/o B/L 8 Highburgh Rd, Glasgow G12 9YD.

Sol III (27-30 May, Grand Hotel, Brum): 15th -that's XV, folks, not III –

official Trekkiecon. GoH J. Doohan, W. Koenig, A. McCaffrey, B. Shaw. SAE to 39 Dersingham Ave, Manor Park, London, E.12.

Beccon 83 (29-31 July), Essex Crest Hotel, Basildon): GoH Ken Bulmer; £3 supp £7 att to 191 The Heights, Northolt, Middlesex, UB5 4BU.

Silicon 7 (26-29 Aug, Grosvenor Hotel, Jesmond, Newcastle): membership £3.50 to, er, well, even Mastergannet Harry Bell doesn't know Sue Hepple's address – he advised me to ring Kev Williams (0632-375713). I did, but he wasn't in....

Constellation (1-5 Sept, Convention Centre, Baltimore, USA): 1983 Worldcon. GoH John Brunner, FGoH Dave Kyle, \$10 supp, \$30 att now, \$15/\$40 Jan-July; Box 1046, Baltimore, MD 21203, USA. 3450 members as of mid-Oct. This is as good a place as any to bury some stuff on the Hugos (did you notice that in [A29](#) I forgot to mention *Locus*'s 1982 Fanzine Hugo? Well, well): ConStellation is being urged by George Flynn (leader of Business Meeting and Rules fandoms) to take up its “spare Hugo” option – the committee can add a category to the Hugo ballot for its con only – and adopt the additional Semi-Prozine Hugo. This was actually voted into the rules at Chicon, but requires ratification at ConStellation. It isn't, as common sense might suggest, an attempt to acknowledge the current situation by retitling the “Fanzine” Hugo: it provides an *extra* award for “semiprozines”, defined as magazines meeting two of the following criteria – [1] print run over 1000; [2] pays contributors/staff; [3] provides at least half someone's income [4] at least 15% full of ads; [5] calls itself a semiprozine. In other words, instead of muttering about the wicked, evil *Locus* and *SFR* getting all the Hugos, fandom will be able to mutter about a different selection of malefactors, possibly beginning with wicked evil *File 770*. I submit that the whole idea does not make very much sense. We all knew that there was no justice and that huge-circulation fnz could always woo the unthinking hordes of Hugo voters. Now the biggies are exiled to the semipro category, and Real Fanzines have their chance to be voted on by ... well, actually, the same enormous hordes of Hugo voters, most of whom won't have a clue. Which doesn't stop them voting even though “the voting population is at least 1000 to 1500 while most decent fnz have circs of 400 or less.” (*Jerry Kaufman*) Quite. Voting will probably reflect circulation even though circulation – conceivably a measure of, say, novels' or magazines' popularity – has nothing at all to do with fnz quality. In addition the new rule produces

extremely silly anomalies in the fanwriter and fanartist categories: exactly what sort of artist is Alexis Gilliland, for example, who mostly draws for *SFR*? There doesn't, you see, happen to be a semipro artist category.... Piffle, piffle; the fan Hugos were silly enough before, and this amendment makes them less logical and more divisive (perhaps not in theory, but certainly, I think, in practice).

X-Con (2-4 Sept, Belgium): Beneluxcon 83. Approx £3.30 supp £7.15 att – SAE to Ken Slater, Fantast (Medway) Ltd, 39 West St, Wisbech, Cambs, PE13, 2LX.

Unicon 4 (2-4 Sept, U of Essex, Colchester): GoH “Unconfirmed”, FGoH Ken Slater, Special Guest Garry Kilworth; £3 supp, £5 att (£6 from Jan); no official address to be found, but probably c/o Alex Stewart, 11a Beverly Rd, Colchester, Essex, CO3 3NG. The shifted date (since [A29](#)) was caused by U of E double-booking.

The Con With No Name (17-18 Sept, Leeds Dragonara): no idea what this one is, but *Matrix* reports a high committee turnover. GoH Dennis Spooner (who he?); £10 att to Leeds Rd, Liversedge, W Yorks, or maybe 111 Chestnut Cr, Conisboro', S Yorks.

Invention (23-25 Sept, Central Hotel, GLasgow): replaces Faircon for 83. GoH Chris Boyce, FGoH Jim Barker; £5 supp, £9 att to Easter – memberships to 10 Woodlands Gdns, Bothwell, Glasgow, G71 8NU.

Milford (UK) Writers' Conference: 25 Sept to 1 Oct almost certainly. Ask me.

Galacticon (??? Oct 83): planned mediacon, esp Blake's Galactica – weird flyer asks £2 but looks outdated; con may well have been cancelled; anyone know?

Frankfurt Book Fair (12-17 Oct, Frankfurt) – not relevant for most of you, but this is the time of year when your favourite publisher may be hard to find....

Novacon 13 (4-6 Nov, Birmingham): £7 att to 46 Colwyn Rd, Beeston, Leeds LS11 6PY. Once again there are rumours of a possible venue change to the Grand Hotel (“Rog Peyton doesn't like it”): most of the people at Novacon 12 were in overflow hotels, inevitably, and many were eager for a change. But who knows?

Orwellcon 83 (11-13 U of Antwerp): GoH Anthony Burgess. IRC to A Vermeghenlon 21, Bus 20 B-2050, Antwerpen, Belgium. Odd year for an Orwellcon....

Eastercon 1984 (20-23 April, two bids): **Seacon 84** is the chosen name for the Brighton bid which plans to combine Eastercon with the 1984 Eurocon (see flyer this issue). A small steering committee has been selected from the millions of former “Committeepeople”. The 1984 World SF Meeting will be held in Brighton from 17-19 April if Seacon 84 succeeds ... £1 pre-supp to Pauline & Chris Morgan, 39 Hollybrow, Selly Oak, Birmingham, B29 4LX. • **1984 Con** is the Blackpool bid, also full of worthy folk (NB: Pat Charnock, fearful that [A29](#)’s phrase “Linda Pickersgill replaces Pat Charnock” might imply ugly rifts, wishes it to be known that she [Pat] merely resigned owing to lack of time). £1 pre-supp to 28 Duckett Rd, London, N4 1BN. *Ansible* will carry a 1984 Con flyer when they do one that fits!

COA

GEOGRE [sic] BONDAR, 33 Ragstone Rd, Chalvey, Slough, Berks, SL1 2PP ||| MARY & BILL BURNS [see masthead] ||| JON COWIE, Flat 63 Rm 29, Castle Irwell, Cromwell Rd, Salford, Manchester [to June 83] ||| DAVE LOCKE & JACKIE CAUSGROVE, 6828 Alpine Ave #4, Cincinnati, OH 45236, USA ||| KEN MANN [temporary] c/o B. Smith, 60 Crofton Rd, SE.6 ||| HELEN McNABB, The Bower, High St, Llantwit Major, S Glam ||| DAVE MONTGOMERY, The Flat, Tankerton House, Basingstoke Rd, Spencers Wood, Reading, RG7 1AB ||| CHRIS PRIEST & LISA TUTTLE, 1 Ortygia House, 6 Lower Rd, Harrow, Middlesex, HA2 0DA [Devon House now sold] ||| PETER SINGLETON, Eliot Ward, Park Lane Special Hospital, Maghull, Liverpool, L31 1HW ||| JOHN SLADEK, 13 Elmsdale Rd, Walthamstow, London, E.17 ||| MARTYN TAYLOR, Flat 2, 17 Hutchinson Square, Douglas, Isle of Man ||| remember to notify COAs to me!

Infinitely Improbable

“**When You Write The Book, It’s A Virgin**” explained D.M. Thomas to *Esquire*. “Then when it sells, it loses its virginity. It’s the *off-white* hotel now ...” Oh. DMT’s next one is about “a contemporary Soviet poet, torn and

divided emotionally and politically ... he travels to Armenia, meets a blind Lesbian, and spins tales of an imaginary voyage to America which will complete a Pushkin fragment.” (MMW) ... **Forthcoming Publications:** Chris Atkinson and Linda James both plan to perpetuate the species next year, Linda taking peculiar pains to target the birth for Bob Dylan’s birthday ... **World SF** has voted that its International Standard Subscription should be quoted in Swiss francs *only* – despite not having a Swiss bank account. Fearlessly I reveal the official UK equivalent, £7 to 2 Cowper Rd, Cambridge, CB1 3SN, bringing the limitless benefits of 1983 membership, such as newsletters telling you the subs in Swiss francs ... **Elitist Conspiracy** spreads further through the world of letters! – conveys Colin Greenland, winner of 2nd prize in *Fiction Mag* short-story comp. with a “new wave” skiffy tale. Meanwhile David Pringle begs a plug for *Interzone 3*, containing 4 extra pages and some interior art at last (nobody will tell me what obscure collective sublimation is responsible for the picture of Peter Nicholls being strangled on p.7). IZ apparently has some 850 subscribers but sells many more copies – print run 2-3000 ... **Arena** is the provisional name (assuming Geoff Rippington and some other party fail to complain) of Hutchinson/Arrow’s new upmarket Picadoresque pb imprint – the first two titles when it’s launched in Spring will include *The Affirmation* by C. Priest. The upmarket and KingPenguinish cover is a great disappointment to those who hoped it would follow Arrow tradition and depict, say, a garishly spacesuited man clutching a luminescent football ... **RIP** – John Gardner of *Grendel* fame (in a motorbike crash); Frederic Dannay of “Ellery Queen” fame (the other half of EQ, Manfred B. Lee, died in 1971: SF relevance is of course that 3 “EQ” potboilers were ghosted by Jack Vance, plus “major” EQ novels by Sturgeon [*The Player On The Other Side*] and Avram Davidson [*And On The 8th Day; 4th Side Of The Triangle*]); Stanton Coblenz of 20s/30s pulp fame ... **Malcolm Edwards** rises to new power on April 1 (h’m) as the Gollancz SF editor – John Bush is stepping down from both that role and the Gollancz chairmanship. Tremble, fans, and obey ... **Remember Thor Five!** Peter “peter pinto” Pinto and Derek “Dark They Were And Golden Eyed But Not Any More” Stokes are operating in Lancaster as “Interstellar Master Traders” (selling SF), the latter playing a minor role partly because of “people’s unwillingness to accept that dtwage’s limited liability company status should not apply to the money *they* were owed when it collapsed” (PP). The Shaw/Craig “Photon Books” empire in Glasgow has now become

“Future Shock” (Craig) and “Second Foundation” (Shaw, who thinks he’s ahead on acronyms if nothing else) ... **DUFF:** as per Joyce Scrivner’s note (p.4), the new US -> Australia race is on. Voting fee \$2 min; deadline 31 March 83; address J. Scrivner, 2732 14th Ave S Lower, Minneapolis MN 55407, USA OR P. Toluzzi, PO Box H143, Australia Sq, NSW 2000, Aus. Ballots: ask them or me. **Australia Again:** Douglas Adams has been publicity-touring, plugging *LTU&E* and yet again explaining to huge audiences the supremely intellectual processes which led him to 42 as all-time funniest number (*Thyme*). It has come to *Ansible*’s attention that some obscure hack called Lewis Carroll has made similar play with Mr. Adams’s number (cf. *Alice*; *Hunting Of The Snark* [twice]): we trust that Mr. Adams will sue ... Bruce Gillespie has published a 200,000 word reset reprint covering the first year of *SF Commentary* – in its heyday one of the great critical fanzines – £25 to him at GPO Box 5195AA, Melbourne, Vic 3001, Aus. And tiny Norstrilia Press (one-third Bruce) has one of its books, *The Plains* by Gerald Murnane, on the shortlist for the most prestigious local award “The Age Book of the Year”: the book is “meditative fantasy set in an alternative Australia” (BG) ... **The Kid’s Guide To Parents** – Jim Barker recommends this £1.95 cartoon collection which not only aids “Save the Children” (loud boos from Hazel) but also contains three masterpieces from a Falkirk fanartist whose name we have mislaid ... **APAs:** Eurapa is of necessity a European apa, with 50-copy requirement, dues 10DM (=£2) yearly: Joachim Henke, Jahnstr.21, D-6551, Volxheim, Germany. Anzapa (Aus/NZ of course) has meanwhile blown its credibility by voting Our Joseph not only as Best Humorist but as President ... **Bug Jack Barron** (film version) is now said to have a \$21M budget, incorporating that of the cancelled *Firestarter* (watch out for a title change to *The Bugging* or *Barron’s Lot*). (MMW) **Eurocon 7:** Marjorie Brunner reproves Ahrvid Engholm ([A29](#)) for complaining about Germans speaking German, and for not mentioning famous Cherry Wilder (plus a million other English-speakers) or the award to French mag *Antares* ... **Ahrvid Strikes Back:** “Swedish fan Eje Berggren recently went to a meeting called ‘How to make your children avoid mysterious and dangerous sects like Hare Krishna, Devil-worshippers, comics and science fiction’ ... Danish fnz *Fantastiske Film* rumours that Steven Spielberg is in trouble – US author Lisa Litchfield claims that the MS of E.T. is very similar to one of her own (the play *Lokey From Maldmar*) and demands \$750 million in compensation” (AE) ... **The Best Of Susan Wood,**

an 80-page anthology assembled by Jerry Kaufman, should be ready now, proceeds to the usual good causes – \$2 plus postage (a couple of £1 notes would be fine) to 4326 Winslow Place N, Seattle, WA 98103, USA ... **Omni Flash:** austere and remote Andie Burland writes to say that despite the “separate” UK edition’s demise (reports of which were mistaken by some as indicating that *Omni* would no longer be on sale here – “sales are falling but not that bad”), she’s still at *Omni*, 2 Bramber Rd, London, W14 9PB, as “acquiring editor” looking for science bits and – especially – fiction for *Omni* US ... **Con Updates** – already, since pp 5-6 – everything you know is wrong! **Santacon**, thinks Ken Slater, is in 1983, not 1982: I now see that the given dates make no sense until 1984. **Silicon 7:** rates up to £4 att – 2 Seaton Ave, Lewsham, Blyth, Northumbria. **Unicon 4:** memberships to 17 Laing Rd, Colchester, Essex. **Noreascon** (1982 Worldcon) has revealed a profit of \$29,077.85 (to July 82), even more than Yorcon II, Channelcon or Novacon. **Mythcon** (16-18 Sept 83, Brum): £2 supp to 133 Sheen La, SW.14, but first read *Ansible* 27. **Galacticon** (29-30 Oct 83, London): SAE 171 Heath Rd, Hounslow, Middlesex ... **Starlight SF News** goes on Prestel shortly (Micronet 800 pages): “electronic *Ansible*” with Aldiss minisagas, Brunner news, Watson story – more soon.

Hazel’s Language Lessons #21; Kikuyu

tombora to press a squashy object all the way through something.
ruūka to become uncircumcised.

ANSIBLE 30 from DAVE LANGFORD
94 London Road, Reading, Berkshire
RG1 5AU, United Kingdom: 26 Nov 82

[Inserted flyer on half-size paper:]

Ansible 30 Addendum

Kevin Smith, all-powerful TAFF Administrator, has now acquired an Address at last. Rush your TAFF ballots to: 53 Altrincham Rd, Gatley, Cheshire, SK8 4EL. (There was a TAFF ballot in every copy of A27, and when I remembered I stuck copies in with subsequent subscribers’ first

issues.) Vote! Vote wisely! Vote for Avedon Carol! Do it now!

Yet More On Conventions: Am tempted to swear that never again will I try to do a con-list for Ansible – the facts keep shifting and changing faster than I can type them. Also I make mistakes. (Quick now – did you even notice the mention of Noreascon as the 1982 rather than 1980 Worldcon on the back page?) So ...

Santacon: yes, it is being held in 1984 (14-16 Dec).

Oxcon (late Aug to early Sept 84, in some Oxford college-probably St Catz) is the Right Place's reply to Fencon: £1 pre-supp to 28 Asquith Rd, Rose Hill, Oxford, OX4 4RH.

Triple C Con (26-29 Aug 83, Grand Hotel, Brum): 16th UK Trekthing. £5 supp £12.50 att (£6/£13 after 1 Feb 83); 39 Nelson St, Gloucester, GL1 UQX.

Cymrucon (26-28 Nov 82) was pretty triff and had some 480 attending (280 in 1981). Apparently they did produce a progress report but merely failed to send it to many folk, including the guests. A repeat performance is expected next year; meanwhile wait for searing reportage in Ansible 31.

Interzone is now being guaranteed against loss, to the tune of £2000 promised by the Arts Council (in this present financial year).... (Dave Pringle)

1983

Ansible 31

February 1983

ANSIBLE 31 is the cosmic adventure of the ultimate soldier on a desperate mission beyond death! (Blurb credit to Timescape Books.) Another dose of cognitive estrangement from DAVE LANGFORD, 94 LONDON ROAD, READING, BERKS, RG1 5AU, UK; phone (0734) 665804. Subscriptions £2 for 8 issues (airmailed abroad): sterling cheques/cash/POs or \$ bills to me, Girobank transfer to a/c 24 523 0408, \$US cheques to Mary & Bill Burns, 23 Kensington Ct, Hempstead, NY 11550, USA, Euromoney to Roelof Goudriaan, Postbus 589, 8200 AN Lelystad, Netherlands. Consult your Keith Freeman Mailing Label for current sub status or thinly veiled threats. ARTWORK by Alexis Gilliland, who does a nice home-brew. Feb 1983.

TAFF: Not yet having the promised Full Revelations from ever more reclusive Kevin Smith, I can only reveal that the fabulous Avedon Carol is the appointed US delegate to Albacon this Easter, and also becomes FGoH. Voting went: Avedon 35 votes N America, 34 Europe, total 69; Larry Carmody 28/ 4/32; Grant Canfield 10/7/17; Taral 12/2/14; Hold Over Funds, No Preference and the late Gen.Franco 1 vote each. Stu Shiffman now retires as NA fund administrator, superseded by Avedon, who in an exclusive interview confided: “The only things I know how to do are be a dilettante and sing.” Her address: 4409 Woodfield Rd, Kensington, MD 20895, USA. Euro-administrator still K. Smith (see COAs), who will publish a fascinating issue of TAFF TALK covering the above and much more. Meanwhile, Avedon plans to infest Britain from 25 March to 7 April – no space here for usual character assassination, but read Albacon’s PR3 ...

L. Ron Hubbard Not Dead, reports our expert on the esoteric, George Hay – his “good source” for this being outside the Scientology organization. New readers begin here: Hubbard’s son Ronald DeWolf is trying to have LRH declared dead or senile, presumably with a view to scooping the royalties on Hubbard’s doorstep skiffy blockbuster *Battlefield Earth* (NEL July), to which a 2,500,000 word sequel in 12 volumes has already been announced.

“Position on Hubbard fiction rights in complete mystery,” clarifies George. Nobody has seen Hubbard at the numerous Scientology-sponsored publicity binges for BE, though letters allegedly from him have been read at them; only the vilest of fans (Malcolm Edwards) have had the temerity to suggest that the contents of BE are prima-facie evidence of its author’s death. Charles Platt has reportedly sworn an affidavit to the effect that his recent postal interview with Hubbard seemed to be the real thing. What next?

Hugos/Nebulas: Hugo nomination forms have now reached the UK – anyone wishing to spend \$15 for the privilege of not influencing the mindless voting hordes is welcome to purchase a xerox of my copy. Ballots must be postmarked by 8 March. The preliminary Nebula ballot is also to hand, top novels being *Sword Of The Lictor* (19 nominations), *Helliconia Spring* and *No Enemy But Time* (both 15) – but expect huge surges forward from *Friday* (13), *Foundation’s Edge & 2010* (both 5). Also of UK interest: *Roderick* (7), *Transmigration Of Timothy Archer* (7), *Silver Metal Lover* (4). And in the novelettes: “Myths of the Near Future”/Ballard (7), “House on Hollow Mountain”/David Redd (3).

The Wooster Letter: “Hero Campbell Award winner Somtow Sucharitkul, instead of Christmas cards, is sending copies of his awesome short story ‘The Fallen Country’ (Elsewhere II), noting that ‘if, by some quirk of fate, you happen to have a Hugo nomination ballot before you ... well, you can’t blame me for trying.’ ... Speaking of awesome fame, Harlan Ellison is the only SF superstar to grace the pages of The American Bachelor’s Register, compiled by the learned editors of Playgirl as a guide to, er, ‘hunks’. Ansible readers wishing to abandon their lives to the conquest of Mt. Ellison are advised that frontal assault is desirable: ‘Don’t play panther games with me,’ Ellison warns. ‘Don’t circle round and round my fire.’ (And hard-hitting new fanzine *DT* [M. Edwards] carries the glad news that *Last Dangerous Visions* is Finished, nearly, and ready for delivery to Houghton Mifflin within the week, although – quoth HE – there was still just time for Chris Priest to send in a story ...)

“Robert Asprin is trying to form a consulting firm to hustle money from corporations to subsidize cons. Beer companies like Michelob could subsidize film programmes, for example. Think: Isaac Asimov sponsored by Wonder Bread, Ted White courtesy of Dupont (Better Living Through Chemicals), Jerry Pournelle courtesy of Dow Chemical (Better Living

Through Death) ...” (MMW)

Strange Companions: “A US company, I understand, has decided to use fandom as a tax write-off. It has reportedly put \$600,000 into a corporation that purports to bring famous Sci-Fi pros to cons, free of charge. Called ‘Synergy’, it has a well-paid board of directors consisting of hustling fringe-fans who apparently talked the company into the idea. (A local member has sold a Star Trek bridge [is that like a Brooklyn Bridge? – DRL] belonging to him to Synergy for ~\$20,000.) Synergy is introducing whoring to fandom; they seem to expect this reaction, and have been appearing at cons with buttons asking fans to ‘give them a chance’ before making up their minds.” (Taral)

Bestsellers & Things: Huge hubbub in *Locus* and places about the latest Asimov sequel reaching #3 on the NY Times bestseller list, only to be overtopped by *2010: A Space Sequel* at #2. Chris Priest notes that all this praise for our boys tends to ignore the fact that James A Michener’s “impure sf” novel *Space* was at #1 around then, and adds: “Isn’t it strange, silly and sad how important the best-seller list has suddenly become to SF writers? My, it seems like only yesterday that I used to read scornful remarks about writers of ‘bestsellers’ ...” All this wouldn’t be so bad if the Asimov weren’t unreadably dull or the Clarke were more than a competent Clarke pastiche. M.M. Wooster reports that “ACC has been crashing papers left and right with his publicity tour for 2010 ... He informed *USA Today* that the sequel to *2010* ‘will be called *20,001*, and it’s promised for New Year’s Day, 2000.’ ...The Joe Nicholas Memorial Award for best acerbic review of 1982 goes to Tom Disch, reviewing *Foundation’s Itch* in *Inquiry*: ‘.. proved after a few pages’ testing to be unfit for human consumption ... Asimov attempts so little and achieves so much less that a critic shrinks before the task of describing emptiness so vast ... virtually no action save the movement of puppets’ jaws, and the dramatic impact of the story falls far short of a Senate filibuster ... [Whether it] will enjoy the success of its antecedent trilogy would seem to lie in the hands of the ten-to-twelve-year-old segment of the reading public.’ (TD)” (MMW yet again)

Charles Platt Repudiates! (See M.M. Wooster’s bits in A30.) “There I was at the world fantasy convention, doing my best to provide good copy for grubby voyeurs such as he – and he got it all wrong. The beer I squirted at Ellen Datlow was from a bottle, not a can. I was in Kirby McCauley’s

penthouse suite, not the more plebeian, overcrowded Ace party. I was not attired in black leather; indeed, do not own any other than a jacket and a few lockable wrist and ankle restraints, none of which I normally wear at social gatherings. And I was not ‘given the boot’ by Susan Allison; in fact she seemed so impressed by the simple honesty of my critical statement re Ms Datlow and her editorial policies that she kindly led me from McCauley’s suite to her own party, perhaps hoping to put my talents to further use. Adding it up, I find Wooster made four errors in two sentences, from which I conclude he wrote the story from hearsay, no doubt unable to attend the events himself due to amateur status. Tut!” Mr Platt also sends a bizarre memo from Edelman Public Relations, explaining how Space Sells and how a programme of Screaming Yellow Zonkers activities (what?) is planned to increase US Ovaltine sales via skiffy tie-ins under the benign guidance of “an expert in trends in science, computers and SF” – none other than Charles Platt. A later note applauds Philcon 1982, held 15 Jan 1983 “in an aridly modern, dully beige downtown hotel concurrently with a convention of gravestone builders, possibly a significant omen ... The non-art programming was monumentally dull, encumbered with obscure members who seemed to have been added, or to have added themselves, at the last minute. The ‘High-Tech SF’ panel included not only e.g. Hal Clement but also Susan Shwartz, whose credentials in science and/or fiction apparently consist of having edited one anthology. Still, Clement did get time to explain, rather endearingly, that dangers of nuclear power plants are trivial compared with dangers in the home such as gas mains and slippery bathtubs ... A mood of rare torpor pervaded most of Saturday, as five people successively and separately left the SFWA suite to take afternoon naps in their rooms (and they meant it) ... Generally the SF folk were easily distinguishable from the tombstone builders in that the latter, in addition to being respectably dressed and of average weight, were also more lively.” (CP)

Starlight SF: an Ansible spinoff now lurks in the pages of Prestel, British Telecom’s fabulously unpopular viewdata system. Masterminded by D. Langford, G. Hay (consultant) and David Babsky (of the Micronet 800 user group – under brutal questioning he confesses to having been at school with Brian Stableford, and appalling revelations are expected any day), Starlight is already instructing countless dozens of profans to vote Hugos to Space Eater and The Science in SF. Famous pros are invited to send in snippets about their doings – no money in it, old chap (as the BBC used to say), but

think of the publicity. Everyone else is invited to punch 6006207 on the nearest Prestel set, and boggle.

Dougal Dixon of *After Man* fame turned up unexpectedly at Cymrucon, complete with that model of his vile Night Stalker beastie (Hazel was embarrassed to have this horror left in her arms for some hours while Mr Dixon was otherwise occupied in the bar). Concerning his non-win of the Hugo – which Chicon have so far neglected to tell him about – he quipped, “Any system of judging that elects *Raiders Of The Lost Ark* as the best dramatic presentation must be a little suspect.”

COFF: Too late for A30, I received detailed Concrete Overcoat Fan Fund results from Kev Clarke. 305 votes for 56 nominees were recorded, raising £15.25 each for TAFF & GUFF. The fans you hate to love: Bob (fake) Shaw 62 votes, Steve Green 50, Pauline Morgan/Kevin Rattan 17, Kev Clarke 16, Sandy Brown/Howie Rosenblum 11, Paul Turner 7, Vernon “Giggles” Brown/Rory McLean/Chris Baker/Chuck Connor/Dave Baber/ D. Langford 6, Rog Peyton/Brian Smith 5, Jessica Watson/Eve Harvey/Malcolm Edwards/Alan Dorey/Chuck Partington 4, Jan Huxley/Jon Cowie/Hans Loose 3, Ian Watson/John Brosnan/ Albacon II Committee/Steve “Haggis” Rae/Carlton Hill/ Joe Nicholas/Steve Jones 2. Lots of people were =32nd with 1 vote, including COFF co-administrator Chris Suslowicz, Ken Eadie, Robert Heinlein and someone called Stephanie Green. “Thanks to all, and Novacon 12 for programme time,” says furry and easily corrupted Mr Clarke. 6 lousy votes ...

Dancon 82 “was rather odd,” reports Colin Fine. “The Danish SF Circle is in a bad way – still smarting from Dancon 80, which was grandly planned and under-attended; their publishing business has suffered the depredations of their landlord, who sent the decorators in without warning them and had their stock destroyed as rubbish – they’re going to law over that one – and there appears to be internal tension between factions from Sealand and Fyn. Thus this year’s national con was a shoestring operation, comparable to Colnecon, except that of 50-60 attendees at least 25% were pro/semipro – authors, editors, translators. All zines in evidence were litho-produced, full of reviews, new fiction and translations of English-language stories; all were on sale; no sign of the usual. (But when I revealed I could read Danish several editors pressed them on me.) The con was non-residential, held in a Community Centre in Valby, a suburb of Copenhagen. Four meeting rooms, one with

continuous films, one with books (i.e. the above zines and the four most recent books published by Tangent), the programme in the other two alternately. I sat in on some, trying to understand, but am now convinced that Danish is impossible as a spoken medium....” (CF)

Clarke Again: ACC Secretaryperson Paul Heskett sends more scraps from the great man’s desk, revealing (e.g.) that the Polish crisis is not preventing our old pal Wiktor Bukato from trying to organize a collection of Clarke shorts in Polish translation (as early as last September). The usual drawback of payment-only-within-Poland-in-zlotys is brilliantly met by Clarke’s Countergambit, whereby with a dazzling smile he reveals that his agents have already negotiated the first-ever deal for Soviet royalties to be paid in real money outside the USSR....

Larry Niven addresses this plea to readers of *USA Today*: “If you insist on bombing [America], I’d rather you used neutron bombs ... because neutron bombs only kill people, not buildings. If I survive, I’ll have something to build civilization with.” Ansible suspects that Larry does not know a lot about n-bombs and should consult his pal Jerry.

Media Man R.I. Barycz sends appalling facts about *ET* ladies’ underwear, declares that “Star Trek 3, *In Search Of Spock*, will be directed by ol’ pointed ears himself,” and spreads rumours about the films *Dune* (“talk of Sting of The Police playing Paul ... it’ll happen in we-have-ways-of-devaluing-the-peso-gringo Mexico”), *2010* (“Having Kubrick direct has come to a halt over \$. With K I’m not surprised. Did he really take 35 takes to get Jack Nicholson out of a snowmobile in *Shining*?”) and: “Harrison Ford’s girlfriend who wrote *ET* is to write *ET2*, in which Ma Bell comes to collect a phone bill. 3000 lightyears etc ...” (RIB)

D.G. Compton Unsaleable In US Market! So proclaims a US editor who had better remain anonymous, thus dashing Langfordian hopes which had risen at the surprising information that a submission’s style had “edged into the Comtonesque.” In a world like this, who can be surprised that Jackie Lichtenberg’s *House Of Zeor* (autographed) is selling in the NY “Fantasy Archives” shop for – better sit down – \$75.00?

Stuff That Even Ansible Won’t Print: under this heading our Malcolm’s *DT* reveals revelations, e.g. about Ben Bova’s nonfiction *The High Road*, 3000 copies of which were bought by *Omni* (ed. Ben Bova, then), at terms

grossly unfavourable to *Omni* but not to BB, and expensively advertised in *Omni* at a cost of x thousand dollars transferred to the ad division of Guccione's empire, achieving an ultimate reported sale of 38 copies. Gee whiz. *Ansible*, however, draws the line at revealing which editor of *DT* and *Interzone* has contrived to sell a story to *Interzone*: you all know that.

SUFF (Scandinavia-UK Fan Fund) is the eldritch brainchild of Ahrvid Engholm, who'd like to start a tradition by bringing a fabulous British fan to Swecon 83 (Stockholm 17-20 Aug). Required: fundraising to the tune of about £200, a UK rep to help with this and with publicity, and nifty candidates who'd like to become an official delegate and guest at Swecon. Ahrvid even suggests a special subfund to meet Sweden's high beer prices ... Prospective reps or candidates should write to AE, Maskinistgatan 9 ob, S-117 47 Stockholm, Sweden. Also: *Fanac*, the Swedish newszine which began like *Ansible* (but in 1963) and grew to resemble *Locus*, folded with issue 118, December 1982. Founder and editor John-Henri Holmberg wants to concentrate on the filthy prozine *Nova SF*. Also: Sam Lundwall's new novel *Crash* – "about the wild life during SFWA meetings in New York" – is unlikely to be published outside Sweden. "They'd lynch me," says Sam. Also: Who's Cherry Wilder? (*AH*)

More Euromatters: The crazed Yugoslav fans, not content with bidding for Eurocon 1986 and Worldcon 1988, are now eager to have their 1983 con declared a Eurocon even though Eurocons are biennial in even-numbered years. Meanwhile the Italians have taken over World SF, issuing an immense booklet of Italian SF data which they call a Prontuary. Over to Malcolm: "Virtually every one of them sounds like a Mafia hitman, and that peculiar term 'Prontuary' certainly sounds like a place where corpses end up pretty damn quick." Um.

The *Ansible* Higher Education Supplement [Cymrucon]

Cymrucon: 27-28 November 1982, Central Hotel, Cardiff
Phil Palmer

Cymrucon in Caerdydd was special for me as it was the first time I'd been in strange parts for quite a long time, reflecting how after you've been to a few

cons you find you've been to most parts of the country. Alison (a colleague) had recently been to Wales and had remarked that it took so long to read the bilingual road signs, and parse and pronounce the Welsh bits, that you'd gone past the turning before you knew it. "Pooh," I'd said, "you're just a girl. Bilingual road signs are something boys are good at." But it's true; you do go sailing past. Yet it's hard to get completely lost when all you have to do is drive down the M4, and I eventually found my way to the quite astonishing CENTRAL HOT L. (That's what the neon sign said; I'm very observant you know.)

This building may have started out quite sensibly, but has evidently been redesigned by Peake (the labyrinthine basement), Grouch Marx (the partitioning of the bedrooms: I never found the room where you had to bang on the wall so your neighbours could turn your lights out), Escher and Lovecraft (floors and walls inclined at eldritch and impossible angles, unbearable for the human mind to comprehend, so you lurched drunkenly around even when stone cold sober) and Torquemada (the eponymous central heating system). Some unsung genius had also situated the HOT L right by the railway line, so that periodically various unsecured objects could be seen to move through space for no apparent reason, accompanied by a deep rumbling noise such as Hollywood has led us to associate with manifestations of an invisible force. Were only the late great John W. Campbell still with us then that mighty intellect would have been at work, driving huge tonnages of freight through the future universe propelled only by the influences of huge space-born mega-railways.... The Royal Angus it wasn't, but it lent a certain character to the weekend.

The other remarkable feature of this con was that your badge didn't have your name on it, so that conversations with strangers took on an added piquancy. Do I already know this person? Am I being incredibly rude? The arrangement had its compensations: I was able to enrol as Sandy Brown for Hugh Mascetti's Oxcon, promising to pay later. I still have the receipt. The Machete entertained us at length with talk of guns and rifles and shooting machines, all of which he's very fond of. It's similar to talking to someone about computers, really. He described a Gatling attachment for an automatic which seems to enable you to blaze off wildly and indiscriminately in all directions. "Ho ho," chortled Lionel Fanthorpe, "that would give the local skinheads something to think about."

I zoomed off on Saturday morning to winkle Caerdydd founder-fan and local skinhead out of his scratcher, spending the day being shown high and low spots of the Cambrian metropolis, in particular something wonderful called Brains' Dark. After that everything went dark quite satisfyingly: even the atrocious con disco didn't seem to matter too much. I remember saying goodbye to Brian Stableford, who'd only been over for one day, and apologizing for missing his talk which everyone said had been jolly good. I'd missed Ian Watson's and Lionel Fanthorpe's too, after all their hard work and all, so early next morning I did the only possible thing. I stayed in bed and missed Dave Langford's. (Well, it would have been crawling, wouldn't it?)

In case you're thinking that talking to SF fans isn't sufficient to justify conventioning, I did go to one talk on something interesting and new to me. This was Dez Skinn's and Garry Leach's Item on *Warrior* comic, of which they are the editor and an artist respectively. *Warrior* is excellent, with detailed, competent draughtsmanship and stylish, imaginative storylines: it was interesting to get an insight into two personalities behind it. Garry Leach had sampled the delights of carry-out curried chicken and chips from the local chippie the previous evening, and had declared it to be true nectar. He now withdrew this opinion. In the interests of research I tried some myself; apart from having my postconvention bowel movement a little earlier than customary, I can report no spectacular effects. Still, read *Warrior*, they have suffered for their art.

Two images from amid the apres-con blues ... One is of late Saturday night, and Nicholas the Nervous One (Who he? – Ed) is quizzing me on Welsh pronunciation. Some Radio 1 DJ clot has offended everyone by rhyming Pontypridd with twenty quid; though I've managed to say "Troed-y-Rhiw" earlier in the day with at least the right noises, if the wrong accent, I am still English and suspect.

"Say 'Tonypandy'," commands the fluffy one.

"Tonypandy," I answer brightly, although it hasn't occurred to me that it's pronounced that way until just now: everyone is too pissed to spot the trick.

The other image is of passing a sofa on Sunday morning and one exhausted teenager is remarking to another, "You know, I just can't face the prospect of watching *Barbarella* again in a room full of people." Yes, it was that kind of convention. As I drove back into England the towers of the Severn Bridge

diminished in the rear-view mirror like falling guillotines.
(*Phil Palmer*)

Dazed They Were, And Bleary Eyed

Ace reporter Dick Downes saw the programme:

Cymrucon 2 had the same venue as #1, but there was more of it; in the face of over 500 fans, the Sunday breakfasts were lacking in content until Ann Looker attacked the manager's wife with her Presence and the starving were fed at last. The same complaints about the hotel were made, the same workmen were deepening the Mohole outside, and a little bird tells me the venue will change for '83....

High spots for me were the Chris Morgan writers' workshops and the guests' speeches. Writers and readers alike cringed and thrilled in turn to the swingeingly erudite Watson and Stableford, the delightfully earthy garden of Badger-hunting Fanthorpe, the consummate acting skills of the ever-mimeful Langford. Watson: "Criticism is like a weed – it imitates the plant of Literature while strangling it, unrecognized in its impostority." Stableford: "Ideas and themes in SF come in three categories – Aha! Ho-ho! and Yeuk!" Fanthorpe: "Come next Beet Plucking, me deary-o ..." (All cringed at RLF's born-again inspirational message at the end of his speech, poetically calling fans to true religion ... DRL.) Langford: "Breaking this year's pattern of guest speeches, I shall not discuss the Wittgenstein Academy of Christian Gardening." Somehow the view one has of the Great Published changes when one sees them bared to hallucinogenic cacti, the russell of their kanted philosophy, the sheer exuberance of their stylistic development-or sees them in the Real World of negotiation with toxophilite publishers.

Scoop! Shock! Horror! Three fifths of the Fancy Dress Judges were sexists, and the other two-fifths (both called Watson – DRL) walked out when they awarded a Mary Whitemouse Least Dressed award, much more refined than the Breast Dressed Award at Unicon 3. Oh, what a storm in a D-cup!

My filmgoing was limited to *Santa Claus Conquers The Martians*, a film which (If you'll just step this way, Dick, the injection won't hurt a bit-ah, he's calming down!) I'm looking forward to next year's overcrowded programme and continuous bar, even at those prices: it was a good con.
(*Dick Downes*)

Cons

1984: Still two strong bids, the controversially named Seacon 84 (Brighton) and 1984con (Blackpool), whose committee includes several organizers of Seacons 75 and 79 – oops! The manager of the Metropole in Brighton assures Seacon 84 that the Metropole is the better of the two hotels; the manager of the Pembroke in Blackpool assures the 1984con committee that the Pembroke is infinitely superior; so it goes. 1984con has the advantage of cheap beer (currently 66p/pint) and a committee living close together; Seacon boasts function rooms offered free of charge and “something extra” in the form of 1984’s European convention, whose international committee (scattered through 15 countries) can presumably cope with any difficulties about being widely scattered. Either would run a good con.

Seacon 84 continues the hard sell in PR Zero: Heinlein promises to come (“He promised that to Seacon 79 too,” said an embittered 79 spokesman), ditto Ellison if a box is provided for him to stand on; testimonials from Clarke, Bradbury, Verne, Wells expected imminently. Is this the future of Eastercon bids – huge lists of pro endorsements, with the holder of the biggest names winning? Plainly such names will attract thousands. As a minor committee member (without portfolio) I keep getting asked, “Why must this Eurocon be combined with Eastercon, when it’ll succeed anyway, as Seacon 79 did? Why the insistence on ‘Easter or nothing’ after pledges at Channelcon (where the bid was formally announced) and Mönchengladbach (where the right to hold Eurocon was won) that if Seacon 84 failed to win Eastercon then they’d run Eurocon later in 1984?” The traditional wisdom is that Eurocons do better when combined with national cons – i.e. that without the prop of the existing Eastercon, Seacon 84 might fail. It now seems failure-proof: and rude fans say, approximately, “How dare Seacon committee members accuse the rival bid’s supporters of chauvinism and xenophobia, when Seacon 84 has itself created the situation whereby the vagaries of Eastercon voting can deprive us all of the priceless benefits of Eurocon?” (Teacup storm: Harry Bell complains that contrary to the orange Seacon 84 flyer, most Gannetfans support Blackpool; John Brunner’s pious reply denounces this as a “‘wogs begin at Calais’ attitude”; Malcolm Edwards’s Blackpool committee protests bitterly.) OK. Unlike (apparently) some Seacon 84 zealots, I still agree that fans should be able to choose the

Eastercon they want, and that a choice is a good thing ... though I rather wish Seacon 84 had aimed to outdo '79 with a colossal August Bank Holiday con, thus avoiding the current dilemma. (Unfortunately the decision to go for Eastercon and only Eastercon was taken before a Seacon 84 steering committee was formed, and was never discussed in committee: reportedly it's now too late.) As it is, the Seacon 84 Eastercon bid must either face Edwardsonian mutterings about "moral blackmail", or weaken its case by promising after all to do an August (say) Eurocon should the voting go against it – in which case fans might vote for Blackpool on the theory that, this way, both committees get to do their stuff. If, most improbably, Seacon 84 does lose Eastercon, the committee (and/or the BSFA, which as our national SF organization is nominally Responsible despite a theoretical impartiality) should arguably try to organize Eurocon later in 84 as originally promised, rather than wetly let it default to Ghent.

Better, I think, to have some advance discussion of these matters than stay grimly silent until the bidding session at Albacon (I recall with loathing how most of the Metrocon bid's question time was occupied by an idiot who kept asking about car-parks and another who kept answering him – oops, that slipped out, sorry boss). Suppose those Scots who are fanatical about "no free rooms" learn only at the last instant that Eurocon statutes require all the expenses of four international committee bosses (as well as four GoHs) to be met from con funds? Alarming revelations about 1984con, and comments on the above, will be eagerly welcomed.

Current Presupporter Scores: 1984con (Blackpool) 75+, Seacon 84 (Brighton) 225+. Oh, the tension! RaCon, imminent as I type this, will doubtless change all.

Convention Calendar

The notes below merely update and correct the version to be found in A30 (supplement, back cover), and incorporate the post-Cymrucon flyer.

The Great London SF Convention (12-14 Aug 83, Grosvenor Hotel, London): media thing, GoH J. Doohan, £3.50 daily/£5 for 3 days. Bizarrely, this is run from the US (Syndicate Inc, Box 55007, Tulsa, OK 74155) and I've seen no UK publicity: all right, sauce for the goose etc, I shall shortly be

organizing a bid for a British Worldcon to be held in (say) Flushing, NY.

Triple C Con (26-29 Aug, Grand Hotel, Brum): 16th UK Trekkiething. £6 supp £13 att to 39 Nelson St, Gloucester, GL1 4QX.

Silicon 7 (26-29 Aug, Grosvenor Hotel, Newcastle); the facts at last, after rude letters of correction from Harry Bell! £4 att to 2 Seaton Avenue, Newsham, Blyth, Northumberland. Damn these crackly phone lines....

Unicon 4 (2-4 Sept, U of Essex) confirms John Sladek as main GoH.

Mythcon (16-18 Sept, Grand Hotel, Brum): GoHs Joy Chant, Bryan Talbot, Mat Irvine; £2 supp £8 att; no conversions after 1 Sept; the awkward sods ask that you send not money but SAE for a proper bureaucratic Registration Form (to 158 West Way, Raynes Park, London, SW20 8LS). Still more encouragingly, “The Committee reserve the right to refuse admission.” Even if they’ve taken your money?

Novacon 13 (4-6 Nov, Brum, rumoured venue change devolves as usual to Royal Angus Hotel): GoH Lisa Tuttle. £7 att. In my innocence I thought money should be sent to Paul Oldroyd & Chris Donaldson (46 Colwyn Rd, Beeston, Leeds LS11 6PY), but the infallible Brum SF Group Newsletter corrects this to Phill Probert & Eunice Pearson, Apt 2, 1 Broughton Rd, Handsworth, Birmingham B20.

Oxcon 84 (late Aug/early Sept, in some Oxford college – probably not Brasenose, famous for producing Martin Hoare, Dave Langford and Jack Profumo): £1 pre-supp to 28 Asquith Rd, Rose Hill, Oxford, OX4 4RH. This is a bid for the peripatetic Unicon – there’s another, data not to hand. Evil Hugh Mascetti’s Oxcon cohorts little know that even now, the ancient sages of Unicon (C. Hughes, J. Fairey, J. Huxley) are plotting a Unicon Charter laying down rules too irksome to list ... thus achieving the longed-for guidelines several decades quicker than Eastercon.

Santacon (14-16 Dec, Leeds Dragonara) is, as predicted in A30, a 1984 event.

Worldcon Yugoslavia (1988) is, of course, merely a bid so far. Info: Sfera, Ivanicgradaka 41A, 41000 Zagreb. Or c/o the eligible bachelor whose Slavic good looks are the talk of Hanwell: Gerry Webb, 67 Shakespeare Rd, Hanwell, W.7. European Cons In General are well covered in Roelof G’s Shards of Babel (see masthead for address): vile, insular, chauvinist Ansible

shifty claims a lack of space for coverage of more than events of obvious UK fannish interest.

Club Spot

(Idiosyncratic choices only; scene much better covered by BSFA, etc):

Glomerule: The Reading Sf (Reading) Group meets on 3rd Thursday of each month to debate on the role of SF in beer, 7.30-8pm onward. The former pub has installed a disco and driven out even deaf Langford to the RAILWAY TAVERN almost next door: it's still right out of BR station, left after bus station, and just up the hill. Hic.

New Southend Group: "held an open night mid-Jan; fiasco from start to finish, talk on SF, when half the members think it begins and ends with ET, was asking for trouble. At least one guy walked out while we were there, muttering 'Sod this crap, I read books.' Trouble is that this sort of thing actively discourages the people they should be trying to attract; and they're labouring under the delusion that a group needs at least 50 members to succeed. Undaunted, they're now prattling happily about running a con next year, none having yet been to one ..." (Alex Stewart)

COA

CHRIS BAILEY and FOCUS, 23 Clevedon Rd, London, SE20 7QQ • PAUL & JUDY BEGG, 37 Vesper Gate Dr, Kirkstall, Leeds, LS5 3RD • PETER COHEN, 68 Chatsworth Ave, Cosham, Portsmouth, Hants • PHILIP COLLINS, 7 Colchester Rd, Leyton, London, E10 6HA • LIONEL and PATRICIA FANTHORPE, "Rivendell", 48 Claude Rd, Cardiff, CF2 3QA • CHRIS & PAULINE MORGAN, 321 Sarehole Rd, Hall Green, Birmingham B28 0AL • CYRIL SIMSA, 15 Holland St, Cambridge, CB4 • KEVIN SMITH, 53 Altrincham Rd, Gatley, Cheshire, SK8 4EL • PHIL & LIZ STEPHENSON-PAYNE, "Imladris", 25a Copgrove Rd, Leeds, LS8 2SP • JON WAITE, 1st Floor Flat, 47 Cintra Park, London, SE 19 • JON WALLACE [a non-COA – some of his mail's been bouncing with Not Known At This Address markings, but he's still at:] 21 Charleston St, Dundee, DD2 4RG • ASHLEY WATKINS, Flat 3, 2a The Leas, Westcliff-

on-Sea, Essex, SS0 7ST

Infinitely Improbable

Engagements & Things: Spring approaches, the year's first fanzines peep shyly through the soil, and the young fan's fancy turns to wedding bells and rotten clichés. Steve Green and Ann Thomas; Kev Smith and (after eleven years of cautious hesitation) Diana Reed; Peter Nicholls and Clare Coney (who aim to marry in July): all have attained that state which is the opposite of "vacant". Peter, alas, has been suffering from broken ribs sustained in a ski mishap: although he's still in semi-amicable dispute with Brian Stableford and D. Langford over *Sci in Skiffy* royalties, it is not true that his first Get Well card was a telegram from Brian saying "That was the first warning" ...

D. West's Bane: tell it not in Bingley, but another famous fanzine reprint has emerged – 4 issues of Lee Hoffman's *Quandry* in facsimile, \$5 from Joe Siclari, 4599 NW 5th Ave, Boca Raton, FL 33431, USA. Also of peripheral interest: Ethel Lindsay has privately published a bibliography of detective-genre reference books, £2 plus postage (26p): her subsidiary aim of including all nonfiction by mystery authors may be overambitious, e.g. she cites 9 out of about 90 G.K. Chesterton titles. 69 Barry Rd, Carnoustie, Angus, DD7 7QQ ... **Without Comment:** "6.5pm: Riverside. GLC leader Ken

Livingstone is a science fiction buff and reviews ET." (Express TV guide 6 Dec) ... **RIP:** Joan Hunter Holly of *The Flying Eyes* fame (19 Oct) ... **Help Wanted:** Joy Hibbert plans to run a minibus from (presumably) Stoke-on-Trent or thereabouts to Albacon II, cost approx £11/head – phone (0782) 271070, and while you're at it, advise her on how to run her WEA course in SF after Easter. Also: your Editor needs urgently to know the price asked in remainder shops recently (or even better, that at which it was offered to them) for the Langford/Morgan *Facts & Fallacies* – remaindered in breach of contract by Webb & Bower, who are now asking a nonsensical price for the few remaining copies ... **Kurt Vonnegut** is flashing through England this month to promote his latest, *Deadeye Dick* (sequel titled *Mexican Pete* is not expected) ... Oh, I can't resist it: Andromeda Bookshop's top authors for 82 were (1) Wolfe; (=2) May, Adams, Dicks; (5) Harrison; (6) Pournelle; (7) Langford; (=8) Herbert, McIntyre, Niven ho Perhaps more interesting are the top publishers – (1) Futura; (2) Arrow; (3) Star/Target (presumably on the strength of Dr Who books); (4) Pan; (5) NEL; (6) Sphere; (7) Grenada; (8)

Corgi; (9) Fontana; (10) Hamlyn; (11) Penguin/Puffin; (12) Magnum/Methuen; (13) Unwin; (14) Coronet (with no points at all – scores being calculated on books in the shop’s monthly Top Ten only) ... **Sidney Jordan** of Jeff Hawke lives, and has lately been the great and good friend of Marise Morland-Chapman (High Wycombe), who threatens to bring him to Reading meetings as GoH ... **Naughty Parts:** French publishers J’ai Lu and JC Lattes are operating an interesting anti-censorship, translating “lowbrow adventure SF novels” with added spicy sex scenes. “I can picture a profitable smuggling trade of the ‘complete, desabridged’ French editions towards the prude-but-frustrated countries (UK, USA) where only the mere original text was published ...” (Pascal Thomas in *SoB*) ...

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Become a **D. WEST GROUPIE!** ARE YOU blindingly handsome, possessed of immense muscular strength, an invariable winner at dominoes, the proud owner of an IQ in excess of, say, 95? IF SO, forget it. ARE YOU small, weedy, of one or several sexes, impressionable, easily overawed by cold sneers during the Cutting of the Cards? DOES YOUR soft flesh have an unhealthy, luminescent pallor? DO YOU habitually carry more than £10 in used oncercs? THEN D. WEST WANTS YOU! Yes, Dave (for it is he) West needs eager young fans to help him massage the bits he’s too old, tired, devious and manipulative to reach.

LEARN TO PERFORM ... MAKE AN IMPRESSION ... RID yourself of awkward 50p pieces via D’s unique Laying-On of Hands ... **FETCH** drinks in the staggering West Fitness Programme – combines Interbar Jogging with Loss of Unsightly Wallet Fat ... **FALL** over in approved fashion as demonstrated by the Master in person (Advanced Groupies Only) ... **READ** the sense-defying Sacred Texts, of which it has been said, by Ted White, frequently! (Soon available in 1000-page facsimile edition from Bergeron & Nielsen Hayden Reprints [1939] Inc) ...

WRITE NOW to The Master, 48 Norman St, Bingley, W Yorks, BD16 4JT, enclosing only the first of many 50p pieces and saying, in 20,000 words or more, “Yes! I want to be a D. WEST GROUPIE!” **HURRY** – or the **CHAIN** will be **BROKEN!!!**

A Modest Proposal: “With regard to the fanzine Hugo problem, my suggestion is to divide the number of votes cast by the circulation of the zine – with, say, a minimum print run of about 100 to qualify.” (*Benedict Cullum*) Fun, but implausible (tips the balance too far *against* giant-circulation mags whose readers greatly outnumber Hugo voters) ... **Ian Watson Reveals** the secrets of his first appearance in print – a piece on growing cacti in a gardening mag, published when he was 13. Later, infused with Aldous Huxley, he wrote on “Growing the Sacred Cactus” (peyote), and even tried some, but ate the wrong bit: all that came through the doors of perception was vague nausea ... **Peter Roberts** wants to sell of 1000s of fanzines and is preparing a List: send wants and SAE to Gafiate’s Retreat, 36 Western Rd, Torquay, TQ1 4RL ... **Jim Barker** is now so famous and successful an artist (cartoons for Mike Rohan’s book on micros, greetings card designs Real Ale ad artwork, comics, you name it) that he’s thinking of leasing an office/studio rather than work at home. His second Great Pork Pie Race, at Albacon II, invites entries – criterion this year is “the most fannish means” of transporting the pie from A to B ... **California Book Auction** (24 Feb) features all the goodies you hoped you’d never find, e.g. rare copies of *Fahrenheit 451* and even *Firestarter* bound in asbestos. Am eagerly searching for that rare edition of Lovecraft bound in gorgonzola ... **Lancs SF:** P. Pinto protests that I failed to give an address for his IMT book traders (45 Blades St, Lancaster, LA1 1TS) or to mention the wonderful meetings on 1st Wed each month there and at the Crown pub. Well, I won’t, so there ... **The Fangs Of Bostock:** Simon B. is doing a lewd *Dracula* send-up on video (he’s director), and nude virgins are eagerly solicited – sex unspecified.

CREDITS: C. Priest (Pedantry), Hazel (Hand-Lettering), JH/JMN/KJS/DRL (Groupie Ad)

Hazel’s Language Lessons: Italian?

That word *prontuary* (directory? see end of p.2) baffles all our references except one 1878 Italian dictionary ...

prontuaria: Vizio che nasce dall’ira, sfacciataggine.

A vice born out of wrath? Impudence/facetiousness?

So, no doubt, is

ANSIBLE 31, from:
94 London Rd, Reading,
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***Ansible* 32**

March 1983

ANSIBLE 32 is argute with analystic refulgence and beneficent mansuetude; it makes its preterite way to you in March 1983, hurled like a jerid from the gaunt, compulsory visage of DAVE LANGFORD, 94 LONDON ROAD, READING, BERKS, RG1 5AU, UK, whose unambergrised malison may be aneled by rushing subscriptions – £2 for 8 issues anywhere *except* Australia / Far East (£2 for 7). Sterling cheques, gelid pound notes or \$ bills to me, Giro transfer to a/c 24 523 0408; \$US cheques to Burns, 23 Kensington Ct, Hempstead, NY 11550, USA; Euromoney to R. Goudriaan, Postbus 589, 8200 AN Lelystad, Netherlands. Shining like cynosures for their aid are Keith Freeman (labels), Harry Bell (above cartoon), Dave Haden (over). There are no prizes for guessing which doorstep fantasy blockbuster your editor has recently quaffed like a sapid draught of clinquant roborant whose fulvous surquedry and caducity make knurrs come from the vocabulary out. What a wonderful person Stephen Donaldson is.

Final Ballots: BSFA Award votes – from BSFA or Albacon II members – must reach Joe Nicholas by 30 March or the Albacon desk by 6pm on 2 April. NOVEL: *Helliconia Spring*, *No Enemy But Time*, *Little Big*, *The Divine Invasion*, *The Sword of the Lictor*. SHORT: “Myths of the Near Future” (Ballard *F&SF*), “Overture for a Midsummer Night’s Dream” (Carter *Interzone*), “The Dissemblers” (Kilworth *IZ*), “Kitemaster” (Roberts *IZ*), “The Third Test” (Weiner *IZ*). MEDIA: *Another Flip for Dominick* (BBC), *Blade Runner*, *ET*, *Mad Max 2*, *Tron*. Artist: Peter Goodfellow, Peter Jones, Bruce Pennington, Tim White. **Nebula Awards** deadline also 30 March. NOVEL: *Helliconia Spring*, *Foundation’s Edge*, *No Enemy But Time*, *Transmigration of Timothy Archer*, *Friday*, *Sword of the Lictor*. NOVELLA: “Another Orphan” (Kessel *F&SF*), “Horrible Imaginings” (Leiber *Death*), “Moon of Ice” (Linaweaver *Amazing*), “Unsound Variations” (Martin *Amz*), “Souls” (Russ *F&SF*). NOVELETTE: “Myths of the Near Future”, “Understanding Human Behaviour” (Disch *F&SF*), “Burning Chrome” (Gibson *Omni*), “Mystery of the Young Gentleman” (Russ, *Speculations*),

“Swarm” (Sterling *F&SF*), “Fire Watch” (Willis *IASFM*). SHORT: “Petra” (Bear *Omni*), “High Steel” (Haldeman/Dann *F&SF*), “Corridors” (Malzberg *Engines of the Night*), “Pope of the Chimps” (Silverberg *Perpetual Light*), “A Letter from the Clearys” (Willis *IASFM*), “God’s Hooks” (Waldrop *Universe 12*). Items are eligible in the year after first US appearance for Nebulas, that after first UK appearance for BSFA Awards. **Hugo** final ballot is due to be released to *Locus* any second now and to other newszines in early 1984, which brings us to -

More Scientology! Andy Porter had a moment of paranoia in a recent *SF Chronicle*, fearing that the massed forces of Scientology would join ConStellation this year to vote the sainted Hubbard’s *Battlefield Earth* a Hugo. Charles Platt, as ever championing the free flow of information, at once wrote to the book’s promoters to suggest exactly this. “I feel very strongly that (*BE*) deserves to win the Hugo Award for Best SF Novel of 1982 ... Since Mr Hubbard has many loyal readers beyond the fan in-group, why not get those readers to pull their weight?” The first repercussions have already hit in Britain, with the lovable George Hay served with a SUPPRESSIVE PERSON DECLARE AND EXPULSION ORDER giving him the boot from the Church of Scientology for “suppressive actions” (unspecified by George), and signed by an INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE CHIEF, no less. Lateral-thinking George says he’ll be taking this up in a letter to *Foundation* as soon as he’s read *BE*.... (His current limp is not because he’s been done over by a squad of International Justice Chiefs; he encountered a hit-and-run driver in London late last year.)

Magazines? As usual a few are in the air. *Reality* is a planned magazine of TF or “technology fiction” which is like SF only subtly different, masterminded by Maurice Goldsmith (Science Policy Foundation), Charles Barren (SF Foundation Acting Administrator). George Hay and just possibly me: having been to a meeting or two and learnt that the planned format was an A3 newspaper costing around 50p, to be launched in the Spring, I dutifully kept all this confidential as requested, only to hear no more (bar rumours from George about £30/thousand for fiction, possible April launch, and submissions to CB c/o SF Foundation, NE London Poly, Longbridge Rd, Dagenham, RM8 2AS) ... but M. Edwards tells me I’m editor of the thing, and I suppose he can’t possibly be wrong. *Sebastian* is a semipro affair which should be out around now. “A4 size, vicious, shocking, avant-garde,

provocative, about 80 pages,” says expatriate Frenchperson Patrice Bernard (Intergalactic Art Ltd, 31 Morecambe St, SE17 1DX). 70% art/comix; relies mainly on French talent; text in English, though. *World Tomorrow*, mentioned in *A28* as “postponed to Spring”, remains silent.

TAFF: Cruelly maligned and deeply wounded Kevin Smith, who is not reclusive at all, explains that he wasn’t able to furnish me with TransAtlantic Fan Fund final statistics since Stu Shiffman hadn’t passed them to Kevin. Avedon Carol, meanwhile, is eager to meet London fans and visit the One Tun (though she doesn’t know this yet) just before Albacon – and thus Malcolm Edwards and I (neither of whose business it is) are unilaterally declaring a mini-One Tun meet on the evening of Wednesday 30 march. Take note. This may be the only warning you get. The really stark and stupendous rumours concern the upcoming 1984 TAFF campaign, with Rob Hansen and D. “Dave” West contending to go to Los Angeles....

Phil Dick Award for best original US paperback SF of ’82 – judges Le Guin, Disch, Spinrad – will be announced soon. Finalists: *Waiting for the Barbarians* (Coetzee), *Aurelia* (Lafferty), *The Prometheus Man* (Nelson), *Software* (Rucker), *Roderick* (Sladek), *Umbral Anthology of SF Poetry* (ed. Tem).

The Wonderful BSFA, who brought you the famous French poet Rambo (Ballard interview transcribed by Dorey/Nicholas) and the philosopher A.G. Ayer (*Vector 112* author of *Languaje, Truth and Logic*), now offer the amazing disappearing *Matrix*, as not found in the February mailing. “Doing away with *Matrix* is a first giant step towards improving BSFA popularity”, chairman Dorey did not say in an exclusive interview. “Membership will top 2000 when we’ve gone on to abolish *Paperback Inferno* and *Vector*,” he failed to add. BSFA profits in 1982 came to £501.



Chris Priest Writes! (Slap on the wrist to the smart alec who said “Yes, but not very often.”) According to a current Best of Young British Novelists advert, Chris looks like this on the right [*here above*], the partial obscuration of his chin being caused by the hairstyle of another B.Y.B.N. Over to him: “We have a new phenomenon in the SF world, which I think might be called the Elderly Pioneer Syndrome. In this, SF writers getting on in years make certain discoveries about the world, harmless discoveries for the most part, but because for many decades they have believed their own misleading propaganda that SF writers have new ideas, they seem to assume that because it is happening to *them* it is happening to the world for the first time.

“The first example of this that I can recall was Robert Heinlein’s landmark discovery that blood transfusions save lives. More recently we have had Isaac Asimov crowing in public about what he obviously believes is the world’s first bestseller, and Arthur Clarke actually hiring someone to inform the world of *his* breakthroughs. Now Clarke’s most recent folly is to announce that he is the first Western writer to negotiate a royalty deal with the Soviet Union.

“Well, Clarke is actually wrong. I neither know nor care who was the ‘first’, but I myself have signed two royalty deals with the Russians, one of them as long ago as 1977. (The deals have been honoured.) Back in 1977 I was given

no impression that my case was at all remarkable, but that since the Soviet Union had signed the International Copyright Convention that such deals were routine.

“But what’s important about this is that any Western writer making a deal with the Russians ought to realize what’s going on. The Soviet authorities belatedly signed the convention *not* as a goodwill gesture to the likes of Clarke and me, but as a way of attempting to control the work of their own dissident writers. I happen to believe that on balance it is better for opposing cultures to talk to each other, and not isolate from each other, and so I was pleased to be published in Russia, but I don’t think I have any illusions about the wider consequences. The unfortunate signs are, though, that as Arthur Clarke’s grow with the years, so do his illusions.

“Clarke has much to be modest about, and I wish you newszine editors would check some facts before accepting any old crumb thrown down from the great men’s tables. Clarke’ll be telling you next he’s the most popular writer in Russia. Well, he’s had one book published. I’ve had two ... but good old Clifford Simak has had *seven!* (and to nip something else in the bud ... the most popular SF writer in China is James Gunn!)” (*Fascinated by all this, your editor begged details of the alleged Soviet use of the ICC....*)

“What happened, as I recall the reasoning, was this. Dissidents could not get their work published in the Soviet Union – and hence not abroad either – so began the practice of smuggling out MSS to Western publishers who then held the royalties for collection. (The same operated in reverse: Western writers published in Russia had to go to Moscow to collect their money and spend it locally. I believe that Brian Aldiss has actually done this.) Both sides were technically in breach of copyright ... so the Russians had the brilliant idea of using international Copyright Law to their own advantage. They set up a State Copyright Agency, through which all foreign sales and money must be passed – in either direction. (It deducts 10% for the service ... on top of other deductions.) Whether this in reality serves to prevent undesirable Russian books appearing in the West, I’ve no idea.. but certainly no Western publisher can now print a Russian writer without either breaking international law or getting permission, which can only be filtered through the State Copyright Agency, which at the very best will act as a bureaucratic obstruction.” (*Chris Priest*)

Always knew there was something ominous about the SCA....

Ian Watson Writes Too! “(1) *Changes* is now definitely scheduled for July 83. The editorial team at Berkley/Ace have not been idle in the interim. Disliking the style of typeface provided by the printer, they’ve had the galleys reset, reports Mike Bishop (who already corrected the galleys once). (2) Latest word about *Last Dangerous Visions* is that contributors with stories over 6000 words will receive a cheque for an additional \$100 real soon now; those under 6000 words, a cheque for \$50. Vol 1 ‘will’ appear from Houghton Mifflin this Autumn. May one surmise that Vol 2 might follow in ’84, Vol 3 in ’85? Indeed one may. No harm in surmising. (3) I’ve sold a comic novel about mutation and metamorphosis to Granada for ’84 publication as an original large-format paperback; title will probably be *Converts*. This is of course the same *Metamorphoses* alluded to in our interview – bounced by Gollancz, now hailed by Granada as a ‘tour de force’ – and quite right too. (4) Pamela Sargent & George Zebrowski have taken over as American editors of *SFWA Bulletin*, with myself as European editor. We intend to publish every three months, and there will be a strong Euro-Brit voice – so long as the Euro-Brits provide enough material. (5) I must say that Soviet timeship *could* have waited till publication day [of *Chekhov’s Journey*] to impact, preferably with Siberia! Damned annoying, wasting itself in the Atlantic.” (*Ian Watson*)

Brian Aldiss’s minisaga saga drags on, the famous collection of 50-word stories (27 of the 300 being by Brian, we hear, owing to lack of adequately triffic entries) having left original commissioners Cape to become the subject of enthusiastic dithering from Faber, whose offer achieved new breakthroughs into the mathematics of the infinitesimal. Faber having changed their minds, the collection moves on....

E.F. Bleiler, famous biographer, is preparing a vast compendium of essays on fantasy authors, replete with obscure German ones never yet translated, etc – reports Brian Stableford, who was quick to spot an omission from the endless list of authors to be covered. Aha, no Mervyn Peake, he cried. Quick as a flash Bleiler riposted that Peake did not write fantasy. But, said Brian, citing five reams of supportive detail.... At last the truth emerged as Bleiler made his final, crushing statement: he doesn’t like Peake. This news has been passed to the hitmen of the Peake Society (enquiries to 1 Brownswood Rd, London, N4 2HP – try SAE).

People & Books: Stephen King is expected to be signing his latest, *Christine*, at Forbidden Planet (London) in May, and ditto Gene Wolfe with the *Arrow Citadel of the Autarch* on 8 Oct (Andromeda signings in Brum no doubt to be announced)... **David Redd** passes on a *Telegraph* mag article “which manages to destroy the reputations of Isaac Asimov, Martin Amis, Adrian Berry and the *Telegraph* all in 1.5 pages”: Asimov modestly confesses to being a genius and a schmuck, Amis is scathing about Asimov’s autobiographies but sycophantic when actually interviewing him, Berry calls *Foundation’s Edge* “compelling” and quickly twists the subject into his black-hole-travel book *The Iron Sun* (now quite exploded)... **Colin Greenland**’s launch party (at FP) for his book on *New Worlds, The Entropy Exhibition*, stressed the entropy metaphor as several crates of wine underwent irreversible degradation inside not very many people.... **M. Moorcock** (also present) will shortly publish an essay called *The Retreat from Liberty* (Zomba “Bee in Bonnet” imprint, another Beautiful Jakubowski Book), proving things about the UK.... **The Lorimer Brizbeep SF Looney Party** (prop. CUSFS) got a plug in the *Grauniad* recently.... **Your Editor** is not the Mr David Langford fingered in the *Financial Times* as “missing” in the collapse of dubious security dealers Langford, Scott & Partners; nor, despite One Tun rumours, is he the person appearing in the nude on page 24 of the first March *Time Out*.... **Chris Priest** has earned the disfavour of Faber by confiding to some 56 reporters the facts of how Faber remaindered all his books last year (except *The Affirmation*), only for the Priest/Peyton consortium to buy the lot and – now – to meet the millions of orders pouring in for this Best Young Etc. Faber get 10% for passing on orders; “I’m now on a 90% royalty,” quipped Chris, but the *Grauniad* failed to print this.

Albacon II (Easter) is imminent, with PR3 published and a late change of guests: Marion Zimmer Bradley replaces Tanith Lee, who had “business commitments” – or, to quote a letter allegedly sent by her to Sam J. Lundwall – “I have a trip planned to Paris around that time. I let the committee know but said I might be able to be in Glasgow for one of the days. They declined this offer. It was the full appearance or nothing. Even then I didn’t know that I had been billed as GoH.” (AE)

Rumblings In Brum: The Novacon 13 committee wants to shake up boring old Novacon, whose sparse programme and poor value for money have raised comment. But revitalized Peter Weston is worried (it appears) that spending

more money on Novacon (film video, fanroom, free party) may eat up the vital profits which support the Brum SF group – £200-300 according to a defensive Novacon 12 PR, £500 (N-11) or £800 (N-12) according to current committeeperson Jan Huxley. Peter has recently lectured the committee in the presence of embarrassed GoH Lisa Tuttle, revived the BSFG right to veto Novacon actions, and produced a newsletter suggesting ways to “defuse criticism” by using the profits “for the greater benefit of fandom.” Next: an extraordinary General Meeting of the BSFG at which Novacon demands autonomy or at least consultation with attendees, and Steve Green runs for BSFG office, dragging in the Pauline Morgan/S. Green feud – Pauline’s impartial BSFG newsletter, her last before resigning over differences with P. Weston, slags Steve and says Don’t Vote For Him! [\[More below\]](#)

More 1984

Since [A31](#) the Eastercon 1984 arguments have reached such a pitch of frenzied excitement that the merest mention of this debate afflicts your Editor with urgent yawns. To hand are several letters from John Brunner, Malcolm Edwards and others, an Edwardszine (*DT4*) proving irrefutably that the Seacon 84/Eurocon bid is a load of dingo’s kidneys, and a 7-page rebuttal from J. Brunner proving equally irrefutably that it isn’t. Though tempted to declare the whole subject too tedious for human consumption, I select and paraphrase as follows:

Alex Stewart says of Seacon 84: “I can’t help feeling that the committee have won the bid, and they should be committed to running Eurocon in ’84 regardless. All we, British fandom, should be asked to vote on is whether it should be combined with Eastercon or not. By making Eurocon conditional on winning, they’ve made a vote for Blackpool a vote against Eurocon itself – rather than a vote for a separate Eastercon.... No one has bothered to explain *why* it’s so unthinkably impossible to run Eurocon separately. All I’ve seen are vague statements like, ‘All the best ones have been held in conjunction with a national con.’” **John Brunner**’s answer to this point is, roughly, that “to provide all the facilities we hope for we have to have a very broad financial base ... the likelihood of making a success of a separate Eurocon, particularly if it were to be held during the high season when hotel and travel charges are at their peak, seems to be diminishing by slow and

inexorable stages.” John also argues that another big con besides Eastercon would be impossible to get to for all the unemployed or otherwise impoverished fans who can only afford one big con in a year. Malcolm, on the other hand, considers that by virtue of the all-star lineup promised, Seacon 84 would be the big con of the year and a success whenever or wherever held – a separate Eastercon might be smaller as in the year of Seacon 79, but Eurocon is a guaranteed attraction. This argument obviously questions the supposed absence of a “broad financial base” for a Eurocon not allied with the Eastercon. However, jolly **Martin Hoare** now declares that it’s wholly impossible for the Eurocon to be held later in the year since there’s no time to make arrangements, since “high season” costs will be prohibitive and since the obvious alternative date – August Bank Holiday – is “too close” to Worldcon in Baltimore. (Of course, certain of these difficulties were overcome by Seacon 79.)

Though Martin’s argument may be unanswerable, it does rather beg the question. Malcolm: “What does strike me as odd about this – purely from the viewpoint of the organizing committee – is how hamstrung they have been by the decision [to run the Eurocon only if combined with the Eastercon]. They’ve given themselves one year instead of two in which to organize; they’ve already lost (by Easter) 6-7 months of valuable time. Instead of using letters from stars of sci-fi as inducements to vote, they could be using their promised attendance as inducements to join the convention. They could *already*, by now, have an assured success on their hands.” But John wants “people from a lot of countries to get a taste for [Eastercon] while it’s still possible.” We have a good thing, he says, and should share it....

The unclearness surrounding the “Eurocon levy” has, I think, dissipated. John explains that this amounts to 10 French francs per con member (about £1), to be remitted to the International Committee (as opposed to the local British committee) treasurer for such purposes as covering expenses of international committee members and helping float the next Eurocon. Owing to the Swiss Eurocon disaster (which John uses as an example of why Eurocons need to be combined with national cons, but seems more an example of why no con should be run as a one-man show) there’ll be no float from this source for Seacon 84.

John Foyster writes saying that Eurocons and national cons shouldn’t be combined since this will tend to harm the international character of Eurocon.

This strikes me as the least weighty argument against the combination that I've heard; as well declare that Eurocons shouldn't be held in individual countries. The point of Eurocon is that it takes on the flavour of the country it's visiting. The point against the combination (argues Malcolm) is that certain trappings of Eurocon may not blend with the tradition of Eastercon. But they can be ignored by fans who don't want to take advantage of translation services, gape at Eurocon awards, etc (argues John). But you will still have to pay for all this and the "levy" anyway, says Malcolm quick as a flash. But actually this will be covered by all the extra Eurofans who attend, says John (I think). You can go on as long as you like.

A point about names. Malcolm is hurt that Seacon 84 should be called Seacon 84, since all the Seacon 79/75 people involved in this bidding are on Malcolm's 1984-con Blackpool bid. John's apologetic about this – though not so much so as the idiot who drunkenly suggested it at a Eurocon gathering! – and personally wanted it called just Eurocon 84 UK, only to be outvoted. This may or may not explain why Ken Slater, who inadvertently called the bid Seacon 4, received a Brunneroid letter of correction explaining that the third convention of this name to be held in Britain would actually be called Seacon 2.

If all the stuff above and overleaf sounds confused and inconclusive, it's probably a fair guide to the state of the argument, with no-one appearing to agree on first principles but with names like "xenophobia", "tradition", "levies", "nationalism", "internationalism", and "*argument ad hominem*" floating about in the acrimonious fog. *Ansible* looks forward to when all this is over, and is not afraid to predict that Seacon 84/Eurocon/Brighton will win if Blackpool/1984con doesn't.

Oxcon: rushing in to fill August Bank Holiday 1984 is Oxford's first college con, at St Cat's. GoH Brian Aldiss (provisional), £4.50 supp £8 att to 28 Asquith Rd, Rose Hill, Oxford, OX4 4RH. Now going ahead whether or not it inherits the Unicon tradition, Oxcon promises a 24-hr bar with 4 real ales, main plus alternative video programs, and death-defying trapeze acts by the Fellows of All Souls'. Will the video shows feature closed-circuit coverage of Silicon?

Novacon/BSFG (*cont. from p.2*): The EGM happened on 11 March, mainly

to elect more committee members – including Steve Green! – but also to vote on proposals by the Novacon committee that they should have more of a free hand. Pauline Morgan got told off for that tendentious newsletter issue, which was cleverly negated by a Weston Decision that Pauline had *really* resigned before producing it. The Peter/Pauline disagreement was reportedly because he kept quite unreasonably asking her to apologize for insulting possibly inoffensive Chris Suslowicz in an earlier *BSFGN*, only it wasn't her but hubby Chris who inserted that bit ... oh god, it's like reading *Ah, Sweet Idiocy* all over again. Interesting factoids emerged: "Very obligingly, conventions have donated their profits to the group. During 1982 we received about £130 from the 1977 Eastercon (not a BSFG project but run by some members of the group as individuals) and around £500 from our own Novacon." (Eastercon 77 published profits were £145.07. No comments received from non-BSFG members of committee.) Also the BSFG's £900 video library had only 4 users last year.... P. Weston's instruction to the Novaconcom was deemed unsaid since not previously approved by BSFG committee: "So long as you make £500 for the group I don't care what you do with Novacon." Amendments to give Novacon more freedom were somehow omitted from the printed "Constitution (including *all* proposed amendments)" provided at the EGM, but instead were read out with colourful personal commentary by chairman Tim Stannard, and rejected by voters. At close of play, all fiddly clauses about Novacon needing the BSFG to sign its cheques were replaced by one giving the BSFG total power over all Novacon thoughts and actions, irrespective of the con committee, some of whom feel slightly redundant.... (Data: C. Suslowicz, S. Green, J. Wilkes, C. Hughes, J. Huxley)

Infinitely Improbable

The Science in SF was not edited even slightly by Malcolm Edwards, as drunkenly alleged by Owen Whiteoak in his post-pub preparation of the RaCon programme book. Happily engaged editor Peter Nicholls ("Is Clare Coney Fay Wray?" asked a famous anonymous correspondent, adding "I hope Peter doesn't run out of his Dr Jekyll potions.") is no longer arguing with collaborators Stableford and Langford, all having joined forces against vile packagers Roxby Press, who to the horror of all have decided to make a somewhat illicit deduction of nearly £46,000 from the receipts (to cover out-of-pocket expenses like printing the book) prior to calculation of royalties....

RIP: Mack Reynolds, who died of cancer on 30 Jan. (also my Adler Electric typewriter succumbed to bloodsucking repairmen in February.)....

Engagements Etc: Chris Lewis plans to marry “an ex-reader of McCaffrey & Norton”; Steve Higgins reports that his future spouse is Leah Phelps with an April 9 wedding date – and, sadly, that in early March they lost the baby expected for August.... **Alien Accounts:** a hidden hand, conceivably the fake Bob Shaw’s, sends the Neil Craig/Bob Shaw “Photon Books” accounts from Sept 1980 to Oct 1982. Increasing losses are visible; for 1982/3 Bob’s salary appears to have been £324, lucky man; why have I been sent this?....

Screaming Yellow Zonkers (reports nearly famous SF publicist Charles Platt – see [A31](#) for more) “are a sugar-coated popcorn candy snack. The promotion now seems to have fallen through, Ovaltine, the owners, having decided not to finance dinners at which yours truly would receive \$500 a shot for telling sales reps to get out there and SELL SELL SELL. They want me to write it as a press release instead. Cheapskates!” (CP).... **By A Strange**

Coincidence: “Guests in the Philcon SFWA suite were shocked when a tired and emotional C. Platt grabbed *SFR* columnist Darrell Schweitzer by the throat and clumsily attempted to strangle him, claiming provocation by Schweitzer in his columns criticizing the 1960s new wave. The attack was defused when New York fan Ginjer Buchanan gave Platt a maternal kiss on the cheek and led him gently away in the direction of the bathroom.” (*Leslie Smith*).... **Arvon Foundation** courses this year include one on SF/fantasy, run by J. Brunner and L. Tuttle with “guest reader” J. Sladek (July 14-19); others feature D.M. Thomas on poetry (Sept 15-20), A. Carter on fiction (Sept 29-Oct 4). A mere £80 (less possible Arts Council Grant if you’re Nice) to Arvon Foundation at Totleigh Barton, Sheepwash, Devon EX21 5NS.... **RIP:** Arthur Koestler. “he disliked fantasy but supported SF. (He once described himself as a fan of mine....)” (Brian Aldiss – who has delivered *Helliconia Summer* for autumn publication, and sold Kubrick film rights to his 1969 short “Supertoys Last All Summer Long”).... **Fan Fiction:** 1983 “AMFFIC” award for amateur SF authors looked like a good idea at first glance. Closer inspection reveals it’s compulsory to write stories based on triffic scenarios like *Blake’s 7* or *Star Trek*, that the award is strictly honorary and that (celebrities being financed to make the November presentations, change going to “Children In Need”) the entrance fee is not. You are urged, though not by me, to rush SAE-for-details to 2 Palm Ave, Fenham, Newcastle, NE4 9QT.... **Graham James** features in a recent *Grauniad* with a letter of

impenetrable obscurity referring to earlier letters and a “lady with pine drawers”: baffling.... **Albacon II Hotel** has either 5 or 0 car parking spaces depending which AA book you consult, reports Martin Easterbrook.... **Avedon Carol** should arrive in the UK at 8:10 am on 25 March at Heathrow (BA flight 274), so if you happen to be passing.... **Unicon 4** finds it’s inadvertently acquired yet another Special Guest, Angela Carter (and I’ve just noticed that her partner on the Arvon fiction course – previous page – is A.C.H. Smith of the *Dark Crystal* novelization.... **Barycz Mediates Again:** “It seems that Nimoy is not to direct *ST3* after all.... **Bug Jack Barron** now has a \$20M budget and Harlan Ellison doing the script.... The Salkinds have found their Supergirl, and quite nice looking and all. Will she appear with Superman I wonder? Fascinating: what happens when one removes from a relationship the root cause of sexual inequality, viz. the ability of the male of the species to strong-arm, intimidate and generally thump the female of the same into doing things *his* way? Fascinating: but do you think the Salkinds have considered the implications? I doubt it.... Disney organization exhibits once more the failings of an institution with too many chiefs and powers. Release of *Something Wicked This Way Comes* is put back to May to enable extra special effects to be added. Another *Watcher in the Woods*, innit – half cocked project has to be saved in the editing room and with inserts.... Legal argy-bargy over *2001* sequel (*claimed by Fox and MGM*) seems to have quietened to sound of legal minds at work. As I recollect, the film served as the basis of AC’s novel [*no, they were ‘simultaneous’ – DRL*] and MGM would have reserved sequel rights in film only. Whereas our Arthur has sequelled the novel, not the film, and these rights are his to give to 20th C. Fox ... a lot of lawyer’s children are gonna be put through college with the unravelling of the relevant clauses. Meanwhile our Arthur appears in TV commercials for Wang electronic offices, looking rather like a suntanned ET.” (*RIB*) Bob Day accuses RB of spreading perpetual-motion *Dune*-film rumours without actual substance, and reports “the ugly rumour that film rights to *Foundation’s Edge* have been sold”.... **Thanks** to all fans reporting cheapo copies (£1.50-£1.95) of the Morgan/Langford *Facts and Fallacies*, thus refuting base publishers who claimed £2.95 as the *wholesale* price.... **Bestsellers:** I’ve given up looking at the lists. It was bad enough in *Time* (14 Feb), seeing five skiffybooks (*2010, Space, ET Storybook, Edge, Life The Universe Etc*) in various spots from 1 to 9, but when Piers Anthony gets in on the act with *Night Mare*, oh God.... **Good Old Interzone** – as recently being

reported as being guaranteed against loss to the extent of 2000 Arts Council pounds – is brutally called “dire” and “awful” in *SFC* (March). Ah, these blind Americans – but wait! Actually this is in a “London Report” by lovable UK fantasy fans Steve Jones & Jo Fletcher, who will shortly be receiving another letter of protest from Joe Nicholas.... **More Aldiss:** “HRH (*sic*) The Queen allowed the term ‘science fiction’ to escape her lips without opprobrium in a speech in San Francisco. WE HAVE ARRIVED.” (*BA*).... ***The Gruesome Book*** is Ramsey Campbell’s contribution to junior horror fiction, a collection based on the philosophy “There are too many nice kiddie-ghost stories. *I* want to scare the shit out of the little buggers.” To this end he includes a plug for *Ansible*: quid pro quo, etc....

Hazel’s Language Lessons #23: Urdu (from Chris Priest)

Beecham Sahibki gooli is, literally,
“Master Beecham’s Balls” ... or
Beecham’s Pills. That’s the name on
the packet.

ANSIBLE THIRTY-TWO
edited by Dave Langford,
94 London Road, Reading,
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Ansible 33

June 1983

ANSIBLE 33: the slightly tardy post-Easter (June) issue of a frequent (allegedly) SF (allegedly) newsletter (alleged) from a purported Dave Langford at his rumoured address 94 LONDON ROAD, READING, BERKSHIRE, RG1 5AU – a whole year there, and 3 fans a week are still asking whether the postcode means we're 465 million miles from the nearest post office. SUBSCRIPTIONS, tediously and regrettably, are up again: £2 for 7 issues anywhere (airmailed outside UK). Sterling notes or cheques to me, also \$ bills; Giro transfer to a/c 24 523 0408; \$US cheques to Burns, 23 Kensington Ct, Hempstead, NY 11550; Euroshekels to Goudriaan, Postbus 589, 8200 AN Lelystad, Netherlands. Grovelling thanks to Keith "Labels" Freeman, ever ready to SUBDUE lapsed fans, to poll-topping artist Pete Lyon (above) and to Leigh Edmonds for madly volunteering to distribute Aussie copies. Also, thanks and a free issue each to the Ansible Poll voters: Ashworth (H&M), Bailey, Berry, Brazier, Brown (S), Carol, Charnock (G), Collins, Connor, Coxhead, Darroch, Day, Earp, Edwards (L&M), Ferguson, Ford, Frost, Garnett, Goudriaan, Hanna, Hansen, Harries, Hill, Jarrold, Lake, Lowe, Nielsen Hayden, Nicholas, Ounsley, Owen, Palmer, Pardoe, Polley, Robertson (J), Rose, Shearman, Sherwood, Suter, Taylor, Thomas, Tudor, Vincent, Wareham, Warminger, Watkins, Wells, West, Whiteoak, Wood, Yon. While we're still in the boring small print, I offer by unpopular request the fabulous Circulation Figures. As of 31 May, Ansible has 327 unlucky recipients, 259 in the British Isles and 68 outside. In detail: England 220, Scotland 27, Wales 7, N. Ireland & Eire 2 each, IOM 1. USA 35, Australia 11, Sweden & Canada 5 each, W. Germany 3, Finland 2, Belgium, Egypt, France, Greece, Italy, Japan & Netherlands 1 each. Print run is currently 400; many back issues available at ludicrous prices. Yawn....

The 1982-3 Checkpoint/Ansible Fan Poll

A record 52 fans voted in this, the 12th annual informal poll covering fan

doings from Easter to Easter. Here we go –

Best British Fanzine: 37 titles (and an apa) nominated. 5 points given for a 1st-place vote, 4 for 2nd, etc (same system in next two categories); *Ansible* ineligible; last year's positions in brackets after score. 1) TAPPEN (141pts) (1st): Malcolm Edwards, 28 Duckett Rd, London N4 1BN; available whimsically; two issues, #4 and #5 in 1982-3. Tappen's popularity is loathsomely displayed by Malcolm's success in publishing the best single issue, with the =best cover by the best artist plus the best article from the almost best fanwriter. Good grief. Such elitism ... 2) STILL IT MOVES (47pts) (2nd): Simon Ounsley, 21 The Village St, Leeds, LS4 2PR; available for the usual; one issue, #3. Another fat genzine like Tappen though a little sloppier; eccentric material (e.g. article on Constable) and nifty personal stuff from famous S. Ounsley. 3) Epsilon (43pts) (4th): Rob Hansen, 9a Greenleaf Rd, East Ham, London E6 1DX; available for the usual; at least two issues, #12 and #13. Despite occasional contributions, Epsilon scores highest for its letter column and Rob himself talking sense about whatever burning fannish issue is going. 4) INDIAN SCOUT (34pts) (7th): the Red Army Choir c/o Sandy Brown, 18 Gordon Tce, Blantyre, Scotland, G72 9NA; available inexplicably; the single issue of the year is billed as #19 but appears to be #2, or maybe ... h'm. Noted for triffic (and even =best) covers and violent outbreaks of street credibility – also for leaving BSFA reviewers and *Ansible* editors at a loss for words. 5) TWLL-DDU (32pts) (-): me; available usually; one issue, #20, which I still haven't finished distributing because I am a lazy sod. Contains, almost exclusively, me. Also with 5+ points: Out of the Blue (29); Drunkard's Talk, Microwave, Wallbanger (28); This Never Happens (23); Crystal Ship, Tiger Tea (22); The Chocolates of Lust, The Zine That Has No Name (14); Second-Hand Wave (13); Nabu, Small Friendly Dog, Twentythird (12); Pig on the Wall (11); Felicity (10); Creature from the Typing Pool (6). Also 8 points were scored by The Women's Periodical, which as an apa is presumably not a single fanzine ... or is it?

Best British Fanwriter: 43 fans were nominated. 1) DAVE LANGFORD (91pts) (2nd) – er, thanks; 2) D. WEST (88pts) (=12th) – another vote would put D first, an index of the huge reaction to his famous and only 1982-3 article "Performance"; 3) LINDA PICKERSGILL (69pts – h'm) (=10th) – both triffic and prolific, Linda had more pieces nominated as best article than anyone else; 4) CHRIS ATKINSON (66pts) (1st) – still in the realms of glory

despite publishing only a couple of pieces, both nominated etc etc; 5) JIMMY ROBERTSON (53pts) (3rd) – confused everyone by folding then reviving 23rd but still has Street Credibility, whatever that is. Also: Simon Ounsley (46); Malcolm Edwards (33); Skel (20); Alan Ferguson (17); Rob Hansen (14); Phil Palmer (13); Eve Harvey, Christina Lake (11); Chris Evans (10); Owen Whiteoak (9); Nick Lowe (8); John D Owen (7); Bill Carlin, Kate Davies (6).

Best British Fanartist: 31 British residents nominated, plus 3 ineligible Americans (all scored <6pts, plus “No Award” (Ditto). I’m too cautious to comment here on Art ... 1) PETE LYON (128pts) (1st); 2) ROB HANSEN (94pts) (2nd); 3) HARRY BELL (57pts) (5th); 4) D. WEST (54pts) (4th); 5) JIM BARKER (49pts) (3rd). Not much movement in the “top 5”. Also: Atom (35); Margaret Welbank (31); Anne Warren (25); John McFarlane (21; *Shep Kirkbride* (19); *Martin Helsdon* (14); *Dave Harwood* (11); *Dave Collins, Harry Turner* (6).

Best Single Issue: 36 issues of 29 different Britzines nominated, plus one ineligible US zine (1 vote only). 1) Tappen 5 (Malcolm Edwards) (20 votes); 2) Felicity (Jimmy Robertson) (13); 3) The Zine That Has No Name 3 (Skel) (11); 4) Tiger Tea 1 (Linda Pickersgill and her Periodic Women) (10); -5) Indian Scout 1983 Annual (Red Army Choir) & Still It Moves 3 (Simon Ounsley) (each 7). Also: The Chocolates of Lust 2, Microwave 5, Tappen 4, When Yngvi Was A Louse (4); Epsilon 13, Out of the Blue 4, Spook 1, Twll-Ddu 20, Wallbanger 6 (3); Crystal Ship 6, Shallow End 1, This Never Happens 3 (2).

Best Article/Column: 58 items nominated. 1) “Performance”/ D. West/Tappen 5 (24 votes! Never seen anything like it); 2) “Desert Island Lavatories”/Nick Lowe/Chocs of Lust 2 (5); =3) “Desperate Fun”/Linda Pickersgill/OotB 4, “How Women Get Pregnant”/Linda P/OotB 5, “Return to Red River”/Bill Carlin/ Indian Scout, “When Fandoms Collide”/Bob Shaw/TZTHNN, [Untitled house-move horror stories]/your editor/Cloud Chamber 13/17 (all 4 votes). Also: “Asking For It”/Atkinson/Tappen 5, “Bangers & Mash”/Lyon/2HW, “Life with the Loonies 2½”/Atkinson/T4, “Making of BOLLARDS II”/Ounsley/SIM 3 (all 3); “... Blue Eyes ...”/Robertson/Felicity, “Case of Home-icide”/Ounsley/SIM, “Fan Wars”/Davies/TT, “Go for your Goon”/Atom/Mic 5, “Making the Most of your Woodcock”/ Welbank/TT, [untitled?]/Ferguson/Felicity (all that bloody

long list with 2 votes exactly). Incidentally, Linda Pickersgill collected 10 votes spread over 4 separate articles.

Best Fanzine Cover: 32 covers from 26 different fanzines were nominated, plus a single vote for “Hold Over Funds”. =1) Pete Lyon/Tappen 5, John McFarlane/Indian Scout (8); 3) John McFarlane/Felicity (7); =4) Pete Lyon/2nd Hand Wave (Autumn 82), Margaret Welbank/The Chocs of Lust 2, Harry Hansen & Rob Bell/Epsilon 13 (all with 6 votes). Also: Barker/Wallbanger 7, Steffan/Tappen 4 (5); Lyon/SIM, Hanbellsen/Epsilon 12 (4); Fox/Crystal Ship 7, Pickersgill (presumably)/Tiger Tea, Turner/Microwave 3, Hansen/TD20 (3); Bell/Mic 4, Lyon/ Earthquake Country (2). Here P. Lyon got 23 votes spread over 7 covers, and I let D. Steffan in since though a colonial he did a BRITISH fnz cover....

Worst Thing Of 1982-3: no less than 68 items nominated. 1) THE FAKE BOB SHAW on numerous counts (14 votes); 2) JOHN BRUNNER (6); 3) KEITH WALKER’S FANZINES (5); =4) ROB HANSEN for unprintably sexist reasons – shame on a certain caddish voting bloc in Leeds, SHALLOW END, OUR WONDERFUL TORY GOVERNMENT and THE VICTORY OF THE BRIGHTON 1984 EASTERCON BID (all 4 votes). Both Keith and Bob were mentioned last time. Also: Convention Bid Fanaticism, the Falklands Affair, the Mysterious Nonappearing *Matrix*, Novacon 12 (all 3); Albacon II Hotel Food, Crystal Ship, ET, Joe Nicholas (all 2). After the extravagant pro and con reactions to “Performance” I thought it might figure here as well as in “Best Article”: not so unless we conflate the categories (1 vote apiece) “Performance” and “The D. West Cult”. Cult?

The Dead Past: Ten years ago, Peter Roberts’s *Checkpoint* 36 featured the second British fan poll “since the days of *Skyrack*”. 24 fans voted and the favourites for best fanzine, writer and artist were, respectively, *Egg* (P. Roberts), Ian Williams and curiously timeless Harry Bell. Ten years before *that*, Ron Bennett’s *Skyrack* 51 revealed the 26 voters’ favourites in the same categories to be *Skyrack* itself, Walt Willis and curiously timeless Arthur “Atom” Thomson.

BSFA Awards: Almost as cosmically influential as the Ansible poll, the BoSFA non-trophies for 1982 work were presented, as it were, at Albacon II – to *Helliconia Spring* (novel), “Kitemaster”/K. Roberts (short), *Blade Runner* (media) and Tim White (artist).

Nebula Awards were this year unenlivened by withdrawals and acrimony (though on a recent US trip Lisa Tuttle was depressed to hear the total coverage of *SFWA Forum* of late was “Tuttle and word processors”. NOVEL *No Enemy But Time* (Bishop); NOVELLA “Another Orphan” (John Kessel); NOVELETTE “Fire Watch” (Connie Willis); SHORT “A Letter from the Clearys” (also Connie Willis).

Hugo Nominations: the award that’s almost as respected as the Soviet electoral system. Data arrived in predictable stages: over a period of about three weeks came *File 770*, *Locus* and *SFC*, all with detailed voting statistics; then at last I had a letter from the Worldcon breaking the glad news of my nomination (no other details); and finally came a release for *Ansible* scoop publication, with all those difficult statistics omitted. Not that I would complain, oh no. NOVEL: *Foundation’s Edge*, *The Pride of Chanur* (Cherryh), *2010*, *Friday*, *Courtship Rite* (Kingsbury), *The Sword of the Lictor*. (Voting spread 96 to 189 votes.) NOVELLA: “The Postman” (Brin/*IASFM*), “Brainchild” (Delaney/*Analog*), “Another Orphan” (Kessel/*F&SF*), “Unsound Variations” (Martin/*Amazing*), “Souls” (Russ/*F&SF*). (52-77) NOVELETTE: “Nightlife” (Eisenstein/*F&SF*), “Swarm” (Sterling/*F&SF*), “Aquila” (Sucharitkul/*IASFM*), “Fire Watch” (Willis/*IASFM*), “Pawn’s Gambit” (Zahn/*Analog*). (43-49) SHORT: “Sur” (LeGuin/*Compass Rose*), “Melancholy Elephants” (Robinson/*Analog*), “Spider Rose” (Sterling/*F&SF*), “Boy Who Waterskied to Forever” (Tiptree/*F&SF*), “Ike at the Mike” (Waldrop/*Omni*). (36-55) NONFIC: *The World of the Dark Crystal* (Froud), *Isaac Asimov: The Foundations of SF* (Gunn), *Engines of the Night* (Malzberg), *Reader’s Guide to Fantasy* (Searles/ Meacham/Franklin), *Fear Itself: The Horror Fiction of Stephen King* (Underwood/Miller). (32-60) DRAMATIC: *Blade Runner*, *Dark Crystal*, *ET*, *Road Warrior (Mad Max II)*, *Star Trek II: The Overacting of Khan*. (119-278) PRO EDITOR: Terry Carr, Ed Ferman, David Hartwell, Stanley Schmidt, George Scithers. (85-191) (same as last year) ARTIST: Kelly Freas, Don Maitz, Rowena Morrill, Barclay Shaw, Darrell Sweet, Michael Whelan. (49-188) FANZINE: *Fantasy Newsletter*, *File 770*, *Locus*, *SF Chronicle*, *SF Review*. (45-123) FANWRITER: Dick Geis, Mike Glycer, Arthur Hlavaty, Dave Langford. (same as last year) (32-46) FANARTIST: Alexis Gilliland, Joan Hanke-Woods, William Rotsler, Stu Shiffman, Dan Steffan. (19-65) A total of 660 ballots were rushed in by a membership of about 4500 (it’s since topped 5000) – about 15% turnout.

John W Campbell Award for most overrated new writer: Joseph H Delaney, Lisa Goldstein, Sandra Miesel, Warren G Norwood, David R Palmer, Paul O Williams. (19-34)

Philip Dick Memorial Award for best 1982 original SF paperback went to Rudy Rucker's *Software*, with a runner-up award to Ray Nelson's *The Prometheus Man*. Deciphering the delicate euphemisms of US newszines leads one to believe that Rucker was understandably as gratified as a newt. Next year's judges: Algis Budrys, John Clute, Anthony Wolk.

Miscellaneous Other Awards: American Book Award (original pb) to Lisa Goldstein's *The Red Magician*; £1000 Scottish Book of Year award to Alasdair Gray's *Lanark*; the little-known Balrog fantasy award is working at becoming less known (reports Darrell Schweitzer), with successive ballot forms arriving after the nominations deadline, with numerous ineligible items on the ballot (SFC), with Stephen King shortlisted as Best Artist ... Ditmar (Australia) has, in the International section: *No Enemy But Time*, *The One Tree*, *Riddley Walker*, *Roderick*. (Thyme)

Market Meanderings: *Reality*, the magazine of "technology fiction" still hangs fire though not for the usual financial reasons – it seems that despite submissions from such as van Vogt, there's a distinct "tf story flow problem", exacerbated in the eyes of mastermind Maurice Goldsmith by sf authors' depressing distrustfulness of wonderful future technology ... *Interzone* has lost Malcolm Edwards, who is overcome with Gollancz and freelance responsibilities (not to mention the staggering realization that selling stories to *IZ* is far more profitable than being an unpaid editorial collectivist): the official address is now Dave Pringle's, 124 Osborne Rd, Brighton, BN1 6LU ... *Imagine*, the TSR adventure games mag, has reached its 3rd issue at £1 a go; games fans were apparently unimpressed by the first two, but fiction is being bought by jolly Asst Ed P. Cockburn, TSR(UK)Ltd, The Mill, Rathmore Rd, Cambridge, CB1 4AD ... *White Dwarf*, longer-running games mag, appears to be reacting to *Imagine*'s challenge by also running a book review column (I do WD's and Dave Pringle does I's – so all you authors/publishers make sure we get your stuff, eh?), with regular fiction – both f and sf – likely to appear soon: 27/29 Sunbeam Rd, London, NW10 6JP ... *Imago: The Worlds of Fantasy* is planned for July, chief editor Richard Monaco: said to be glossy, highly visual, 96pp, initial print run 180,000 copies, planned fiction payments 5-7¢/word. Chief promised attraction is a

gossip column by Charles Platt, who is folding *Patchin Review* owing to lack of time, after the coming 7th issue (*CP*) ... *Network News* (224 St NE, Washington DC 20002) may pay for your old fan articles, hints newly apotheosed Associate Ed. Martin Morse Wooster: “always interested in offbeat ‘fannish’ looks at life overseas ... Write for me as you would for *Tappen*, not *New Statesman*.” Martin wants no grubby fanzines sent to his work address, however. (D. West Interjects: “Being briefly in possession of a copy of Curtis Smith’s *20th Century SF Writers* I noticed a couple of entries by *Ansible*’s very own Martian Moose Worster. I see he credits both Ted White and Dick Lupoff with being sole founders of Comics Fandom, and speaks less than respectfully of TW’s achievements as a pro. Does this mean anything? I think we should be told.”) ... **Drunken Dragon Press:** for the umpteenth time I’ve carefully observed a DNQ request only to be scooped in print for my pains (by Mike Don). Rats. This is Rog Peyton’s long-dreamed-of small publishing house, aimed to produce signed limited editions of (a) assorted Lisa Tuttle stories to coincide with her GoH appearance at Novacon 13; (b) all of Jim White’s out-of-print “Hospital Station” books, in sequence; (c) ??? ... **London Book Fair:** “Next to nothing of sf interest,” reports Paul Barnett: “tried to say hello to Peter Nicholls at the Multimedia stand, but every time I went past he was deeply involved with earnest discussions with rabid Yanks. Or his colleagues were doing the earnestly discussing bit while he nodded his head and grunted every 30 seconds or so to show he was listening – certainly there was a strong glaze on the eyeballs ... This wasn’t true of Maxim Jakubowski who, in the shape of Zomba Books, was adopting an upfront, thrusting, aggressive posture. Zomba had a launch party at which, so MJ tells me, a rock group did their best to annoy Langford, only Langford wasn’t there. On the Zomba stand I spotted the second frankest exploitation title of the Fair, *Shape Up For Sex*. The first frankest exploitation title was on the Multimedia stand: in the wake of *Manwatching* and *Mindwatching*, they had the dummy for *Sexwatching*. I probed the deepest recesses of my brain trying to work out what the hell the book could actually be about ...” (*PB*) **Reshuffles:** Wm Collins have bought Granada for £7.9M, probably bad news for sf as the exiguous Fontana/Collins and the extensive Granada sf lines are unlikely to go on competing (& Collins now own a third of Pan too) ... Lovable Richard Evans of Arrow sf fame is now an editorial director at Futura, some way from the sf front line with Peter Lavery (Lavery? Depends who you ask) from Hamlyn cracking the whip over hapless sf authors at

Arrow ... Frederick Muller Ltd, the hardback house, was just bought from HTV by two of its directors, Anthonies White & Blond: Langford cringes, having a contract with FM ... Greg Benford reports: “Sf business scene looks bleak over here with slow recovery starting. The Baen/Dell deal, whereby Tor would package and Dell distribute a new line of pbs is dead – leading to Baen releasing titles held for possible buy....”

Several Words on Albacon II Yet Another Boring *Ansible* Convention Supplement

Avedon Carol rushed the full, uncensored text of her Albacon notes: “They tell me that Albacon II was Not So Hot as Eastercons go, organizationally a mess and all that, but I couldn’t tell. I had the good luck to be mostly unfamiliar with the normal run of local fanpolitics, and I wasn’t in on the gory details, which I must say I found refreshing. Dave Langford showed up when he was supposed to, which was good enough for me. I had no trouble finding the Fanroom, and therefore the fans, which is the main thing. So as far as I was concerned everything was fine. My room was comfortable and conveniently located. I loved being able to make myself a cup of tea in the morning without having to get dressed first, and there were plenty of towels.... Must say I got a bit tired of the same old fish for lunch every day, and breakfast was too early. I certainly would have preferred a better grade of soft drink, but the bartender who kept grabbing his crotch supplied an interesting floorshow. I do which, however, that D. West would take up a game which makes a more interesting spectator sport.... And everyone was really just absolutely triffic and you see if I write my TAFF report right now it will be all mushy and effusive and even maudlin and not very funny and – shit, now I know why no one ever finishes a TAFF report.” (AC)

Terry Carr was suspicious: “I wonder if [Avedon] proved to be as wonderful as you expected. So far I have only her report-in-part on her trip, which seems to make it clear that SHE at least had a fine time; but I know you Brits, your politeness and all, especially to TAFF delegates, and I have to wonder: Sure, I know you threw up on her shoes and called her ‘chick’, friendly as you are, but what else? Did you show her the Tower of London where uppity females were incarcerated before you cut off their heads? Did

you induce her to eat fish-and-fries, that Brit dish that makes McDonalds burgers taste like manna? Did you introduce her to a modern incarnation of Richard III without having Josephine Tey to stand by and explain that everything he did to her served a greater purpose? I bet you didn't; and I further bet that Avedon will be too polite to mention it in her TAFF report....” (Elsewhere in the same letter:) “Can it be that even Mal Ashworth has become staid as he's grown older? This is a question that strikes close to my heart: I wasn't surprised when Heinlein and Bradbury became oldpharts, but *Mal Ashworth...?*”

Wizened **Mal Ashworth** staidly reports: “Confidence in Albacon's prospects had been soaring for some time, after progress reports failed to live up to the promise of the early one which contained a Kidney Donor card, and no Last Will & Testament form appeared. The Unreal Bob Shaw's prophecies of doom and destruction for any event not organized by himself proved no truer for than for any other Eastercon, and the committee showed that they couldn't hold a candle to the attendees for that Mindless Incompetence with which they'd been tagged. On Sunday night a lift full of three lifts-full of fans driven into suicidal ecstasy by the Brum Fan Room Party plummeted – well, ‘descended rather hastily’ – to the bottom of its shaft. The laws of the known universe, baffled as to how to gelatinize further such an oversaturated mass, settled for an injured ankle. In this suspension of the natural order of things, it seems that I resolutely and repeatedly attempted to pioneer a fourth-dimensional route to the loo through the trouser press attached to our bedroom wall: the only reportable results were of anatomical rather than metaphysical interest.

“Appropriate to Easter, there was both Good News and Bad News. The good news was that cheap food was available almost continually in the hotel, as was good and reasonably priced real ale. The bad news was that the food was so staggeringly awful that even the hotel staff gave up and didn't bother to cook most of it, while the beer ran out on Saturday night.

“I gave my word not to mention that I missed Marion Simmer Broadly's GoH speech, but it doesn't mean much these days. I did hear her fulminate fulsomely in the bar about over-sexy covers on her books (‘After all, a spaceship never offended anyone’), an example which converted all the boringly intellectual and literary conversations going on into talk of tits and bums – amid which I recalled that the covers of John Norman's novels

culpably *undersold* the porny potential of their interiors.... Faintly puzzled punster James White (known in this ludicrously overdemocratic age as ‘Jim’) was the hardworking, ubiquitous and unfailingly entertaining Fan GoH, and for a Sunday follow-up to those recovered from James’s quietly funny speech, Bob Shaw took time out from being ‘strangely fascinated’ by Lilian Edwards (and why not?) to tell of his friend von Donegan’s latest invention, a solar-powered sunbed. Suitably horrendous, too, was the Vogon poetry competition – a shame that the clear winner received no recognition. This was the Central Station announcer, who with enormous enthusiasm kept relaying his entries, in a Vogon voice of vast verisimilitude, direct into hotel bedrooms long after the competition had ended, in a desperate bid for the popular vote. More successful in this respect was John Brunner – as, of course, One of a Team – who secured the popular vote for Brighton rather than Blackpool, for Eastercon, Eurocon, Life, the Universe and Almost Everything. Both bid committees earned undying admiration for their valorous survival of a Trial by Trivia before a large audience (‘How far would the Book Room be from the Breakfast Suite,’ demanded Ken Slater, convincing me that There Are Subtleties In All This That I Shall Never Understand). US fan Joe Siclari was wide-eyed at both the fine detail and what he politely called the ‘spirited’ nature of the rival presentations, surpassing aught of that ilk encountered in the States. (One-night stands with trouser presses notwithstanding, the high point of *my* con was being able to introduce avid fanhistory resurrectionist Joe and D. West, and suggest they must have much in the way of putative joint projects to discuss.)

“The Book Room was one of those features designed to promote that healthy exercise so lacking at cons (others being high-speed potholing in crammed lifts and jogging from bar to bar in search of the last pint of real ale). Here the good old English game of Leapfrog was given new twists in the constricted aisles between loaded tables, the whole play area achieving a density equivalent to Saturday night in a black hole. Despite repeated visits which had little to do with buying books, Fate decreed I should fail to be projected into a plane of mind-blowing delights in a hyperspace encounter of the torrid kind with, for instance, the topologically improbable Lisanne Norman.... Next door was the Video Room, with a continual and varied programme for those lobotomized hours or days at any con when one doesn’t feel up to higher pursuits like standing up, moving about and so on. Interestingly, most of the audio that went with the video took place in the next (Alternative

Programme) room: at last I saw the silent classic *Metropolis*, but to the accompaniment of a 70s US sitcom soundtrack, while Colin Fine's excellent talk 'Language in SF' battled with a hidden curriculum on communication consisting, as far as one could tell, of an unedited recording of World War Three. But it was all Good Fun.

"And so was watching the Bond-like suavity with which one DL of Reading detached gobbets of my wife's hair from his spectacles, mainly to assure himself that the Swedish room party surrounding him hadn't done a Mary Celeste. Luckily he completed this complex manoeuvre before midday on Monday, to regale an entranced and evil-minded Fan Room audience with the *Ansible* review of the steamiest scurrilia of a steamy twelvemonth.

"TAFF winner Avedon Carol looked relaxed, happy and distinctly unlonesome; in this latter respect unlike Peter Weston, whose brave Fancy Dress Parade entry as Jophan, with brightly polished Shield of Umor, was met by a roof-raising cheer from the mighty BAFF (Born Again Fifties Fan) contingent in the hall (me), and bemused silence from the minority of 400 or so other fans. But there was plenty to keep *them* happy – colour, spectacle, sex, smoke-bombs, all that any fan could hope for. Except possibly the Other Bob Shaw. Pity he couldn't be there; he might even have enjoyed himself."
(*Mal Ashworth*)

Albacon II reckons to have made around £1000 profit, but has received a £500 repairs bill for the famous plunging lift. (Katie Hoare, who knows everything about everything, thinks the hotel is culpable in having a faulty lift to begin with, as required safety cutouts should have immobilized the thing when overloaded. Any more experts out there?) As committee member Chris O'Kane just happens to be going out of the film projection business and into video, there are plans to buy up his equipment – two 16mm projectors, screens, etc – for free loan to any bona-fide con prepared to pay transport costs (from Scotland, hem hem). Also there's talk of buying ultrasonic alarms for Book Room etc security, available similarly. (*DRL*)

FURTHER CONVENTION NOTES: UPDATES AND THINGS

Beccon 83 (29-31 July): GoH Ken Bulmer, rooms £15 sngl £26 dbl/twin including VAT but not breakfast; other details *Ansible 30*. **Great London SF Convention** (12-14 Aug): see A31. The utter lack of UK publicity or a UK contact address for this US-run con has led some to speculate that it's a rip-

off aimed at US visitors to the UK who will discover too late ... Apparently the Grosvenor Hotel in London, the venue, admits only to a “provisional booking”. **Triple C Con** (26-29 Aug): see A31. Trekkiecon. **Silicon 7** (26-29 Aug): see A31. Rumour has it that the good old Grosvenor Hotel in Newcastle has changed hands following the bankruptcy of nice manager Mr Pepper, but that the new folk are friendly ... **X-Con** (2-4 Sept, Eindhoven, Holland): see A30. **Constellation** (1-5 Sept, Baltimore, USA): 1983 Worldcon. See A30. **Unicon 4** (2-4 Sept, U of Essex): see A30/31/32. **Mythcon** (16-18 Sept, Brum): see A31. **Con With No Name** (Ditto): see A30. **Invention 83** (23-25 Sept, Glasgow): see A30. **Galacticon** (29-30 Oct): see A30. **Novacon 13** (4-6 Nov, Brum): see A31. Worried by low registrations resulting from the glut of cons and N12’s being the first Novacon to achieve Worst Thing Poll ranking, Steve Green begs you all to sign up (£3.50 supp £7 att to 46 Colwyn Rd, Beeston, Leeds 11) and flock to N13’s “high quality” filmshow and main, alternate, video and breakfast programmes. To titillate you he quotes from planned guest Toby Roxburgh’s latest public utterances: “Isaac Asimov doesn’t like flying, he doesn’t like cars, he doesn’t really like travel; he *does* like his wife, which I find astonishing ... Bob Silverberg was a hack writer, a genius; a genius as a hack, not as a writer ... Fritz Leiber looks like a bad El Greco sketch ...” Back to Steve: “The major difficulty with this kind of high quality is that if we don’t get the attendance we (and the Brum Group) could well go under.” **Fantasycon VIII** (14-16 Oct, Imperial Hotel, Brum) is listed out of sequence here owing to reasons. GoHs Gene Wolfe, Bruce Pennington etc ... no other data as yet. Wolfe is visiting to promote the Arrow pb *Citadel of the Autarch* (signings expected at Andromeda, Forbidden Planet etc). By a wondrous coincidence the Book Marketing Council’s SF promotion is planned for 10-22 October, with the BSFA’s very own Geoff Rippington as one of the sinister triumvirate in charge; lots of Chris Foss artwork is expected in the promotional material. (By the way, Mike Don’s catalogue/fanzine accuses me of being “closely associated” with the promotion and about having “voiced doubts” in Ansible about the BMC’s restriction of the affair to “hard” sf. I’m not and I haven’t.) **Cymrucon III** (26-27 Nov, Cardiff): GoH Jon Brunner, appearances promised from Dougal Dixon and Warrior mag, £7 att rising to £8 in Aug; The Bower, High St, Llantwit Major, S. Glam. (04465-4282) **Seacon 84** (20-23 April 84, Brighton Metropole): won Eastercon bidding at Albacon II and combines Eastercon with Eurocon. GoHs: Isaac Asimov,

Chris Priest, Pierre Barbet, Josef Nesvadba, Waldemar Kuming (fan). Official rates etc should appear in PR1, due mid-May (hem hem): I'm fairly sure it's currently £8 att until November, less £1 if you were a presupporter, to 321 Sarehole Rd, Hall Green, Birmingham B28 0AL. After some vacillation about "keeping numbers down" the committee is going all out for a huge con with 3-5000 members, using the Brighton exhibition centre with the attached hotel as a mere fan room, applying for colossal UNESCO grants in view of the cultural wonderfulness of it all, etc. **Mexicon** (25-28 May 84, Royal Station Hotel, Newcastle): new sort of alternative con aiming to stress written sf with minimal media catering. Committee: Williams (K&S), Bell, Pickersgill (L&G), Frost, Hansen. £5 att to any of them or to 19 Jesmond Dene Rd, Jesmond, Newcastle-upon-Tyne NE2 3QT. Why the name? Aha ... **Albacon 84** (20-23 July, Central Hotel, Glasgow): GoH John Sladek, £3 supp £8 att u.f.n. The lack of published address is because the committee (curiously similar to the Albacon II committee) is busy arranging a PO box; if in urgent need to contact them try c/o 34 Peninver Dr, Linthouse, Glasgow G51. I gather that this would have been called Faircon 84 if not for the Shaw Split and ... **Faircon 84** (20-23 July, Ingram Hotel, Glasgow): GoH Sydney Jordan, £5 supp £8 att, 2/L 244 W Prices St, Kelvinbridge, Glasgow, G4 9DP. Yes: to the annoyance of most runners of previous Faircons, Bob (Fake) Shaw is setting up on his own, with his solicitor (last seen writing threatening letters to previous Fairconcom members) and other equally fannish folk. To counteract the likely avoidance of this event by sf fans in general, Bob is pushing the comics side of things ... **Oxcon** (24-27 Aug, Oxford): see A31/32. The Stoke opposition having dropped out, this is the only Unicon "bid" remaining just now – plenty of time for others to come forward, though, says Alex Stewart: "The Unicon charter is now in force, and sets down a few guidelines that should prevent anyone making too massive a cock-up. (It hasn't been officially ratified yet, as my copy went astray in the post, but the major clauses were agreed to verbally at Albacon.)" Since Oxcon planned to go ahead whether or not given the Unicon seal of approval, will it choose to do so rather than accept the Unicon Charter guidelines? We'll see. **Santacon** (14-16 Dec, Leeds Dragonara): see A30/31

Special Battlefield Earth Update: George Hay reports that he's read the Hubbard epic and swears it's genuine Hubbard. In America, a weird charade involving special ink formulated by a forensics experts (in which Hubbard subsequently wrote documents later sworn to feature his own handwriting

and fingerprints) is supposed to have proven the recluse's continued existence. (F770) Meanwhile NEL have cancelled their edition of *BE* despite extensive circulation of advance proof copies: the most fascinating rumour is that this is due to pressure from the Scientology Org (but why?). US fans are still appalled by evil Charles Platt's failed attempt to discredit the Hugos by campaigning for *BE*'s nomination, but apparently not appalled by the similar campaign of nice John and Bjo Trimble, who actually like the book: it's not what you do, it's who you are when you do it....

The SF Lunch Club Shock Horror Supplement or, Fear and Loathing on June 1st

[Inserted sheet]

The rest of this issue was intended to be all of this issue: but in my folly I nipped out to today's SF Lunch Club thingy (a three-monthly affair costing one vast sums for such delights as struggling through crowded and red-hot Central London to eat hot food and subsequently listen to Gerry Webb talk for hours while in the background restaurant flunkeys inexorably dismantle the bar ... but I digress). Here an ashen-faced Les Flood, with the air of the Ancient Mariner drawing attention to his albatross, produced the details of the Book Marketing Council's SF promotion ... concerning which, and notwithstanding the previous page, I now begin to have opinions and even Voice Doubts. The shortlist of 20 books for maximum-publicity promotion is as follows: Aldiss's *Helliconia Spring*, Asimov's *Foundation* trilogy, Ballard's *The Drowned World*, Benford's *Timescape*, Bishop's *No Enemy But Time*, Cherryh's *Downbelow Station*, Clarke's *2001* and *2010* (counted separately, making the Great Arthur the only author to officially figure twice – more of this anon), Donaldson's *White Gold Wielder* (so much for a “hard sf bias”), Harrison's *The Stainless Steel Rat for President*, Herbert's *Dune*, Huxley's *Brave New World*, McCaffrey's *The Crystal Singer*, Moorcock's *Dancers at the End of Time* (one-volume edition from Granada later this year), Niven/Pournelle's *The Mote in God's Eye*, Orwell's *1984*, Silverberg's *Majipoor Chronicles*, Wolfe's *The Citadel of the Autarch*, Wells's *The War of the Worlds* (Best SF of 1898) and Wyndham's *The Day of the Triffids*.

Erk.

Now I should explain that this is a paperback promotion, and the “sample population” consists of paperbacks available in October: those not yet out will appear as follows – *2010* Granada Oct, *NEBT Sphere* Aug, *DS Methuen* June, *WGW Fontana* Sept, *MC Pan* Oct, *CotA Arrow* Oct.

I thought about the list for a long while. I admired the daring risks taken in promoting all these unknown classics and bestsellers. I savoured the incidence of British authors in a British promotion – seven, including all three dead ones here. I merrily calculated the average publication date of the books featured – around 1966-7. I chuckled to see two series-end volumes which will be hugely promoted at the expense of the previous books. I laughed, I cried, I frothed at the mouth.

“The judges selected such titles as Clarke’s *2001* and Orwell’s *1984*, familiar to the general public, as the promotion aims not only to increase the sales among sf buffs but also to widen the market for the genre.” Absolutely. The only way to sell books to the general public is to pick ones the general public have already read. (Quotation is from the official publicity flyer, courtesy of Les Flood.)

So I rang Geoff Rippington, fandom’s representative on the judging panel, and gibbered at him awhile. He filled in some background, as follows ...

The panel was stuck with a “History of SF” theme and therefore forced to include several oldies. Publishers were asked to nominate books from which the final 20 could be selected: the entire might of British paperback publishing managed to come up with 23, of which the judges couldn’t bring themselves to accept more than 9 as being Worthy. Rather than junk the promotion, the panel ransacked publishers’ backlists in search of plausible stuff, and tried to persuade said publishers to sponsor their choices. A certain reluctance was met with, owing to the fact that to sponsor a book required that one cough up £500 towards the promotion – which is apparently why only the most recent Donaldson and Wolfe books are included, Fontana and Arrow being unable to afford the whole series. On the other hand, Granada sneaked through the Foundation trilogy by cunning negotiation, as a boxed set and thus a single item.... Geoff also insisted that the panel was biased towards British authors, quite strongly so, but with the exceptions on the list could find no British publisher prepared to sponsor any book by a British author which the panel thought worthy. (Given the general state of sf lists

over here, it's hard to find British authors at all, but even I can think of a few like Watson, or Shaw, or Holdstock, or Priest – no, HE'S already been apotheosed ...)

Oh well. One can hardly wait. Also at the SFLC: Peter Nicholls revealed that he's slipped partially from the toils of Multimedia (see page 2) to be a freelance editorial director. George Hay and Roz Kaveney had a disappointingly polite confrontation concerning the very rude RK review of *Battlefield Earth* in *Foundation*, the which George considers unfair and wicked and to be taken up in letters to the editor. Malcolm Edwards made the shock horror revelation that he himself personally had just rejected *BE* upon its resubmission to Gollancz: probes in the direction of putative publishers NEL got the reply "we were going to publish it – we'd bought it from St Martin's in the US – but then we found we had to deal with these shady characters called Author Services Inc [promoters of *BE*] and so we dropped out ..." (Or words to that effect.) Geoff Ryman gloated over having sold a story to *Interzone*, lucky sod, while John Clute mentioned that fantasy and stuff was easy to find for *IZ*, it was hard sf that was in short supply. Ken Campbell of theatrical fame leapt about explaining that he no longer wanted to adapt books and dramatize other peoples' boring old words: no, he wanted to do a "companion piece" to Dick's *Valis*. Somehow this metamorphosed into an account of a Batty Therapy weekend he and a friend had recently undergone, a sort of est affair whose principal activity appeared to be hurling your arms with graphic violence into the air while synchronously shouting "HOO!" Afterwards he and friend were both struck by the same thought, "I could run Batty Therapy weekends just as good as that, and at £55 a head ..." Move over, Scientology.

Malcolm (that man again) revealed a rumour that D. West had won the writer, new fan and fanartist categories of the *Pong* Poll, and grudgingly allowed that it would do no harm were Ansible to mention HOLDSTOCKWORLD – R. Hansen's name for the fabulously lucrative "theme park" project to be based on the Holdstock/Edwards *Alien Landscapes*, providing Rob and Malcolm with luxurious all-expenses-paid trips to Canada for discussions, and thus enabling them to horrify and alarm Avedon Carol by welcoming her to Britain when she'd only got as far as Boston ... Joy Chamberlain of Penguin insisted that the sf line was to be Rejuvenated in Spring 84: "You mean you're getting rid of Fred and

Geoffrey Hoyle?” I asked with bated breath. “Oh God yes, they’re so banal.” Here I realized was a woman of rare scientific taste. I leant closer. “You’re getting rid of Jack Chalker??” Long pause. “Well, he does sell....”

Somebody cheered me up by revealing that the Frederick Muller stock (see p.2) had all been sold off for £1000 because the outfit was losing so much money. In whispers I was told of the Stephen King Story Nobody Will Print Not Even Twilight Zone: “It’s about this surgeon cast up on a desert island,” said omniscient Chris Priest, “and he can only survive by eating bits of himself ... But even more offensive and tasteless is the new Monty Python film, which Lisa and I saw in America while you haven’t, har har.” Gamma of Forbidden Planet demanded massive publicity for coming signings, Moorcock (*The War Hound and the World’s Pain*, 6 Aug) and Aldiss (*Helliconia Summer*, 8 or 15 Oct). An anonymous Gollancz sf editor confessed to having purchased a Pohl “novel” of pieces written around “The Midas Plague” (Nov publication). Gerry Webb, on space or something, battled Maurice Goldsmith (on how science fiction is old hat and technology is more important than science and utopian tf will etc) in the Interminability Stakes, and fought to a draw....

[End of inserted “supplement”]

COA

CATHY BALL, 712 N Stewart, Norman, OK 73071, USA • PAT & GRAHAM CHARNOCK (“Now we’ve got our own rotting old 5-bedroom house!”), 45 Kimberley Gdns, Harringay, London N.4 • CHRIS HUGHES & JAN HUXLEY, 128 Whitley Wood Rd, Reading, Berks, RG2 8JG • ROY MACINSKI, 5 Bridge Ct, River Rd, Taplow, Bucks • KEITH MARSLAND, 1 Northgate, Goosnargh, nr Preston, Lancs PR3 2BB • PETER NICHOLLS (& Clare Coney), 83 Lavender Sweep, London, SW11 1EA until 27 June – then 5 Furlong Rd, Islington, London N.7 • TERESA & PATRICK NIELSEN HAYDEN c/o Kaufman & Tompkins, 4326 Winslow Pl N, Seattle, WA 98103, USA • BOB & SADIE SHAW, 90 Albert Rd, Grappenhall, Warrington, Cheshire, WA4 2PG • NICK TRANT as Roy Macinski • KEV & SUE WILLIAMS, 19 Jesmond Dene Rd, Jesmond, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE2 3QJ • MIKE XDICKINSON & JACKIE

ZGRESHAM (subtle concealment of sequence error), c/o 146 N Parade, Sleaford, Lincs NG34 8AP from end June • JIM ZZBARKER hasn't really moved but now has a daytime office at 2 Manor St, Falkirk, FK1 1NH • 31-5-83

Infinitely Improbable

Leeds in 1985? First '85 Eastercon flyer is to hand, begging us all to rush £1 each to Yorcon III, 45 Harold Mt, Leeds LS6 1PW: other bids expected imminently ... **Appalling Nicholls Revelations:** "We're being married at Islington registry July 16, followed by a piss-up, then a flight to San Francisco and a week on horseback in the High Sierras. I hope I do better than Humphrey Bogart in the same area ... Have now signed a contract on Fantastic Cinema, 83,000 words to be delivered by Dec 31, published by Ebury Press May 84. This time I will try to do the work all by myself." (PN) ... **Things For Sale:** I have a few copies each of Jerry Kaufman's *Best of Susan Wood* collection (80pp+covers) and P. Nielsen-Hayden's *Fanthology 1981* (66pp+covers: Hayden, "Adverse", Atkinson x 2, White, Carol, Mayer, Smith, Bangsund, Priest, Langford, Benford) – each £2 post free, proceeds to Worthy Causes. This is not so of the fabulous signed copies of the incredibly rare hardback *War in 2080: The Future of Military Technology*, yours for £3 pf ... **FANFUNDERY:** DUFF was won by Jerry Kaufman (other candidates being Jan Finder, Charlotte Proctor, Alexis Gilliland); he'll be at Syncon 83, the Australian national con. GUFF with luck will bring a strange Australian entity to Seacon 84, names mentioned in this context being: Justin Ackroyd, Roger Weddall, Jean Weber and Someone Else. TAFF will very likely inflict a Eurosomeone on the LA Worldcon (84): rumoured names are Rob Hansen and Harry Bell but not, according to D. West, D. West. Some fans are even thinking ahead to TAFF 1985: Jeff Schalles wants to come over, as did Ted White, only to be sabotaged by Another Project (rumoured to be a guest slot at the near-cert 1985 Melbourne Worldcon) ... **The Seacon Secret:** "Any hope of success for the Blackpool bid was destroyed when Graham James rose to support them." (M. Easterbrook) ... **Joe Nicholas Really Dave Langford!** Flushed with the success of his first professional sale (an Albacon II report to Locus), Joseph was bemused to learn that BSFA awards he distinctly remembers presenting at that event were, according to SFC's infallible newshounds, handed out by D. Langford ... **Remainder Follies:**

Fascinated as always by remaindering, your editor noticed various paperbacks going at 60-65p reduction in the local remainder shop – *Red Dragon*, *Fever*, a heap of Dick Francis thrillers, *The Golden Torc*, *The Nonborn King*.... Simultaneously, all were being sold at full price in a respectable local bookshop, as “new publications”, and the first and last were even bestsellers. Would someone better acquainted than I with the Net Book Agreement explain all this to me? ... **Ian Watson Gloats** – “Just sold a new novel to Gollancz for Feb 84 pub date: *The Book of the River*, to be serialized in F&SF between late 83 and early 84. Gosh” ... **Greg Benford Explains *Against Infinity*** – “I suspect that the entire subtext (as we intellectuals say) of reference to US lit traditions, the whole theme of southern concerns etc – all will be lost on UK audience. In latest *Locus* I noticed Chinese rug dealer reviewer was totally ‘bewildered’ by last third of book, even after Charlie the B relayed word to him that reading some Faulkner might be helpful. On the other hand we must remember that sf is a nawthern intell-lecsul imperialism phenomenon anyway.” (GB) ... **John Brunner Again** – reporting annoyance at a surprise announcement that he’d be at Italcon (23-25 April Italy) despite having said he couldn’t; despite this he got the Premio Italia 83, whatever that may be, at another Italian con a week later, and in May the Grand Prix of the 3e Festival de l’Insolite in Provence. (All I got on my 1983 hols was the Grand Prix de Barclaycard Overspending) ... **Mundanes**, says D. Schweitzer, is what the new generation of US mediafans likes to call the boring old farts who read books and fanzines ... **RIP:** Max Ehrlich – *The Big Eye* – on 11 Feb; Rebecca West – *The Meaning of Treason* etc, but gets into sf newszines thanks to 10 years as great and good friend of H.G. Wells – on 15 March ... **That Dune Film:** media master R.I. Barycz sends mounds of wearily circumstantial data (“budget \$40M, shooting began 30-3-83 in Mexico City” etc). A pal of Paul Kincaid’s has inside data corroborating this: “shooting scheduled to finish November ... Francesca Annis plays leading female role, and apparently appears in virtually every scene ... also due to appear briefly in the sequel already scheduled” (As Jessica, I suppose). OK. I believe you all. Enough ... **Puzzle Corner:** Which leading newszine complains about fans reprinting material without permission, yet swipes Ansible news without permission (which I don’t mind) and without giving credit (which I do)? Clue: not *File 770* ... **Lisa Tuttle** dared to defend the Best Young British Novelists campaign in *Time Out* recently, but was properly put in her place by erstwhile fan Chris Fowler who wrote in to say that she was “hardly a

disinterested party, for she is married to none other than Christopher Priest.” Ooh, savage ... **Blood! Violence! Death! Acrimony!** Thus our Joseph’s verbal account of his resignation as *Vector* reviews editor, depleted from a former 10,000 words by excision of libellous references to *V* editor G. Rippington ... **End Of The World News:** Leroy Kettle sends clippings revealing a) that flatulent termites are going to increase the world’s mean temperature, while (b) the eruption of an obscure Mexican volcano will decrease the world’s mean temperature. “The temperature has already dropped enough to wipe out herds of anchovies (personally I’d have thought the tins would have protected them) so the termites have got quite a bit of farting to do to catch up. There’s definitely a disaster novel in there somewhere.” ... **Stopped Press:** I really meant to publicize the SFF “SF & Psychology” evening at the City Lit (23 May) and the Forbidden Planet signing of S. King’s *Christine*, but. King plus entourage appeared at the 2nd BFS pub evening on 13 May, and our roving reporter Nic Howard nearly touched him ... **Last-Minute Coas:** Roelof Goudriaan, Postbus 1189, 8200 BD Lelystad, Netherlands (so much for the small print on page 1); Jean Weber c/o Eric Lindsay, 6 Hillcrest Ave, Faulconbridge, NSW 2776 (temporary, while resting after operation) ... **Chris Atkinson** (and to a certain extent Malcolm Edwards) heroically produced another future Ansible subscriber on 25 May, male and named Tappen Thomas....

Hazel’s Language Lessons #24: Tibetan

gós-kyi yáb-mo byéd-pa to beckon by waving one’s clothes
dkan-yuyér the wrinkles of the roof of the mouth

* ANSIBLE THIRTY-THREE *

Edited by Dave Langford,
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Ansible 34

July 1983

ANSIBLE 34: the July 1983 issue of Britain's optician-sponsored SF newsletter wings its minuscule way to you from DAVE LANGFORD, 94 LONDON ROAD, READING, BERKSHIRE, RG1 5AU, UK. Scientific tests show that nobody ever reads this tiny print: I can say what I like here, I can libel John Brunner and Harry Harrison, I can raise the subscription rates and fandom will never ... wait a minute. Note last issue's increase, please: £2 brings you seven issues wherever you live, airmailed outside the UK. Sterling notes/cheques to me, also dollar bills; Giro transfer to a/c 24 523 0408; \$ cheques to US agents Mary & Bill Burns, 23 Kensington Ct, Hempstead, NY 11550 (they invite you all to their pre-worldcon party there on 27 Aug, 4pm onward); Euromonies to Roelof Goudriaan, Postbus 1189, 8200 BD Lelystad, Netherlands; Leigh Edmonds distributes Australian copies but doesn't yet take subs. Cartoon by D. (Famous Dave) West; labels superlatively dataprocessed by Keith (Infallible) Freeman. Please read your label and note that: LASTISH XX means XX is the last Ansible you get on your current subscription (all who now write in to observe that we're already up to issue XXXIV will be Punished); SUB DUE means the chopper is ready to fall, avertable only by sending Langford money (as above) or hot news (credit given at editorial discretion); ***** means you are on the dustbin of history and lucky to see this issue at all, as increasing poverty is causing me to prune the list ever more ruthlessly; TRADE means you're currently getting free copies in exchange for your frequent newszine, for sundry nameless favours, or out of shameless Langfordian sycophancy. This issue's immediate mailing goes to 327 addresses, same as last time since new subscribers have balanced out a fairly ruthless purge. Help! Nuclear Debate Thought for Today, from the notebooks of Samuel Butler: "We shall never get people whose time is money to take much interest in atoms." (circa 1880.)

Don't Throw Away seemingly valueless sf oddments like those J. Brunner form postcards (with a tick against the phrase "Your fanzine was junk mail fit only for recycling"). One Colin Huggett of Sheffield offers such rare

memorabilia for sale: an 8-word typed postcard from Asimov goes for £6, a 32-word handwritten one from Aldiss is £10. Bradbury only has to write his name and “Hallo” on a form letter to make it worth £10.50, while Clarke does the same and adds “All good wishes” but rates a mere £7.50. Star item at £30 is a carbon of Priest’s “The Invisible Men”, listed as “possibly unpublished” (actually published twice at least) ... Invited to comment, Brian Aldiss rushed back a 59-word handwritten postcard demanding a cheque of commensurate value, and ever-informative Chris Priest revealed all: “I remember being approached by someone called Colin Something, a few years ago. Represented himself as a lifelong fan, whose collection would not be complete without a signed MS. Smelt fishy to me, so ignored it. Then he wrote again later. I called Brian, and asked him what to do. Brian said: ‘Oh that bastard ... I think he’s a dealer.’ So ignored him again. After a third letter I decided no harm would come of sending him a bottom carbon copy of my worst story, thinking that he’d never get a price for it. Now, years later, it emerges with a £30 tag. Ho ho ho.” (CP) Offers for the full 239-word typed letter with rare indecipherable Priest signature may be sent to the usual address.

Isaac Asimov, somewhat to the chagrin of the Seacon 84 committee, has belatedly decided that his promise to come here as Guest of Honour “health permitting” actually meant “health and absence of lucrative novel contracts permitting”. While Asimov exits giggling to write a sequel to *Foundation’s Edge*, the committee (no doubt murmuring “Our gain is literature’s loss”) is seeking an alternative US guest, said to be Philip José Farmer. Asimov’s defection is one reason for further delay of Progress Report 1, planned for mid-May and currently due Real Soon Now. But, three months to the day from its bid victory, Seacon *has* produced its first publication, a page of information with the proper European air of having been translated from Serbo-Croat. Attending membership costs £7 (rising in December), payable to Seacon 84, 321 Sarehole Road, Hall Green, Birmingham, B28 0AL; Brighton Metropole hotel rates £16.50/person/night inc. breakfast, and ditto in the Bedford (overflow). Paid-up pre-supporters of both the Blackpool and Brighton bids for this 1984 Eastercon/Eurocon get £1 off membership. Meanwhile, the infosheet mysteriously insists that two of the remaining four Guests of Honour (Chris Priest, Pierre Barbet) are *not* guests but merely authors who are coming along – though I suspect this is an error of ace creative typist Alan Dorey.

Chinese SF Secrets: writing in the *TLS*, the possibly famous Yang Xianyi reveals all. “There is a vogue for sf in China today ... [*But*] Chinese people do not have pessimistic ideas that the world is going to be dominated by insects, robots or creatures from outer space, or destroyed by a nuclear holocaust or other catastrophe; so they find most present-day Western sf too depressing and unacceptable.” The phraseology is familiar enough to make you wonder whether the editors of *Asimov’s SF Mag* are secretly Chinese.

Magazines: *Imagine* and *White Dwarf*, sf/fantasy games mags covered last issue, currently have circulations of 15 and 18.5 thousand respectively; fiction rates seem to vary with auctorial fame, around £25-30 from *I*, £15-25 from *WD*, per thousand words. *Interzone*, depressingly, is doing rather less well: Dave Pringle, as usual ashen-faced and tight-lipped, says “As of mid-June we had received only about 25% of the anticipated resubscriptions. If more people don’t resubscribe soon we’re going to have to *take measures*. Keep Britain’s only sf magazine alive! The small ad which we paid £130 to place in the *Grauniad* books page a month ago has resulted in just 7 subscriptions. Count them: 7. Out of a *Guardina* readership of, what? Half a million? It’s at times like this that us sf fans feel with perfect justification that we’re part of a tiny persecuted minority.” (DP) Ouch. Rush Dave a fiver today, you deadbeats ... The long-promised *Sebastian* (Intergalactic Art Ltd, 31 Morecambe Street, London, SE17 1DX) recently appeared, 64pp inc. glossy covers, a strange semipro affair dominated by artwork and comic strips from Huge French Names in translation, plus some fiction. £2.50 + 50p p&p, says secret master Patrice Bernard; issue 2 in a year or so, depending on colossal response....

Sweden: An anonymous Stockholm source reports that that great work *The Science In SF* will appear from huge publishing firm Norstedts there next year, translated and – ominous word – edited by Sam J. Lundwall. He plans to revise the text and remove claimed anglo-chauvinistic errors (“Frankenstein’s monster wasn’t the first artificially created human in the literature, for instance”), no doubt replacing all those boring Anglo-US references with really important Swedish authors like H.G. Wellsson, Mary Shellejsdottir and Lucian of Samosataholm. Reports of numberless references to the works of hugely famous Sam J. Lundwall are eagerly awaited. Meanwhile it is *mere coincidence* that roving reporter Marc Ortlieb has been reading Harry Harrison’s *Starworld*, there to find the line: “Old Lundwall,

who commands the *Sverige*, should have retired a decade ago...” No comment, thanks.

Book Marketing Council October SF Promotion: Geoff Rippington went on about this in *Vector 114*, revealing among other things that the Gang Of Four who picked the books to be plugged had a mere 6 days in which to locate and read the nominated books: naturally lifelong skiffyfan Geoff was the only one who did. (His printed account differs in small details from what I extracted over the telephone: it apparently cost £600 per book to nominate for the promotion, plus 50% for non-BMC publishers, explaining certain strange absences; and the “history of sf” theme used to justify the older choices was only dreamed up at the last second in face of unremitting awfulness of newer material.) Geoff lists 23 titles – he says 27 but that’s his problem – so, omitting the final choices listed in A33, here are the Ones That Didn’t Make It ... GRANADA *Complete Short Stories Of Ray Bradbury*, *The Encyclopaedia Of SF* (Nicholls); MICHAEL JOSEPH *The Science In SF* (Nicholls, Whatsisname, Stableford); HODDER (it says here) *Friday* (Heinlein); CORGI *Radix* (Attanasio), *Dinosaur Tales* (Bradbury), *Secret History Of Time To Come* (MacAuley); ARROW *Run To The Stars* (Rohan); SPHERE *Fade-Out* (Tilley), *Vaneglorry* (Turner), *The Amtrak Wars* (Tilley).

At the inaugural SF Supper Club meeting, or more accurately piss-up (at which Kingsley Amis read out all his favourite reviews of his Golden Age collection, several people enthused “This is what the One Tun should be like” even as they fell over, and next day convalescent organizer Priest remarked “It must have been good, people have been phoning all morning to apologize for things –”) ... I heard strange promotional gossip: what happened to the 2/3 books Futura say they nominated? Or the great Langford novel which Richard Evans swore on a full pint glass had been nominated by Arrow? Was the list somehow weeded even before the selectors saw it? Richard also complained that nominating *2001* was a waste of time, seeing as Arrow sold a steady 20,000 copies every year, the market saturation level. I told you so. Last word from that man Priest: “One of the things which I haven’t seen commented on is the disproportionate bias towards British authors. 40% of the writers are British, and this is a scandalous misrepresentation of the sf field as a whole. Also, most of them are dead, which is a bit lacking in taste, if you ask me. All the Americans are alive, so why can’t the British be?” (That’s enough Priest this issue – Ed.)

Books & Things: John Bush of Gollancz got quite excited at the June BSFA meeting. In a sneak preview of coming sf masterpieces, he casually yawned his way through familiar names, “another Shaw, another Sladek, and [*eyelids droop*] another Watson ...” But then, in a sudden galvanic spasm: “You must read this one book we’re doing! [*waves arms, leaps up and down*] It’s called *Golden Witchbreed* by Mary Gentle ... [*froths at mouth, hurls beermugs at inattentive listeners*] On September 1st YOU WILL ALL GO OUT AND BUY IT!” Joe Nicholas was seen to regard with awe the fingers with which he’d mistyped so many of Mary’s reviews for the BSFA.... **First Byte** is Mike Rohan’s vade-mecum of home computing for the ignorant (EP £3.95), notable among other things for Jim Barker cartoons, one of which contrives to use Jim’s *Ansible* mailing label not only as an example of dot-matrix printing but so millions of dazzled readers can now write to Jim and commission artwork.... **The Whole Truth Computer Handbook** is Charles Platt’s rival book on why you don’t need one of the stupid machines really: it’s illustrated by Dan Steffan, is as yet unsold in the UK, and will be translated into English from the original American text by – argh! ... **The Book of the New Sun** has maddened Tom Disch and John Clute into planning an entire critical work analyzing the subtle bits, and famous Mr Clute has developed an answer to the burning question “Who was Severian’s mother?” which he threatens to justify in vast textual detail anytime I approach him with the magic phrase “You are the *Foundation* man and I claim my free insomnia cure” ... **Pocket/Timescape** are having a further shakeup, with the entire sf line editing farmed out (with the exception of really important *Star Trek* books which cannot be trusted to others) to the hacks of the Scott Meredith Literary Agency in New York. Lovable former Timescape editor Dave Hartwell gets the boot (not at all amicably, we hear) and will be out by the end of October; there are hints that the now well known Timescape imprint (famous for publishing most recent award nominees etc) will, in a stroke of dazzling market acumen, be renamed. (*Sources:* everyone really, but Bob Shaw – traumatized by a transatlantic phone call – was first.) ... **Peter Lavery**, spelt like that and not the way *Locus* prefers, has the Hamlyn as well as Arrow backlists to play with at Arrow now, the former having been bought up by Hutchinson/Arrow. Sources insist that the gaffes of the famous Hamlyn line, such as publishing millions of books and storing them carefully in a warehouse until deciding that the poor sales demanded remaindering, were the fault of others. (Signed, Grovelling

Arrow Author) ... **Famous “Network News” editor Martin Morse Wooster**, whose plea “Write for me as you would write for *Tappen*” was featured last issue, enthusiastically bounced a Langford submission with the classic words “We’re not prudes, but –” Corrected specification: write as you would for *Tappen*, but omitting anything in the nature of rude words, horrid innuendo, mention of bodily orifices (ears may possibly be OK in certain circumstances), tappens, and most other things to be found in *Tappen* ... **Peter Winnington of the Peake Society** has been querying E.F. Bleiler’s rumoured omission of Peake from a forthcoming fantasy-author compendium, “and got a strange answer which made reference only to the recently published *Guide To Supernatural Fiction* ‘in which I did include Peake’s *Mr Pym* [sic]” – do you play verbal golf? He’s found how to get from Poe to Peake in one!” (GPW) ... **Malcolm Edwards** reports imminent Penguin & Puffin editions of his almost famous reprint antho *Constellations* (1980): same cover, same layout, different price. Still bemused, he writes on A33: “Speaking as the editor who bought *Against Infinity* over here I confess myself wholly baffled by Greg Benford’s letter. Influence of Faulkner? Must go back and read *Moonfleet* again ... ‘TF’ = termite farting, do you think?” (MJE)

TAFF: Malcolm denies D. West’s denial of TAFF candidacy. “D. West is too standing for TAFF. He has no choice in the matter. If need be he will be the first write-in TAFF winner. (Signed: The Secret Masters.) Our slogan is, ‘Send D. West to de west’.” (MJE) As *TD* readers know, Famous Dave is proposing an alternative D. West Fan Fund to bring some lucky and deserving person like Ted White to D’s own home in Bingley. Already his eldritch powers are working to make the town a place of pilgrimage: the current Soc of Authors mag has a list of hotels offering discount to members, and naturally only a handful of places are willing to encourage vile creatures like authors, but of these the very first is the Hall Bank Hotel in, of course, Bingley....

RIP: Zenna Henderson of “People” fame died on 11 May, of cancer. She was 65. (LOCUS)

Random Convention Updates

Albacon II has paid half of the £500 lift repair bill from the Central Hotel (this being not so much Justice as an attempt to keep the hotel sweetened for future cons). Steve Green complains that the world-famous COFF award, handed by Kev Clarke to the hotel porter before numberless witnesses, was never seen again and according to the hotel never had been seen by their porter: *Ansible* suspects the trophy's construction is to blame, the beerglass "dome" over the legendary model Concrete Overcoat having probably been "repossessed" for the hotel bar, the rest discarded, the embarrassment of admitting to this being relentlessly avoided ... **Eurocon 8** is not Seacon 84 after all (it'll be Eurocon 9): the Yugoslavs have succeeded in having their September 16-18 (1983) con at Cankarjev Dom, Ljubljana, recognized as a Eurocon, which now becomes an annual – not biennial – event. \$5US supp, \$10 att (cheque/IMO/cash, or approx equivalent in other hard currency) payable to Elizabeta Bobnar, Ul.Ivanke Ovijac 4, YU-61215 MEDVODE, Yugoslavia ... **Unicon 4** (2-4 Sept, U of Essex): "Oh shit!" quipped merry chairman Alex Stewart after losing two Guests of Honour in one day – John Sladek plans to be in America and Angela Carter in hospital come convention time. Even more famous Ian Watson is GoH, unless his pre-election predictions come to pass and all sf authors in Thatcher's Britain are herded into a concentration camp, there to be subjected to life sentences of readings from the works of R.L. Fanthorpe ... **Seacon 84** – word reaches my ear that the planned simultaneous translation services look like costing over £3000 (including free rooms for a horde of professional interpreters), or somewhat more than the base figure for ALL other technical equipment and services. "No big fat UN grant, no simultaneous translation," hints a glum informant ... **Spring Bank Holiday 1984** event has a slight name correction: not Mexican but Tynecon II: The Mexican. The idea is to found a dynasty of Mexicons, each at the same time of year but with different locations and identifying names, like the Eastercon but (they say) better. £5 to Sue Williams, 19 Jesmond Dene Road, Jesmond, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE2 3QT. Hotel rates (Royal Station, Newcastle) £13.25/person dbl/twin, ditto snl-without-bath, £16.50 snl-with-bath ... **Fantasycon VIII** (see A33): "We haven't yet released details," says Jo Fletcher of the BFS repressively (no doubt the BFS tradition of keeping Fantasycon hushed up ...). Gene Wolfe is GoH; Bruce Pennington isn't a guest but "may turn up"; Ken Bulmer will be MC; "more details later" (*JF*)

Our Teeth Grated, And My Nipples Went Spung! All true fans will at

once recognize this famous line from *The Number Of The Beast*, and 102% will hastily add “Of course I didn’t read the book, I saw it quoted somewhere.” *TLS* coverage of a book on Japanese comics now suggests a source for Heinlein’s subtle onomatopoeia: there are conventional sounds for all sorts of things like slurping noodles (*suru-suru*), reddening with embarrassment (*po*), adding cold cream to hot coffee (*suron*) and vanishing into thin air (*fu*). Amid all this I find the glad news that “When a penis suddenly stands erect the accepted sound is *biin*.” When *biin* is found, can *spung* be far behind?

Thomas Paul Atkinson Edwards is the full name of, er....

Epistolae Et Cetera

Brian Aldiss – “The 6th Annual Meeting of World SF passed off peacefully in Zagreb, 16-20 June. The Yugoslav hosts did a great job; experienced congoers (like Elsie Wollheim & Sam Lundwall) voted it the best con ever. The new WSF awards were a success. Gerbish received one for *dedicated service*. An emerald green Harrison Award – named after our founder* – went to Bruce Gillespie. Russian & Chinese delegates (the popular Weng Fengzhen) were present. Next year: Brighton.” (*Founder Harrison? Michael? M. John? George? Give us a clue, Brian ... Ed.)

Alex Stewart – “The BFI yearbook thudded onto my doormat the other day, and, much to my surprise, it lists no less than seven sf/fantasy/horror films currently in production in the UK. Plus whatever may have started since the new year, of course. In case anyone’s interested, in alphabetical order, they are: *Greystoke* – multi-megabuck Burroughs, from Hugh ‘Chariots of Fire’ Hudson. *House Of The Long Shadows* – Price, Lee, Cushing and Carradine. No plot summary, but with a cast like that who cares? *The Keep* – Nazis fight demons in a creepy old castle. How can they tell them apart? *Krull* – sword & sorcery thingie. No different from all the rest, I suspect. *The Sender* – fun and games with a suicidal telepath. (I’m not making these up, honestly.) *Superman III* – ’nuff said. If you don’t know what to expect by now ... *Sword of the Valiant* – Sean Connery, Peter Cushing, Ronald ‘Coathanger’ Lacey take another crack at Sir Gawain and the Green Knight ... The thing I find most interesting is the obvious trend away from space and futuristic subjects

towards pulp adventure and the paranormal. I'm not sure if this represents the start of a new cycle, or just reflects the lower budgets available in the UK."

George Flynn – "As you may have heard, ConStellation has subcontracted to NESFA the production of a book of John Brunner's songs. These are about evenly divided between SF parodies and political songs (about rotten landlords, murdering generals, and all that sort of thing); the latter produced a minor outbreak of revulsion among the more conservative NESFA members, who subsided upon being informed that we already had a contract." (NESFA: New England SF Assoc, o ignorant ones.)

Ramsey Campbell (re the once "unprintable" King tale mentioned in A33) – "As for its being refused publication elsewhere, I for one never saw it, nor even knew of its existence until after I'd closed *New Terrors*. I gather it has now been published in America, I believe in a Charles L. Grant anthology. Speaking of unprintability, I can claim to be the author of the (commissioned in advance) story the *Liverpool Daily Post* wouldn't print ('Calling Card') and the *Twilight Zone* story that Herbert van Thal wouldn't use in his pornographic Pan series ('Again'), though I'm not sure if the latter is because it was too tasteful or too disturbing. Both events can now be seen as stages in my progress to being the British horror author nobody in Britain will print – at least, as of now I'm wholly out of print in Britain save for some of my anthologies and a few short stories. 'We all go down together, mate,' Chris Priest comforts." (Ouch.)

Peter Wareham contributes a snippet from *TV-Cable Week* spotted during his US holiday – "How do you script a sequel to a film in which the protagonists buy the farm? Well, writers Terry (*Candy*) Southern and Michael (*Saturday Night Live*) O'Donoghue are even now polishing *Bikers' Heaven*, a vehicle for *Easy Riders* Dennis Hopper and Peter Fonda. As Hopper, 47, has come to explain the new movie: 'It takes place 100 years after a nuclear holocaust. This guy on a golden Harley comes down from outer space and brings Peter and me back to life to save America, which has been overrun by mutant bike gangs, black Nazis and lesbian sadists.' Oh." (The piece is unsigned, but here at *Ansible* we feel the author has the right attitude. Watch for sequels to *On the Beach*, *Dr Strangelove* ...)

Ahrvid Engholm – "SEFF, the Scandinavian-European Fan Fund, intends to bring over a scandinavian fan to Seacon 84. Any fan may nominate one

candidate – send your nomination of the Swedish fan you'd like to see at Seacon 84, no later than *18 August 1983*, to me at Maskinistgaten 9 Ob, S-117 47 Stockholm, Sweden. The most popular fans will later appear on the final ballot which will be distributed this autumn. Donations to the fund are highly appreciated!" (To clarify: nominations need not be accompanied by donations, but they'd be welcome; voting will require a donation as with TAFF/DUFF/GUFF. Ahrvid is Scandinavian administrator and is still after a UK administrator for SEFF. Also he's editorial secretary of Sweden's *Teknik-Magasinet* (means more or less what it sounds like), sponsored by the biggest local magazine publishers and with a planned run of 50,000. Autumn launch. Another real fan, Anders Palm, is editor-in-chief, and sf, reviews and fannish articles are expected. Ahrvid also hopes to run translations of published stories by UK writers.)

Dave Locke sends a thrilling news item – "FANNISH LITTLE AMATEUR PRESS HAS SLIGHT FLAP ... Co-OE Locke was observed scratching his head as zine after incoming zine contained mailing comments castigating ace fanwriter Langford for subtle, invidious and unspecified remarks made in the previous mailing against the personage of the co-OE. Langford himself, in responding to Locke's review of *The Space Eater*, commented 'Lots of thanks, and I take back all the obscure jokes about you last issue' ... Due to recent experiments in FLAP to encode messages by such devious means as underlining letters or using the first word or first letter of each sentence, reviewing Langford's two-page 'last issue' for subtle or encoded slander became a task of almost forbidding proportions. Before he was carried away, the co-OE was finally observed holding the potentially offending sheet of paper up to a mirror while sprinkling his own urine on it ..." (Strange people, these Americans, eh?)

L5: Charles Platt passes on an L5 Society flyer featuring a really quite remarkably illiterate exhortation to join, from Robert Heinlein. With amusement Charles points out the naked nationalism ("The construction crews may speak Chinese or Russian – Swahili or Portuguese" warns RAH in accents of horror) followed by hasty internationalism: "Space is big enough for everyone – all races, all languages." So long as America gets there first ... **Susan Wood** collection (advertised last issue) sold out, but the "Best Fanwriting of 1981" collection is still available from me for £2 post free, proceeds to TAFF ... **Big Ike:** *Ansible*, the fnz of sweetness and light, has

found something nice to say about Asimov (in SFC). Proof copies of his novel *The Robots Of Dawn* are infesting America, while, because Asimov is a lonely and obscure author devoid of public recognition, Columbia U is cheering him up with an honorary doctorate. "Writing brilliantly about the future," they told him encouragingly, "you have shown a profound understanding of the past; your respect for fact is equalled only by the penetration of your fantasies." Excuse me, I feel momentarily unwell ... **Space-Ex 1984**, the planned hugecon, came nostalgically to mind when I unearthed their last publication, the Jan 1981 newsletter which opened with a broadside of dyslexic denials of the rumoured cancellation. Oh, fond memories. A letter to organizers ISTRA evoked no reply. Anyone pay money for this thing? Anyone hear from them recently? Anyone get any money back? ... **Michael Whelan** recently broke his right wrist in karate class, reports SFC: I can think of many artists and writers far more deserving of this incapacity ... **Space Eater** 6th favourite first novel in *Locus* poll! Wow. My thanks to both voters ... **Hugos**: the statistically implausibly number of ties which produced more or less than the standard five finalists in four Hugo categories and the JWC award (Hugo categories were novel, novella [somehow I omitted mention of K.S. Robinson's "To Leave a Mark" here in A33], artist, fanwriter) resulted from the Worldcon committee's decision that two items less than X votes apart, X not being specified, would be treated as tied. Need I remark that the Hugo rules make no such provision? (F770) ... **Avedon Carol** reaches page 16 of TAFF report!

COA

WILLIAM BAINS, 1950 Cooley Avenue #5207, Palo Alto, CA 94303, US • JIM BARKER, pesty fellow, asks me to stress that his business address as mentioned last issue is not for mere fanzines etc – send to his home, 113 Windsor Road, Falkirk, FK2 5DB • AL FITZPATRICK, 214 Morsetown Road, West Milford, NJ 07480, USA • STEVE HIGGINS, 26 Montague Road, Hornsey, London, N8 9PJ • AKE JONSSON, Regementsgatan 53, S-723 45 VASTERAS, Sweden • ANN LOOKER, 12 Russell Street, Swansea, Wales, SA1 4HR • VIC NORRIS, 29 rue des Chapelles, Sevres 92310, France • EUNICE PEARSON & PHILL PROBERT, "Ballard's View", 32 Digby House, Colletts Grove, Kingshurst, Birmingham, B37 6JE • DAI PRICE (to end August), 2 Gaer Road, Newport, Gwent, NPT 3AD • GEOFF

RYMAN (from 15 July), Manor Farm Cottage, Crawley Road, Old Minster Lovell, Oxon • CYRIL SIMSA is moving he knows not where in mid-to-late July: mail c/o 18 Muswell Avenue, London, N10 2EG • JEFF SUTER (but NOT Pam Wells, who is staying put), 4 Henry Road, Finsbury Park, London N.4 • SIMONE WALSH, 74 Corsebar Road, Top Flat/Left, Paisley, Scotland, PA2 9PS • ROB WELBOURN, Flat 7, 11 Eldon Square, Reading, RG1 4DP • To answer certain confused enquiries: you don't have to be famous to have your CoA mentioned here; it's automatic if you're an A subscriber or buddy; otherwise, try intimidation or (especially) bribery • Unusually, we have some Changes of Name: GRAHAM KOCH (formerly Graham England, but he lives in Germany where postmen get very confused by the old surname and send his mail back over here) • MIKE DON (formerly known, though only in *Ansible*, as Mike Yon thanks to his awful handwriting and anonymity in his own fanzine) • CATHRYN EASTHOPE •

Infinitely Improbable

Appalling Scenes At Brunners' Silver Wedding Party (2 July), if any, were not observed by your editor, nor by the steering committee of Seacon 84 (J. Brunner, Co-Chairman) since they were cleverly scheduled for a meeting in Birmingham that day ... **Marjorie Brunner** sends harrowing details of the return from their Italian trip (car hood ripped off, wine, presents and other valuables removed) and John a release about how the month abroad since January, the coming teaching at the Arvon Foundation (mid-July), the International Conference of Writers in Hiroshima (end July), the Baltimore Worldcon GoH appearance followed by something else in California and Cymrucon GoH-ing (Nov) ... all this and Seacon 84 is slowing up his current novel. Poor John ... **"My, He's Rather Good-Looking"** said Ted White of a certain British fan caught in Avedon Carol's UK photographs, and according to her was quite disappointed that she hadn't fooled around (her phrasing) with this sensuous chap. Good-looking? "I hadn't really thought so myself, and certainly not from these pictures of him, but Ted was, well, intrigued, I guess. Well, is this a new transatlantic romance in the making?" (AC) The UK fan in question was, of course, Phil Palmer ... **Group Theory:** Reading skiffyfans meet these days on the 3rd Thursday each month (Railway Tavern, Greyfriars Street, ignore Steve Green's BSFA Clubs Directory – I hear the Gannet venue there is some years out of date, too). Steve himself, famous for

having interviewed Margaret Thatcher during her pre-election Brum visit (“didn’t use the opportunity to attempt an assassination before the election, thus saving the entire country the mindnumbing torment of staying up for the results, alas ...” SG), mentions the Solihull group’s habit of meeting 2nd Sunday each month (Red House, Hermitage Road) and charging £1/year membership. All pales before the egregious “SF in Southend” under infant prodigy Joe Beedell, whose habits of charging lots for membership, offering little in return bar the chance to subscribe to a group fanzine, buying unspecified quantities of office equipment for his own use from group funds, raising subs in a tactful way whereby to have paid £3 or whatever last week still leaves you liable for £4 or whatever immediately after the increase ... these rumoured habits have caused Unrest, and even now Joe is getting in Real Accountants to audit everything, scotch rumours and find the £100 or so alleged to have gone missing (AS) ... **The Answer:** £2A is the cryptic comment scribbled in my deadly notebook against the names of those who have just given me £2 subscription for something called A. “Good grief,” said Martin Hoare, interrupting execution on his mouth/ale interface, “that’s the Answer to Life, the Universe and Everything, in hexadecimal!” As of this year Mr Hoare is 1F even though he may look 4F ... **Forbidden Planet SF Con** (US) has Charles Platt in charge of programming: by the time you read this Samuel Delany should have interviewed A.E. van Vogt (the mind splurges) and Tom Disch, if not restrained, will have read his coming *Twilight Zone* hatchet job on the complete works of Jack Chalker, to an audience consisting largely of Jack Chalker ... **Colin Greenland**, famous author, has at last sold his famous novel *Daybreak on a Distant Mountain* to Unwin’s pb fantasy line. Greenland Appreciation Society supremo Ian Watson is counting the minutes until he lays hands on a review copy ... **Fantasycon** data just arrived, and I take back any unkind thoughts which may have crossed my mind in the remote past (p.2). 14-16 Oct, New Imperial Hotel, Brum: £7.50 att (£6.50 BFS members) to 15 Stanley Road, Morden, Surrey. Rooms £12.50/person/night. **COA:** Steve Jones/Jo Fletcher/BFS publications, 130 Park View, Wembley, Middlesex, HA9 6JU ... **RIP:** Bob Pavlat, longtime fan and FAPA stalwart, died of pneumonia on 17 June; he was 57. Buster Crabbe, Olympic gold medallist famous for playing Flash Gordon (& Buck Rogers) died of a heart attack at 75, on 17 April (*Dave Locke, SFC*) ... **Barry Bayley** spoke to the Brum Group in June. Why did Brumfans later shudder in horror at the suggestion that he be asked to a

certain other con? Why were comparisons made with the late Edmund Cooper (who if memory serves me right regaled bored Brummies with between-drinks details of how he'd done naughty things that day with both wife and mistress, until he fell over)? *Ansible* is eager for hard facts which will explode these vile allegations, or not ... **Hugo Name Pro Emerges**
From Reading: local fan, BFS mole and Derleth hierophant Nic Howard has sold his "verse cycle" *Follow The Dream* to Moorlands Press under their special terms of 0% royalties and all the copies you can carry ... **Talking Heads:** Scotfans Matt Sillars & Brian Hennigan are running an appeal in their fnz *The Head* to (a) raise £500 to sponsor a (democratically chosen) SF book's recording on 14-hour cassette by the RNIB for blind fans; (b) encourage taping of fnz for the same. 8 Beaverbank Place, Edinburgh, EH7 4ER ... **Battlefield Earth**, notes F770, was within 20 nominations of the 96 minimum (scored by Cherryh's *Pride Of Chanur*) to reach the Hugo final ballot. I'll say no more, having been Reproved by one John Hertz in that same fnz for daring to mention Scientology and *BE* on the same page. "Langford's potshots aren't even 'man bites dog'," he complains, presumably meaning that the *BE* controversy is normal "dog bites man" news and that I should instead focus on those rare, bizarre books whose weirdly non-reclusive authors are never rumoured to be dead/gaga, which are curiously unpublicized by Scientologists and whose UK editions are unprecedentedly published rather than hastily cancelled ... **Fuzzy Language** is George Hay's contribution to computer thought: away with all these clogingly precise relationships, instead let's have, e.g.: "in some circumstances equals", "could quite possibly mean that" ... Offers from IBM, please? **Foundation AGM** 21 July 2pm....

Hazel's Language Lessons #25: Hebrew

Contributed by Edmund Wilson

At the Convention Fancy-Dress:
shōkoh – to wander around lasciviously.

ANSIBLE 34: Dave Langford
94 London Road, Reading,
Berks., RG1 5AU, England.

Your *Ansible* Subscription: a Dreadful Secret....

A separate flyer included with Ansible 34.

As belligerently stated in the almost invisible type of the *Ansible 34* masthead, times are hard and it seems that your formerly mild-mannered editor will have to get all brutal too. What usually happens is that Keith's computer detects with infallible electronic senses the final issue of your subscription, and prints a SUB DUE notice on the label. Most fans almost instantly ignore this. Out of the generosity of my heart I have in the past quite frequently sent a further issue or two by way of reminder, and a remarkable number of people still complained "I never *noticed* my sub had lapsed!" when at last I savagely deleted them from the computer files. Yet more recently I've been experimenting with a bloody great rubber stamp placed embarrassingly on the mailing label for the postman to read and saying:

SUB OVERDUE

But this rubber stamp (except in a few whimsical cases) is going into retirement. For all but a few who are real buddies or who possess my signed IOUs locked in a safe place, the issue that says SUB DUE will be the last. Sorry, my children, but with the mailing list at its present ridiculous size I can't afford to send all those extra reminder copies each time. Instead I have instituted this very bit of paper which you are now reading. If you want to let your A subscription lapse, I can respect, admire and sympathize with this courageous decision. If you have a bone to pick (like, you distinctly remember thrusting £2 at a drunken Langford and seeing me write it down in my notebook – always make sure I write it down, fans), now's your chance to complain. But let us have no more whingeing about *Ansible's* failure to draw your attention to the lapsing of your subscription. OK, folks? OK.

Bye-bye, then. Or possibly *au revoir*. (DRL)

***Ansible* 35**

October 1983

The Oct 83 issue of Britain's occasionally frequent SF newsletter from DAVE LANGFORD, 94 LONDON ROAD, READING, BERKS, RG1 5AU. Still £2.00 for 7 issues, airmailed outside UK: notes to me, cheques to *Ansible*, Giro transfer to a/c 24 475 4403. Americans may send \$3.50 to Burns, 23 Kensington Ct. Hempstead. NY 11550. Artwork by Margaret Welbank, e-stencils by John Harvey, labels by Keith Freeman – please resubscribe if yours says SUB DUE or ****. #35 is late because your editor diverted his priceless time to finish a novel for Frederick Muller Ltd, out (with luck) next Spring; #35 has a somewhat cheapo aspect because your editor is broke. Back to litho and sybaritic luxury next time, I devoutly hope.

Awards

The Hugos offered some surprises, but not in the novel category, won by Isaac A's *Foundation's Edge*, the novel which supersedes Valium. Novella: "Souls", Joanna Russ. Novelette: "Fire Watch", Connie Willis. Short: "Melancholy Elephants", Spider Robinson. Nonfic: *Isaac Asimov: The Foundations of SF*, James Gunn. Editor: Ed Ferman. Artist: Michael Whelan. Dramatic: *Bladerunner*. "Fanzine": Locus. Fanwriter: Dick Geis. Fanartist: Alexis Gilliland. JWC Award (for new writer – not a Hugo): Paul O. Williams. And the coveted award of the Right To Hold The 1985 Worldcon went as expected to Melbourne, Australia (GoH Gene Wolfe, FGoH Ted White, 22-26 August 85), and a British 1987 bid was almost instantly mooted to save Americans from the awful 87 alternatives of Phoenix and San Diego. Meanwhile back in civilisation, an international panel awarded the JWC Memorial Award to *Helliconia Spring* by Brian ... Brian something ... it's on the tip of my tongue ...

Cosmic Awards

Of far more cosmic value was the straw poll at Silicon 7, where on penalty of not receiving free drinks the entire membership passed on these cosmic issues:

- WHO IS THE BIGGEST WALLY IN FANDOM? Fake Bob Shaw 11%, V. Brown / S. Green 9%, “Me” 7%, M. Hoare / I. Sorensen / S. Polley 4%
- WHICH FAN WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE KING / QUEEN? D. West 15%, J. Nicholas 10%, E. Harvey / H. Bell / R. Kaveney 8%
- FAVOURITE CON OF THE YEAR? Silicon 59%, Eastercon 10%, Becon / “Next one” / Novacon 4%
- WHICH FAN WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE? “Me” 23%, D. Langford 10%, “Richest” 8%, G. Pickersgill / M. Welbank / R. Hansen 5% – also “Chris Evans with hair”, “Lady Windermere’s”)
- BEST RECENT FANZINE? Still It Moves 17%, Tappen 12%, Out of the Blue / Tiger Tea / Twll-Ddu / DT 8%, A Cool Head / Ansible / Epsilon 6%
- MOST CUDDLY FAN E. Harvey 17%, I. Williams 14%, L. Pickersgill 12%, A. Akien 7%, J. Harvey 5%, J. Scrivner 4%, J. Barker 2%
- WORST DRESSED? A. Frost 15%, D. West / A. Harries 10%, R. Kaveney 7%, R. Jackson / D. Bridges / J. Nicholas 5%
- FAVOURITE FAN OVER 50? D. West 18%, I. Williams 9%, M. Edwards / K. Slater / R. Peyton / B. Shaw 5%, J. Jarrold 7% – the Gannets ordered this list, not me – K. Smith 2%
- FAVOURITE UNDER 10? I. Williams 16%, Amanda Dorey / I. Maule / P. Turner 9%, S. Green / D. West / D. Jackson 5%
- WHICH FAN SHOULD BE EXHUMED? D. West 14%, L. Kettle / P. Weston / W. Willis 9%, R. Jackson / S. Polley / G. Pickersgill / H.P. Lovecraft 6%. – EXHUMED AND REBURIED? P. Weston 23% F.B. Shaw 18% D. West 8% G. Pickersgill / S. Polley / I. Asimov 5% MOST BORING FAN? A. Akien 19%, G. Webb / S. Green 9%, V. Brown / P. Weston / I. Watson / G. Bondar / F.B. Shaw / J. Brunner 4%
- FILM HERO(INE) YOU’D MOST LIKE TO BE? Barbarella 7%, D. Bowman / Flesh Gordon / B. Bunny 2%
- FAN WITH BEST POSE? J. Jarrold 23%, J. Nicholas 15%, D. West 9%
- NICEST FAN? “Me” 15%, L. Pickersgill 11%, E.& J. Harvey 7% – also “a dumb G. Pickersgill”

- WHICH BABY BORN INTO FANDOM RECENTLY GAVE YOU MOST PLEASURE? None 31%, A. Dorey 14%, The One That Doesn't Get Brought To Cons / S. Polley / Interzone / T.P. Atkinson Edwards / H. Oldroyd 6%
- SEXIEST VOICE? E. Harvey / "Me" / L. Pickersgill 9%, A. Akien 7%
FAN TO TAKE TO A DESERT ISLAND? L. Pickersgill 21%, J. Hanna / E. Harvey 10%, G. Pickersgill / D. Langford 5%
- WHICH FAN SHOULD BE STRUCK DUMB A. Harries/ A. Akien 10%, S. Green 8%, S. Lawson / D. Jackson / F.B. Shaw / G. Pickersgill / J. Nicholas 5%
- BEST LOOKING FEMALE? L. Pickersgill 20%, S. Hepple 15%, S. Kavanagh 8%. – MALE? R. Hansen 23%. S. Higgins 10%, D. West / M. Edwards 8%, R. Holdstock/J. Jarrold 5%
- WHERE'D YOU MOST LIKE A CON? London 21%, Newcastle 8%, Hawaii / York 5%. – LEAST LIKE A CON? Brighton 21%, Glasgow 16%, Blackpool 5%, Birmingham/Iran 3%

Also the most popular appliance with which to be marooned on a desert island was a typewriter and/or an Inflatable Steve Higgins / Eve Harvey / Linda Pickersgill. Market researchers take note.

Constellation Malcolm Edwards

Several thousand people showed up to the World SF Convention in Baltimore – conceivably enough to avert the committee's bankruptcy (rumour had it that they were so grossly overspent that any figure less than 7500 attending spelt disaster). (*Final attendance was a shade over 6000 – DRL*) Still, by Saturday 800 people were said to have shown up and paid at the door – \$55 full attending membership which is, believe me, Too Much.

ConStellation was held in a convention centre and several main hotels. The committee had cunningly arranged for the Hilton to be the "party hotel", even though it was much further from the centre than was the Hyatt, and even though its 23 floors were serviced by just two lifts.

The convention itself? Mediocre organisation and programming, I'd say, but

went off OK. (At least, I had a good time) The main programme was remarkably short on items of any interest. The fan programme worked better, and the new practice (to Americans) of having a fan lounge / fanroom area did serve its purpose by providing a focal area where people could find each other. Highlight of the fan program was the “Fans Are Slans” panel, wherein Steve Stiles extemporised a remarkable account of Claude Degler’s insanitary habits, John Shirley exposed parts of his body nobody (except representatives of the French media) wanted to see, and Charles Platt developed his “I love fandom” act with glutinous sincerity. Lowlight of the main programme was the Hugo ceremony, which sabotaged its own intention of being short and punchy by starting 45 minutes late. The restive audience was then treated to slides projected onto one of those monster videoscreens currently popular at sports stadia. Evidently nobody had told the organizers that the image on such screens doesn’t resolve until you’re about 100 yards away ... cavernous as it was, the main hall was no more than 75 yards long. A slide came up. Toastmaster Jack “I’ve never won a Hugo” Chalker invited the audience to guess what it was. It looked to me like bits of tumbleweed on a desert plain. “That’s right.” said Jack, “the first Worldcon banquet.” Not many surprises among the awards, except the relegation of *E.T.* to third place. Isaac Asimov, receiving his Hugo, said that it really belonged to everyone who had ever written sf. But he refused to hand it over to me later.

Missed moment of the con: Charles Platt and I were talking at length to Fred Harris of Author Services Inc. (L. Ron Hubbard promotional organisation), hoping to extract some untoward revelation. Finally he leaned forward saying. “I really shouldn’t tell you this –” We waited in eager anticipation. A person from Porlock (or in this case *Locus*) unknowingly intervened. The moment was gone.

British representation was not overwhelming but did exist. I spotted John & Marjorie Brunner (of course), Martin Tudor, John Bark, Colin Fine, Hugu Machete, Tanith Lee among others.

Almost the first thing that happened after we arrived was that I was summoned by Bruce Pelz, who told me that Britain had to bid for the 1987 Worldcon, since the West coast bids (Phoenix and San Diego) were not popular even with West Coast fans. It wasn’t long before other prominent West Coasters – Craig Miller and Gary Farber to name but two – reinforced this message. The rest is – or one day will be – history. (MJE)

Britain in 1987

We interrupt Worldcon coverage to announce that a bidding committee nucleus has been formed, or more correctly has formed itself, and so far consists of Malcolm Edwards, Chris Atkinson and Dave Langford. A few more names should have been added by Novacon, where we hope to discuss the whole thing in an open forum (rotten eggs should be left at the door) Expressions of support, encouragement, unbridled lust, etc. would doubtless be welcome, care of Malcolm or *Ansible*.

Mary Burns sent pages on ConStellation, opening “overall this was a good Worldcon” and proceeding in true *Ansible* style to an extensive list of flaws. Programme: “There were up to 15 tracks going at the same time ... poor choice of competing alternatives, scheduling fan GoH speech against the slide presentation about the new Indiana Jones movie and the making of *The Return of the Jedi*.” Masquerade: “Poorly executed ... video bad, cameraman often stayed on the MC instead of the costume or focused on the wrong thing ... slow handclaps at too-long and too-boring presentation by MC ... 130 costumes, presentation started an hour and a half late. Many people walked out before then.” (Apparently seven children’s costumes were shown earlier, and everything else was endlessly delayed while the obligatory prizes all round – calligraphed certificates – were prepared for the seven. so they could then go to bed. As they didn’t, and as the kids in the audience were thus kept up much later than need be, this seems not wholly sensible.) Overall: “Too many people. Too many hotels. Probably unavoidable.” Mary, in the Hilton, tended to miss late-night items in the Hyatt, “Baltimore streets could be dangerous to my health if I went between them by myself ...” Sounds like my own vain efforts to get to bed early at Novacons, striding resolutely through the bar and ... (after that, the dark).

Footnote.... Least Likely Prohibition At A Con: fans were sternly forbidden to walk about exposing their naked feet in the con centre. Most Boring Statistic: Melbourne got 642 out of 725 site selection votes, whereas Bingley received one write-in vote. Fascist Oppression Dept: Astral League Poles were brutally confiscated during the masquerade – subsequently apologies were issued in the con newsletter *Scuttlebutt* (ed. Mike Glycer), whence most of these notes, and “responsible” use of poles declared OK, leaving the status of the Astral Initiation open to doubt. Hugo Statistics: too boring to list, but

just to twist the knife in the wound I reveal that the final novel placing was *Foundation's Itch. Pride Of Chanur* (which actually got most first place votes), *2010, Friday, Courtship Rite* and *Sword Of The Lictor*. (Bill Evans)

[Change of Address list omitted]

Venture Into SF

The second SF Supper Club gathering saw Desmond Clarke, director of the Book Marketing Council, defending this promotion (cannily not titled “Best of SF”) against hordes of rotten nitpickers. Asked why a campaign to promote SF featured (e.g.) a Donaldson fantasy bestseller in no need of promotion, D. Clarke had no hesitation in exclaiming that even when something was a bestseller the volume of sales could still be increased no end. Blank silence from fandom. Cornered and asked the point of this drive to make visibly rich (in many cases) authors richer still, he was not afraid to explain there’d very likely be another and much better follow-up promotion. Tackled again on the matter of Donaldson, he fearlessly admitted it was all the judges’ fault (the judges, you will remember, blame the publishers; one wonders if the publishers blame the BMC.) All the fans’ points about this campaign’s choices and omissions are made by Chris Priest in a *Bookseller* article, “Venture into the Stodgy”: “The old pecking order remains, and those wrongfully neglected go on being so.” Aldiss, Ballard, Moorcock, Silverberg and Wolfe are all expected at the 10 Oct promotion launch in London; the revelry continues to 22 Oct. I wait in fear and trembling.

Also at the SFSC: Bob Shaw attempted to teach D. Langford his renowned trick of not falling over, with little success. Famous literary agent Maggie Noach pointed a small dog at people in the hope that it would divine literary talent, and was seen to associate with newly-famous Mary Gentle with open intimacy which (scandalmongers rumoured) presaged a sensuous author/agent relationship. Chris Evans pinched my reviews notebook and thrust it at Rob Holdstock, strangely open at the page containing a detailed statistical analysis of the works of Robert P Faulcon’s “Nighthunter” books (broken down into Major Atrocities, Minor Supernatural Frissons, Outbreaks Of Italics and Bodies Per Chapter).. “I didn’t really have a body-count running into three figures in Book 3, did I?” said Rob with moans which were

terrible to behold.

Brian Stableford is plunging back into writing owing to a slight financial crisis caused by the departure of lovely Viv Stableford: “I can’t stand living in Reading.” she cried, and has bought a house in Swansea where she lives with the kids and which Brian (tied to Reading by university tenure) is permitted to help redecorate. The current Stableford masterwork is non-fiction about bionics, genetic engineering, etc., for the ill-famed Roxby Press. whose overlord Hugh Elwes is insisting the book be titled *Future Man* despite the existence in print of Chris Morgan’s opus of genetic engineering, bionics, etc., interestingly titled *Future Man*. Next challenge for Brian: to re-establish relations with cuddly, batrachian Don Wollheim, strained since DAW left off the downbeat ending of a recent Stableford novel. Writing to *Locus* (who didn’t publish it) and DAW, Brian cracked jokes about censorship etc: a very annoyed Wollheim issued an unanswerable counterblast to the effect that “we didn’t censor a word, it was just a routine, in-house losing of the last page of the manuscript.”

Speaking Of DAW, we have an unattributable rumour from Joyce Scrivner, who reports that [[Sorry, chaps. This was the one time *Ansible* did nearly get sued. Every trace of the original allegation has therefore been expunged. Literary detectives will just have to reconstruct what they can from the apology in *Ansible 36*. – DRL]]

Robert P Faulcon Again! What is the eerie significance of the aged, doddering couple called Pat & Graham Charnock who in “Nighthunter” 3 are eaten by a giant spider? Or of the virginal schoolteacher Kath Mitchell who succumbs to an evil, debilitating, lustful, sweaty, greasy embrace? Does the evil etc. embracer have a big nose? *Ansible* waits agog for Book 4.

Brian Aldiss must be delighted by US ads for *Helliconia Spring*: in *SFWA Bulletin*, Atheneum proudly quote the review of one Roger Schlobin, who compares *HS* with “such other monumental world-creating-efforts” as *Foundation* (h’m), the *Dune* series (h’m) and ... grand climax ... the Proton/Phaze Trilogy by Piers Anthony.

Daybreak On A Different Mountain, not long to be denied you by Unwin/Unicorn, is the real title of Colin Greenfinger’s novel *Daysend On A Distinct Mundane*, misheard in a phone call from informant Malcolm Edwards and printed last issue as *Dayspring On A Deferent Mountain*. We at

Lesbian suspect this was engineered by C. Greenstreet to ensure further mentions of *Offspring Of A Difficult Mounting*....

Pocket Books Etc: Somewhere back in pre-geological time (A34) there began to unfold a saga of Proustian proportions and similar riveting plotline. In brief: unhappy with D. Hartwell's handling of the Timescape SF line (specifically his inability to create bestsellers on a publicity budget of 45 cents per book), Pocket Books gave him the boot and announced a secretly fomented deal with famous hack literary agents Scott Meredith Inc, who'd be in the enviable position of packaging a Timescape line relabelled "Starscope" (for no apparent reason, except that this cleverly ditches the goodwill built up by Timescape), and would be able to favour their own authors if they chose ... "Conflict of interest," howled SFWA, and quite right too. Greg Benford takes it from there: "I enclose the just-received press release surrendering the Meredith connection. I am proud of SFWA's alliance with the agents to stop SM taking over the Timescape line. Reportedly. Pocket wrote a press release saying they had differences with Meredith and were breaking off the deal, and mentioning the pressure from-SFWA & agents. They circulated that one in-house, decided it gave too much away, recalled all copies, and issued a new one saying they weren't bending to pressure after all." (The new PR explains that absolutely no problem that anyone could possibly imagine was responsible for the change of plan, which just sort of happened.) "They caved in, in part because we had an injunction set to go to court and through the Federal Trade Commission, all nicely researched ... and we (SFWA authors & Directors) had agreed to pour money into the battle, shorting some SFWA programs if need be, and making sure Busch [Pocket president] found that out.... our networks worked remarkably in this crisis. Busch got sandbagged in the press, partly because we already knew his position before he opened his mouth. so we undercut him at every turn." (GB)

Pocket authors have been enjoying a series of rumours about the new Timescape, or Starscope, editor. Born-again anthologist Roger Elwood; Jim Baen of Tor Books (whose publisher was listening over his shoulder as he got the call from Pocket); Ben Bova; even George Scithers. I am unconvinced by the non-attributable source signing himself "Yours in it up to here". who guesses the job will go to that "reliable arbiter of taste, leading stylist and noted commentator ... Darrell Schweitzer." Excuse me....

Why am I taking such interest in a US firm's fate? Because I am a close and

fascinated spectator of Pocket's finances: owing to a contract hassle I still don't fully understand, Timescape have had my very own SF novel in print for eight months without having paid any advance money whatever, and apparently without a contract as well. With financial wizardry like this I don't see how Timescape could possibly lose money.

Interzone: Slagged off by other collective members for "trying to be honest and realistic" in the depressing resubscription figures last issue, Dave Pringle has adopted a mood of buoyant optimism. Resubs were last seen at 50% and rising; issue 5 sent to lapsed subscribers by way of encouragement; unpublished Philip K Dick material promised by his literary executor Paul Williams; issue 6 to contain Keith Roberts's "Kitecadet", sequel to "Kitemaster" and appearing for the first time in *IZ* despite false claims to the contrary in Scithers *Amazing* ads (*Amazing* gets to publish it many moons after *IZ*). A point: *IZ* is often called the successor to *New Worlds* – to the partial irritation of its editors – and it was interesting to read Mike Moorcock's massive Fontana anthology of *NW*, with its mention of those who carry on the "tradition" of that mag. Today's only possible candidate is *IZ* – which is nowhere mentioned. Take that, *Interzone*, for daring to question the wonderfulness of *NW* in that editorial!

Battlefield Earth (sorry, that again) missed 1983 Hugo nomination by only 15 votes, confirms omniscient Ted White. A little more shoulder-to-shoulder effort from those staunch allies Bjo Trimble and Charles Platt, and there *BE* would have been, and in the opinion of some fans the Hugo would have been discredited forever. (Other fans would silently point to some of the things that were nominated, and won, this year.) Ted: "At Westercon I encountered (despite minor efforts to avoid her) Bjo Trimble, who informed me she'd won a bet because of my criticism of her and John's *BE* fanclub and Hugo-nomination efforts. 'I bet a guy at LASFS that you'd be one of the people who ignored our 30 years of service to fandom,' she told me with a moderately straight face. I told her I thought her promotion of *BE* was morally indefensible." (TW) My favourite behind-the-scenes explanation of why NEL dropped out of publishing a British hardback of *BE*: seems they learnt that Scientologists had already imported 15,000 copies of the American hardback, somewhat vitiating the market.

Speaking Of Charles Platt, here he is at the NY Forbidden Planet con: "In a panel on 'how publishing really works' Fred Pohl was accused by an

audience member of advocating the ‘Milton Friedman school of publishing’. Malzberg lamented ‘Has no editor ever had the courage to create a new SF market as opposed to following the trends?’ To which I replied ‘Yes, Judy-Lynn del Rey.’ Jack Chalker and Tom Disch debated SF criticism somewhat dully; Disch repeatedly hinted that he had with him the MS of a forthcoming review he’d written of Chalker, but Chalker refused to take the bait and ask Tom to read it. ‘There are nine million SF critics in the SF world,’ said Chalker, ‘of whom 8,999,998 hate my guts.’ He condemned the ‘National Enquirer’ school of criticism (i.e. *Patchin Review*) and also all British critics. ‘I have an incredible body’ he said. ‘Of reviews.’ he continued after a somewhat confusing pause that had most of the audience momentarily agreeing with him....

“I did an interview with Phil Farmer as a substitute for a GoH speech. He gave me a list of questions to ask him, including ‘If you had never been born, where would you be now?’ He said he didn’t know the answer, but after a moment’s reflection came up with one. There is a large reservoir of souls (he said), far more than there are available bodies. Surplus souls are allotted individual body parts. ‘So if I had been reincarnated as one of those souls,’ said Philip Jose Farmer, ‘I would like to have been Ronald Reagan’s cock. Then whenever he wanted to have sex, I could say, uh-uh, sorry Ron. That way, he would never have been elected because no one’s going to vote for an impotent President.’ Mothers of small children in the audience appeared somewhat disconcerted by this revelation.” (C. Platt)

Saturn Awards announced at that con went to 2010 (novel), *The One Tree* (fantasy novel), Ballard’s *Myths Of The Near Future* (short – the surprise of this batch, voted by US SF bookshop customers), Donald Kingsbury (new writer), *F&SF* (magazine), Michael Whelan (best cover: 2010).

The Con With No Name, scheduled for September, seemingly tried to make it as The Con With No Publicity and as a consequence became The Con With No Registrations (well, a rumoured 12). It self-destructed quietly. Which should be borne in mind by the organizers of **Space-Ex 1984** (4-11 Aug Wembley Centre), an event whose long silence has led most fans – including some who’d paid vast membership fees – to a verdict of Presumed Death. Many weeks after an attempt to check this and prise out current data for *Ansible*. I received this from Mike Parry: “This letter would have been sooner had you enclosed a SAE as is customary when requesting information. Space

Ex 1984 Information is for registered members *only* until Jan 1st 1984 when we will be advertising widely and when we ourselves are sure of all our schedules celebrities etc etc. At which time you will receive the fullest information that we can provide. ISTRA only owes information to people who are registered, we have to date done exactly that. And as we have sold out of V.I.P. memberships, Public Registrations will be offered January 1st.” (sic) Perhaps some member (this means you, Paul Vincent) could share with me the closely guarded secrets divulged in an immense flood since the last flyer I saw (Jan 81)? Can Space-Ex really have sold the 5000 advertised tickets at prices from 15£ (81) to 19£ (83)? Why should any con want a publicity blackout ending at a traditionally bad time of year for ad campaigns (post-Xmas, with people’s holiday plans mainly fixed)? Answers to Space-Ex, 21 Hargwyne St., Stockwell, London. SW9 9RQ.

Books. Asimov’s *The Robots Of Dawn* is not as bad as *Foundation’s Edge* (assures Brian Stableford, hot from slagging off his proof copy) but is still incredibly verbose, stuffed with further attempts to weld Asimov’s disparate stories into a triffic Future History, and makes thrilling use of a brand-new suspense technique whereby sleuth Lije Bailey realizes the solution to the book’s detective puzzle in a blinding flash *every time* he goes to sleep, forgetting it every time he wakes up. Is Asimov’s latter-day verbosity due to his triffic word processor? Rumour has it that after endorsing the wonderful, indispensable TRS-80 system which made writing so much easier, Dr A found himself incapable of using it and reverted to the old portable typewriter.... Heinlein has delivered *Job: A Comedy Of Justice*, 400pp of religious satire set partly in heaven and sounding suspiciously like Cabell’s *Jurgen: A Comedy Of Justice* (did not win a Hugo). And GALACTIC MEGASTAR Robert P Faulcon’s Nighthunter series is all set for a LONG LONG run of ... oh, they stopped you after 5 books, Rob? Sorry.

News From Japan: from M. Edwards’s *DT* I learn of a Japanese con publication printing numberless “messages of support” requested from UK/US writers. Most are heavy-handed Hints that the writer in question would really like to visit Japan one day as a con GoH.... Ellison goes over the top, listing a dozen Japanese as the world’s top fantasists, rivalled in the West only by Borges, Marquez, Kafka, Ellison. Ballard offers a tasteful exhortation: “That great feat of arms, the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour on December 7, 1941, must now be repeated in the realm of the imagination –

let the SF writers of Japan set out across the skies of the human psyche, each carrying a piece of that explosive future which will torpedo the battleships of complacency and inertia!”

TAFF, GUFF etc.

Most copies will feature a **TAFF** flyer, mentioning the names of Hansen and Ounsley, plus the enigmatic D. West: in a postcard from ConStellation, the Nielsen Haydens said “D. West confirmed as TAFF candidate”, but the most D. West was heard to say at Silicon was something like “If elected I will stand.” Ballots next issue, I imagine, when all will become still less clear. Vote for a Welshman, folks.... The lucky delegate will attend the 1984 Worldcon, LA-Con II in Los Angeles, whose co-Chairman Craig Miller begs that I use *Ansible*’s awesome facilities to deny the rumour (SFC) that free memberships are being offered to all SFWA members.

GUFF should bring an Australian to Seacon 84 here, the slate consisting of Justin Ackroyd, Shayne McCormack, Jean Weber and Roger Weddall (whose habit of phoning me at length about GUFF, from Australia, left me in awe of his riches until Judith Hanna revealed the secret to be a bent telephone engineer in Melbourne). Ballots – er – real soon now?

DUFF operates between the US and Australia: at present Aussies Jack R. Herman and John Packer are contending for the trip to LA-Con II; and among those thinking ahead to the 1985 Melbourne DUFF race are said to be Joni Stopa, Marty & Robbie Cantor, and Mike Glicksohn (er, US = NA up there).

SEFF is the Scandinavian-European Fan Fund, whose UK administrator Colin Fine (205 Coldham’s Lane, Cambridge CB1 3HY) says “Yes I know, but try getting an acronym out of ‘The Scandinavian-All-the-bits-of-Europe-that-aren’t-Scandinavia-not-forgetting-offshore-islands-like-Britain Fan Fund’.” Contributions/nominations for a Scanfan to be inflicted on Seacon 84 are requested.

SFAFF, standing for something unmemorable, is or was a tentative plan to complement GUFF by bringing a continental Eurofan to Melbourne in 85. Correspondence/enthusiasm to James Styles in 342 Barkly St, Ararat, Vic 3377, Australia.

SF – what, will the line stretch out to the crack of doom? – is the Shaw Fund

planned to bring a democratically elected Bob Shaw to this same Aussiecon II, Melbourne, 1985. Spurious Bob Shaws excluded. Money to GPO Box 2708X, Melbourne, Vic 3001, Australia. Candidates include Bob Shaw.

Searing Controversy about fan funds is rare, but here's one. DUFF administrators Joyce Scrivner and Peter Toluzzi have been getting some stick for (only the bravest should read on) extending the poll deadline of the 1983 DUFFing, enabling an alleged anti-Jan Finder lobby to allegedly affect the result following an alleged but unproven leakage of interim totals.

Coincidentally there were similar rumours about the last TAFF race, the allegation this time being that as a result of leakage from US administrator Stu Shiffman, Moshe Feder tried to drum up extra votes for Taral (to spare his hurt feelings at getting so very few, rather than to affect the result). And Scots BNF Frances Jane Nelson has launched an assault on TAFF for bringing over the loathsome Avedon Carol, whose high crimes appear to include such atrocities as being late for things, cracking traditional banquet food jokes, not liking Jan Howard Finder and spending too much time with someone called Langford (bloody hell, I barely saw her after the first day, too). Tut, tut.

Polls Again

F770, from which some of the above was also pinched, reveals the Pong poll results courtesy of Ted White. BEST FANWRITER D. West, FANARTIST Dan Steffan, FANEDITOR Malcolm Edwards, SINGLE PUBLICATION Warhoon 30, #1 FAN FACE Dan Steffan (remember him?), NEW FAN Steve Bieler, FUGGHEAD OF THE YEAR Seth Breidbart (who he?).

F770's own poll ... FANWRITER (1) M. Glycer, (2). D. Langford. (=3) R.E. Geis, T. Nielsen Hayden. Other Brits featured: (=7) C. Atkinson, (=16) M. Edwards, (=21) K. Smith, C. Priest, D. West. FANARTIST (1) S. Shiffman, (2) A. Gilliland, (3) J. Hanke-Woods. Brits: (=24) R. Hansen. BEST CON GoH: Harlan Ellison. Brits: (5) Jim White. MOST BORING & REPETITIOUS READING (1) Discussions of whether Hubbard is alive (2) Dick Geis on economics (3) Southern fan feuds (4) Asimov's introductions to his own stories. Practically British item: (9) Judith Hanna's convention reports. The poll also revealed that 101 out of 140 fans would be unwilling to accept a Hugo Award on behalf of Dick Geis.

Cons & Events

8 Oct 83: **Kev Smith & Diana Reed** get married in remote, inaccessible bit of Cornwall. Langford makes best-man speech negligibly altered from previous versions at M. Hoare nuptials. Gene Wolfe & Robert Silverberg sign books at Forbidden Planet in London.

14-16 Oct 83: **Fantasycon VIII**, New Imperial Hotel, Brum. GoH Gene Wolfe; membership £7.50. Ken Bulmer is MC; BFS Awards to be presented.

15 Oct 83: Wolfe (am), McCaffrey (lunch), Silverberg (pm) sign books at Andromeda, Brum. Aldiss does ditto to Helliconia Summer at F. Planet.

4-6 Nov 83: **Novacon 13**. Royal Angus Hotel, Brum GoH Lisa Tuttle. £7 att to 46 Colwyn Road, Beeston.. Leeds, LS11 6PY. Hideous Novacon scandal appears to have died down after a final altercation between R. Peyton and S. Green when the former allegedly said “Look, last year’s Novacon was deliberately a crap convention to keep the attendance down...” The tiny Lisa Tuttle collection from Drunken Dragon Press to be released at this con is called *The Other Book*.

26-27 Nov 83: **Cymrucon III**, Central Hotel Cardiff GoH John Brunner. £8 att to The Bower, High Str Llantwit Major, S Glam, CF6 9SS. **Important Notice:** the Cymrucon committee is extremely annoyed to hear that an evil fan – reported to be Hugh Mascetti – has been spreading untrue rumours of Cymrucon’s cancellation. Should he tell you this, hit him in the mouth in as tactful a fashion as you can contrive.

20-23 Apr 84: **Seacon 84**, Brighton Metropole Hotel. GoH Roger Zelazny (Phil Farmer withdrew as soon as the Asimov posters had been burnt and the Farmer ones printed), Chris Priest, Pierre Barbet, Josef Nesvadba, Waldemar Kuming (fan). £7 att.to 30 Nov £8 to 31 Jan, £10 to 19 Apr, £12 at door: 321 Sarehole Rd, Hall Green, Birmingham, B28 0AL. Seacon rallied nicely from Asimov’s defection, with a flyer about being “the only con in 1984 which has a written assurance from Isaac Asimov that he won’t be attending”, but moans of despair were heard when they lost Farmer too, and then Maxim Jakubowski weighed in with a widely disseminated “formal and public protest about the choice of Pierre Barbet as one of the European guests ... a slap in the face of French SF and denotes a complete lack of understanding of the virtues of excellence in writing which so many other

French authors have been promulgating for years ... [as] if the first ever British SF author to be invited to a French con were Lionel Fanthorpe ... that's what Barbet's choice means to the French and European SF community. Also the fact that he is on the Eurocon committee smacks of decidedly mixed ethics in my book ... doubt strongly that this decision will influence Eurofans (beyond the small circle who've already been to a British con) to attend. I for one wouldn't go to Paris or Bruges to see John Russell Fearn, even if he were still alive ..." (MJ) On the bright side, Seacon has managed to get publicity in a CAMRA magazine thanks to the promised Cheap Real Beer.

25-28 May 84: **Tynecon II**, the Mexican. Flyer Enclosed for most of you; otherwise see A#34..

20-23 Jul 84: **Albacon 84**, Central Hotel, Glasgow, GoH Harlan Ellison, info from 62 Campsie Rd. Wishaw, ML2 9QG. AND: Faircon 84, Ingram Hotel, Glasgow, GoH Sydney-Jordan, £8 att rising to £9 hotel rooms-£16.50 single £14.50/person twin. 18 Greenwood Rd Clarkston, Glasgow, G76 7AQ. I'm glad I don't live in Glasgow. On one hand we have Albacon 84, the alleged good guys. who apart from the coup in securing Harlan Ellison have given no indication that they're doing anything. On the other hand, Faircon and the Fake Bob Shaw's forces of evil, constantly deluging me with flyers, progress reports and assorted bits of paper, but keeping significantly quiet about membership figures (the usual lists don't appear in the PRs). Faircon's letters to Albacon – suggesting that as a reasonable compromise Albacon be moved to Feb 85 and existing memberships be transferred to Faircon – can be taken as a plea to avoid aggro or a gesture of membership-starved desperation depending whom you favour. Also to hand: a record of balloting of the Glasgow SF group FOKT, as to whether dear Bob should be allowed to present FOKT Awards at Faircon (as stated in his PR0). (1) Where should FOKT awards be given? Albacon 84. 21 votes; FOKT meeting 4; Faircon 84, 0. (2) Do members want "Mr Robert Shaw" to organise events in the name of FOKT? No, 21; No comment, 4; Yes. 0. (Faircon 84 committee folk declined to vote – "may have distorted voting pattern, did not affect result.") I'm glad I don't live in Glasgow.

4-11 Aug 84: **Space-Ex 84**. A secret convention.

24-27 Aug 84: **Silicon 8**, Grosvenor Hotel, Newcastle, 2 Seaton Avenue,

Newsham Blyth, Northumberland, probably about £4.50 att, but ask first.

25-27 Aug 84: **Oxcon 84**, St Catherine's College, GoH Brian Aldiss – £8 att to 28 Asquith Rd, Rose Hill. Oxford. Incorporates Unicon, I believe.

30 Aug -3 Sept: **LA Con II**, Anaheim Con Centre, CA, Worldcon. GoH Gordon Dickson, FGoH Dick Eney. \$40 att to PO Box 8442. Van Nuys. CA 91409, USA.

2-4 Nov 84: Rumoured **Novacon 14** in Brum. Rumoured GoH Rob Holdstock.

14-16 Dec 84: **Santacon**, Dragonara, Leeds. No data. Medioid affair. 10 Langford Rd, Heaton Chapel, Stockport, Cheshire, SK4 5BR.

5-8 Apr 85: **Eastercon**. Current bid, Yorcon III, Leeds Dragonara. £1 presupp to 45 Harold Mount, Leeds, LS6 1PW. Committee: numerous Leeds fans.

22-26 Aug 85: **Aussiecon II**, Southern Cross Hotel, Melbourne, Australia. GoH Gene Wolfe, FGoH Ted White. \$40 US/\$45A to GPO Box 2253U, Melbourne. Vic 3001, Australia. Anyone who voted in the 1983 site selection ballot (like me, ha ha) is already a supporting member. Supp: \$25US/\$28A. Conversion: \$15US/\$17A. You must be a member of Aussiecon II to vote for Britain in 1987. Rates rise in 1984. (By the way, a three-years-in-advance bidding system for Worldcons was proposed at ConStellation and will come into effect in 1986 if ratified – I assume – at LA Con II.)

29 Aug - 2 Sept 85, **NASFiC**, Austin, Texas – the big US con always staged (sometimes with a mild whiff of sour grapes) when the Worldcon goes out of America. GoH Jack Vance, ho ho, and Richard Powers. FGoH Joanne Burger. Details. FACT, PO BOX 9612, Austin, TX 78766, USA.

28-30 Mar 86: **Eastercon**. Current bid, Contravention, to be “somewhere in the Midlands.” possibly the NEC Metropole. Doreys, Oldroyd, Donaldson, Wilkes, Pearson, Huxley, Hughes – in no particular order, Probably £1 presupp to any of these?

Worldcons: New York, Philadelphia and Atlanta are bidding for 1986, the latter most favoured in the F770 straw poll. In 1987, San Diego, Phoenix and B*R*I*T*A*I*N. In 1988, Yugoslavia – one might feel guilty about a 1987 UK bid being detrimental to this, were it not for prevalent US opinion that

Yugoslavia is a total non-starter. In 1989. Boston again. After which, who knows?

Mediations • R.I. Barycz

“Space Patrol” of antient US-TV fame is to be resurrected as a feature length movie cum TV series pilot partly in 3D ... wonder if the new will recapture the heady naivete of the old – that in prevideotape days went out live and there are still people around who remember The-Episode-In-Which-The-Monsters-Of-The-Planet-Tharg-Got-Bored-And-Began-To-Eat-The-Cardboard-Scenery-And-Revealed-Themselves-As-Small-Lizards-With-Stuck-On-Fangs-Made-Large-By-Crafty-Camera-Angles. Or the time the stars forgot a line and ad-libbed a whole episode....Oh, the Golden Age.

ROTJ was the end of a six year love affair. I can do no review – mostly out of annoyance. I coughed up £50 for 2nd, 3rd and 4th draft scripts of *Star Wars* at a movie jumble in March and IT’S ALL THERE AND I READ IT. A dreadful sense of deja-vu, or djedi-vu. In the last draft I gather Lucas got to do his favourite scene viz. where the hero is adopted into a tribe of Wookies and teaches them to fly X-wings and off they zoom to knock the guano out of the Death Star. For wookiees, substitute Ewoks and there it is. Lucas Plays Safe. Boo, Hiss.

Cannon will start filming Colin Wilson’s *The Space Vampires* in England in Jan 84: scriptwriter to be Dan (the good bits from Van Vogt) O’Bannon..

More Cons

Unicon was “bloody awful”. apparently due to low numbers and Manconish university venue; **X-Con** (Holland) was also underpopulated but reportedly OK despite the awful ravages of a drink called Mort Subite whose cherry-flavoured version (it’s a sort of stale barley wine laced with methanol) was inadvisedly tried by Bob Shaw. **UFP-Con** (4-7 May Midland Hotel Manchester) is the 84 Trekthing, £15 to 135 Greensted Rd, Leighton, Essex, IG10 3DJ; **Mythcon 84** (7-9 Sept, Hull) £10 to 53 Glencoe St, Hull, HU3 6HR; **Conquest** (12-14 Oct 84 Ingram Hotel Glasgow) is devoted to – oh God – Elfquest, GoH Pinis, £10 to 63 Waybridge Mead, Yately, Camberley,

Surrey, GU17 7UX. **Birmingham In 86.** another Eastercon bid (see p.6) reputedly from M. Tudor & S. Green. Amusing if this and Contravention were offering the same rumoured venue....

Milford

Henrietta the Rat reports: “The 1983 Milford SF Writers’ Conference (UK) attracted a baker’s dozen to the usual venue, the Compton Hotel, from 25 Sept to 2 Oct. Present: Scott Baker, Richard Cowper, Malcolm Edwards, David Garnett, Mary Gentle, Rob Holdstock, Garry Kilworth, Rachel Pollack, David Redd, Diana Reed, Kevin Smith, Andrew Stephenson, Lisa Tuttle. Daytimes were as usual devoted to serious activities such as reading, discussing manuscripts, and drinking. Evenings were as usual divided between serious activities such as open discussions and drinking, and frivolous activities such as games and drinking. The period between 3am and 7am was reserved for sleeping. Important Facts: K. Smith was undefeated in the pool league, while G. Kilworth racked up the high score on the now-venerable Meteoroids machine. Call My Bluff sessions came up with the usual absurd definitions: *crantara* a piece of bloody wood carried from clan to clan in medieval Scotland; *dowcet* a deer’s testicle; *papaphobia* intense fear of the pope. All these definitions proved to be true. New chaos emerged in a game introduced by R. Cowper: one person leaves the room, the rest choose an adverb, and the victim tries to guess the word by asking people to perform different actions in the fashion it suggests. The only sight to rival G. Kilworth encountering a rat in the street *offensively* was the spectacle of all twelve other players dying *melodramatically* in front of a baffled R. Pollack. Everyone present vowed never to mention the Cowper interpretation of painting a picture *pervertedly*.

“L. Tuttle was elected as the new Chair, replacing clapped-out D. Garnett. The other committee members – Langford (Secretary) and Edwards (Treasurer) – were re-elected. Next year – same time, same place (yet again.)” (HtR)

(NB: Mary Gentle’s rat Henrietta was present all week but didn’t bring a story. The report is actually not by Mary.)

Infinitely Improbable

More COAs: GWEN FUNNELL, 28 St Martin's Place, Brighton, E Sussex, BN2 3LE • ANDY LUSIS, 33 Majuba Rd. Edgbaston, Birmingham B16 • MICKEY POLAND, 2 Sqn, 21 Signal Rest, RAF DET OSNABRUCK, BFPO 36 • **Lord Foul's Baen – Official!** “Jim Baen is the new El Supremo at Pocket / Timescape / Starscope / whatever,” reports M. Edwards, who got it from G. Benford, who we'll hope didn't just read it in *Ansible* ... **Patrick Nielsen Hayden** writes announcing his and Teresa's 1985 TAFF ambitions: “We must descend to active solicitation, crassly prostrating ourselves like some, some ... *Jan Howard Finder* ... (gnashing of teeth, gurgling of internal juices) ... Nearly recovered from the brutal phantasmagoria that was ConStellation, little Teresa is almost completely reassured that really nothing so horrible as ‘Isaac Asimov’ exists, much less wins Hugos for first drafts, and the twitch in Patrick's shoulder – the tragic result of one too many obsequious pleas for an award by the gruesome ‘Jack Chalker’ audioanimatron – may be, they tell us, treatable through incisions of only *one lobe*.” (PNH) **Headlines:** WESTON CRUSHED. THE BRUMMIES JUST LOVE WESTON! WESTON IS NOW “TWINNED” – AND THAT'S OFFICIAL! All passed on by Dave Wood, who (not to keep you in suspense) lives and buys his newspapers in Avon. Also Joyce Scrivner sands a *Minneapolis Tribune* ad offering, with your purchase of a 1982 Snapper, a FREE THATCHERIZER – sobering thought. **Wm Gibson**, famous Vancouver author not to be confused with Continental person Wim Gijzen, was himself confused enough to send a congratulatory note on the arrival of their baby to Malcolm Edwards and Chris Evans.... **R.I. Barycz** reports *Dune* location footage to be in the can, George Lucas to have celebrated *ROTJ*'s success with divorce proceedings (“This is very American”), *ST-III: The Search For Spock* to be shooting under Nimoy's direction, the only 70mm print of *2001* in the UK to have been recently junked, *2010* to be in preproduction (\$20M budget) ... “At a recent Anderson con someone was mad enough to buy a Thunderbirds ice-lolly, 10 yrs in a fridge. And unwrapped it and sucked it to the stick there and then.” [[But see next issue.](#)] R. Peyton reports recently auctioning a rude “Kirk-Spocking” fanzine for £105, one of Kirk's old jackets for £135 ... **SF In Southend – An Apology:** We are very sorry about “SF in Southend”. (Old jokes aside, last issue's snippet generated inflammatory letters from J. Beedell, A. Stewart, J.

Murphy, all somewhat confusing. All are no doubt paragons and merely misunderstood – JB’s naivete being eagerly hoped to conceal corruption, etc) ... **Nuclear-Free News Item:** US sympathy with the antinuclear movement, or with Marjorie Brunner (take your pick), was revealed when she organized an antinuke meeting at ConStellation and nobody turned up. A Gollancz editor too often mentioned this issue offers floorspace to fans attending CNDcon (22 Oct), but ring first – 01-340-9983. Worries about what my quondam employers AWRE would say about this item are eclipsed by worries of what they’ll do to me on reading my novel *The Leaky Establishment* in Spring, it being about nuclear high-jinks at a totally fictional research establishment. **Boring Boring:** Joe Nicholas “would like to point out to recipients of John Owen’s fnz *Rastus* that his letter, partly paraphrased therein, was expressly DNQ (a fact Owen actually acknowledges in passing) – and that having broached this standard fannish confidence. Owen completely misrepresents the content of the letter. It’s nice to hear he’s calling off his attacks on me, but would he have done so if I hadn’t pointed out that he was contradicting his own advice about me in the WAHF column of *Crystal Shit 6?*” (JN) **GUFF** ballots are now out but are in A4 format (no Ansible distribution) – ask Joe at the Tun, Novacon, or 22 Denbigh St. Pimlico, London, SW1V 2ER (sae?) ... **Charles Platt**, overexcited at a Worldcon party, was heard to proclaim that if someone brought him Judy Lynn del Rey he’d piss on her. (Nobody did.) He reports: “John Sladek arrived here and has been staying in an illegal sublet upstairs from me. Unfortunately the building superintendent heard him typing and deduced his presence. He is therefore moving again, to Minneapolis, Minnesota state of his youth. He had contemplated a 3-month walk down the Appalachian Trail: this being his answer to NY’s High Rent Problem, but a stroll up and down a hill overlooking Tom Disch’s country summer house changed his mind.” (C. Platt) **The Fake Bob Shaw**, writes Neil Craig, has expanded with another shop close to NC’s “Futureshock” SF bookshop. “He has made it clear that the purpose of this new site is not to make money particularly but to get me for not coming to heel etc and publicly objecting to being ripped off. To quote Shaw: ‘He he cackle.’” The Craig/Shaw partnership (dec’d) having been “Photon Books”, this new place shared with a photographer – started as “Photo’n Books”, became “Futureshop” after legal muttering and after more legal muttering is “Books’n Photo”. Price war in progress. Also “Futureshock” has suffered a curious rash of superglued locks, smashed

windows ... 5 Oct.

Hazel's Language Lessons #26

Hindustani by Numbers

dhaunchá: number from the four and a half times table;

chhangá: man with 6 fingers;

battísí: 32 of something;

sankh: 10 billion; 100 billion; a conch shell.

ANSIBLE 35: DAVE LANGFORD

94 LONDON ROAD, READING,

BERKS, RG1 5AU, ENGLAND.

***Ansible* 36**

December 1983

ANSIBLE 36 comes to you with merry Xmas greetings (since this year the Langfords can't afford even cheap Xmas cards – take another bow, Pocket Books) from ever-misinformed DAVE LANGFORD, 94 LONDON ROAD, READING, BERKSHIRE, RG1 5AU. Shock horror inflation strikes the sub rates again following a further Agonizing Reappraisal: the usual £2 now brings a paltry SIX issues, airmailed outside the UK. Notes to me, cheques to *Ansible*, Giro transfer to a/c 24 475 4403 and pawns to Q4. Americans: \$3.50 to Mary & Bill Burns, 23 Kensington Ct, Hempstead, NY 11550. Continental Europeans: equivalent of £2 to Roelof Goudriaan, Postbus 1189, 8200 BD Lelystad, Netherlands. Institutions who insist in messing around with invoices rather than paying with order like honest folk: £4 to me or \$7 to the Burnses. Thanks this issue to KEV CLARKE (cartoon), KEITH FREEMAN (libels/labels editor), CHRIS SUSLOWICZ (cheapo white paper) and JOHN HARVEY (electrostencil boss). For those unskilled in the esoteric mailing-label cipher: the arcane runes LASTISH (followed by a number) mean you're OK to the given issue number; SUB DUE or ***** mean absolutely frightful things such as the extreme unlikelihood of your receiving another *Ansible* unless you rush along money or hot news. (Your change of address, essential though it is to the continuing supply of *Ansbles* on your doormat, does not actually count as Hot News for this purpose.) Subscription/trade list at the type of typing: 362 copies to me mailed out in one glorious day. Death, where is thy sting? Almost forgot: thanks for collation and assistance over the last few issues to Chris Hughes, Jan Huxley and Hazel. Here is the small print, where nobody will read it, this fanzine feels safe in supporting ROB HANSEN FOR TAFF and BRITAIN FOR THE 1987 WORLDCON. Also: Happy New Year.

Novacon 13

(4-6 Nov Royal Angus Hotel, Birmingham) The usual appalling debauchery

and disconnected events seemed to be cloaking a pretty good Novacon this time. GoH Lisa Tuttle explained all about cons in her fannish speech (in the fanroom, which was down that sort of mineshaft hidden in a labyrinth at the back of the hotel restaurant), revealing fannishness to be a virus and the con phenomenon to be ascribable to the Selfish Gene; her pro speech was in the main hall and thus allowed room for an audience, which emitted appropriate oohs and ahs of horror at her uncensored revelations of what it's like to collaborate with George R.R. Martin. When this speech was over a committee member who shall be nameless popped up to announce something or other, and an *Ansible* editor who shall be nameless still feels deeply guilty for allowing the spirit to move him to flee the hall shrieking "Oh God it's Steve Green!" – thus getting a round of cheap applause, tut tut.

The Drunken Dragon Press publication *The Other Book*, a special 80pp Tuttle mini-anthology, was unfortunately cancelled by putative publisher Rog Peyton when the estimated cost reached £8.95 per copy; so this Novacon didn't feature the usual Special GoH Publication. Light on this was provided by another talk from Toby "Publishing Is The Last Of The Cottage Industries" Roxburgh, who overwhelmed his audience with book-production cost figures and excoriated them for the Neanderthal insistence on dustjackets ("the most expensive single bit of a hardback") by which the reader in the street helps keep books overpriced. Less successfully, a panel on "Why are American SF authors so reactionary, and British ones so revolutionary?" (invisibly chaired by Phill Probert) turned out to have been sabotaged beforehand by behind-the-scenes organizer Jan Huxley's tendency to accidentally swap the terms "American" and "British" in the panel title when inveigling people onto it. Peter Weston talked about Larry Niven's jacuzzi, Joe Nicholas uttered hideous curses on the lickspittle fascists running dogs of the repressive Thatcherite/Reaganite juntas, D. Langford failed in agonizing efforts to Define Terms, and supercool Stu Shiffman (hauled onstage as Token American despite firm protests) confided that these British generalizations did somewhat tend to piss him off. We draw a veil over Jack Cohen, master of the semi-infinite question from the floor, and also over the gruelling "Novacon Factor" event in which P. Morgan, L. Kettle, J. Jarrold and Yr.Editor were tested for forgotten abilities such as memory, SF knowledge and doing the dreaded Astral League Pole Test. Few survived.

The next Novacon is to be in the Grand Hotel (the usual Novacon overflow)

with S. Green as chair and Rob Holdstock revealed as Big enough to be GoH. One hopes the committee will overcome the Grand's rumoured tendency to offer a choice of two bars, a small closed poky one at the top and a big one full of the general public at the bottom. Martin Easterbrook records this immortal dialogue during the announcement – *Green*: “Next year's Novacon registration will be cheaper because the hotel is letting us have the function rooms free.” *Probert*: “But the Angus let us have the function rooms free this year.” *Green*: “Yes, but the function rooms at the Grand are bigger.”

Nova Awards were duly presented. Best British Fanzine: *A Cool Head* from Dave Bridges (so *that's* why he put out 3 issues simultaneously). Fanwriter: D. Bridges. Fanartist: Margaret Welbank. A kindly mole revealed the runners-up in each category, respectively: *Still It Moves* and *DT*, Linda Pickersgill and D. West, Pete Lyon and D. West. The fabulous COFF award again raised a fair bit for TAFF and GUFF at 10p/vote, this year's victor having an enormous majority said to have been “arranged” by the Women's Periodical apa-mob for his wicked printing of the tasteless *Matrix 48* cover – in which case one might enquire why Pete Lyon got no votes at all for drawing said cover ...

Those thought most in need of a Concrete Overcoat (at least by those who voted early and often): Simon Polley (84 votes), Pauline Morgan (22), Bob fake Shaw (21), Pete Weston (20), All Babies/John Brunner/Steve Green (all 15), Joy Hibbert (12), “A Crook Named Bolt” (10), Graham James (7), Rog Peyton (6), Tibs (5), Adam Baxter (3), Jack Cohen/Martin Hoare/David Power/Matt Williams (2), Jon May/Ian Sorensen (1), Kevin Clark (½). Polls now open for 1984, say official ballot stuffers Kev Clarke (h'm) and Chris Suslowicz – 111 Valley Road, Solihull, W Midlands, B92 9AX.

The Rob Holdstock Tact Award went to Martin Hoare, who congratulated Peter Weston on his “new fancy-woman”, only to discover the lady in question to be Eileen Weston in a new hairstyle. (“The Brum Group is going to collapse at the beginning of 1984”, she loyally confided: “Peter hasn't time to be chairman again.”) The Chris Carlsen Mindless Violence Award had Greg Pickersgill hot favourite following reports of how his fist had instinctively sought Martin Tudor's face, but Greg's almost apologetic performance seemingly pales into insignificance when compared with that orgy of destruction at Mr Tudor's (non-Novacon) party, where a glass door suffered personality dissociation and all I know is that Steve Green rang me

to ask that I refrain from printing the foul libels I would receive from Chris Suslowicz (but didn't). Nor can *Ansible*, fanzine of good taste, reveal which 1984 Novacon chairman was complained of by a bitter Chris Hughes, for "completely demolishing more than half of an eight-member committee meal whilst nobody was looking". Surely not....?

Britain in 1987

Furtive meetings, fanroom discussions, and official announcements happened at Novacon, emerging with a provisional committee of Chris Atkinson, Malcolm Edwards (chair), Colin Fine, Dave Langford, Hugh Whatsit, Martin Tudor and Paul Vincent (later purged). Presupporting memberships – over 100 – were taken at £1 apiece, since lots of money is needed for publicity (especially in the US and Australia): rush yours to 28 Duckett Road, London, N4 1BN, for now the Official Address. Americans: \$2 to Gary Farber, 2773 8th Ave NE, Seattle, WA 98105. Australians: \$2 to Roger Weddall, 79 Bell St, Fitzroy, 3065, Australia. Europeans: Equivalent of £2 to UK address or Roelof Goudriaan, address lurking in *Ansible* masthead. More agents are needed all over the place, and we hope sympathizers will help with donations, fundraising Auctions, etc. Carey Handfield reports that the Aussie 85 bid, spent about £1300 on bidding expenses (and were still criticized as cheapskates by one or two US fanzines). So: money, money, money!

What's going for this bid? American fans seem enthusiastic, as reported last issue. Gene Wolfe Himself is presupporting member #1, and also GoH at Aussiecon II in Melbourne, where the voting will take place ... And, although boring old Pete Weston has some quibble in this area, it's generally accepted (*Encyclopaedia* etc) that the first-ever planned SF convention was the British one in Leeds, 1937. Fifty years on ... can this be destiny?

The 22 Denbigh St People's Revolutionary Collective

"... has surrendered to the forces of Bourgeois Middle Class Respectability," writes *Political Correspondent Pam Wells*. "Or, put another way, Judith Hanna and Joseph Nicholas were married on Saturday 19 November. After the brief ceremony in fascistically marble-halled Westminster Registry Office, Joe & Judith led their guests crocodile-fashion through the

Underground network to Collective HQ. Tucking into hummus dip and piles of crisps, many of us evidently hadn't had time for breakfast that morning; the mountains of chilli con carne which Judith magnificently produced satisfied the toiling masses' hunger for the kulaks' blood. Wine flowed freely and its effects were freely visible; all we had to do was raise our empty glasses for Joseph to fill them again. John Harvey fell asleep in the loo, to be forcibly roused by Ian Maule hammering on the door in defiance of Eve's pleas to 'leave him alone'. As a stumbling Harvey descended the stairs, the paintwork of the second stair was slightly rearranged, the almost visible chip alarmed the fastidious Joseph, who hardly even paused to mutter *Property Is Theft* before setting about repairs. John, undeterred, resumed his nap huddled in a heap by the bed.

"The Opening of the Presents took a fair while, mostly because the happy couple were laboriously trying to keep the paper intact. The Collective seemed particularly taken with a gift of bright red towels, obviously a worthy contribution to the Revolutionary cause. There followed a speech from 'unaccustomed as I am' Joseph, and another from 'unaccustomed as I am' Judith: since neither of them is the least bit unaccustomed to speaking in public, I think the Trades Descriptions people should be told.

"Despite having the wedding certificate about his person, Joseph said he didn't *feel* married; Eve assured him that he probably wouldn't for a few weeks. Thus spake the voice of experience.... When you're drinking wine from noon to evening, it seems much later than the lying clocks tell you. I wobbled homeward at eight, convinced it was really midnight. An excellent party: Congratulations to Ms Hanna and Mr Nicholas." (*Pam Wells*)

Charles Platt: "At the beginning of November, Putnam/Berkley collaborated with book publisher Byron Preiss in an extravaganza at Danceteria (fashionable NY midtown disco) to mark publication of a collection of old Arthur C. Clarke stories [*The Sentinel*] being hyped as a 'major publishing event'. Banks of colour TVs showed 2001 while a competing sound-system played 'background music' and guests shouted in each other's ears. Highlight of the evening: 'a special message from Clarke', a 1-minute taped phone call that sounded like *Hurro ar uh in nuh orrrrk thiss Arrrthr C. Clarke via brrrrkkkk communications satellite rrrhhggttss awrr sss ...* while at the same time the TVs blared 'Open the pod bay door, Hal!' etc ... Scott Edelman, a

Brooklyn wine dealer, is pushing his new mag *The Last Wave* as the ‘last hope of speculative fiction’, successor to ‘*New Worlds, Orbit and Dangerous Visions*’. (Funny, he doesn’t mention *Interzone*.) Despite glossy paper and decent typesetting, the mag looks slightly tattier than a socialist leaflet, whereas it costs slightly more. Recognizable names in the first issue include Disch and Sladek, represented by old stories apparently unsaleable elsewhere. Upcoming, in issue 2: the libretto of an ‘unpublished opera’ by Disch, who must shoulder the blame for having discovered Edelman at a Clarion writing workshop.” (*Charles Platt*)

Cymrucon 3 (26-7 Nov Central Hotel, Cardiff): “A wave of nostalgia hit me as I approached the third Welsh National Con,” *hiccup* our beer correspondent *Martin Hoare*. “Not just the alcohol (due to a derailment at Paddington the train was so overcrowded that I was compelled, against my will, to stand at the bar for the whole journey), nor the general shabbiness of the hotel (bringing back memories of early Novacons at the Imperial): it was arriving at a con that in the previous two years avoided the pretension of many more established counterparts.

“In the homely Central Hotel, my room seemed just as I’d left it last year; gladly I retrieved my corkscrew from the bin where I inadvertently threw it in a moment of awful drunkenness last November. What the Central lacked in image it made up for in enthusiasm. The bar really did stay open all night, and the bar meals – unlike the Royal Angus’s – were good value.

“Cymrucon is an enigma among British cons. It’s been described as seven cons sharing the same hotel: where else can you watch *Fireball XL5* (don’t worry, Dave, it was the same episode as last year) or films more severely edited than *Ansible* con reports (*Carrie* cut to 30 mins!)? John Brunner proved a good GoH, both by failing to walk out on any programme items he was on and by mingling in the bar much more than most guests. He even stayed in the hotel, reluctantly, while fans dragged me out against my will around the real ale pubs of Cardiff. This showed foresight: returning, I found the Becon group’s fan room in full swing, which along with Martin Tudor’s party was the highspot of the con.

“Alas, many notable fans were absent; even Lionel Fanthorpe was hardly in evidence, due to his newly discovered religious scruples rather than the apathy or poverty which overcame most of British fandom. Cymrucon hasn’t

yet acquired the middle-aged bloom of respectability of Novacon etc, and I'll certainly be going to next year's." (*Martin Hoare*)

Footnote: The consensus seems to be that Cymrucon 3 was less triffic than the first two. Famous iconoclast G. Pickersgill went further, as usual, with such phrases as "fucking awful", and "I went because I'd heard it turned the clock back to when cons were really good, but you can turn the clock *too far* back and when I saw all those cretins chasing each other with water-pistols ..." As usual: one convention, several hundred opinions.

Martin Morse Wooster: "You should know about the interview the del Reys had with the *Washington Post*. Not only does Lester reveal 'I'm a happy little moron who happily and deliberately dropped out of college because I didn't think it was worth a damn'; not only does Judy-Lynn disclose 'I used to be a Jewish princess – now I'm a Jewish empress'; but the del Reys' *secret passion* is revealed: 'three identical figures of bulls, each 3" high, each with a thatch of mink fur between the horns ... They are garlanded in miniature kerchiefs and neck chains, and each has a teeny teddy bear half its height "to sleep with".' The bulls are fed regularly, and one has a business card: 'Urban del Rey. Represented by Scott Meredith Literary Agency'. Two more quotes: Lester now says 'I consider myself, by my own choice, a has-been writer.' And David Hartwell says that Judy-Lynn's success 'is too narrow. The basis for her success is the repeatable product. That response to the marketplace is no different in kind, in many respects, from Silhouette Romances [*US Mills & Boon*].' Way to go, David. *Where are you working now?*" (*MMW*)

World Fantasy Awards have been awarded. Novel *Niffit The Lean*, Michael Shea (I quite liked the book, but it does happen to be a collection of short stories); Novella "Beyond any Measure", K.E. Wagner, tied with "Confess the Seasons", C.L. Grant; Artist, Michael Whelan; Life Achievement, Roald Dahl; etc ... **Games:** *Imagine* magazine is expanded to an alleged 30,000 printrun with national distribution via WHS etc; not to be outdone, the Old Firm at *White Dwarf* plans to boost printrun to 21,000+ and get distributed via WHS etc; contributors to both anticipate hugely increased payments ... **Constellation (Worldcon 83)** has lost \$25-30,000 and is begging for donations; plans include flogging the mailing list and selling leftover goodies like the Brunner Songbook (with great commercial acumen they contrived to

sell only 177 out of 1500 copies at the con). The giant video-screen (A35) alone cost \$15,000 to hire, a sum apparently unauthorized by the main Worldcon committee.

The Intermittent *Ansible* Letter Column Returns!

Gian Paolo Cossato: “With the phrase ‘Marjorie Brunner sends harrowing details of the return from their Italian trip’ (A34) you give the impression that the incident happened in Italy. This is not the case. In a letter dated 15/7/83 and addressed to me, Marjorie says ‘... the con at Les Allues was fun but spoilt at the end because someone ripped off the hood of the Stag and stole many things, – and we have always felt a little fear about leaving the Stag in the car park in Venice!! Oh well.’ The aforementioned place is outside the Italian border.

“Not many years ago the magazine *Der Spiegel* had a nice cover with some spaghetti and a gun which was meant to describe the Italian situation with red brigades and such. And the message was do not go to Italy, you might get killed. It did not take long for the Germans to experience their own brand of the same.... I am sure there was nothing intentional on your part but I just wanted to make it clear.” (GPC)

* To the entire Italian nation, *Ansible* apologizes! Implication not intended, A35 also wrongly conflated (or rather the information source did) two items at ConStellation: a moderately well attended “antinuke meeting” not organized by Marjorie Brunner (though featuring John), and the SF radio drama where Marjorie’s cassette of *When The Wind Blows* failed – like everything else there – to attract an audience. After a period of the usual death threats signed in blood, diplomatic relations between Reading and South Petherton have been resumed....

Bob Fake Shaw: “A couple of points about the latest issue that I find more than slightly offensive. Firstly, the strange suggestion that Faircon ’84 isn’t the side wearing the white hats, and the mischievous implication that Faircon is solely the creation of Bob Shaw. We’ve been straight with everyone else in Glasgow and elsewhere. In turn, we’ve been fucked about as much as possible by our fellow fans – yourself included. We made a serious, and

responsible, set of suggestions to the somewhat insubstantial Albacon 84 Committee which led to less than nothing. ...Such approaches were very much at the behest of the Committee in general. My own feelings about the whole thought of attempting to talk to a bunch of folks who range – in my opinion – from the merely defective right through to the actively poisonous were in many ways at odds with those in the rest of the committee ... Vilification of Faircon is wrong. You shouldn't do it. Why not simply let actions speak? Our actions have been fair, open and honest. Can the same be said of the lot you characterize as the Good Guys? The membership Secretary of Faircon '84 informs me, by the way, that we have 43 members (and counting).”

* From this letter it would be hard to deduce that the “defective/poisonous” Albacon 84 mob consists of much the same people who ran the quite successful Albacon II earlier this year: that after the initial foolish situation of “confrontation” (Albacon '84 and Faircon are on the same weekend) had been set up, Bob's reasonable proposal consisted not of combining the events or offsetting one by a week or so, but of asking that Albacon hand over all memberships and start from scratch with a new con at the chilly end of the year; or that the hideous bias of *Ansible 35* was such that I also got verbally ticked off by one or two Albacon '84 committee members, for giving some credit for superior publications production (since equalized by Albacon) etc to “evil” Bob. Of course the membership figure is pre-Novacon, like the 50+ reported by Albacon '84.

* Bob goes on to complain about “the hopelessly deranged Neil Criag” (sic), to explain that the whole business of Bob's bookshop being temporarily called “Futureshop” – to rival Neil's “Futureshock” – was but a merry harmless jape, and to add that Glasgow vandals have also done over *his* shop: “Of course I might have arranged [this] just as a smokescreen ...” *Ansible*, bias-free as ever, must give equal time to the possibility that Neil's was the evil hand, attacks on “Futureshock” being mere persiflage ...?

* Shaw News from other sources hints that one of his emporia has been closed, leaving only the one in Woodlands Road with Neil's, and that his spouse Morag is anticipating a Happy Event.

Marta Randall, President: SFWA. “I am writing on behalf of Andre Norton and Jessica Amanda Salmonson, who have asked me to respond to your recent note in *Ansible* (35) concerning these folk. Ms Norton has advised me that she was never asked to review a Salmonson script, by Don Wollheim or anyone else, and certainly would never have threatened to boycott a publisher because that publisher printed something Ms Norton did not like. Ms Salmonson advises me that to the best of her knowledge, no manuscript of hers has ever been submitted to DAW ... It appears that the story which appeared in *Ansible* is a fabrication from beginning to end, in general and in particular, in whole and in part.

“At least, it was ill advised to print such a story without calling one of the principals to check the facts. Both Ms Norton and Ms Salmonson are understandably quite upset, both by the ostensible ‘feud’ which was foisted on them behind their backs. Perhaps a note of apology and a retraction in the next *Ansible* would be appropriate – and a resolution that, in the future, such stories will be verified before they are printed.” (MR)

* I can only accept this correction, retract the *Ansible* 35 snippet in toto, and offer apologies to all concerned. Varyingly temperate letters on this subject were received from Jessica Amanda Salmonson, from the Larry Sternig Literary Agency (Andre Norton’s agents) and from Yergey and Yergey (Andre Norton’s attorneys). Although my retraction and apology is made without qualification, I note for the benefit of the latter that the untrue rumour wasn’t of *my* invention, but was reported to be as circulating in certain “US academic” quarters. Which is no excuse but does place the *fons et origo mali* back in America.

Brian Aldiss: “Re your *Ansible* 35 knocking of *Interzone*. *IZ* is obviously superior to *New Worlds*, since *NW* would accept the occasional story from me, whereas *IZ* turns them all down. So be more respectful to *IZ*!” (BA)

* I asked Malcolm Edwards (erstwhile *IZ* maestro) what sort of stories that mag was after. He launched into an outburst about how he’d tried to persuade Ellen (Omni) Datlow to reject a few of Wm Gibson’s stories, since famous Mr Gibson had promised after frightful threats to let *IZ* have a second look. Quoth Ms Datlow: “I’m *never* going to reject a Gibson story!” The author in question

had better not read this *Ansible* or he'll become overconfident (oops, he's a subscriber) ... Meanwhile Richard Bergeron, convinced that WG is the leading literary light of the known universe, plans to run extracts from the author's *Neuromancer* (recently bagged by Malcolm for Gollancz. Were IZ given the chance to serialize it? I think we should be told) in his fanzine *Wiz*. What all this is leading up to, Brian, is that I'm sure I could handily serialize *Helliconia Winter* in *Ansible* 42-123 if we can arrange terms....

The British Library Lending Division: “To: British Science Fiction Association Ltd, 94 London Rd, Reading, Berks ... The British Library Lending Division is building up a worldwide collection of serial literature. Our attention has been drawn to your publication ‘*Fantasy and Science Fiction*’. Before deciding to place a subscription to this title, we would like to inspect a sample ...”

* No comment ... Next, the much-maligned former organizer of “SF in Southend” exercises the Right to Reply in what one hopes – SFiS being reportedly defunct and fandom unified in those parts – will be the last word or something:

Joe Beedell: “Thankyou very much for *Ansible* 35, the whole SFiS issue is not yet over, as you see I have some loose ends to tie up, like Alex Stewart for instance. I thought that you would be pleased to know that I have joined the Alex Stewart fan club for real prats (excuse the punn) but I have still got the needle over the following things,

“1. He caused one of my very best friends, who I have known for over II years to turn against me because of the melicious lies he has been telling about me.

“2. Apart from that I warned certain people no end about the high and mighty attitude that he delights in talking about media fans in general, lets take UNICON as an example shall we UNICON was supposed to be for media and general fans alike but of course as Alex is two faced, *and believe me he is* as some of his media friends have found out. One of the members of the UNICON convention helped out after Susan Francis let everybody down the angels name is Helen MacArthey[1], who is a member of Fanderson came as a blessing in disguise to John Murphy who was left with the *sinking Ship*.

Now when the convention has ended and John said to Alex why don't we have a whip round for Helen as a kind of thank you for all she had done, Alex turned round, and said 'We don't have to get her anything do we'. John was very angry about this and had to have a whip round himself. John said the program was disgraceful and asked what he could do for the media fans before the end of the convention, Alex's reply to this is unprintable even in this letter.

"To clear up any rumors about me and somebody else starting another science fiction club, they are totally unfounded, as for me leaving S.F. Fandom, I am not leaving because if fandom is to be cleaned up it's people like Alex Stewart that needs to be calmed down to the media fandom. As it stands, Alex used UNICON and me to publicise the fact that he wants to be one of the biggots of fandom, by trying to drag my name into disrepute that Alex seems to love that women's talk by himself.

"I have the following thing to say to Alex, and he had better take notice of this. 'Are Alex my old friend, have you heard of the Klingon proverb that Telsors revenge is a dish best served cold. It is very cold in media SF fandom.'

"Hope to be subscribing to ancible soon and look forward to his reply because I am telling Alex to FUCK off. Never to come near me again." (JB)

[1. Probably McCarthy.]

* Maybe this – printed as received since some of the allusions escape me – won't be the Last Word after all. From Alex I merely have a report of the Unicon 4 business meeting: four A4 pages of complaints about the U of Essex venue's standards of accommodation, inadequate health & safety precautions and surly staff – who at one stage stole the committee's membership receipt stubs for a Mancon-style morals check on attendees from the same address who'd only booked one room between them. Various drastic reprisals were discussed – legal action, reporting the centre as a substandard venue to the Conference Bluebook, etc – but I gather there was a compromise whereby the committee paid lots less than originally agreed and thus made a vast surplus for Unicon 5/Oxcon's use. The report *records* no complaints about the committee (who got three votes of thanks, all from Ken Slater) or

programme (bar some references to “unsuccessful” live music one evening), and arch-biggot A. Stewart appears to have proposed a vote of thanks to Helen McCarthy “for organizing the Logan’s Run”. Nobody seems to regard Unicon 4 as a particularly good con, but everyone blames this on the almost unrelievedly rotten venue.

Alex Stewart: “It’s *definitely* the last time I get involved in a con committee of less than half a dozen, though, and the last one I want to chair for quite some time....

“About MAP’s sci-fi magazine *Space Voyager*. Apparently the entire editorial staff has just been sacked, by form letter, to be replaced by friends of the publisher. Needless to say, they know even less about SF than the old lot, which leaves my future as an underpaid book reviewer in serious doubt. Marion van der Voort has already come out in support of the old regime by refusing to continue compiling the con listings. [*Later she decided it was ‘better to have one fan still on the strength, no matter what’ and is carrying on – verbal update from AS*] Me, I always knew it wouldn’t last....

“I was very amused by the ‘Thunderbirds ice lolly’ story in A35: a classic example of myth creation in progress. The confection in question, was, in fact a packet of KP Outer Spacers, which fetched a goodly sum in the con auction due to having been autographed on the spot by Gerry Anderson. I know – I was there (he said, blowing his cover as a closet media fan). But do you want to bet that the far more romantic ice lolly version, suitably embellished with circumstantial detail, will remain forever in mediafannish mythology?” (AS)

R.I. Barycz: “So more ordinariness. The news about the Anderson lollypop (ice) is devastating. It was a direct quote from the man himself in an issue of *Screen International*. You mean it was ... just Hype?”

John F Carr: “It is time once again for your annual SFWA dues. I am pleased to announce that dues will continue to stay at \$40 per year....”

* Ironic that this, and SFWA’s reproval of a small fanzine (last page), should swiftly follow the news that SFWA feels unable to help extract a four-figure sum owed me/Arrow by Pocket Books.

COA

Margaret Austin, 5 Bosworth Rd, Grange Park, Swindon, Wilts, SN5 6AL :: Marty & Robbie Cantor, 11565 Archwood St, N Hollywood, CA 91606, USA :: Philip Chee, 90 Chapman Cres, Kenton, Harrow, HA3 0TF :: Jonathan Coxhead, 5 Priory St, Cambridge, CB4 3QH :: Jim Darroch, 8 Montague St, Edinburgh, EH8 9QU :: Mike Dickinson & Jackie Gresham, Via Vittoria Veneto 9 (CS), 21013 GALLARATE (VA), Italy :: Martin Easterbrook as M. Austin (a late mention since they forgot to tell *Ansible* for months) :: Paul Heskett, 2B Kempas Highway, Stivichall, Coventry, CV3 6BN :: Steve & Leah Higgins, 3rd Floor, 14 Prince's Gdns, London SW.7 :: Nic Howard, Eynon House Annexe, Church St, Reading, Berks, RG1 2SB :: Linda Miller, 63 Weybridge Mead, Yateley, Camberley, Surrey, GU17 7UX :: Caroline Mullan, c/o 50 Cecil Rd, Wealdstone, Harrow, Middlesex :: Keith & Krystyna Oborn, 20 Hanwood Close, Woodley, Reading, Berks, RG5 3AB :: Phil Palmer, 84 Glenwood Rd, Harringay, London, N15 3JR :: Dai Price, 10 Frome Rd, Wood Green, London, N22 6BP :: Bob & Sadie Shaw ("a new PERMANENT address"), 66 Knutsford Rd, Grappenhall, Warrington, Cheshire, WA4 2PB :: John Sladek ("I got fed up with New York very quickly ... a bedsitter in a cockroach-infested building in the more dangerous part of town costs \$600/month"), 3124 Girard Ave So, Minneapolis, MN 55408, USA ("Utterly unlike NY, I'm glad to say. A few people here still say hello to strangers on the street! I'm, getting a job – technical writing – & and a car." JS) :: Chris & Jenny Southern, "Kalana", 81 Middle Rd, Higher Denham, Bucks, UB9 5EQ :: Statistic – *Ansible* has printed 92 COA notices during 1983.

Infinitely Improbable

Events: A completely updated con listing can wait for A37. The **One Tun Xmas Meeting** is on 22 Dec. **Albacon 84** details at last: £3 supp/£8 att to 62 Campside Rd, Wishaw, ML2 7QG. **Conquest (A35)** is not just an Elfquest con, protests Linda Miller – address above – but will have James White as token SF person. **Beccon 83** (at which I distinguished myself by dropping on for one day, getting up so early that I fell asleep in Brian Stableford's talk and distracted him into reportedly abusing me for several minutes until the person next to me in the front row gave a humane prod) will be succeeded by Beccon 85. **Oxcon (A35)** is filling up quickly, say the committee: book now, etc ... **Eurocon 84** is the 6th European Conference on Electrotechnics – it

says here. **Seacon 84:** PR2 is out with a booking form putting Easter back one day in accordance with the little-known religious tenets of PR boss Alan Dorey ... **Boston In 89** worldcon bid launched, details from Box 46, MIT Branch PO, Cambridge MA 02139, USA ... There is no Birmingham in 86 Eastercon bid any more (A35) ... **Frank's APA** is a new UK apa which burst fully-armed from the brow of G. Pickersgill since Silicon: three mailings have already happened and there is now a Waiting List, the goal of 35 members having already been attained. Applications to FRANK (Greg's official title), 7a Lawrence Rd, S Ealing, W5. Reportedly famous Brum person Pete Weston is Deeply Unamused by the fact that f.b.p Rog Peyton has joined FRANK after numerous refusals to be enticed by Birmingham's (ie Peter's) APA-B ... **More Wooster:** "Network News is dead. It was rather a spectacular bankruptcy, and your correspondent has been temporarily transformed from Hero Editor to Self-Employed Hack." So don't send him the articles he was requesting a few issues back. "The composer of the *Dune* soundtrack is to be Stevie Wonder. Sting, fresh from starring in *Dune*, has purchased the rights to the Gormenghast trilogy and has written a screenplay containing 'a role for him as a vicious but attractive upstart, his favourite part'" ... **News Clippings:** Dave Wood also sent something about this Sting person, who confessed that "Mervyn Peake is my favourite sci-fi author though I've never met him." Also the traditional local headlines: WEST FARMING WOMEN, WESTON HELD AT BAY, LANGFORD WORKS (a palpable lie) and, attached for some reason to a copy of D's flyer this issue, ILL WINDS FROM THE WEST. Also Brian Aldiss sends a second-hand bit from *Private Eye* ("I bought this painting – a tasteful abstract – believing it was the work of a famous local artist called Brian Burgess ... shortly afterwards I discovered it was not by Burgess but by an 8-week-old Muscovy duck called St James who waddled across the canvas with paint on his webbed feet" – same difference), and Chris Morgan's *Solihull Times* extract demands quotation in full: "KEVIN'S DREAM MACHINE! The love in the life of Balsall Common window cleaner Kevin Smith weighs several tons, has shiny bells, a deafening klaxon and is painted bright red." Neither recently married Kevin or the love of his life Diana was available for comment ... **British Fantasy Awards:** given at Fantasycon VIII, 16 Oct. Best Novel, *Sword Of The Lictor*; Short "The Breathing Method" (King); Small Press *Fantasy Tales*; Film *Bladerunner*; Artist D. Carso; Special, K.E. Wagner for something or other ... **Twilight Zine 6** "from the Solihull SF

Group (who they?)” was found by George Flynn “on freebie tables at Constellation. I reported this to the MIT SF Soc, which has been pubbing *its Twilight Zine* since 1961. Much indignation ensued ... (War should be averted as long as we don’t tell Reagan.)” ... *Ian Watson Computerized!* The new firm Mosaic Software (founded by Vicky Carne, once of Dobson Books) is producing tie-in computer games based on Ian’s “The Width of the World”, his old buddy Harry Harrison’s Stainless Steel Rat books (?) and something by Colin Kapp. The reprinted book/story and programme cassette (?) will be marketed together ... **William Golding** – you must have heard this – picked up a Nobel Prize for *Lord Of The Flies* (1954) and there was a terrific bust-up just like the Hugos, when one of the judges felt it ought to have gone to a French novel so obscure it’s never been read or translated ... **So Long, And Thanks For All The Fish:** what could this be a sequel to? Who is going to write it if he can think of some jokes? Which publishers have paid £100,000 and \$400,000 for it? Did you really believe somebody when he said *Life, The Universe And Everything* was to be the Last Of The Series? Answers to Pan and Pocket Books ... **Dragoncon 2:** 22 Jan 84 at The Bull nr Mortlake Station. GoH Anne McCaffrey, Mat Irvine. £5 to 131 Sheen Lane, London, SW1 8AE ... **RIP:** Franz Ettl, long-time German fan and inventor of the fabulous drink Vurguzz; Mike Wood, US fan since the 60s; Maeve Peake, writer and artist best known as the widow of Mervyn P ... **Priest News:** Chris P. is nearing the end of a new book *The Glamour* and looking forward to publishing a couple more issues of his fanzine *Deadloss*. A TV play of his, “The Watched”, goes out on ITV Schools (!) Broadcast in February and “isn’t set in the Dream Archipelago any more.” The Priest *Take Your PIQ* (Paranoia Induction Quotient) Test is in the Xmas *Bookseller*, enabling book people to assess their (essential) ability to make authors paranoid and discouraged. And our hero shared a Best Author spot in the Eurocon awards given in Yugoslavia: “I am Najboljsi Pisatelj, scoff as you may, second only to Istvan Nemere. That’s going to shake them, down at Faber.” Only other name in Eurocon awards which UK folk will all know: *Shards Of Babel* as co-Best Fanzine ... **Mike Parry** of Project Starcast fame is rumoured to have acquired hordes of “Captain Scarlett bendy toys” for a nominal sum (going rate apparently £5 each!), only to be pursued with legal threats from the now-enlightened former owner ... **Boring Boring Boring:** Evil John D. Owen responds to Joe Nicholas’s *j’accuse!* (A35) with “a toothy grin, a tip of the hat, and a cheerful cry of ‘Sorreee!’” Oh, I say....

Hazel's Language Lessons #27: Afrikaans

courtesy of Chris Morgan

Dit reent oumeide met knobkieries:
it's raining cats and dogs (literally:
grandmothers with knobkerries).

ANSIBLE 36: DAVE LANGFORD
94 LONDON ROAD, READING,
BERKS. RG1 5AU, ENGLAND.

1984

***Ansible* 37**

February 1984

ANSIBLE 37 salutes 1984, famous scientific year of G.K. Chesterton's famous skiffy work *The Napoleon Of Notting Hill*. Editor: DAVE LANGFORD, 94 LONDON ROAD, READING, BERKSHIRE, RG1 5AU, ENGLAND. Subscriptions: £2 for six issues, airmailed outside UK, to *Ansible*; Giro transfer to a/c 24 475 4403; Americans can send \$3.50 to Burns, 23 Kensington Ct, Hempstead, NY 11550; and in the unlikely event of its being more convenient, continental Eurofans can rush £2 equivalent to Goudriaan, Postbus 1189, 8200 BD Lelystad, Netherlands. Institutions: £4/\$7. BRITAIN IS HEAVEN IN '87, and anyone sending an *Ansible* sub is urged to add an extra £1/\$2 for pre-supporting membership of this triffic Worldcon bid. Cartoon by D. WEST (but vote for ROB HANSEN on your TAFF ballot), sticky labels by KEITH FREEMAN, special Supreme Editorial Taste Award to KARL EDWARD WAGNER. Thanks for collation last issue to Jan Huxley, Chris Hughes and Rob Welbourn. Mailing label runes: LASTISH NN = you are OK to *Ansible* #NN; SUB DUE = send money instanter; ***** NN = your sub expired with issue NN and you should be ashamed of yourself; TRADE = for some reason Langford wishes to curry favour with you, and you should be on your guard. Essential reading for Spring 1984 includes *Micromania* by C. Platt and D. Langford (Gollancz, 1 March) and *The Leaky Establishment* by DL alone (Muller, 27 April but there should be some at Seacon). This fanzine has received financial assistance from the Public Lending Right scheme and is saving up for an ISSN.... Feb 1984

Sunny Optimism was noted in certain quarters as 1984 got under way. At the SF Supper Club, Roz Kaveney confided that she's escaped the *Interzone* chain-gang to become "Queen of Sci Fi" at Chatto & Windus, editing a "small upmarket SF line". Toby Roxburgh spread a little gloom and despondency by announcing that SF was dead and nobody wrote sense-of-wonder books any more – but soon cheered us all up with the stout avowal that even if we all did write super wondrous new books, his small, upmarket

SF line at Futura would unhesitatingly reject them in favour of imported American Hugo-winners. Malcolm Edwards gloated over the leaked news that Mary Gentle's *Golden Whichbreed* (famous dog-pedigree guide) had acquired more votes than anything in the current BSFA Award nominations, while Brian Stableford skulked in Reading, bitterly complaining that his temerity in giving *GW* a bad review had earned him an Official Reprimand plus blacklisting as regards Gollancz review copies.... Everyone was reeling at the news that the Public Lending Right scheme was *actually going to bring them money*: "How much are *you* getting?" was the question at the tip of every tongue, and naturally evil Malcolm assembled the answers, subsequently calling the roll of authors present in strict order of PLR precedence, from those who hadn't registered at all (e.g. himself) and were wailing and gnashing their teeth, up to the heights of Chris Priest (who later bought himself a new photocopier, and is writing articles for US papers trying to whip up enthusiasm for PLR over there, in hopes of similar bounty from reciprocal agreements) and Brian Aldiss, who, when pressed for details of his PLR, smiled modestly as he ordered a further magnum of Moët & Chandon to wash down his tureen of caviar.

Brian Aldiss: "I noticed in your columns that the ex-writer Ian Watson has done something or other about turning his books into games. I hope Sheila Bush gets a percentage. It reminded me to tell you that – without me lifting a finger – my Weidenfeld *SF Quiz Book* has gone onto cassette, and is so published by Acornsoft, as a Grandmaster Quiz entitled, briefly, *Brian Aldiss Science Fiction Quiz for the BBC Microcomputer and Acorn Electron*. Two cassettes, leaflet, lavish packaging. Next Christmas, Penguin will bring out this quiz and the other five along similar lines in one omnibus volume. Just think – this miserable bit of hackwork is currently earning me more than *Helliconia*....

"A report on 1983 Christmas parties which might be of interest to your readers. *New Scientist*: booze and food good, crowded, many pretty girls. Pass. *TLS*: Well worth gatecrashing. Booze and food good and ample. Amiable chaps – no publishers. One pretty girl and Hermione Lee. Drink never dried up. Credit. *Fiction Magazine*: Boozy ambience over pub. Booze inexhaustible, food okay. Salmon Rushdie present (as at other parties) otherwise very jolly, chaps and girls friendly. Frank Delaney. Credit. *Jonathan Cape*: Begins late (9pm), goes on till 4am. Unstoppable flow of

booze and food on all four floors. Many celebrities, including Diana Quick who wants to act in dramatized version of *Helliconia*. Hours of fun, girls up to scratch, chaps friendly, no SF writers, except for Desmond Morris. Credit plus.

“As for this kind offer to serialize *Helliconia Winter*, you’re on. All the SF magazines have rejected it. ‘Too literate’ – *Omni*. ‘Too downbeat’ – *Analog*. ‘Too intelligent’ – *Asimov’s*. ‘Too long’ – *Interzone*. ‘Too amusing’ – *Punch*. ‘Two fingers’ – *Private Eye*. Enclosed is an instalment you might like to begin with, still in a rough state. Typically, it has no excitement in it, no spies, no dialogue, no sex; but it has cooking – something lacking in previous sf Empire-builders.” [BA]

Scoop! *Helliconia Winter Extract* (p.25a of draft): “twisted up through the building. / She paused at one of the tiny kitchens, where an old grandmother worked with a young maidservant. The old woman gave her a greeting, then turned back to the business of making pastry savrilas. The lamplight gleamed on pale and honey-coloured forms, the simple shapes of bowls and jugs, plates, spoons and rollers, and on dumpy bags of flour. The pastry was being rolled wafer-thin, mottled old hands moving above its irregular shape. The maidservant leaned against a wall, looking on vacantly, upper teeth chewing pouting lower lip. Water in a skillet bubbled over a charcoal fire. / It could not be true that everyday life in Koriantura was threatened, as Odim said – not while the grandmother’s capable hands continued to turn out those perfect half-moon shapes, each with a dimpled straight edge and a twist of the pastry at one end. Those little pillows of pleasure spoke of a domestic contentment which could not be shattered. Odim worried too much. He always worried. Nothing would happen. / Besides, tonight Besi had someone other than Odim on her mind. There was a mysterious soldier in the house, and she had glimpsed him. • All the lower and less favoured rooms”

Copyright © Brian Aldiss, 1984. Wait for next sense-shattering instalment, in which a glacier bursts through the kitchen wall and Odim says “I told you so....”

Further Fiction From Rob Holdstock: “RH’s 110,000 word novel,

extended from the story 'Mythago Wood', has been won by Gollancz after a mighty battle with Rob's old publisher, Faber, lasting just two phone calls. Faber's first offer included a 3-figure sum, no detectable enthusiasm, and heavy hints about massive cutting. Gollancz offered lots more and threw in a big, friendly grin from Malcolm Edwards. In the States, Susan Allison of Berkeley Books is reported to be delighted with the manuscript, which she had commissioned a year earlier. The Gollancz edition is due in July, with a 4-colour cover, all of which will be subtle shades of yellow. A follow-up novel (not a sequel) *Lavondyss* is in production. Other great recent works from the mighty-thewed pen include *Night Hunter 4: The Shrine*. The terrifying saga of Dan Brady's endless bloody quest to find his lost family in the foetid and haunted labyrinths of occult England, continues. Again, he totally fails to find them. It is very possible that Dan Brady is extremely inept. Book due in August.... *Realms of Fantasy*, new Edwards/Holdstock epic, is out from Dragonsworld: lavish illustrations of 10 fantasy worlds including Earthsea and Urth. The first publicity was an interview for Manchester radio. Rob was totally flummoxed by almost every question the crazy DJ interviewer asked, but particularly by one about Mars: 'There's a chapter on Mars in the book, and the pictures are very red. And, like, Mars itself is very red, isn't it. Do you have any opinions on that, Robert?' Listen carefully for the thud of someone's jaw impacting the table." [RH]

L. Ron Hubbard Funnies: Although NEL backed out of the contract, for reasons, their boss Trevor d'Cruze has snaffled *Battlefield Earth*, to appear this year in both hardback and paperback from his own new imprint Quadrant Publishing. Meanwhile, famous Terry Carr has been nearly editing the 12-volume *BE* sequel *Mission Earth* ("clean pulp prose, crude in style but quite serviceable," he noted): he verbally agreed an \$80,000 fee with Author Services Inc, the Hubbard marketing organization. Imagine Terry's surprise and delight when the contract did not arrive "within the week" as promised, nor at all: instead the grapevine reported that similar offers were also made to Algis Budrys, Dave Hartwell, and others; and finally a call came from ASI saying "I just want to set your mind at ease. We've decided to do the editing as an in-house project, so don't worry, we didn't hire another editor instead of you." Suddenly one remembers the original report that NEL dropped *Battlefield Earth* because ASI were impossible to work with....

RIP: "George Charters, Grand Old Man of Irish Fandom, died on

Wednesday 18 January from a long standing heart complaint. The funeral, at Roselawn, Belfast, was attended by James and Peggy White (Walt and Madeleine Willis had to turn back on account of snow). George used to say that the proudest achievement of his career was to have stencilled *The Enchanted Duplicator*, but in fact he published many fine issues of his own fanzine *The Scarr* and wrote several articles in other fanzines. All are suffused by the gentle warmth and quiet humour which made him such a nice person to know and so impossible to forget.” [Walt Willis]

Also recently deceased: Mary Renault (78) noted for fine historical novels edging into borderline fantasy (e.g. *The King Must Die*); Leonard Wibberley (68) of the SF romps *The Mouse that Roared* and *The Mouse on the Moon*.

Interzone has received a no-strings-attached £100 cheque from that patron of the arts Sir Clive Sinclair. “Now we’ll be accused of allowing ourselves to be corrupted by rich capitalists,” says ever-optimistic Dave Pringle, adding that issue 8 features an unpublished Dick story “Strange Memories of Death” and that *IZ* stories by Scott Bradfield and Malcolm Edwards are being grabbed by Karl Edward Wagner for the next DAW *Best Horror Stories of the Year* – information which would fill the *Ansible* editor with rage and envy were it not that his own short nasty from Ramsey Campbell’s *The Gruesome Book* will be in that same volume, ho ho. And ...

Ian Watson: “Sold vol.2 of the trilogy (**The Black Current Trilogy**), namely *The Book of the Stars*, to dear old Gollancz. Whoopee ... ‘Slow Birds’ bought by Gardner Dozois for his new Best of the Year roundup from Bluejay Books ... Have just become the Sunday Times skiffy critic, gosh. Amazing and horrifying how my prestige has shot up with the chaps in the Red Lion, mothers, aunts, etc., compared with when I was merely an *author* of books last week ... Nene College, Northampton, phoned out of the blue and asked me to be Writer in Residence one day a week for the rest of the term for £1750; I said yes. Went out there yesterday: lovely campus, rose beds, Zen gardens, bars, coffee bars, nice laid-back attitude to life. Staff wearing velvet jackets: suddenly realized I was dressed in rags and should improve The Image ... Back to Earth with a bump: Vicky Carne (Mosaic) phoned to ask for a final discussion of the game options in the program for ‘The Width of the World’ before they go into production. As I don’t have a computer on hand, still using a club and clay tablets for my work, I’ll have to buzz down to London. ‘Could you make it the week after next?’ asked Vicky.

‘Next week, Simon – he’s your programmer – is doing his mock A-levels.’ A Humble Moment ... You’ll have heard, I Newshound, that John Clute has been rendered hors de combat in St Barts with smashed femur, dislocated shoulder etc. after being swiped off his bike. Can it be coincidence that a hit-&-run driver nobbled George Hay mere months earlier?” [IW] *Am glad to report that John Clute has escaped hospital, though it may be a little while before he can put the boot into SF with his customary vigour....*

Encyclopedia Of Fantasy: Maxim Jakubowski is in the throes of preparing a detailed outline of this massive project (“pace Peter Nicholls”, who had more or less abandoned his similar plans), covering fantasy, horror, and the supernatural, and running to some 600,000 words. Outline plus 20,000 words of sample stuff to be delivered to Allen & Unwin, after which “we shall then together pitch it to the Book Clubs and US publishers with a costly but professional printed dummy.” Contributors include Greenland, Brosnan, Collins, Barron, Winter, Kaveney, Jones’n’Fletcher, Miller, Shippey, Grant, Langford and whatsisname from Gollancz who’s been mentioned too often this issue. Watch this space. Data from Maxim himself, who is also about to write the authorized biography of Philip K. Dick (reminding me of the PKD Society: 4+ newsletters a year, £3.50 surface/£7 airmail, cheques to V. Buckle, 47 Park Ave, Barking, Essex, IG11 8QU. Unpublished Dickiana promised).

Douglas Adams: Neil Gaiman reveals all! “Re. last *Ansible*, I noticed you had a bit on *So Long, and Thanks for All the Royalties* – the new DA book. To set the record straight, that isn’t *necessarily* the title. The ‘plot’ concerns A. Dent’s quest to find God’s Final Message To His Creation (which apparently *will* be featured on the last page, don’t hold your breath), and so DA’s agent wants him to call it *God’s Final Message To His Creation*. DA prefers *So Long* ... but is currently thumbing through *Hitchhiker #1* looking for a quote to title it with. (I suggested *Eighteenth Printing*, but ...) He’s not yet started writing it, still working on ‘DA SCREENPLAY’ as he is.

“Trivia: did you know that ‘the most gratuitous use of the word fuck in a serious screenplay’ has been bowdlerized to ‘use of the word Belgium ...’ in the US edition? And the word ‘wop!’ – a multipurpose sound effect – has become ‘whop!’ to avoid offending any – ahem! – Italo-Americans that might read it. Both these in the pocket version of *Liff, the Royalties and Everything*. Oh yeah, and ‘You’re an asshole, Dent,’ has become ‘You’re a

complete kneebiter, Dent,' for what it's worth. I find the concept of kneebiting more offensive than the concept of assholes, but maybe that's because I'm not American. Remember where you heard it first –" [NG]

Nebula Awards Preliminary Ballot: This document contains hordes of things from 1983, to be voted down to a shortlist of 5/6 per category by the SFWA membership. Top novels are *Citadel of the Autarch* and *Against Infinity* with 17 and 10 nominations. Life is too short to list the lot, but here are some items of UK interest: *Crucible of Time* (Brunner, =12th novel, 4 votes); *Helliconia Summer* (Aldiss, =19th novel, 3 votes); "Slow Birds" (Watson, 3rd novelette, 12 votes); "The Black Current" (Watson, =15th novelette, 3 votes) and "Brothers" (Cowper, =12th short, 3 votes). Rankings mean little as some stories have been picking up votes throughout 1983, while others appeared late that year. Final ballot soon.

RIP Again: "Eric Needham died suddenly on Dec 1. I received word from his widow Kathleen. Eric was best known for offbeat writings in Harry Turner's fanzine and in particular was the originator of the 'Widowers Wonderful' verses. He was active in early Manchester fandom and had a truly original brand of humour, much appreciated by his friends." [Ethel Lindsay] "Slim Pickens who rode an H-bomb into the credits and Vera Lynn song of *Dr Strangelove* is dead." [R. I. Barycz] The mention of Eric Needham reminds me that at Novacon, Eric Bentcliffe asked for a further plug for *When Yngvi Was A Louse*, the 1950s fanthology, containing Needham material and verses. Send a couple of quid to EB at 17 Riverside Crescent, Holmes Chapel, Cheshire, CW4 7NR ... [Ed.]

Barycz Media Horror Rises From Grave: "Have you got big tits? Can you swing a broadsword? Can you wear Calvin Klein chainmail knickers? Redheaded? Then Dino de Laurentiis wants to hear from *you*, as he's going to produce that figment of R. E. Howard's misogyny *Red Sonja: She Devil with a Sword*. Call Navarro-Bertoni Casting in California, on 212-765-4250, *now*. Any shortcomings in the above requirements can no doubt be made good with the help of ILM and the finest plastic surgeon Dino can find off Hollywood and Vine. Fascinating to see what sort of compromise he makes between the need for Sonja to have big ones and yet at the same time swing a sword about without distraction ... Kier Dullea is set to make a return in 2010, also Douglas Rain who did HAL's voice ... Piers Haggard who directed the TV version of *Pennies from Heaven* hopes to make *The Stainless Steel*

Rat. Script by Harry Harrison. Whatever happened to Limelight Productions ol' Harry was so enthusiastic about a few years ago? ... Glen A. Larson does it again. To wit: ripped off *Tron* and any number of shows you care to think of with *Automan*, holographic image created by a police computer expert to fight crime in a blue halo, aided by his trusty sidekick Robin^H^H^H^H a little sparkling light called Cursor ... 2010 begins photography at MGM on 6 Feb: \$25M budget and nine months preproduction already done ... 20th C Fox announce their ritual SF project for this year, *Enemy Mine* based on ditto by Barry Bongyear ..." [RIB]

Misc Bits

Pauline Morgan was bitterly disappointed, last issue, by her low placing in the Concrete Overcoat Fan Fund results: "I am surprised I received so few votes in the COFF award competition. I had been told several months ago that it was being arranged for me to win it. Perhaps the money ran out or the unpopularity of the winner (Simon Polley) was grossly underestimated?" [PM]

Love's Young Dream: Mr. Polley himself ascribes his popularity in 1983 to ... but let him tell it in his own words. "ANSWER TO MY VILE RECORD LAST YEAR NOW REVEALED TO BE PARTLY DUE TO SUNDRY AMOROUS INTENTIONS WHICH HAVE LED TO A DEFINITE MARRIAGE DATE NEXT AUTUMN SHOCK HORROR STOP INTENDED IS TYPIST AND BON VIVEUR DEBBI KERR STOP" There's been a lot of this ever since Joseph and Judith demonstrated that fannish marriage was still ideologically OK: Steve Green and Ann Thomas succumbed on December 17 and Eunice Pearson and Phill Probert on December 21. Only my inability to master Telemessages prevented the luckless couples being bombarded with tasteful extracts from Swinburne (*Time turns the old days to derision / Our loves into corpses or wives / And marriage and death and division/Make barren our lives*)....

West Gets Controversial: "Great is the name of Langford – your plugs have been bringing in the orders (for *Fanzines In Theory & Practice* – flyer last issue) to the extent that I'm now just short of the satisfying round number of 50. Considering that I've never heard of many of the people who have sent money this is indeed good news. R. Bergeron has coughed up; so has Ted

White. By a remarkable coincidence in the very same post as T. White's \$10 bill came one from Martian Moose Worster: 'Anyone who Ted White thinks is an asshole is O.K. with me' declared Martin Moose, and demanded that his own copy be 'suitably inscribed'. (I'm still thinking about it. Maybe you could run it as a competition in *Matrix*.) Only other US order has come from one Dave Rike, who informs me that certain elements of California fandom are eager to take that high US price out of my hide. I have duly informed him that he should tell these querulous persons either to buy their own copies or go fuck themselves. (Another satisfied voter.)

"News around here is fairly negative. Due to one of Graham James's periodic attacks of Dynamic Leadership the Leeds group have moved back to the West Riding for meetings, but since it doesn't seem too well heated (and the back room we used to be in has closed) we'll quite likely be back at the Adelphi before long. Simon Ounsley has done a disappearing act, not having been seen or heard from in the last month. Simon Polley has done an appearing act, having started coming to the pub again. But still with no copies of *Matrix*, so sod the BSFA. Ursula LeGuin will not be GoH at Leeds in 85 – next prospect in line is Greg Benford. (I did put in a word for Brian Stableford – 'cheap'.)

"Just written Greg a letter announcing my withdrawal from FRANK'S APA. I was about halfway through doing this thing called *Fuck-All Point* (since people are always saying that what fandom needs is a Fuck-All Point fanzine) when the contradictions just got too much for me. Everything I said about FEAPA still applies, and there's no real Special Case plea either. Apas are not Ideologically Sound.

"A thing to ponder here: I strongly suspect that it was apa block voting that gave Margaret Welbank the Best Artist Nova Award, and I also suspect that this is likely to happen again and/or cause trouble. Welbank may have deserved to win on talent, but as far as I know she's done practically nothing that's been seen outside the Women's apa. And for a supposedly open award to be given for work which many voters are specifically excluded from seeing makes the whole thing ridiculous. So what's going to happen with the *Ansible* Poll? Unless you exclude apa contributions there's going to be a real outbreak of paranoia – accusations of fixing by cliques and elites and so on. Only this time there'll be some justification." [D. West. *Back to this next issue, no doubt. Mind how you go, everyone....* 1 Feb 1983]

COA

Pete Birks, 65 Turney Rd, London, SE21 7JB :: G.A. Bryant, Rue de l'Arbre Saint-Roch 92, B-4480 Oupeye, Belgium :: Philip Chee, 14 Lorong Cheah Cheang Lim, Ipoh, Perak, Malaysia :: Margaret Hall (from 13 Feb), 5 Maes yr Odyn, Dolgellau, Gwynedd, LL40 1UT :: George Hay, 5 St Andrews Mansions, St Andrews Rd, West Kensington, London, W14 9SU :: Lucy Huntzinger yet again, 2739 Folsom St, San Francisco, CA 94110, USA :: Paul Hurtle, c/o Ellen Trest, 211 W 80th St, New York, NY 10024, USA :: Anne Warren & Jimmy Robertson, 8 The Hermitage, Portsmouth Rd, Kingston-upon-Thames, Surrey :: Cyril Simsa, 34 Canterbury St, Cambridge, CB4 3QF :: Helen Starkey, 6 Skelgill Rd, Putney, London, SW.15 :: Michael D. Toman, 4006 Emerald #307, Torrance, CA 90503, USA ::

Infinitely Improbable

Omni UK is no more, not even the token editorial office consisting of a broom cupboard in Bramber Road containing Andie Burland/Oppenheimer. The erstwhile Penthouse/Omni building has been flogged ... **Sf In Southend:** the usual searing controversy resulted from the Joe Beedell (?) letter last issue. Alex Stewart announces that all persons maligned in said letter are in fact nice, especially heroic Susan Francis; also that he's baffled by being advised "to don thermal underwear before attending any Star Trek conventions." Joe himself sends a more than usually cryptic note implying that last issue's letter was not (despite its fairly accurate rendition of his literary style) written by him: "i hope that what happened to me will never happen again as *THEY* made a Big mistake to be JUDGE JURY & EXECUTIONER don't let this happen again to any body else or there will be a tragedy tell people to get thier Fact's straight next time." [JB – or is it?] **Simon Gosden** offers a local news clipping about the "Orion Club" now reportedly meeting chez Beedell to watch films (videos?) ... **The Sun**, favourite newspaper of informant Leroy Kettle, urgently asks IS YOUR NEIGHBOUR FROM OUTER SPACE? and gives hints (from such notorious loonies as Brad Steiger) on how to spot extraterrestrial infiltrators. "They sleep and work unusual hours ... develop strange physical reactions near certain high-tech machines ... show anxiety when using Earth transportation ... constantly gather information ... misuse common everyday

objects ... have homes will ill-matching decor ... have an unusual object in the home which is highly regarded and protected ..." I swear I'm not making this up. Finally the Sun invites readers to report "space aliens" spotted in their locality, to ALIEN, *The Sun*, 30 Bouverie St, London, EC4Y 8DE. Leroy reckons a few write-ins for D. West would seem to be in order ... **SFWA Smites Pocket Books With Thunderbolt!** Well, not quite: but despite exchanges in A36, SFWA President Marta Randall and I are pals really, and she did investigate the curious business of Pocket Books' failure to pay me my trifling advance despite having had *Space Eater* in print for most of 1983, and coincidentally (or was it?) Arrow announced that the cheque had got as far as their New York agents as was en route to London. This has been a public service announcement requested by local SFWA rep Ian Watson ... **Take That, Langford!** Seems nobody is suing me after all (see A36), not even SFWA as wrongly rumoured in the USA. Andy Porter appears to regret this, and in the latest *SF Chronicle* berates me no end for failing to check everything before publication. Gee, Andy, and I was so tactfully silent about your (doubtless carefully checked) SFC contribution which reported the dismally inept and universally criticized BMC SF promotion as (and I quote) "an unqualified success" ... **Censorship Horror:** do you subscribe to Roger Weddall's Aussie newszine *Thyme*, and have you been wondering about the long gap between issues? We hear the UK agent, a notorious bon-vivant, GUFF administrator and *Paperback Inferno* editor, has suppressed the British mailing of the latest issue owing to Roger's alleged failure to accept the GUFF results with adequate good grace therein ... **Fermat's Last Theorem** has been solved, according to the *Grauniad*, by eccentric cyberneticist and George Hay protege Arnold Arnold (sic). The self-confessed mathematical intelligentsia of fandom (Phil Palmer) opine that either the *Guardina* has left out important bits of proof or – as wickedly asserted by *New Scientist* – this has to be a con. I myself have developed a magnificent proof which this *Ansible* is too small to contain, marginally ... **John Sladek**, who is supposed to be many thousand miles away, was sighted over here escaping the -25-degree Minneapolis Xmas. "London a haven of tropical warmth, he states" [MJE] ... **Constellation**, not content with being fandom's all-time financial disaster, has found a lot more bills under the bed etc. and cheerily announces that the deficit has swelled to \$44,000. "The people who lost it aren't even apologetic," complains Joyce Scrivner. "I was told they bought 19,000 plastic registration envelopes to get a good price break." So among their assets are,

presumably, more than 12,500 plastic envelopes – also a good few thousand felt-tip pens accidentally acquired after an attempt to order a few hundred [SFC] ... **Isaac Asimov** underwent triple heart-bypass surgery in December and is convalescing: we leave you to guess which Gollancz editor drew parallels with Heinlein’s “brain-bypass surgery” and suggested Arthur C. Clarke should look out ... **Seacon 84** has signed up further famous persons: Forrest J. Ackerman, Fred Pohl, Marion Zimmer Bradley, Joe Haldeman. A publicity flyer from hyperefficient Chris Hughes adds the name Gene Wolfe, which has somewhat nonplussed Gene Wolfe ... **Games Centre Kaput:** the 9-shop empire went into liquidation on 31 Dec, a variety of reasons being suggested. GC plead economic recession and loss of trade thanks to London bomb scares; everyone else mutters “total ineptitude”. Reportedly GC cocked-up their supply & demand thanks to a misprogrammed stock-control computer (an accountant – D. G. Langford FCA – comments that it’s not unusual for a small business to program stock-ordering giving priority to what’s on the shelves rather than what’s popular and has therefore been sold). All employees of Games Workshop are of course in deep mourning for the passing of their rivals, however bravely they try to hide their grief with hysterical giggles ... **D. West**, with unaccustomed public spirit, asks “how come the Albacon committee [*who admittedly made a fairish profit*] can’t afford more than a lousy £10 donation to TAFF? Does this have anything to do with the reported failure of TAFF person Avedon Carol to lick the arse of certain committee members with sufficient enthusiasm? I think we should be told.” Surely D. must be totally misinformed here ... **Sweden:** “An official Star Wars Fan Club has been formed and this club dislikes the fan-operated nonprofit SW club ‘Tattooine’. One can suppose the existence of an idealistic SW club makes it harder for SWFC to sell stuff to the innocent young addicts and earn itself a fortune. They threaten to sue if Tattooine continues to use commercially protected words like ‘Star Wars’, ‘Tattooine’, etc. Tattooine’s answer is to change name, to ‘The Rebel Alliance’ (Rebelalliansen) and continue as before ... Kaj Harju and Jan-Olov Segerstrom claim to have founded a *Christopher Priest Society* ... SEFF has collected about £200. This means the SEFF trip to Seacon 84 is secure. Donations are still welcome and will go to the next SEFF trip, probably aimed for the planned Swecon 85 in Stockholm.” [*Ahrvid Engholm*]... **1984 – The View From Two Shores** – UK/US conference(s), UK bit, 2-5 July, costs a mere £75+VAT; ask Colin Mably, SF Foundation, 01-599-3100 / 01-590-7722 x2110.

Hazel's Language Lessons #28: Tibetan

Yúgs-sa-moi dór-rta des yza srun, rmá-la pan Wdn: the middle part of a widow's drawers prevents epilepsy and heals wounds.

(*Tibetan-English Dictionary*, H.A. Jaschke, 1881)

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This special Late Issue of *Ansible*, delayed by the shock of its first Hugo nomination plus a disparaging mention in *New Scientist*, comes as usual from DAVE LANGFORD, 94 LONDON ROAD, READING, BERKSHIRE, RG1 5AU, UK. Subscriptions: a trifling £2 for six issues, airmailed outside the UK. Cheques/sterling money orders to *Ansible*; Giro transfer to a/c 24 475 4403; Americans may rush \$3.50 to Burns, 23 Kensington Ct, Hempstead, NY 11550, while continental Eurofans who find it convenient may thrust an equivalent £2 into the prehensile hands of R. Goudriaan, Postbus 1189, 8200 BD Lelystad, Netherlands. YOU WILL SUPPORT the Britain-in-1987 Worldcon bid, and how better than by adding a quid's presupporting membership to *Ansible* subs sent direct to me? An enclosed flyer should reveal all concerning outside-UK agents for this bid; another should allow you one last desperate chance (if you get this by 30 April) to save the world for truth, justice, Welshfandom and baked beans by voting ROB HANSEN FOR TAFF. Enigmatic cartoon this issue by ALEXIS GILLILAND, mailing labels by KEITH FREEMAN and his AMAZING AMDAHL. For those not versed in computers, the esoteric machine-code instruction on your label translates thus: LASTISH XX, send money by issue XX; SUB DUE, send money now; ***** , send money sooner than now; TRADE, keep sending whatever appalling thing you send. Mailing list: 381 copies. Collation last issue: Chris Huge, Arnold "Woe, Gloom and Misery" Akien. This issue officially dated Easter 1984 or so....

April Fool! You read it in these pages, that 1984 is *really* the year of G.K. Chesterton's *Napoleon Of Notting Hill* ... and duly there's a version of *Napoleon* playing at the Old Vic until Easter (repeat: September). Somehow I hadn't imagined one of my favourite novels being played as a musical, by 12-18 year olds, with a sex-change for the chief male character. You will hear more of this.

Awards: Having contrived to start with something – anything – other than the Hugo nominations, I now give you ... NOVEL *Millennium* (John Varley), *Moron: Dragonlady Of Pern* (Anne McCaffrey), *The Robots Of Dawn* (Isaac Asimov), *Startide Rising* (David Brin), *Tea With The Black Dragon* (R.A. MacAvoy). *** NOVELLA “Cascade Point” (Timothy Zahn), “Hardfought” (Greg Bear), “Hurricane Claude” (Hilbert Schenck), “In the Face of My Enemy” (Joseph Delaney), “Seeking” (David Palmer). *** NOVELETTE “Black Air” (Kim Stanley Robinson), “Blood Music” (Greg Bear), “The Monkey Treatment” (George R.R. Martin), “The Sidon in the Mirror” (Connie Willis), “Slow Birds” (Ian Watson). *** SHORT “The Geometry of Narrative” (Hilbert Schenck), “The Peacemaker” (Gardner Dozois), “Servant of the People” (Frederick Pohl), “Speech Sounds” (Octavia Butler), “Wong’s Lost & Found Emporium” (William Wu). *** NONFICTION *Dream Makers II* (Charles Platt), *Encyclopaedia Of Sf And Fantasy Vol III* (Donald Tuck), *The Fantastic Art Of Rowena* (Rowena Morrill), *The High Kings* (Joy Chant), *Staying Alive: A Maven’s Guide* (Norman Spinrad). *** DRAMATIC *Brainstorm*, *Return of the Jedi*, *The Right Stuff*, *Something Wicked This Way Comes*, *WarGames*. *** PRO EDITOR Terry Carr, Edward L. Ferman, David G Hartwell, Shawna McCarthy, Stanley Schmidt. *** PRO ARTIST Val Lakey Lindahn, Don Maitz, Rowena Morrill, Barclay Shaw, Michael Whelan. *** SEMIPROZINE *Fantasy Newsletter/Review*, *Locus*, *SF Chronicle*, *SF Review*, *Whispers*. *** FANZINE *Ansible*, *File 770*, *Holier Than Thou*, *Izzard*, *The Filk Fee-Nom-Ee-Non* (wot?). *** FANWRITER Richard E. Geis, Mike Glycer, Arthur Hlavaty, Dave Langford, Teresa Nielsen Hayden. *** BEST FANARTIST Brad Foster, Alexis Gilliland, Joan Hanke-Woods, William Rotsler, Stu Shiffman.

Note that the “fanzine Hugo reform” has been implemented and that trash like *Ansible* only gets in because *SFR & Co.* are booted upstairs to the new “Semiprozine” category. Note how this leaves poor old Dick Geis in the very silly position of being a shortlisted fanwriter whose writing all appears in a semipro- rather than a fanzine. Hugo information came in patches: two items by phone from LA-Con chair Craig Miller (guess which ones), one from Ian Watson (guess which) and the rest from *File 770* as usual....

John W Campbell Award for best nearly new writer: Joseph H. Delaney, Lisa Goldstein, R.A. MacAvoy, Warren Norwood, Joel Rosenberg, Sheri Tepper.

Philip K. Dick Award for best original paperback went to Tim Powers for *The Anubis Gates* (he got \$1000), with R.A. MacAvoy's *Tea With The Black Dragon* as \$500 runner-up (info: Jerry Kaufman). Phil Palmer supplies helpful background on UK bidding for *The Anubis Gates*: "My entertainment these days comes from lying somewhere between Roz Kaveney and Malcolm Edwards (how awful!). At the Tun Roz told me that she and Malcolm had been playing 'handball'. She left early and Big M arrived late. 'Oh is that what she calls it,' he said a little heatedly. 'I call it snatching a book I recommended in a personal capacity, for enjoyment ...' Now Roz is furious. 'It is a matter of record that I was a Tim Powers fan before ...' well, of such primaevial antehistory as to make the minds of men reel with the titanic vista of such ancientness. And this is only the first book of Roz's list! What other sensitive relationships are to be torn asunder? Roz is much consoled by the answer this makes to the criticism that her list [Chatto & Windus] would be of books that no one else would buy." [PP]

BSFA Awards: the usual shortlist, from the usual administrator Joseph Nicholas, who at Seacon 84 will count the ballots in the usual way. NOVEL *Helliconia Summer* (Brian Aldiss), *Cat Karina* (Michael Coney), *Golden Witchbreed* (Mary Gentle), *Tik-Tok* (John Sladek), *Citadel Of The Autarch* (Gene Wolfe). *** SHORT "The Flash! Kid" (Scott Bradfield), "The Tithonian Factor" (Richard Cowper), "Novelty" (John Crowley), "After-Images" (Malcolm Edwards), "Calling All Gumdrops" (John Sladek). *** MEDIA Android, The Day After, United States Parts I-IV (stage), Perfect Shadows (BBC-TV), WarGames. *** COVER ARTIST Peter Jones, Ian Miller, Bruce Pennington, Tim White. No other artist got more than one vote: hence a shortlist of only four. John Sladek originally had two nominated novels but withdrew one; we're not allowed to tell you which, so here's a letter on A37 from Richard Cowper: "Did you make up that extract of *Helliconia* (extract of malt)? It sounds too like a parody to be true – so I guess it IS true. [Yes – DRL] Still, I suppose it's appropriate that it concerns itself with dough ..." And following his Hugo gloat, Ian Watson gracefully remarks "Of course I'm chagrined not to be a nominee in the more cut-throat annual award for the best story from any two issues of *Interzone*." Indeed all 5 BSFA-nominated stories *are* from *IZ*, but can this be because *F&SF* (where Ian's "Slow Birds" appeared) lacked the elementary sense to offer cheap subscriptions to the BSFA voting pool, and to distribute the magazine with BSFA mailings? A bit more Watson before the Nebulas: "Amazing news

about Moreton Pinkney: Alexei Sayle, star of the club circuits, the hit parade, and ex-member of the CP (Marxist-Leninist) has just bought a house here, next door to the spinster ex-schoolmarm secretary of the Tory Party. I'm going to ask him to open the village fete, perhaps by shooting a dead cod through the head." (IW)

Nebula Award Nominations: argh! NOVEL *Against Infinity* (Greg Benford), *Startide Rising* (David Brin), *Tea With The Black Dragon* (R.A. MacAvoy), *The Void Captain's Tale* (Norman Spinrad), *Lyonesse* (Jack Vance), *Citadel Of The Autarch* (Gene Wolfe). *** NOVELLA "Hardfought" (Greg Bear), "Gospel According to Gamaliel Crucis" (Michael Bishop), "Her Habiline Husband" (Michael Bishop), "Eszterhazy and the Autogondola-Invention" (Avram Davidson), "Homefaring" (Robert Silverberg). *** NOVELETTE "Blood Music" (Greg Bear), "Blind Shemmy" (Jack Dann), "The Monkey Treatment" (George RR Martin), "Black Air" (Kim Stanley Robinson), "Cicada Queen" (Bruce Sterling), "Slow Birds" (Ian Watson), "Sidon in the Mirror" (Connie Willis). *** SHORT "The Peacemaker" (Gardner Dozois), "Her Furry Face" (Leigh Kennedy), "Cryptic" (Jack McDevitt), "Ghost Town" (Chad Oliver), "Geometry of Narrative" (Hilbert Schenck), "Wong's Lost & Found Emporium" (William F. Wu).

Things to note. (1) Either there's been a statistically implausible number of ties or the committees which are allowed to add an item in each category "at their discretion" have been working overtime. (2) Exactly 55% of the fiction shortlisted by the naff, downmarket, populist Hugo poll appears also in the refined, artistic, writers'-choice Nebula list. (3) One of the non-Hugo-listed novelettes, Dann's, had been sent to all SFWA members by Ellen Datlow of OMNI, with the usual plea for Nebula votes – another successful hype!

Burn This! Possibly one or two fans in the central Sahara have still not heard of the May test case at the Old Bailey, in which a megalomaniac Dept of Public Prosecutions is trying to set legal precedents whereby, for example, David Pringle can be done under the Obscene Publications Act for depraving and corrupting people by recommending William Burroughs. No joke: WB's *Junkie* is among many "drug-related" books seized by our wonderful police, along with Thompson's *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, Wolfe's *Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* and A. Huxley's *Doors Of Perception*. The argument

going the rounds in fandom is that if reinterpretation of the O.P. Act's words "to deprave and corrupt" allows this lot to be impounded and possibly burnt, then what about Dick's druggier books, or a million SF tomes depicting legal pot come 1999, or even Doc Smith's Lensman batch with their loving descriptions of "thionite"-sniffing? H'm. The real point for me is that most of the seized books mentioned are openly on sale in my local W.H. Smith. It's a political prosecution, with the OPA not merely perverted but selectively perverted to attack radical bookshops (like Acorn, my local Reading one). Annoy the government and you can be wiped out by having your stock grabbed and held until the OPA trial: no compensation even if you win. Over to our man of the issue, G.K. Chesterton: "It is most intolerable of all to play the tyrant while appealing only to temporary fiction. Nobody can be expected to stand the inquisitor who says, 'I am burning you alive for what you said today, and what I shall probably think tomorrow.'" (1930) Now, friends, you can have your books burnt for saying things which were perfectly all right yesterday, and are perfectly all right today provided you're W.H. Smith or similar. Anyone worried can send a few quid to the defence fund in that test case (Knockabout Comics & Airlift Books vs Maggie's Censors): "Right to Read", 249 Kensal Road, London, W.10; 01-969-2945.

Meanwhile, Back At The Ranch: further publishing horrors. Chris Priest gloats over having had 8 publishers bidding frantically for his new novel *The Glamour*, finally bagged by Cape for an advance so huge that Chris hastily bought a new car to avoid bursting his bank account. Doubleday bought US rights; the classiest runner-up bid (UK) was said to be on the lines of "We can't afford any more, Chris ... but how would you like to see all your other books back in print in nice yellow jackets ...?" A. Nonymous writes: "News on the *Pantyhose/Omni* thing: *Penthouse* has been sold to Northern & Shell, an advertising agency of (as I understand it) dubious reputation. They've bought the UK *Penthouse* franchise, including rights to the *Omni* name & mag as well. *However*, the boss of N&S *hates* SF with a vengeance dire and even tried to make the last editor drop my Silverbob piece. (I rather liked it, but wish they'd printed what I'd written. At least I spelt Jakubowski right.) So he doesn't want to do anything with *Omni* except use it as a showcase for ads. Therefore it's going to be coming out in UK format, unchanged except for UK ads, sometime in the foreseeable future. Isn't that nice to know?" Bernard Leak, our foremost Stephen Donaldson fan, has some old news: "It has transpired that Collins (disguising themselves as Fontana in the hope that

God won't know whom to destroy) have published *The Man Who Killed His Brother* (as by 'Reed Stephens'). I first knew of its British appearance when it found its way into remainder bookshops ... It displays all the characteristic Donaldson vices, lurking behind a completely different surface texture of genre clichés – this time it's a detective thriller. I showed Nick 'Donaldson flays the English language alive and empurples his prose with its blood' Lowe how to lay his hands on a copy, and he sallied forth. Next thing he knew, Tibs was reading it, and punctuated the brooding silence with delighted yelps like 'It's good, isn't it?' Er, well, Tibs IS a bit strange ...” (BL) Interested in a private eye called (with typical SRD felicity) Mick Axbrewder – not leprous but alcoholic? Try offering a quid for *Ansible's* copy of *TMWKHB*.

Arrivals/Departures: Kevin & Diana Smith, realizing that the only way for Big Kev to escape the BSFA company secretary post is to provide a replacement, have arranged to found a dynasty later this year ... **Mal & Hazel Ashworth**, as a preliminary to Mal's December '83 retirement, finally contrived to get married – “at the Registry Office one morning last October (I think it was),” reports Mal, doubtless overtired from the honeymoon ... **John Newton Chance** died recently: the author of 150-odd books including the 20+ “John Lymington” SF potboilers (*Froomb!*), he made a steady income by delivering thrillers to Robert Hale at a chapter a week – 4 chapters of the latest remain mouldering in the Hale office ... **Maxim Jakubowski** has resigned as managing director of his very own Zomba Books empire ... **J.S. Cairns**, Sunderland fringe-fan and amateur publisher, died in November 1983 while partway through a Dorothy Davies manuscript (reports a perturbed Dorothy) – the first *Ansible* subscriber to die, alas ... **Harry (Andy) Andruschak** writes from an alcoholism unit: “underwent detoxification and today am cold sober for the 1st time in 14 years. But I do have the shakes, and will for a while” ... **Charles Barren** “semi-retired” as SF Foundation maestro, in February ... **Ad Astra** magazine, which you all thought/hoped had sunk into a peaceful grave in 1981, is still appearing – according to the 1984 *Writers' And Artists' Yearbook*, which denies the existence of anything called *Interzone* ... **Jerry Pournelle, Jim Baen & John F. Carr** invite me to contribute to their new skiffy mag which will try to emulate the past glories of (wait for it) *Destinies*. Rush MSS to *Far Frontiers*, J.E.P. & Associates, 3960 Laurel Canyon Blvd, Suite 372, Studio City, CA 91604 ... And **George Hay's** pterodactyls, long thought extinct, have re-emerged onto his

letterhead.

Seacon '84, Eastercon/Eurocon: hasn't happened as I type, but this doesn't preclude a pre-con report. **Best Committee Coup:** the cheapo rail fares (£3.55 return to Brighton from anywhere in Southern Region, £5.50 from anywhere else), leading to a flood of enquiries from other cons to the hitherto obscure Theatre & Concert Rail Club – through whom diplomatic A. Akien arranged the deal by swearing most solemnly that *of course* the con would be chiefly concerned with the Performing Arts. Most exciting panic: the news about two weeks before the con that the chosen insurance company was refusing to cover the event, and “no insurance no convention”. (Substitute believed to have been arranged.) **Best In-Committee Feud:** Katie & Martin Hoare vs Alan Dorey. **Newest GoH Outrage** (apart from the lack of information about any of them in any progress report): Wiktor Bukato going on in *Shards Of Babel* about GoH Pierre Barbet (Claude Avice) not having received some Polish medal claimed in PB's own literary biography – Marjorie Brunner phoned at length to explain Bukato is all wet, Barbet is an honourable man, the problematical medal will be on view at Seacon, etc etc. **Best How-To-Get-There Map:** the one redrawn at the last second for PR4, the Doreyographical original having reportedly omitted vital sidestreets and left the Western Road pedestrian precinct as the only car route to the hotel. **Most Alarming Overheard Comment,** from a jetlagged M. Hoare back from a Chicago visit just one week before Seacon: “Oh shit, I forgot to cancel the disco.” **Best Omission:** all World SF members (plus selected others: see PR4) are invited to the Mayor's Reception on Thursday, but both PR4 and the WSF flyer neglect to mention that according to the highest authorities on etiquette (K. Hoare) those daring to present themselves without lounge suit or equivalent will be rebuffed at the door ... **Best Promise:** at one stage Author Services Inc offered to provide Kate Bush (by way of *Battlefield Earth* promotion) but instead are laying on giant inflatable aliens. Having read BE at last and found it unspeakably awful, I was tempted to provide free pins with this issue ... **Funnybone Award For Most “Humorous” Typo In PR4:** winner's name and address withheld by request. **Rumoured Estimate Of Number Of Walk-Ins At £12 Needed For Seacon To Break Even:** approx 500. **Surprise Award Category:** the Doc Weir Award reappeared in PR4 when everyone thought it dead, this because a BSFA chairman who shall be nameless had the trophy valued, found it to be solid silver and worth £1000, and understandably decided it had *better* be presented to get the responsibility

off his hands. After last-minute shouting it's likely that the DWA vote will follow the Eurocon Awards pattern: everyone votes, after which a select jury gives the award to whoever you should have voted for. ("So what's new?" mutter past students of the DWA.) **Surprise Non-Award:** the planned short story competition – to be judged by C. Priest – was quietly dropped after the discovery that merely because no rules were ever published, there were no entries.... An abridged version of Hawkwind, whom I believe to be itinerant players of chamber music, should be making the night air hideous on Sunday, so don't expect to find me there that evening....

The Very Boring *Ansible* Convention Supplement

Already past: **Picocon** at Imperial College, London, Feb 18 (which broke new ground in GoH conscription by announcing putative guests and later giving them a nice surprise by telling them they were guests) and a **TSR "Gamesfair"** at Reading U, 6-8 April (during my fleeting visit I was amazed to discover that people *really do* sit playing D&D etc all day, that the bar closed throughout the afternoon and that it was regarded as a coup to have secured an evening bar extension to 11.30pm. Fast footwork helped me avoid Stephen Donaldson fans, G. Gygax, and the BBC wallies who wanted to be told where all the devil-worship and human sacrifice was happening). At the **SF Lunch Club**, Charles Platt (on a UK promotional tour, pushing *Micromania*) was mutedly, hideously outspoken about the food and the company: unluckily, or luckily, he was unable to stay and make his speech. As he left to be interviewed for the umpteenth time that week, he charged Malcolm Edwards to repeat the Words of Platt: "This event is stifled by geriatrics! I shall not return!" Speechifying time came round, and Malcolm's free rendition went: "Charles asks me to say, I love all you sons of bitches ..." This is known as Editorial Skill. Onward....

UFPcon 84 (4-7 May, Midland Hotel, Manchester) is the 17th "official" UK Trek thingy: £15 att. 135 Greensted Road, Loughton, Essex.

BSFA Meeting (18 May, King of Diamonds, Greville Street, London): these happen 3rd Friday each month. May's should be fun – a repeat of the amazing Nick Lowe "So You Fancy Yourself As A Writer" event from Fencon. On 15 June, John Clute explains how to define good sf in 15,000

terse, obscure polysyllables; on 20 July, Big Rob Holdstock reveals the severe health hazard of not buying his new novel MYTHAGO WOOD.

Tynecon II: The Mexicon (25-8 May, Royal Station Hotel, Newcastle): £13.25/person single/dbl/twin, £15.50 snl+bath. Tynecon has provoked astonishingly silly comments from fans who – while accepting cons devoted to a single media interest as Perfectly Normal – regard the Mexicon concentration on “written sf in its widest sense” as monstrous, elitist, and very, very evil. Really! The committee is gloating over having signed up Russell Hoban and Alasdair Gray; with my review copy of Gray’s *1982, Janine* (Cape) came this fascinating letter – “Although not strictly science fictional *Janine* certainly has fantastic elements, on the strength of which [Gray] has been invited to read at Tynecon II, the Science Fiction Convention ...” First time I’ve ever known a publisher play up rather than try to deny the sf aspects of a borderline book.

View From Two Shores (2-5 July, NE London Poly): subtitled “1984: Now or Never?” Guest speaker: A.C. Clarke. Membership: £75.00 plus 15% VAT. Accommodation: more or less up to you. Bar: nothing about one in the flyer. Incipient academics should rush their cash to Colin Mably, SEH Short Course Unit, NE London Poly, Longbridge Road, Dagenham, Essex, RM8 2AS. A conference, not a convention.

Albacon 84 (Central Hotel, Glasgow, 20-23 July): £4 supp £9 att. GoH Harlan Ellison. 62 Campsie Road, Wishaw, ML2 7QG. Still beset by the deadly Shavian rival:

Faircon 84 (Ingram Hotel, Glasgow, 20-23 July): £6 supp £9 att. GoH Sidney Jordan plus the 2000 AD mob (said to have signed up as Albacon 84 attending members so they can Meet Harlan). 18 Greenwood Road, Clarkston, Glasgow, G76 7AQ. Forgot to mention Mat Irvine, another GoH, and the fake Bob Shaw, who as organizer will be very hurt if not vilified as usual in these pages. Vilify, vilify.

Leisure Hive (it says here)(4-5 August, somewhere in Swindon): a Dr Who thingy. Data: 2 Domestic Qtrs, Bryanston School, Blandford, Dorset. That’s all I know.

Space-Ex 84 (6-11 Aug, Wembley Centre, or so it’s said): we last met this no doubt sincere and wonderful, but extremely inept, outfit in A35 (Oct 83),

when bossman Mike Parry explained that publicity (you know, what you do to get new members) would be confined to existing members until 1 January 1984, when a massive campaign would be unleashed on the world. It is April and my Seacon spies – hi there, Rochelle! – report the first sign of life in the form of a “really juvenile” ad in the programme book, with a new contact address (24-25 Foley Street, London, W.1) and a curious lack of data such as registration fees. Paul Vincent, who long ago joined Space-Ex, complains of having received little but dross for his money, going on in great and fascinating detail in a letter which I’ve lost. (Oops.) Whither Space-Ex?

Fanderson 84 (17-19 Aug, Bloomsbury Centre Hotel, London): GoHs Gerry Anderson, Christopher Burr; £15 att; PO Box 308, London, W4 1QL. Con devoted to the productions of ... no, let me leave you with the tormenting enigma of just whom.

Oxcon (24-27 Aug, St Catherine’s Coll, Oxford) – aka Unicon 5. GoH Brian Aldiss. £4.50 supp £8 att to 18 Norham Gardens, Oxford. Single rooms (only) £14 inc VAT and breakfast. Elitist convention devoted to “Helliconia” cult fandom.

Silicon 8 (24-27 Aug, Grosvenor Hotel, Newcastle): elitist event devoted to not talking about sf. £4 att to same address as Tynecon II; hotel rooms from £7.50 (communal attic dormitory) to £26.00 (vast family room with gold-plated taps, football pitch, sauna etc) inc breakfast, VAT. “Cheapest con anywhere,” they say.

Galileocon 84 (24-26 Aug, Newcastle Crest Hotel) – 18th “official” UK Trekthing. £15 att; 30 Kirksdale Green, Rye Hill, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE4 6HU.

LA-Con II (30 Aug – 3 Sept, Anaheim Con Center, Los Angeles): 42nd worldcon, GoH Gordon Dickson, FGoH Dick Eney. \$50 att (\$75 after 15 July) to PO Box 8442, Van Nuys, CA 91409, USA. Since page 1 a Hugo release has arrived: 513 ballots cast with a total of 9,594 nominations covering 1,705 separate items (books, films, people etc) – what useful information! Total number of items to get nominations in each category: novel 200, novella 58, novelette 121, short 230, nonfic 72, dramatic 100, pro editor 76, pro artist 156, semiprozine 52, fanzine 176, fanwriter 165, fanartist 193, JWC 105. 1984 Hugo ballots will be “machine-readable mark-sense cards”, prompting evil Colin Fine to suggest we all return slightly enlarged or

reduced xeroxes to annoy the computer....

Beneluxcon (7-8 Sept, Gent, Belgium): still the most popular continental con amid UK fans. GoHs Robert Sheckley, James White, Michael Kubiak. Date shifted forward a week to avoid clashing with international Policecon. Info: Eendenplassstraat 70, B9050 Evergem, Belgium. Membership approx £5.50 att, rooms approx £4.50 per person per night. Accommodation in “Fabliolahome”, con in “Van Eyck Centre” some 10 minutes’ walk away.

Mythcon 84 (7-9 Sept, Humberside Coll of Higher Ed): GoHs Anne McCaffrey, Jack Cohen, Brian Froud. Data: 131 Sheen Lane, East Sheen, London, SW14 8AE.

Brunnercon (22 Sept, Hotel Calgary, Casalbordino Lido, (CH), Abruzzo, Italy): GoH John Brunner. In celebration of JB’s 50th birthday. Open party for any fan who should happen to be passing. Organizers: John Brunner PLC.

Milford SF Writers’ Conference UK (23-30 Sept, Milford-on-Sea): the real elite, by invitation only, a devious, twisted group of literary mafiosi by comparison with whom the Bavarian Illuminati are but children playing in the sand. Your only chance is to bribe the wholly corrupt committee: Tuttle (chair), Edwards, Langford.

Conquest (10-12 Oct, Ingram Hotel, Glasgow): GoHs the Pinis, James White. £12 att. 104 Pretoria Road, Patchway, Bristol, BS12 5PZ. Whenever I make jokes about ConQuest, Linda Miller hits me and threatens me with horrid tortures, but – *ouch! gerroff!* Oh, all right, supporting membership £5.

Galacticon (27-28 Oct, London): media thing, presumably. £7.50 day, £15 att. 171 Heath Road, Hounslow, Middlesex.

Cymrucon (2-4 Nov, Central Hotel, Cardiff) – swaps places with Novacon in shock horror escape bid! In other words, Cymrucon tried to move from the fabulously squalid Central Hotel, and by the time they’d explored every stone and left no avenue unturned (without luck), the Central was full every weekend except ... £5 att to 56 Honinton Road, Llanrumney, Cardiff, CF3 9QL. Usual guest list, but no R.L. Fanthorpe: John Brunner remembers with a cringe of horror how last year he presented born-again RLF with a lovingly crafted certificate making him perpetual patron of Cardiff SF and cons, and Lionel spurned it because “he didn’t approve of the things that happen at night at conventions.” *Which* things ...?

Novacon 14 (9-11 Nov, Grand Hotel, Birmingham): GoH Rob Holdstock, yay yay. Membership fee cut to £6 by resorting like Mexicon to duplicated rather than litho PRs – though unlike Mexicon’s, no.1 was incredibly tatty and provoked a grovelling Steve Green (chair) to ring and inform me that it was *wholly untypical*. Hotel £15/person, presumably including breakfast and VAT (not mentioned in PR1). Bouquets to 11 Fox Green Cres, Acocks Green, Birmingham, B27 7SD. Despite PR1’s aspersions on *Ansible* and significant mentions of COFF, I shall turn the other cheek and urge my readers to put away all thoughts of helping Steve Green win the Concrete Overcoat Fan Fund by sending 10p/vote and Steve’s name to COFF, 438 Station Road, Dorridge, Solihull, W Midlands. (COFF proceeds go to GUFF and TAFF.)

Eastercon 1985 will be decided before many of you see this: as we go to press the only visible bid is Yorcon III (Leeds), 45 Harold Mount, Leeds, LS6 1PW ... one or two subtle irregularities in the Falcon 85 (Falkland Islands) bid flyer give the hint that they may fail to carry the vote despite announcing Jorge Luis Borges as GoH. Speaking of which, D. West writes concerning a chance reference which I failed to edit from his last issue’s letter: “I can tell you that Graham James was not best pleased by that leak concerning the GoH. In fact, he was fucking livid, and two weeks later is still muttering unsociable things about ripping out my lungs and liver. My defence that it would all be the same in a hundred years and that nobody gave a shit about GoHs anyway did not seem to go down too well. Another satisfied Hansen voter. Anyway, there is no news from Leeds except that all future discussions of Yorcon III will be held behind locked doors at two in the morning on dates when it has been ascertained that I am not less than 15 miles away, unconscious, or both. It’s really sad, this lack of trust.... Speaking of which, Simon Ounsley showed me the latest issue of *Microwave*. I see that Terry Hill has got his nerve together enough to move on from slandering me in private (by way of telephone calls asking if I can be relied upon to embezzle the TAFF funds) to libelling me in public (by way of similar suggestions in his editorial). Interesting times, eh? (He hasn’t quite got his nerve together to the extent of sending me a copy, though. Still, it’s the thought that counts.)” (DW)

But we’re slipping away from the subject of cons. After Easter comes **Beccon 85** (26-28 July, Basildon, Essex Crest Hotel, £4 supp £8 att to 191 The

Heights, Northolt, Middlesex), the Australian **43rd Worldcon** (see Britain in 87 flyer) and a clutch of other stuff. A massed Trout (Glasgow fandom) meeting failed to confirm Bob fake Shaw as the manifest leader of **Albacon 85** (July): John Wilkes of the famous Wilkettes is chair, after a hard-fought vote in which he narrowly defeated a hamster. For 1986 we have two Eastercon bids, **Glasgow** again – no details – and **Contravention** (Donaldson, Doreys, Hughes, Huxley, Oldroyd, Pearson, Wilkes, Vine; £1 presupp to 46 Colwyn Road, Beeston, Leeds, LS11 6PY). Contravention's questionnaire asks fans to pick their favourite venue from Brighton, Blackpool (where we hear the hotel whose smallness told against the 1984con bid for this Easter is to grow much huger in the near future) and the Birmingham NEC or subset thereof. Committee opinion is believed to favour the latter. **Stop Press:** Ian Watson writes! "We were going to the Festival de l'Insolite down in the south of France, last week of May, but organizer Bernard Blanc writes that the whole festival has been cancelled due to poverty, bugger it." (13-4-84)

COA

JUSTIN ACKROYD: no fixed abode, but temporarily c/o Nicholas/Hanna (address Bin87 flyer) • TOM BOARDMAN JR (& SF Lunch Club), Books for Children, Park House, Dollar Street, Cirencester, Gloucestershire, GL7 2AN • FAITH BROOKER, Flat 2, 191 Anerley Road, Penge, London, SE20 8EL • LINDA & RON BUSHYAGER, 24 Leopard Road, Paoli, PA 19301, USA • PETER COHEN, 2 Belgravia Road, North End, Portsmouth, Hants • BENEDICT S CULLUM, 35 Totteridge Lane, Whetstone, London, N20 0HD • STEVE DAVIES, 87 Holland Pines, Great Hollands, Bracknell • CHRIS EVANS as Faith Brooker • GEORGE FLYNN, PO Box 1069, Kendall Square Station, Cambridge, MA 02142, USA • WM GIBSON, 2630 W 7th Avenue, Vancouver, BC, Canada V6K 1Z1 • GARY FARBER (see Bin87 flyer) • PATRICK & TERESA NIELSEN HAYDEN, 75 Fairview (2B), New York, NY 10040, USA • PAUL HESKETT, Sunshine House, Nat Children's Home, Clayhill Road, Alverstoke, Gosport, PO12 2BZ • GARRY & ANNETTE KILWORTH, "Greenacres" ("Yuck! That'll have to go" – GK), The Chase, Ashingdon, Rochford, Essex • BERNARD LEAK, 15 Sunderland Road, Tittensor, Stoke-on-Trent, ST12 9QJ • LINDA MILLER, 1A

Aylesham Way, Yately, Camberley, Surrey, GU17 • LINDSEY MORRIS, 59 Bernhard Baron House, 33 Henriques Street, London, E.1 • MARC ORTLIEB, 453 Kooyung Road (modulating to 455 Kooyung Road, for the promotion of greater confusion), Elsternwick, Victoria, Australia • SIMON POLLEY, 85a Victoria Road, Leeds, West Yorks, LS6 1DR • GEOFF RIPPINGTON is moving to Reading in the near future – argh! • CYRIL SIMSA, (back at) 18 Muswell Avenue, London, N10 2EG • JAMES STYLES, 145 Faraday Street, Carlton, Vic 3053, Australia • JEFF SUTER, 18 Norton Close, Southwick, Fareham, Hants PO17 6HU • Sources: named fans, F770, THYME.

Infinitely Improbable

Fanfundery: David Nettle won the first Scandinavia to Rest-of-Europe race by a vast majority and attends Seacon 84; a Rest-of-Europe to Scandinavia race should follow next year, allowing some lucky UK or Continental fan to travel all the way to Swecon 85 only to discover with a thrill of nameless horror that the GoH is Chris Priest. **DUFF** (Australia to US) was won by Jack Herman, 78 votes to John Packer's 11: as punishment for hubris, Jack attends LA-Con. **Dave Wood** rushes me a headline attesting to the widespread fear that D. West may win TAFF and never return from America, thus depleting the UK gene pool: BID FOR A WEST SPERM BANK. (Also HEART SWAP FOR WEST, INTERPOL TO PROBE WEST, &c.) Vote for Hansen! ... **Judith Hanna** has achieved Total Anglicization, as proved when I phoned to ask about Marc Ortlieb's COA above, and she assumed that Victoria could only refer to the station. Her new job is p.a. to Bruce Kent & Joan Ruddock of CND ... **Fanzines In Theory And Practice** by D. West (see flyer, A36): 11 weeks past "publication date" and counting ... **Constellation** (1983 Worldcon) losses reported to be as vast as \$63-69,000. Desperate fundraising campaigns have made up some \$27,000 of this, but the market for Masquerade videotapes is by now almost as limited as the continuing supply of anonymous \$1000 donations from the Boston area (F770). Does bankruptcy loom? ... **BSFA Coup!** Something of the sort has been rumoured for the AGM, with the names of K. Rattan and C. Connor bandied as chief conspirators. I wonder ... Chairman Dorey contributes a worried editorial to *Matrix 52*, wondering whether the visible decay is due to "forgetfulness" or "dis-satisfaction": to annoy Alan I intended to compile an index of noted fans

who've recently left, including Steve Green (who nevertheless appears, to his surprise, as offering himself for Council re-election in the AGM notice) and Jim "Captive" Barker (escaped after all these years!). But life is too short.

Focus has now been bagged by Dorothy Davies & Sue Thomason ...

Glasgow Horror: after being accused so often of lack of balance, *Ansible* is unwilling to print the report that Bob (fake) Shaw has had to be removed by upstanding Glasgow policemen after causing a nuisance in rival Neil Craig's shop. For the sake of balance can someone please send a rumour about Neil having to be warned off by the police after ...? **Terry Carr** updates the "rather wild rumours" concerning him and Author Services Inc (A37): "There was an initial misunderstanding, but this has been resolved in a thoroughly professional manner and the matter is closed ... I want to make it clear that I was treated very well by Doug Hay and Fred Harris of ASI and by Len Forman of Bridge Publications," etc etc. (TC) ... **People And Others: Pascal Thomas** loved Corflu (US version of Silicon) because "conventions always look better when seen from the guest-of-honour seat. Bless the hand that picked my name from the hat. Oh shoot, I've just blessed Terry Carr's hand, he'll just have to wash it real hard for the next few days ... Exchange heard when a couple of hardy fans were trying to work a vintage mimeo: 'It's the duplicator version of the Society for Creative Anachronism' – 'Yes, but they only print with blunt mimeos'." (PT) **Chris Priest** turned out to be the brain behind a Society of Authors poll to determine the wonderfulness of W.H. Smiths as booksellers – final score Priest 1, WHS 0 ... **Wm Gibson** regrets the "indefinite postponement of the fanzine-of-comment promised to British faneditors who so generously posted their product down the black hole of my Professional Activity: I was midway through the more or less final draft of ENDLESS FUCKING NEUROMANCER, and I'd read them and promise I'd Do Something About It as soon as I was through the damn book. Some six months later, having signed two more contracts (*Count Zero* for Ace, *Log Of The Mustang Sally* for Arbor), I see where I slipped up." (WG) ... **Olon Wiggins**, 3rd Worldcon chairman (Denvention I, 1941), died in February aged 74 ... **Robert Lichtman** invites you to buy his fanthology **Best Of FRAP**, 76pp of fanwriting by famous names (many of them Greg Benford), \$8.50 post free – PO Box 30, Glen Ellen, CA 95442, USA ... **M. John Harrison** turned up recently with a story in *Women's Journal*, and romantic-fiction lists are being eagerly scanned for the appearance of *Forever Viriconium* or similar ... **Neil Gaiman** writes in horror to complain that

famous sf knowledge master Dr C. Greenland has never read any G.K. Chesterton! And: “self & Kim Newman just signed a contract with Arrow to produce *Ghastly Beyond Belief*, a book of sf quotations from all media featuring worst blurbs, worst prose from award-winning stories, oodles of wonderful trivia though not of course LISTS.” (NG) ... **MARY GENTLE** joins reviewers’ mafia (inc Langford, Evans, Greenland) with *Interzone* column, passing her initiation test with flying colours by throwing up on all the right pages of *Habitation One* (F. Dunstan) ... **Imago** SF/F mag (US) folds after exciting run of zero issues ... **APAs**: proliferation reaches alarming levels with a Soft Toys Apa (Pam Wells – who rejoices in the title “Big Ears” – 24a Beech Road, Bowes Park, London, N11 2DA). **D. West’s** A37 letter provoked comment from Paul Vincent, who wishes it to be known that he administrates the Nova Award these days (25 Dovedale Avenue, Pelsall, Walsall, W Midlands, WS3 4HG) and think the rules debar work confined to apas; also **Joy Hibbert**, who made vast numbers of mutually contradictory points about “insecure male fans”, and observed that D. West was very parochial for not having visited RaCon to look at something displayed in its artshow and therefore not at all restricted to Women’s Periodical eyes. (For “parochial”, I think, read “broke”.) ... **Surprise, Surprise**: what a treat it was for John Brunner when Arrow books, instead of photo-offsetting his *Crucible Of Time* from the US edition as planned, reset the whole book and gave him an exciting week of unexpected proofreading ... **Books For Sale**: ask me for new/remainder of s/h lists ...

Hazel’s Language Lessons #29: Ila

(a.k.a. Seshukulumbwe)

ing’ombe-muka: a kind of beetle used by the Baila to tie into their hair to catch lice.

ANSIBLE 38: Dave Langford, 94 London Road, Reading, Berks., RG1 5AU, England.

A Message from Our Sponsor

This page, in earlier issues of *Ansible 38*, contained an extremely thrilling flyer from a fannish book dealer (Oh all right – Simon Gosden, 25 Avondale

Road, Rayleigh, Essex, SS6 8NJ). I've run out of the flyers, and I've dealt with the vast mailing list, and I still have a heap of copies left all virgin and uncollated. This is BY DESIGN; it is in accordance with a MASTER PLAN. Over the year or so since my last issue of the almost famous *Twill-Ddu*, I've been assailed by guilt as hordes of fanzines arrive, and arrive, and keep on arriving, while I don't seem to have got round to another *TD* as yet. (But that is not dead which can eternal lie, and *TD* contained more lies than most things – except possibly *Ansible* – so don't send flowers just yet.) Instead, this *Ansible* is going to millions of truly deserving fans as a deeply felt thankyou, as a truly sincere acknowledgement of the great joy and intellectual engagement given me by your fanzine. Thank you, thank you from the bottom of my heart. (And if any cynical bugger suggests I'm only trying to scrape up a few Hugo votes, I'll ... I'll ... ignore them, that's what I'll do.)

Since *A38* appeared at Easter, many things have happened. **Rob Hansen** won TAFF by 101 votes to 60 or thereabouts. **D. West** published his collected fanwriting at last (v. triffic); I believe current price is £5/\$20 (don't ask me). **John Sladek** got the BSFA novel award and **David Brin** got the Nebula. **Yorcon III** is the 1985 UK Eastercon nearly losing to Hold Over Funds – £4 supp £8 att to address as elsewhere. My **Seacon 84** talk “The Dragonhiker's Guide to Battlefield Covenant at Dune's Edge: Odyssey Two” brought me notoriety and death threats from the authors discussed – now published in Dave Wood's *Xyster* and shortly due in Marty & Robbie Cantor's *Holier Than Thou*, so there. *The BSFA Conspiracy* (facing page [here above]) fizzled. **A Certain Fan** who went to Noreascon in 1980 has at last finished his TAFF report ... collected edition later this year, with luck, from Rob Jackson's Inca Press. **Blank Space** below is graciously left for you to scribble in, if I haven't already done so. Keep well, and keep phoning the really vile hot news through to Reading (0734) 665804.

Dave Langford, May 1984

***Ansible* 39**

August 1984

ANSIBLE 39 • ISSN 0265-9816

ANSIBLE 39 is a splendid send-up of a top-secret atomic base, where the zany hero spends his time designing nukes (*Daily Mail*). This latest (in every sense of the word) semi-annual issue is brought to you by DAVE LANGFORD, 94 LONDON ROAD, READING, BERKSHIRE, RG1 5AU, England. Six issues cost £2: cheques/sterling money orders to *Ansible*, Girobank transfers to a/c 24 475 4403; Americans may send \$3.50 to Mary & Bill Burns, 23 Kensington Ct, Hempstead, NY 11550, and anyone unlucky enough to meet Roelof Goudriaan on a dark night is permitted to give him the equivalent of £2 also (Postbus 1189, 8200 BD Lelystad, Netherlands). By a truly wonderful coincidence, all Ansible agents – including me at HQ – are empowered to accept your eagerly offered £1, \$2 or equivalent-of-£1.50-in-Eurocurrency for presupporting membership in BRITAIN IN 87, the Worldcon bid which is more trifficer than any other. Cartoon in celebration of TAFF result by TARAL, mailing labels by KEITH FREEMAN, collation last issue by Chris Hughes (and Jan Huxley? It's such a long time I've forgotten), interior art by MARGARET WELBANK (Bumcon) and D. WEST (TAFF). YOUR MAILING LABEL means you should send money instantly (SUB DUE or *****), by issue XX (LASTISH XX) or hardly ever (TRADE). Mailing list up to 415 people. Thought for Today: "*And when Life's prospects may at times appear dreary to ye, / Remember Alois Senefelder, the discoverer of lithography.*" (Wm. McGonagall – honest!) August 1984.

***Ansible* Gagged!**

Our silence since Easter was due to a unilateral decision of Barclaycard (with no secret ballot), clearly a politically motivated attempt to topple *Ansible's* editorial power structure. Thanks for support to Rob Hansen ("About time

you handed over to someone else”) and Abi Frost (“Let Phil Palmer edit it”). Owing to angst there’s no poll form enclosed: to vote, get a bit of paper and try to recall what happened in UK fanzines from Easter 83 to Easter 84. List up to 5 ranked choices in each of the categories Best Fanzine, Fanwriter and Fanartist; up to 3 unranked choices for Best Single Issue, Article/Column, Fanzine Cover and – perennial favourite – Worst Thing of 1983-4. The usual extra issue for all voters. Also: should jaded Langford slink away licking his wounds and let someone else edit the Great British Newsletter? Small prize for least original answer.

Mouldy News

Nebula Awards went to David Brin’s *Startide Rising* (novel – “Tosh, but good fun,” says R. Kaveney), Greg Bear’s “Hardfought” (novella) and “Blood Music” (novelette), and Gardner Dozois’s “The Peacemaker” (short). The esoteric Buggins’ Turn selection system for the Grand Master award gave it to Andre Norton ... **D. West** scored an overwhelming moral victory in TAFF by triumphantly not winning, his cunning misère play thus leaves Rob Hansen doomed to visit LA-Con. Eurovotes: 41 Hansen, 41 West, 1 P. Skelton. USA: 60 Hansen, 19 West, 1 Hold Over Funds. US administrator Avedon “Impartial” Carol giggled immoderately over (non-first-place) votes for e.g. “Embezzle Funds”, and UK administrator Kevin “Gafia” Smith nearly sent a detailed *TAFF Talk* report ... **A Contest For New & Amateur Writers**, Sponsored by L. Ron Hubbard, featured on a flyer thrust into my hand by lovable Fred Harris at Seacon, but it is now all too late. This leads to a note by **Charles Platt**, who was at Disclave (Washington) and felt it had “successfully wrested from Lunacon the honorary title of Dullest, Stupidest Convention in America. Joe Haldeman was invited to attend, turned up, and found he had been omitted from the programme by mistake. He seemed tired of teaching at MIT and blames that and his word processor for lack of literary output lately. There was a ‘sock hop’, a kind of 1950s style American disco, at which Gardner Dozois was guest DJ, playing Beatles oldies: a truly wretched event. Next day, at the ABA annual book fair, I was so disturbed by the sight of the Del Reys, like a pair of weird gnomish hairy spiders presiding over their little booth of horrendously badly written books, I felt compelled to leave, pausing only to watch a videotape trailer for the *Dune* movie at the Putnam exhibit. The clips they were showing looked totally anonymous and

undistinguished: no grandeur, no sense of place. At a *Dune* promo party I ran into Algis Budrys, in Washington to supervise the LRH short-story awards handed out a couple of days later (I don't know who won): he was employed as a consultant by Author Services Inc to verify the legitimacy of the awards. Frank Herbert was also at this party, but had shaved off his beard, which was all that anyone seemed capable of talking about." (*C. Platt*) ... The weird ***Private Eye*** correspondence (#580-8) about my forgotten UFO book resulted in Malcolm Edwards telling me I was more boring than Larry Adler; in numerous people questioning my existence; in, ho ho, a plug for the Langford novel of nuclear farce *The Leaky Establishment* (Frederick Muller £8.95, buy it or make your library buy it now!); and in an earnest enquiry from F. Gwynplaine MacIntyre – a name to conjure with – wishing to Expose my ufological pretences in a future *Omni*. Help.

Woostergram

“Arthur C. Clarke was recently in town, making his cinematic debut as ‘a wine-sucking bum’ in *2010: The Sequel*. Clarke’s ascent to bumdom was reportedly not a success: attempts to film him feeding breadcrumbs to pigeons were interrupted by a marathon, a walkathon, Pres. Reagan’s helicopter and the unnerving tendency of Roy Scheider to parade in tight black shorts between takes. As a result, the scene was cut from the film. ‘If you can’t be a successful bum,’ Clarke says, ‘the next best thing is a writer’.... Ultra-hot news concerns a perennial favourite, Carl Sagan’s novel *Contact*, which Simon & Schuster has announced as a February 85 title. This ‘long-awaited major literary event ... is not science fiction. It is an engrossing, believable novel, rich in detail and peopled with characters about whose lives we *care*.’ The plot concerns a ‘Dr Rebecca Blake, a distinguished astrophysicist, young, beautiful’ (never trust your grungy workaday astrophysicists, right?) who receives a Mysterious Message from billions and billions of miles away, containing ‘instructions for building a vast and complex machine which nobody on earth can understand, and which many consider a Trojan Horse’ – a passage eerily similar to Worldcon business meetings. (*Oh, was A For Andromeda all about Worldcon business meetings? – Ed.*) Spies report that Sagan’s MS has not, however, been delivered: S&S haven’t even prepared a jacket, relying instead on a toothy picture of Carl Cosmos to fill the gap. The saga continues ...” (*MMW*)

Gangland Hit Attempt in Glasgow!

“A Chicago-style ‘knock-over’ bid was carried out in a Glasgow street on the night of 26 April. A group of skiffy fans had just left a local hostelry when a scream of tyres alerted them to a vehicle bearing down on them. Women screamed and men leapt aside, expecting a fusillade of bullets from the minivan. Fortunately the driver’s ‘Chicago piano’ had evidently jammed, but relief was shortlived: the van mounted the pavement and sped through the crowd, apparently aiming for one individual, a notorious Shavian booklegger. He was saved by Mr Barney Carlin (55), who quickwittedly kicked the van as it passed him, deflecting it onto the road.... The driver of the minivan, identified as M. Molloy (recently charged with attempting to organize a Glasgow convention but released for lack of evidence), then leapt out and apologized profusely to his intended victim, but had to retreat to his van when threatened by the pedestrians who had had to jump aside....” (*Sandy Brown*) Repercussions continue....

R.I.P.

A. Bertram Chandler of “Rim Worlds” series fame, d. 6 June following a heart attack two days before (*F770*); **Charles G. Finney**, author of the 1935 *Circus of Dr Lao*, d. 16 April (*SFC*); **Halls of Horror** magazine, killed at issue 30 owing to persistent rejection by the Smiths/Menzies distribution monopoly in the UK, and the planned **Video Fantasy**, stillborn for the same reason (*BFN*). Word is that Smenzies are displaying proleptic cowardice in fear of the “anti-video-nasty backlash”. (NB: the Old Bailey censorship case – *A38* – went against the police, who at once held sportingly onto the disputed “6,300 copies of 47 assorted titles”, planning to have them burnt by magistrates’ order anyway.)

Gordon Dickson Wins

... in the recent Folio Soc. Worst First Sentence contest, with his *Naked to the Stars*: “The voice, speaking out of the ancient blackness of the night on the third planet of Arcturus – under an alien tree, bent and crippled by the remorseless wind – paused, and cleared its throat: ‘Ahem,’ it said.

‘Gentlemen ...’” (*Now read on –*)

This Is Cactus Country **Abi Frost at Mexican**

“You realize,” I said to the Southern Fuhrer some time after the con, “that if anyone *else* had put on a con with bloody great papier-mache cactuses all over the place, we’d be groaning about this being the ultimate degeneracy of fandom ...”

“You could be right, at that,” said Gregory.

Degenerate it may have been, reactionary it probably was, but the Mexican seemed – to these somewhat biased eyes – to deliver the goods as promised. (*Much* to our relief; I for one spent 12 of my first 24 hours in Newcastle in excruciating pain from Anxiety Stomach, which I tried to cure by spending longish periods in my room reading D. West’s Great Big Yellow Thing and J. Ruskin’s *On The Nature of Gothic*. Hungover on a Monday morning panel, I was quite unable to remember which of them had written some snappy quote about rules and standards I wanted to use. Ruskin’s fanzine criticism much overrated, in my view.)

Well, glory be. It was a con of heroes, anti-heroes, and Amazing Sights Never Before Witnessed. Greatest hero of the lot was Chairman Kevin Williams, without whom etc etc; some larger conventions might be put to shame by his sheer professionalism as an organizer. Surprise hero by acclamation was Alasdair Gray, a shambling figure in a greenish jersey, with a trufan’s attitude to the demon drink (even Pickersgill Punch when the bar closed), who won everyone’s heart by falling asleep on the con hall steps during the disco. (Nobody drew on him, but he drew pictures of people in the bar on Monday.)

Collective heroes were Riverside, the punk PA crew, who provided a panellist for Phil Palmer’s punk-and-comics-fanzines show, turned up the volume during nuclear blasts in *Atomic Cafe*, and drank their Pickersgill Punch in pints. They also turned up on time every day, even when they’d been up later than I had. Heroine, for me, was Kate Davies, who completed her trufannish metamorphosis at Mexican, wearing an astonishing selection

of most un-Trekkish clothes (everything from grape-coloured Victoriana to 1984 prole-garb). Arch anti-hero was The Mysterious Kilted Scotsman, who appears causing trouble and devastation in pretty well all the accounts of the con. No space for full details, but you *must* hear how a certain TWP administrator found him asleep on a landing, made the traditional examination, and dashed away, face curdled with disgust. To some extent he atoned on Monday, paying some exorbitant sum for the larger of the cacti, egged on by a stream of gross personal abuse from auctioneer G. Pickersgill.

Our Gregory was the surprise anti-hero. Pickersgillian Black Moods scarcely come under the rubric “never before witnessed”, but his Mexican downer was a lulu. “Shabby, shabby,” he snarled on Saturday night, presiding like a malevolent spirit over what most thought was the best con disco in history. On Sunday he perked up, had a Real Good Time at the fanroom party, and by Monday’s auction he was everyone’s favourite wicked uncle. “You can’t wear it, Katie,” he told Ms Davies of the backdrop she was bidding for. (“Yer wanna bet?” said her expression); “Jewish comics fans don’t want them,” (failing to sell some fanzines to Lilian Edwards) “so they must be good!” What he said of Phil Palmer has been recorded elsewhere and is in any case obscene.

Collective anti-heroes were Newcastle U SF Society; on Friday night one of them started objecting to a panel on Current Burning Issues (mostly a good old row about Seacon), then announced his intention of walking out during the next item, discussion of Knockabout Comics and censorship in general. Not enough to do with written SF, he reckoned, and no amount of reference to Philip K. Dick would change his mind. The Society walked out en masse despite the suggestion that one of them come and put their case to the audience. Linda Pickersgill later seems to have calmed the man down; but they never quite got into the spirit of the con; once I found the whole lot in the continuation room, silently reading skiffy books.

Anti-heroine, if I’d been making the list beforehand, might have been Joy Hibbert, foremost in the silly “Mexicon is elitist” campaign which annoyed the shit out of us during the run-up to the con: once she arrived she seemed to enjoy herself, though, and even to have recanted. Amazing Sights ... well, it depends what you think amazing, and there are some sights better left unrecorded. But there were unforgettable moments of madness and pure magic. Ah, John Jarrold’s birthday cake! Presented to him by three Chiquitas

in pink plastic Mexi-jackets, it hung round on the fanroom table looking embarrassed for much of the con. In the end it was auctioned: Rog Peyton couldn't get any takers for the whole cake, and not enough for a slice-by-slice sale, so ordered a collection for Jarrold to eat it whole. (Raised about £40, which proves some people's appetite for disgusting sights hadn't been sated by *Pink Flamingoes*.) By this time JJ had started cutting it up and it had begun to collapse into fragments of sponge and hard baby-blue icing; furtively, one eye on the collection bucket, he began eating the bits. The bucket returned: on a count-down he hurled the wretched thing into his face and sucked quite a lot of it down. Pickersgill, who ate a bit that fell on the floor, said it wasn't bad really.

Unlike Gray, who took the con straight to his heart and liver, Russell Hoban sometimes seemed a little withdrawn; like a man with a secret. We found out what it was during Paul Kincaid's interview with Hoban: suddenly he drew out (from where? His shoulderbag?) a little automaton. This, he announced, was the original Mouse and his Child – and then he set the two figures dancing. The hall was bewitched, silent and breathless; then at once alive with clapping.... More applause for Geoff Ryman's dramatization of *The Transmigration of Timothy Archer*. A play at a con? we'd wondered. In the rehearsal time available? Could it really work? It did. Bloody hell, it did, uniting everyone there for the whole evening. Another something I've never seen before is the spirit in the con hall during the panels I put on. During the first few items I – and I would guess Chris Evans and Paul Kincaid, skiffy supremos – felt a little alarmed at the smallness of the audience. It only gradually dawned on me that, though we were putting on a programme that might be comparable to an Eastercon's main programme, the con itself was maybe a quarter the size, in terms of people actually present. And when discussion got going – you were magnificent, Mexipeople. This really was the con where everyone participated. I was particularly grateful for this on Monday morning (future committees – no more 10am starts, *please*), when Anne Warren decided she'd better add some sense to the hungover ramblings of me and my fellow panellists. (That was one hell of a fanroom party ...) Oh? The serious written SF stuff? The boundary-breaking film programme? The special convention bar prices? Bloody hell, Langford, do you want me to write about that as *well*?

Footnote: I'm trying to get together as large a collection as possible of

Mexiconreps, in order to synthesize them into the ultimate conreport of all time for the next Mexican programme book. I'd be grateful if anyone who's writing a report, or just has a few memories they think would add to the thing, would send them to me ASAP. I'm after raw data rather than fine writing – the more the merrier – and am already learning strange things from Margaret Welbank's version ... such as what ants taste like. (*Abi Frost, 69 Robin Hood Gdns, London, E.14.*)

Editorial Addenda

Mexicon was fun ... but the thing about the special con bar prices was that they were, across the board, several p. more than in the ordinary boring downstairs bar. There *are* secrets of the Universe with which fan should not meddle? I remember A. Gray proving in conversation to know vast tracts of G. K. Chesterton; R. Hoban running all the way to W. H. Smith to find what I'd said about *Pilgermann* in my review column; M. Edwards chillingly declaring that of an entire hardback printing in Gollancz SF, "if 100 end up in private hands I'd be quite pleasantly surprised"; punk fanzine person Alan (mentioned by Abi above) looking most eerily like erstwhile fan Peter Roberts in appearance and gesture; Lisa Tuttle, stumped for a Most Pretentious SF Author in "Pro SF Fortunes", saying hopefully "Chris Priest?"; all the BOF survivors of Tynecon I, myself included, agreeing with strange unanimity that the Royal Station Hotel's stairwells had shrunk no end since 1974; and, to quote that M. Edwards's last *DT*, "one classic moment came on Saturday evening when the hotel decided to shut the bar at 2.30am instead of 3.00 as agreed, and I stood at the bar listening to Kev Williams and another committee member try to argue the hotel manager out of this. The other committee member was so persuasive that the bar closed at 2.00 instead!" (Hint: initials G.P.) OK con, and it's happening again in Bristol next year.

Traditional SF Fortunes Coverage from Mexican

Sue Williams has again leaked the results of the polling for the SF Fortunes game (in deference to her tactful wishes I omit the results in the category Most Obnoxious SF Writer) – she also wishes to thank everyone for the

auction's £260 which just got the con into the black after an injudiciously low registration fee (£5): Kate Davies got her backdrop after all, for £32 (look for it at the next Fancy Dress), and technical wizard A. Akien raised 50p by furtively stealing a bit from the film *Celine & Julie Go Boating*. Now, the results you've all been waiting for, in descending order of score:

Best SF Writer: Wolfe & Aldiss (tie), Priest & Dick (tie).

Worst: Asimov & Heinlein & Brunner & Hubbard & Fanthorpe.

Most Pretentious: Brunner, Watson, Delany, Ellison & Donaldson.

Most Fitted To Rule The World: Shaw, LeGuin, "none of them".

Most Sexist: Heinlein, Norman, Cooper & Russ, Pournelle.

Funniest: Shaw & Harrison, Vance & Russell (wot, no Sladek?).

Strangest: Lafferty, Dick, Hubbard & Brunner.

Whose Characters Are Most Cardboard? Heinlein, Clarke, Asimov, Fanthorpe.

Most Believable? Priest, Aldiss & LeGuin, Dick & Shaw & Wolfe.

The High Standard Of Which SF Writer Has Fallen Lowest? Zelazny, Heinlein, Silverberg, Asimov.

Name A Famous Robot In SF: Robbie, R. Daneel Olivaw, Roderick, R2D2 & Gort & Isaac Asimov.

If Abandoned On A Desert Island Which SF Novel Would You Take?

Lord of the Rings & Battlefield ("for firewood") *Earth, Book of the New Sun, The Left Hand of Darkness*.

Name A Famous Race Of Aliens: Martians, Kzinti, Daleks.

Who Wrote The First SF Novel You Read? Capt. W. E. Johns, Isaac Asimov & H. G. Wells, Robert Heinlein.

Best SF Novel of 80s? *Book of the New Sun & The Affirmation, Timescape, Helliconia Spring*.

Name a Famous Spaceship: *Enterprise, Discovery & Space Beagle, Heart of Gold & Anastasia*.

Best SF Novel By A Non-SF Writer? 1984, *The Alteration, Lanark*.

You Are A Space Traveller Setting Foot On A New Planet; What One Thing Would You Take With You? Oxygen mask/cylinders, A Spaceship, Boots, Spacesuit & Another Foot. (Minority suggestion: Margaret Welbank.)

What Would You Do If You Met An Alien? Run away; Say hello; Offer him a drink. (Minority: Ask him if he played dominoes.)

Best SF Movie? 2001, *Star Wars, Bladerunner, Dark Star & Forbidden Planet*.

Most Important Element In An SF Novel? Writing & Plot, Characterization, Readability & Sensawonder. (Minority: Hydrogen.)

Very Old Historical Stuff • Seacon 84 Oddments

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times: anyway it was a bloody big convention of 1700+ fans and there is no convenient place to start. “One of the most enjoyable cons for some years,” enthused Chris (GoH) Priest in a letter gleefully passed on by John (co-Chair) Brunner. “Many people described Seacon to me as the best con they had ever been to, and everyone else was appreciative ...” Evidently Seacon was all things to all fans, written reportage having been overwhelmingly negative ... you get the usual cross-eyed view with “veterans” of one or more previous cons saying “I had a good time because I could chat with friends, but this shambles would have really put off a newcomer” – while simultaneously the committee say defensively, “Oh yes, those elitist fannish fans probably wouldn’t have liked it but we really appealed to the Silent Majority of newcomers.” Take your pick.

Items noted as major highlights/successes were usually individual efforts or programme items: the cheap rail deal organized by one committee member (A. Akien), the first ever working creche at a big UK con (R. Dorey), a scatter of room-parties and programme items like the Helliconia panel (into which B. Aldiss imported a naked lady hired at colossal expense through the Brighton civic authorities), the Hawkwind / Oppenheimer / Sorensen musical bits, “Dave Langford’s brilliant talk” (thanks, Roelof), Bob Shaw’s hypercrowded speech and a couple of the GoH speeches ... Conversely, just about everything requiring lots of on-the-spot group organization seemed to go badly, perhaps the last spasm of Seacon’s chronic committee problems (an initial, democratic policy of letting any willing fan aboard resulted in masses of deadwood – people wishing glory but not to do any work – which even by Easter hadn’t been wholly pruned away: cf. cursing committee members complaining that “B— S— [or other name] hasn’t done an effing stroke of work yet this weekend!”) Thus Chris Donaldson struggled heroically against the belated discovery that the master Programme Schedule bore little resemblance to the version that had got into the convenient, “almost a book in itself” pocket programme: happily this confusion led to *Battlefield Earth* publicist Fred “I contemplated sueing you but you haven’t any money” Harris

missing your editor's tactful talk "The Dragonhiker's Guide to Battlefield Covenant at Dune's Edge: Odyssey Two". Several panels were cancelled altogether, and just about every item I wanted to attend suffered hiccups in one form or another: one of "my" panels got shifted a whole day by mysterious committee fiat after being saved from cancellation only by loud protest, while both R. Goudriaan's carefully prepared panels vanished altogether. This was fallout from the Great Fan Room Disaster: absurdly sited miles from anywhere (reportedly at the hotel's insistence), it was vast, hollow and inhospitable, qualities which might have been overcome by dynamic organization. No organization whatever was visible and even the bar closed after a bit, never to return. It seems that overall, in trying to provide a programme which would have served a Worldcon of four times the size, the committee got over-ambitious.

Other niggles: security was handed over to certain persons calling themselves the 42nd Squadron, who amused themselves by treating con members as morons with criminal tendencies, and helped enliven conversation by shouting at the tops of their voices into the walkie-talkies (christened "wallyphones" by Chris Hughes) which an earlier committee decision had determined would be issued only to selected, responsible members of the committee proper. (I enjoyed seeing security overseer H. Mascetti demonstrate the power of the communications network. "Seacon 4 to ops, Seacon 4 to ops," he said in clipped, professional tones. "When Colin Fine calls in can you please ask him to go to room 506 at once." Efficiently, across the intervening ether, came the clipped, professional reply: "Fuck off, we've got enough troubles of our own without worrying about yours.") To be fair, there were Problems of Security all right: somewhere out in Brighton a gang of badge-forgers was at work, and sixty or so were seized in a pub – it was fascinating to hear John Brunner, smooth and impossible to disbelieve, explain exactly how the wholly false rumour of forged badges had sprouted: a triumph of Keeping One's Cool in the face of the fact that Martin Hoare (co-Chair) had five minutes previously told me all about the sixty forgeries nabbed.... The famous 42nd were however mysteriously invisible for the most serious incident, an invasion of three drunken and badgeless wallies looking for a fun punch-up (one kept explaining how many times he'd been done for GBH): a mighty, spontaneous wave of 100+ ordinary fans-in-the-street edged the disturbance out of the foyer into the night without casualties (Bob Jewett, hero of the hour, got knocked over and your editor had his face

tweaked, but by and large it made you Proud To Be A Fan). To do justice to the 42nd, though, they were firm to the point of brutality when it came to smallish persons whose clearly displayed badges they didn't happen to notice: ask committee member Martin Tudor to show you his bruises. (Lengthy letter of complaint from Lisanne Norman omitted here.)

To happier things and my notebook: in no particular order, the spoils of Seacon. **Josephine Saxton** had flogged a collection of shorts to Roz Kaveney at Chatto & Windus, and is completing the novel begun with James Blish ... **Nick Webb** of NEL extended his hegemony by becoming editorial director at Coronet as well ... the fake Bob Shaw, said an unattributable source, had been slung out of both the Strathclyde Space & SF Soc and Glasgow U's space group "Io" owing to the tedious number of his lawsuits outstanding against the societies' committee members ... The rumour of **Chris Priest's** \$82,000 Doubleday advance for *The Glamour* whizzed round the con so fast, he had to tear up his talk on Being A Poor SF Author and write another: in the middle of the actual speech I encountered **Peter Nicholls** storming ostentatiously out and crying, "Priest is fighting old battles! His drivel has made me genuinely angry!" CP later explained: "Well, the latter half of my speech was a long fulmination against the cult of the 'sf expert' or 'consultant', proving beyond any doubt how sf 'expertise' and 'consultancy' has led directly to trilogies, fantasy sagas, elderly prolixity by the likes of Asimov and Heinlein, sequels, and, of course, Star Wars. We name the guilty men etc etc. One line referred to the fact that even the BBC had seen fit to send its sf expert to cover Seacon that weekend. Sitting in the front row, two black eyebrows beetled mightily over an Australian pot-belly ... Mind you, I did get fifteen quid from the BBC for talking to P. Nicholls. What is it? Danger money?" (C. Priest)

On Thursday evening there was a civic piss-up for a select several score, courtesy of the rate-payers of Brighton: the only one visibly present, **Peter Garratt**, appeared to be single-handedly attempting to make sure the people of Brighton got their money's worth of free booze. **Chris Donaldson** said: "Organized? This con isn't organized! It's a mess!" **Charles N. Brown** of *Locus* fame warned me paternally that I was getting too big: I compared our waistlines in alarm for a long moment, before he went on to explain that *Ansible's* Hugo nomination and swelling circulation meant I'd have to become respectable and not say these dreadful scandalous things any more. I

agreed and went round in a glow of conscious virtue which lasted several seconds before **Rob Hansen** told me about how **Ted White** was being sued for a *Comics Journal* (?) review which made accusations of plagiarism, and gleefully I wrote it down....

Earlier there'd been a World SF meeting at which all the usual extraordinary awards had been presented: I suppose one has to record these things. **Karel Awards** for translation went to Marcial Souto (Uruguay), George Balanos (Greece), Vasili Zakharchenko (USSR) and Maxim Jakubowski (France). **WSF Awards** took the form of perspex slabs and went to AnneMarie van Ewyck (orange, for Dedication), Takumi Shibano and Don Wollheim (blue, for Independence of Thought in SF, the former having independently translated the *SF Encyclopaedia*), and Ion Hobana and John Bush (green, the Harrison Awards for Improving the Status of Skiffy). The peculiar **Long Distance Award**, normally given to someone who's come ever such a long way to the meeting, was not presented despite a couple of delegates from Japan. Sunday saw a vast, poorly attended Seacon awards thingy whose dogged presentation of no fewer than 26 European awards so exhausted the con newsletter that it didn't retain strength to mention the **BSFA Awards** as well: John Sladek's *Tik Tok* (novel), Malcolm Edward's "After-Images" (short), *Android* (media) and Bruce Pennington (artist). As for the Euro-Awards, oh dear. The normal seeking for Political Balance by making each presentation in Eastern and Western European categories was taken further by adding a UK category which was neither East nor West. The basis on which the awards were selected remains obscure since – as John Brunner bitterly complained while accepting his – various ballot forms for use at the convention failed, along with Jean-Paul "Unreliable" Cronimus, to turn up. So, in the order UK-West-East in each category, here we go, exactly as released:-

Special Award *The Science in SF* (Nicholls / Langford / Stableford), International Centre for Documentation about Literature of the Strange (B), J. Parnov (SU). **Novelist** John Brunner, Z. Guddas (I), J. Zajdel (PL). **Short Story Writer** J.G. Ballard, A. de Ceglie (I), R. Wojtynski (PL). **Best Publisher** Gollancz, Fleuve Noir (F), Izdatielstvo "Mir" (SU). **Prozine:** Foundation (!), Fiction (F), Syrius (YU). **Fanzine:** Epsilon, Andromeda Nachrichten (D), Helion (R). **Screenwriter:** no award, R. Erler (D), C. Ajmatov (SU). **Film Director:** no award, no award, P. Szulkin (PL) & M.

Jankovits (H). **Special Special Award:** Seacon 84 Committee. After which it seems almost anticlimactic to note that the revamped **Doc Weir Award** went to lovable Joyce Slater. A fun Site Selection Meeting gave the '85 **Eastercon** to Leeds: a slightly hamhanded “this is the only bid you’ve got so stop asking questions” attitude on the part of certain Yorcon III committeefolk didn’t really justify the determination of a large section of the (small) audience to hate and heckle Leeds on general principles despite having had ages in which to put together an alternative bid if they thought it was so awful.... Main focus of dissent: the spreading of Yorcon III over two hotels. Voting: 17 for the hoax Falklands bid, 49 for Yorcon III, 70 “registered abstentions”, in an atmosphere so vitriolic that several quite sane people said “even the fake Bob Shaw could have staged a winning bid against Yorcon.” With luck the committee will react by running a spiffing con: GoH is Greg Benford (who visited London recently and went sheet-white when I told him Joseph Nicholas had written the article about him for PR1. “Tell me it isn’t so,” he whimpered ..) and membership is £4 supp £8 att to 45 Harold Mount, Leeds, LS6 1PW – or to US agents, same as *Ansible*. Hotels are the dear old Dragonara (main programme, fan room, the implied place to be) and the Queens (books, art, film & video, implied “fringe” events). But those worrying that Yorcon might be over-fannish can take heart from **Pete Lyon:**

“Faaaannnnishly Yorcon struggles from strength to strength, Graham [James] being determined to make the programming as rigid and as much like a cross between an encounter session, a company think tank and a ‘knowledge acquisition situation session’ as possible. Grandiose themes are to be addressed by the combined intellectual forces of the attending membership in long elaborate cross-referenced items dominating whole afternoons ... themes not unlike those hobby-horsical notions permanently trotting round his cranium. I represent a somewhat disorganized opposition to all this as G uses all his negotiating skills to persuade one and all that they agree with him, thus turning the main programme into an unwieldy variation of those stifling seminars so beloved of the middle management mentality.... So you thought Seacon was sercon?” (PL) What a reassurance!

But we were talking about Seacon 84, where **Ron Salomon** wished to thank the BBC as “the first national organization that had the guts to put me on the air”, where **Terry Hill** kept rumouring things about a couple thrown into outer darkness for incidents of wanton public copulation (“I believe that they

were from Birmingham and owned a VW”), and where **D. West** scrawled TERRY HILL FUCKS POODLES on lavatory doors as part of his obscure campaign of revenge. **Julian May**’s glittery costumes were regarded with austerity by Authentic Mediaevalist **Helen McCarthy**, who merely observed with a tight smile, “we don’t have as many rhinestones on ours.” **Bob Jewett** sent 9 people to hospital during Seacon, chiefly People Who Slipped On The Deadly Metropole Stairs and Gophers Who Hurt Their Hands Shifting Things (e.g. **Gerry Webb**’s pesky missile nose-cones, still cluttering the Hoare Home weeks after). **Julian May** – again – raged about being ripped off by famous games mag *White Dwarf*, eagerly encouraged by **Pete Tamlyn** of famous other games mag *Imagine* (PT subsequently got the boot): she threatened all manner of lawsuits. Later she was seen organizing her own impromptu signing session, sitting forlorn amid vast heaps of books, one of which she got to sign. (At that she apparently did better business than the *Battlefield Earth* table, where a doleful lady remarked on Sunday that she’d so far sold one poster.) Also in the chilly bookroom, **Chris Atkinson** was horrified when after she’d sold a book to some small innocuous fan, he was picked up by two thugs and brought back to her table – “Did he just steal this book?” Speaking of the bookroom’s frequently complained-of chill, **Katie “Not a Committee Member” Hoare** (mastermind behind the *I PRUFREAD ANAL DOREY’S PROGRIS REPORTS* badges) explained: “If anyone had asked, we could have warmed the whole room to sub-tropical levels in 10 minutes.” Speaking of the security arrangements, famous co-Chair **M. Hoare** later said: “Indefensible.” Speaking of said co-Chair, enigmatic **Keith Oborn** said: “Inside every Martin Hoare there’s a Hugh Mascetti trying to get out.”

Courage, my friends! We’re nearing the end of my notes. The **Beccon** committee got all uptight when A. Dorey described Beccon 83 as “disappointing” in the programme book despite not having attended same: they wish me to publish a long boring correction but ho-hum, water under the bridge, etc. **Neil Gaiman** gloated over how he’d aroused the wrath of Arrow’s **Faith Brooker** (for revealing Very Confidential Book Plans in the last *Ansible*) and of **Tanith Lee** (by tactfully describing her in an interview as “obviously once attractive”). Finally, back in the real-ale bars of Seacon itself (so triumphantly successful that several barrels of said beer were poured away unsold when all was over), **Harry Harrison** demanded that I take dictation and print his words:

“I’ve got a bone to pick with Charlie Brown. Two years ago this *Locus* reviewer guy, Dan Chow, reviewed three or four of my books – he hates me, hates my stuff, gets the plot summaries wrong – so I wrote and said Charlie, please don’t give this fucker my books any more – if he’s the only choice just *don’t review my books*. Charlie swears he didn’t get that letter, but I’ve got a carbon. Now this year a whole lot of proof copies went out – *West of Eden* – 25 authors say it’s the best thing I’ve written – ask Shaw, Zelazny, Haldeman, van Vogt, Harlan – so Charlie got a proof copy and published a *review by Dan Chow*, three months before publication – ‘one more bad Harrison book written in the 50s, bad *Analog* prose,’ stuff like that – You put that in Ansible, you could head it IS THIS THE END OF LOCUS? Will Bantam – they’ve printed 50,000 copies – sue *Locus* to bankruptcy? See next issue. Oh, and put down how Anne McCaffrey’s now decided she’s the best SF writer in the whole world – doesn’t call herself a hack any more – ripped Kingsley Amis to shreds as a bad writer and a bad reviewer when he called her the Barbara Cartland of SF.... Oh, and I’ve got an epigram for you. Write it down. This is my epigram. ‘When Ian Watson grows up he wants to be John Brunner.’”

Mr Harrison also made a number of gestures during this speech, which are not convenient to describe. As you can imagine (and even omitting all the bits in the notebook marked DNQ or hastily torn out), I myself had a good time at Seacon.

COA

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award for most COA notices 1983-84), Venables, Constitution Hill, Woking, Surrey, GU22 7RT • STEVE & LEAH HIGGINS, 62 Connaught Rd, Reading, RG3 2UP • LUCY HUNTZINGER (who with Avedon Carol was tearfully parted from Britfandom and flew back on 24 July – Phil Palmer escapes rumoured marriage by skin of teeth) c/o P&TNH, 75 Fairview Ave #2B, New York, NY 10040, USA • ANDY LUSIS, 23 Marshall St, Sherwood, Nottingham, NG5 4AF • MARC ORTLIEB (whose COA last issue was a figment of Roger Weddall, he says), GPO Box 2708X, Melbourne, Vic 3001, Australia • DAVE & JENNY RAGGETT, 21 St Peter's Rd, Earley, Reading, RG6 1NT • KEVIN K RATTAN, 21 The Sq, Scorton, nr Preston, Lancs • DAVID ROW, 15 Lymington Ave, Yateley, Surrey • JOYCE SCRIVNER, 4629 Columbus Ave, Minneapolis, MN 55407, USA • TOM TAYLOR, 22 Kingston Ave, Tonge Pk, Bolton, BL2 2OY • JOHN WILKES, 110 Crossloan Rd, Glasgow, G51 3NP • 29-7-84 •

Cons

Albacon 84 (Glasgow 20-23 July) duly happened, heartened by the late cancellation of the fake Bob Shaw's rival con Faircon 84 – "Sidney Jordan (Faircon 84 GoH) will be relieved," wrote tactful Ian Sorensen: "he thought Bob was *the* Bob Shaw when first approached and has been regretting it ever since his pal Duncan Lunan put him in the picture." Ian goes on to deplore vile – and hintedly Shavian – rumours that much-confirmed GoH Harlan Ellison would not in fact appear. Alas, he did not in fact appear, reportedly because he needed to do some rush work on *The Last Dangerous Visions* (you know, that zippy little anthology he's been working on since 1971): Norman Spinrad got given the tickets by his pal Harlan and came over instead as a surprise GoH. The con was enough of a success that a £1500 profit has been whispered ... but at Albacon appeared flyers from the fake Bob Shaw himself, alleging *inter alia* that the impending lack of Ellison was known to Albacon 84's committee not since the week before the con, as announced, but since February. Bob goes merrily on to announce a new Eastercon bid, Albacon 86, a Glasgow bid opposing not only the Midlands (?) Contravention but also Albacon III, a Glasgow bid. We live in interesting times....

Beccon 85 has announced Richard Cowper as GoH (26-28 July, £8 to 191

The Heights, Northolt, Middlesex)....

Space-Ex 84 (6-11 Aug, Central Hall, Westminster) looms close as we go to press. Among the things which continue not to bode well are flyers seemingly typeset by a million monkeys; sole visible organizer Mike Parry whingeing about personal problems in the supposed PR; “VIP” members’ startled discovery that their vast payments had not bought them actual membership, merely the right to half-price admission; ill-drawn ads offering (as Space-Ex’s chief delights) “teleport boarding system”, “traders cabins”, “food & refreshments”, “fully posted corridors throughout” and nothing else ... I forgive them everything for the felicitous phrase “there will be celebrities from TV/Films and Radio wondering around to sign autographs”. Exactly the right word.

1st European Star Trek Con: “We will organise a convention on 2-4 Nov 84 in Antwerp, place of happening still under negotiation,” says Alfons J. Maes of Ruggeveldlaan 519, 2100 Deurne, Belgium, and asks me to publicise his convention in my club-fanzine. GoHs G. Roddenberry, P. Khambatta, H. Harrison....

Swecon 85 (15-18 Aug, Sweden): GoHs Chris Priest & Lisa Tuttle, £1 supp ~£13 att: A. Engholm, Maskinistgatan 9 oeb, S-117 47 Stockholm. CP’s first Swedish appearance this autumn: *En droem om Wessex*.

Britain in 1987

This truly terrific Worldcon bid has been cheered to learn that ~~Hugh Maseetti plans to emigrate to Zimbabwe~~ one of the opposing US bids, San Diego, has officially folded, with its erstwhile chair Sean McCoy now a Britain in 87 presupporter. (San Diego, we gather, will instead bid for America’s substitute event the NASFiC, provided Britain triumphs over the residual ’87 opposition: Phoenix, AZ). John Steward, virtuoso financial juggler of Seacon 79, is now the British bid’s treasurer, and would like you all to send him money – further funds are needed for the US/Australian advertising campaign. Venue decision: as usual there proves to be a wide choice of Brighton (nowhere else has the needed concentration of facilities *plus* accommodation for 5000, despite a search ranging as far as Harrogate – where we were weirdly informed that of course dealers’ rooms would have to

be closed on Sundays, and where they think a bar extension is a job for a carpenter): the vast Brighton Centre is booked for our very own. Next issue: thrilling eye-witness accounts of LA-Con campaigning by Edwards/Atkinson/Fine.

Letters and Controversy

Bob Shaw: “I was GoH at Interesef 84, a con held in Amsterdam on May 26-7. There was a German contingent and during the awards ceremony the Deutscher SF Club presented me with the Clark Darlton prize for the best foreign novel published in Germany in 1983. It was for *The Ceres Solution*. During the same trip I discovered a bar in The Hague where, with just a little bit of insistence, you can be served beer in real *pint* glasses. Not your ½-litre pseudo pints, but actual pints! I’m beginning to think there is a future for the EEC, after all.” (*Hey, why haven’t we named a prize after R. L. Fanthorpe?*)

Ian Watson: “Pamela Sargent & I, in collaboration, have sold *the* anthology of 1985 to Vintage Books (USA). It’s called *Afterlives*, will feature startling stories set in any kind of afterlife, and will be required reading from the Vatican to Salt Lake City. Silverberg, Disch and Wolfe have already promised enthusiastically to write for it. An advance against pro-rata share of revenue, of 5¢ a word. Deadline Autumn 84. UK/European submissions to me, Bay House, Banbury Rd, Moreton Pinkney, nr Daventry, Northants, NN11 6SQ ... Ever been insured for 2½ million dollars? I am now, Pam S. likewise, under a policy paid for by Vintage and included as part of the *Afterlives* contract. This isn’t, I hasten to add, in case the editors fall under a bus before completing the anthology – thus reflecting how much Vintage expect the book to earn. It’s as protection against lawsuits for libel, invasion of privacy, and whatever. No doubt this is more reassuring than just signing a contract where the author/editor swears to indemnify the publisher in the event of any successful lawsuits against the book: but I see it as a sinister development. With medical insurance burgeoning in the States (in the wake of skyrocketing medical malpractice suits) here we have the same phenomenon in the literary world; and where litigation looms, can censorship of contents (just in case) be far behind...

“Meanwhile, Krsto Mazuranic proposes that the 1986 Nebula shindig should be held in Zagreb, Yugoslavia, to coincide with the Eurocon there in June 86

– and advances some compelling reasons why, including the fact that East European book deals could render the trip free to American SFWAns attending. This plan deserves support, a lot of support.

“BSFA FIC-MAG SCANDAL! And lo, Bernard Smith and Dave Clements of Northants founded *Cassandra*, a quarterly anthology of original SF stories. Soon quite a few members of the BSFA, such as Sue Thomason and Simon Ings, belonged to the *Cassandra* group. Taking note of the BSFA’s long-running debate about having a fiction magazine, Bernard Smith suggested that *Cassandra* should be it. And the BSFA high command ignored his letter. So Ian Watson sallied forth unto the AGM of the BSFA at Brighton and voiced Bernard Smith’s offer aloud. Whereupon after debate it was promised faithfully from the chair by supremo Alan Dorey that, if BS wrote a full proposal, detailing cost/production/distribution options etc, this would be printed in the June *Matrix*. August’s would contain membership feedback and October’s would ballot the membership asking them to say yea or nay.

“So BS wrote. Imagine his surprise when the June *Matrix* appeared with his proposal nowhere to be seen. Imagine his shock & horror when he scanned the lettercol to find various members chewing the fat about a ficzine, with editorial comments by supremo Dorey generally putting the boot into this sort of notion – without a whisper of what had been agreed at the AGM. Imagine Bernard Smith’s sentiments when depth interrogation by phone of Mr Dorey elicited the info that personally he and the BSFA committee thought the ficzine idea was a heap of chickenshit. Imagine even that Bernard Smith’s proposal did get lost en route from AD to the Harveys – and that AD totally forgot to mention its existence in the hassle of getting *Matrix* out, even whilst penning words of scornful import re fiction mags for the lettercol...”

(Subsequently AD explained that The Letter got lost en route from unfrocked M editor S. Polley, while BS in a fit of pique withdrew the proposal and sent a tactful letter from which latest M editor Chris “I’m only doing this for one issue” Hughes claims to have excised the most actionable bits, for M54 publication ...)

Sue Thomason had several hour-long phone-calls on the subject, from Bernard (for it is he) Smith ... “I gather that (a) he hates *Matrix*, (b) he hates fans and fandom, (c) he hates Alan Dorey, (d) the sun rises out of Ian Watson’s back garden and (e) this looks like being the most boring and longwinded controversy in the BSFA for a long, long time.... The BSFA

committee are understandably cautious about welcoming another *Tangent*, to rumbles of ‘Vanity publishing’ and ‘if you’re subsidizing one non-BSFA zine, why don’t you subsidize *mine* as well?’ Cassandra are misguided fanatics. The zine is towards the more literate end of the ficzines I’ve seen; this is not to say that the stories in it (including the two of mine that they’ve published) are of professional quality, but it’s a shame that etc. etc.” (Sue is now *Focus* co-editor. Budding authors can contact Cassandra at 8 Wansford Walk, Thorplands Brook, Northants, NN3 4YF; it is, though, Too Late to apply for the 25/26 Aug “Cassandra Workshop” and have your stuff criticized by Ian W.)

D. West sold hordes of copies of his *Fanzines In Theory & Practice* to moneyed Swedes – in particular – at Seacon: “Fred Harris bought a copy too, on the strength of lots of promised libellings of Langford. He also asked for a receipt so that he could claim it ‘as a necessary business expense’. The thought of *FTP* being paid for (ultimately) by L. Ron Hubbard is kind of soothing.... Price is now £6 (\$25 USA). Over a hundred copies sold, and there sure as hell ain’t gonna be no more. I’m not going through *that* business again.” (48 Norman St, Bingley, W. Yorks, BD16 4JT)

Infinitely Improbable

Simon Ounsley wishes to thank the millions of fans who sent “Get Well Soon” and “Congrats On Your Glandular Fever” cards: “The doctor tells me *War & Peace* and the Covenant books are a little on the short side as convalescent reading matter”....

Booker Prize: *Bookseller* rumours of possible shortlisted authors this year include names not unknown to *Ansible* readers – Ballard (*Empire of the Sun*), Carter (*Nights at the Circus*), Moorcock (*Laughter of Carthage*), Priest (*The Glamour*) and Thomas (*Swallow*)....

“I Want To Live In A Space Colony” – bumper stickers with this legend offered by loyal *Ansible* subscriber R. Capes (\$1.00 to PO Box 383, Princeton Jct, NJ 08550, USA). Speaking of which, help Langford become a capitalist by purchasing rare authentic hardback firsts of my works: *War in 2080: The Future of Military Technology* £3.25, *Facts & Fallacies: Definitive Mistakes & Misguided Predictions* £2.95, *Account of a Meeting*

with *Denizens of Another World 1871* (the UFO book) £2.25, all post free....

Joseph Nicholas, now awesome fiction reviewer for CND mag *Sanity* (in whose current issue he appears to have unilaterally abandoned his half-page sentences – only one semicolon in two columns!), asks for GUFF nominations by 30 Nov. Desiderata for fans wishing a trip to Melbourne’s 1985 Worldcon: 3 Euro & 2 Aussie nominations, 100-word platform, £5 “bond” and promise to attend Aussiecon if elected (barring act of god or gods) – all to Joseph....

Eleanor Smith is the latest collaboration between Pieria authors Kevin & Diana Smith (publication date 28 July)....

Larceny! We do not reveal which Gollancz editor swiped a Stephen King film poster from the BFS meeting (unable to resist the slogan *Christine: She’s a killer*)....

Prodom: **Arthur C. Clarke** is waiting for Galileo-probe data on the Jovian moons (late 80s) before being persuaded to accept \$1.25M+ for another 2001 sequel, while less fortunate **Frank Herbert** has had a surprise Washington State tax bill for \$70,000 (*SFC*); **Forrest J. Ackerman** sends interminable data on his doings, most interestingly editing the revived *Weird Tales* (August launch); **James White** “has retired from editing the Short & Harland magazine on account of his eye trouble; however he has bought a word processor, the screen being easier on his eyes than paper, and hopes to start writing more sf. His last took 2 years to write but sold at once.” (*Walt Willis, who enclosed a photo of himself for our hastily postponed colour supplement*)...

Fantasycon (14-16 Sept, Royal Angus, Birmingham) has GoH Charles L. Grant, also Ramsey Campbell (as ever) and Tanith Lee: £1.50 supp £8.50 att to 15 Stanley Rd, Morden, Surrey....

Ditmar Awards (Aussie): George Turner’s *Yesterday’s Men* won the “long Australian SF/fantasy” award; amid some controversy (low voting numbers giving a peculiar nomination slate) the International winner was decided to be “no award”....

What Micro? magazine offers a prize for SF shorts (up to 3000w) with microcomputers as protagonists – rush your entry to 62 Oxford St, London, W1A 2HG by 1 september. The prize ... unfortunately it’s a computer

(Spectrum), but publication at *WM* rates would be worthwhile ... Meanwhile *Computing* devoted a page to wonderful, interactive computer stuff being designed for a “Toronto fun-fair” offering tours of the universe, based on the works of “a team of UK science fiction writers, Malcolm Edwards & Robert Holdstock”....

SEFF candidates fighting for a free trip to Swecon are currently Steve Green and Hans-Jurgen Mader (Germany): nominations close 1 Dec....

Sex Scandals! Linda Pickersgill’s “Venn Diagram” (it isn’t really) of relationships past and present in UK fandom is being passed fascinatedly from hand to hand. How come Harry Bell is one of the major, er, foci? ...

R. I. Barycz’s thousands of pages of medianews won’t fit: his rumour that Koo Stark was to appear in *Dr Who* was swiftly followed by the news that she wasn’t. “Trouble on the 1984 set: they started filming without a script and the Virgin crowd are having to raise money in the City/USA to finish it off in time for it to still be trendy. Trouble is if they get American money it will have the usual strings attached viz: no rats, and we want a happy ending ... *Mad Max III* to begin shooting in Oz in Sept ... *Why The UFOs Steal Our Lettuce* is a German colour skiffy film supposed to be almost as good as *Plan Nine* ... Support first UK *Star Wars* zine, SAE to Roz Wheadon, Springfield, Coldharbour, Sherborne, Dorset DT9 4AB ...” (*RIB*) Help.

Thanks to **John Harvey** for electrostencils, **Ron Salomon**, **Lee Smoire** & **Margaret Welbank** for **Britain In 87** heroisms, and **David Wood** for photographing my Seacon nosebleed.

Hazel’s Language Lessons #30: Marathi

baccedha: the bother, fuss & vexation attendant upon the bringing up of children. (Congrats, Diana & Kevin ...)

ANSIBLE 39:

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***Ansible* 40**

October 1984

ANSIBLE 40 looks back over five hectic years of publication and, in a flood of sudden nostalgia, decides it's safer not to mention any of the details. Instead, the usual up-to-the-gigasecond news and abuse from DAVE LANGFORD, 94 LONDON ROAD, READING, BERKS, RG1 5AU, England ... Subscription rates are being heroically, if temporarily, held constant despite postal increases: 6 issues for £2.00 with notes to me, sterling cheques/money orders to *Ansible*, Girobank transfer to a/c 24 475 4403; \$3.50 US to agents Mary & Bill Burns, 23 Kensington Ct, Hempstead, NY 11550; £2 equivalent to Roelof Goudriaan should you meet him at some continental con; and for Australians I hope to quote rates in local currency real soon now. (Leigh Edmonds, *This Means You!*) The cartoon is by BRAD W. FOSTER. the mailing labels are as ever the work of KEITH FREEMAN, last issue's collation was by Hazel and me because no one else turned up (mumble, grump), and this issue will be zooming off to 424 addresses. Mailing label runs: LASTISH XX means you're OK to issue XX, SUB DUE means you've just stopped being OK, ***** delicately conveys that even if your best friend hasn't pointed it out, you have been non-OK for a detectable period, and TRADE means you're permanently OK until I change my mind. This issue's excursion into culture: "I believe that composing on the typewriter has probably done more than anything else to deteriorate English prose." (Edmund Wilson, 1962.) **DOES ANYONE** read this small print? To test this, I'm putting the Complaints Department here: Marise Morland-Chapman passes on comments from boyfriend Sydney Jordan to the effect that he didn't object to the fake Bob Shaw, merely to "being on the unpopular side" of the Albacon/Faircon clash – "if he's going to take 3 days off he doesn't want to spend it lecturing to 3 people." Mr Jordan avers that he will never agree to be GoH anywhere ever again ... Malcolm Edwards was miffed by my fascist, oppressive behaviour in not mentioning his BSFA award on the front page; Chris Hughes complained that I'd utterly failed to trace 95% of Seacon's problems to a certain co-Chairman who is not John Brunner; and Alan Dorey was unhappy about the "Cassandra" bits (but later said that when

he actually got around to reading *Ansible* rather than relying on Graham James's phone call, it seemed OK). Fulsome apologies to all these afflicted persons. Oct 1984.

Beneath the Flat Stone The World of Books

J.G. Ballard's *Empire Of The Sun*, heavily tipped for the Booker Prize by millions of reviewers, duly bounded onto the shortlist in the favourite's position despite an unusually boring and anti-innovative panel of judges – whose token human being Polly Devlin expressed loud bogglement that Angela Carter's *Nights At The Circus* wasn't shortlisted. (A lot of reviewers thought the same. *The Guardian* explained that AC's "brilliant extravaganza may have been thought too overreaching by the rather conservative panel of judges.") Devlin went on to explain that *Empire* was the favourite because "it is the only novel on the shortlist that is not about writers writing." Even *Private Eye* gave its blessing to "Jim Gentleman Ballard" ... but rumblings of disquiet have emerged from 5,271,009 people interned in 40s Shanghai (setting of *Empire*) who are unanimous in saying *It Wasn't Like That At All, Ballard Has Got It All Wrong*. "Er um well," replied a shifty-sounding Gollancz editor, "Ballard was creating a *metaphorical, fictional* truth." The crack *Ansible* team of semanticists has analysed this remark by Malcolm (for it is he) Edwards, decoding it as: "You cretins, this is really *SF* set in an *alternate-world* Shanghai, only I can't say that with the mainstream critics listening ..." **Stop Press:** Booker results later this issue!

A Marvellous Ear For Names is one of the things that just about everyone grants Tolkien. Which is why I think it's a bit mean of Unwin to publish (in *The Book Of Lost Tales II*) the fact that in callow 1917 he perpetrated, inter alia, an elf called Tinfang Warble....

Bob Shaw's *Fire Pattern* has roused speculation; the hero rings an aging John Sladek to ask about spontaneous combustion in people, and can only extract flip, joky, content-free answers. Is Shaw needling Sladek, I was asked? Bob confesses: "John wrote all his own dialogue for that scene." Thus *Fire Pattern* – like *Lies, Inc*, which has two Sladek linking passages – becomes a vital item for the Sladek bibliography even now being prepared by

notorious pamphleteer Chris Drumm. (CD produces mini-booklet SF/reference stuff at 20-55pp: recent ones are “It’s Down the Slippery Cellar Stairs”, Lafferty nonfic \$2; “Love Among the Xoids”, Sladek short \$1; “A James Gunn Checklist” \$1.25; “Tiger, Tiger!” short Gunn novel from 1952, \$2.25, all postpaid: PO Box 445, Polk City, Iowa, 50226.) Meanwhile, Bob shyly confesses to having contracted to write Gollancz a massive SF Blockbuster of 120,000 words or more! Title? Content? “Er, I’m still thinking about that part.”

Savoy Censored, As Usual: D. Britton & M. Butterworth of Savoy Books produced a vast anthology, *Savoy Dreams*, a weird and slightly self-indulgent (e.g. reprinting all the reviews of previous Savoy Books) collection full of famous names, bits of books that didn’t get published, the inside story of their police prosecution, etc: apparently they only did 800 copies at £7.95, sending most of these to reviewers who almost instantly said nothing. Hear now the word of fearless alternative bookshop Compendium (NW.1), tactfully explaining to Savoy why Compendium feels unable to stock SD: “Dear assholes, I’ve got enough boring letters to open every morning without you two whining because we don’t want to stock your book.... The pseudo-mystical soft porn you specialize in is very, very conservative and deeply boring. I mean, down here it’s 1984 and our customers are just *not interested* in such pretentious twaddle. Piss on you, *Chris Render*.” Far out, man.

The SF Sourcebook ed.D. Wingrove was launched on tides of alcohol, 3 Sept, down in the Planetarium’s “Astronomers’ Gallery” amid giant orreries and a model of Ptolemaic epicycles which for authenticity used real bicycle wheels. Brian Aldiss’s speech did not neglect to mention the book had been *his* idea. “What market d’you think this book’s aimed at?” someone asked Brian Stableford. “Remainder”, he said instantly. Brian had contributed to the book’s “Michelin Guide To SF”, but denied having given the supreme accolade of five stars for characterization to (wait for it) Jack Chalker. “I didn’t give five stars to anything,” he said. “Nor I,” said Roz Kaveney. “In fact I gave lots of things no stars at all,” grumbled BS, “but they all got edited out.” Somewhere a boring *Ansible* editor was droning, “Listen to this. C. Sheffield’s *Web Between The Worlds* gets five for literary merit, putting this undistinguished acolyte of Arthur C. Clarke ahead of Aldiss, Dick, Huxley, Lem, Nabokov, Orwell, Swift, Twain, Vonnegut and Wells, not to mention Clarke himself ...” With such controversy, how could the book fail? Presently

the Planetarium slung everyone out: the Wingrove coterie retreated to DW's private party ("I don't suppose I'll be seeing you there?" said Ritchie Smith to Roz: "No, I thought you wouldn't be invited.") and the rest of us went home to write our reviews.

Non-Reviews: D. Wingrove is also responsible for John Goodchild Publishers' "SF Alternatives" series, aimed at producing nice, expensive editions of books you already have. To hand are Bester's *Tiger! Tiger!* (I turned straight to the typographical pyrotechnics of ch.15, hoping to find the bits clearly missing on p231 of the Penguin edition, only to find this *is* photolithoed from the Penguin edition – rats) and Crowley's *Beasts* (a bit young, at 8 years, for canonization, but never mind. It would have been gracious, though, to cut a page of editorial introduction and make room for Crowley's omitted dedication and epigraph). Another reissue deserving of a mention: H.G. Wells's *The Croquet Player* from Ian Henry Publications, possibly the best of Wells's later fiction and disturbingly prophetic (in 1936) of events in 1939. *Fandom Directory 1984-5* (\$9.95: Fandom Computer Services, PO Box 4278, San Bernadino, CA 92409) may be of value to people wanting to compile vast mailing lists of US comics/media fans, or to purchase plastic bags (the principal product advertised). But coverage is spotty – I can't even find *Locus* in the publications index – and the 230 or so UK addresses are riddled with bygone fanzines, cons and addresses. The problem is that *FD* is not researched but compiled from forms completed by (some) fans: imagine how slim and useful the telephone directory would be if everyone had to make an active and regular effort, involving postal costs, to be listed. Caveat emptor. Lastly, Mosaic Publishing Ltd have released computer game versions of Harrison's *Stainless Steel Rat Saves The World* and Moorcock's *Nomad Of Time* (the "Bastable" Trilogy), £9.95 apiece (CBM-64 version only). Over the phone I mentioned to a Mosaic publicist that I'd heard Harry enthuse about working with a programmer on the Rat adventure-game: "Oh no," was the reply, "that would be the other version that'll be released in the States, he didn't have anything to do with this one." Oh.

Disch Bathroom Horror! Roz Kaveney gleefully notes that one of the hideous fates allotted to characters in Tom Disch's new *The Businessman: A Tale Of Terror* is being condemned to haunt a fearful bathroom appallingly decorated with Aubrey Beardsley designs. It is said that Gollancz bounced

the book. It is certain that, after all their parties, the decor of Malcolm Edwards's and Chris Atkinson's bog is notorious....

Exciting, Vibrant, Late, Boring Worldcon Stuff

That is not dead which can eternal lie, and with strange aeons Malcolm Edwards may send in the report *Ansible* has long awaited, but stuff that. Instead some bitlets from ...

Colin Fine: "LA-Con II committee started as they were to go on, by getting up people's noses. They kept to all their much-trumpeted mottos but #2, 'No standing in line.' Around 11am on the Thursday the half-room in front of the registration tables was so full of people milling about in search of the right desk, they had to stop people coming in for a bit. Result: a 20-minute queue in about 100°; heat. Lovely. Queues returned on Sunday: at midnight they were showing the *Star Wars* trilogy in a 1600-seat theatre, and somebody panicked and put up a notice by registration, pointing out that con membership didn't *guarantee* admission to popular items; registration gophers were instructed to repeat this to each day-member they enrolled at a princely \$35. Whether because of this scaremongering or not, they were queueing for the films before 6pm. Rumour has it that eventually only 1100 people slept sat through the trilogy, and received long-service medals from the official SW fan club.

"The main way the concom upset people was by carelessly allowing themselves to appear partisan over future bids. First they apparently invited Atlanta in '86 to provide bags for member's programme bump, without extending any similar offer to NY or Philly. When Britain in '87 turned up ready to man a membership desk all day, rejected the Fan Lounge (tucked away in an inaccessible corner ... sound familiar?) as a venue, and asked nicely for a table somewhere prominent, they let us use one at the front of the huckster's room. Phoenix in '87 objected, apparently because they hadn't thought of asking for – and couldn't man – a table. LA-Con's Solomonic solution was to oust us and allow Phoenix a day in the same spot – which they did not take up. Instead we acquired a real paid-for table by simply buying up (privately) a dealer's entire stock and offering him a small sum for the tail-end of his table rent.

“About the same time we met the Phoenix people and struck up a relationship culminating in the great '87 Bid Party on Sunday night, which won the coveted ‘party of the Day’ accolade in the Monday newsletter: a triple party, Phoenix, us and LA (a Westercon bid). Chris Atkinson spent the evening selling UK in 87 badges, and occasionally her body, to all comers....

“Membership was 9282; actually *there* were 8365, comprising 5823 pre-registered and 2542 walk-ins. Rumoured profits are over \$100,000, probably \$150,000; rumouredly they broke even in June and everything since is gravy, which they courageously maximized by such financially responsible acts as refusing to show the roomful of short films they’d already hired, as that would need an extra projectionist. Another rumour; part of the surplus will be used to refund memberships of those who put most into the con ... the 1986 Worldcon will be Confederation in Atlanta, Georgia, Aug 28 to Sept 1, GoH Ray Bradbury FGoH Terry Carr Toastmaster Bob Shaw. Membership rates until 1985: \$25 supp \$35 att, further info from UK agent Colin Fine, 205 Coldham’s Lane, Cambridge, CB1 3HY.

“LA’s venue, the Anaheim Hilton and Towers, is a strange hotel. The ‘Towers’ is merely the 14th, i.e. top, floor – actually the 13th since though there’s a floor numbered 13, there isn’t one numbered 10! Long rambling corridors surround, on floor 5, a pool and 2 ‘decks’ of astroturf: many parties were in 5th-floor suites opening onto the decks, so ultimately there was just one giant party in the open under the stars, the Disneyland fireworks and the Goodyear blimp.

“Shock recognition at the con was *Brian Burgess*. Surprise predicament was that of Duncan Lunan, who’d been flown out by a symposium so incompetent that they only got him a single flight and then went broke. He was desperately trying to sell *Man And The Planets* (at \$17.95/copy) to raise his fare home.

“Hugos? Oh yeah, some books or other won them.” (*C Fine*)

Some Books Or Other comprised David Brin’s *Startide Rising* (novel), Timothy Zahn’s “Cascade Point” (novella), Greg Bear’s “Blood Music” (novelette), Octavia Butler’s “Speech Sounds” (short), Donald Tuck’s *Encyclopaedia Of Sf And Fantasy Vol 3* (nonfic), *Return Of The Jedi* (film), Shawna McCarthy of *IASFM* (editor), Michael Whelan (artist), *LOCUS* (semiprozine), *File 770* (fanzine), Alexis Gilliland (fanartist), Mike Glycer

(fanwriter), R.A. MacAvoy (John W. “Not A Hugo” Campbell Award). Censorship in its ugliest form occurred when – Hugo nominees having been asked for transparencies of themselves to enliven the ceremony – LA-Con bounced a pic of D. Langford, requesting “one we can show in public, please.” Thus a boring slide was hastily unearthed from the files, and thus Dave Wood failed to gain an international audience for his tasteful study of my Seacon nosebleed. Shame.

Charles Platt evidently had a great time: “‘Too large,’ people complained, referring not only to the attendees but the environs: several halls the size of football fields, huge concrete plazas across which fans toiled in baking heat, and 100-yard hotel corridors all combined to make it impossible to meet friends except by appointment. The programme was disappointingly sparse. California is the state richest in SF writers, but few big names attended. Frank Herbert spent 2 hours signing books and promoting the Dune movie; he said the soundtrack by the Viennese Symphony Orchestra was ‘at least as compelling as the theme from JAWS’ and claimed the \$60M made it the most expensive movie in history. The clip I saw looked sort of shabby and dim, like an etching.

“Bradbury, van Vogt, Sturgeon and Heinlein didn’t show. Ellison appeared only to bestow a special plaque on one-time SF editor Larry Shaw (who bought Harlan’s first story). Ellison’s speech, read in collaboration with Bob Silverberg, was unusually rich in hyperbole, and couched in the past tense, making it hard to tell the recipient was alive. Shaw appeared, in fact, to be dying of throat cancer, and was thus mercifully unable to respond at length. The grim ritual came midway through the Hugos, as if Ellison were sanctimoniously reminding his audience of the Real Values in life.

“The Hugos drew half the crowd of the 3-hour costume parade. Generally, the more serious the item, the smaller the audience. A beautiful, authoritative slide-show by a JPL physicist, documenting the Voyager mission past Jupiter and Saturn, attracted a crowd of ten. By contrast, fans were lining up to see the *Star Wars* trilogy hours before showtime, playing cassettes of the movie theme to get themselves in the right frame of mind. Those of us who have always felt alienated from the outside world can now feel totally alienated from worldcons, too. The huckster room was heavy on t-shirts, badges, toys, memorabilia and food; light on books. Hollywood studios contributed big media exhibits; I found the 8-foot model Nautilus from Disney’s *20,000*

Leagues the only item with any real imaginative authority.

“Most enjoyable program moment for me was when Barry Bayley won a ‘Japanese Hugo’ for best translated English-language novel. Most enjoyable evening activity was when Greg Benford and his twin brother Jim led me in search of a rumoured nitrous oxide party: ‘It’s somewhere around here,’ Greg said, at which moment the loud hissing of a balloon being inflated came clearly from behind one of the Hilton doors. Within, we found four large tanks of nitrous and a dozen or so left-over 60s freaks in various stages of decomposition. ‘Always look behind you before you fall over,’ one of them told me – sage advice from one who knew.” (*C. Platt*)

Squirring Mags

The section heading comes from *Cheap Truth*, a vile piece of samizdat rumoured to emanate from an anonymous *Interzone 7* contributor at 809-C W 12th St, Austin, Texas 78701, USA. *CT* covers SF mags like this: “*IASFM* suffers from Dr Asimov’s own prolixity, for his prolificacy has now reached the terminal stage and he can write any amount of anything about nothing ... *Analog* exudes the stale, mummylike odour of attitudes preserved too long ... brain and heart are in canopic jars somewhere, while its contributors’ word-processors spit out copy on automatic pilot ... *IZ* has the finest editorial ideology in the English-speaking world, bound cheek-by-jowl with stories often riddled with conceit and void of substance. Yet *IZ* sustains hope with bursts of appalling brilliance ... *Omni*’s ‘Boy Eats Own Foot’ approach to science coverage makes its reportage highly suspect ... its power-mad art department has earned an unpleasant notoriety. Stories are trimmed to fit like styrofoam, occasionally without authorial consultation; sometimes, incredibly, lines are even *added*...” (*CT7*) An earlier issue features a Swiftian Rhapsody on SF, which a famous SF author living in Oxford would surely deny writing; I passed this to Joe Nicholas for *Paperback Inferno*, but just a few lines ...

These failures clog the lists of DAW,
Del Rey, Ace Books, Avon and Tor,
Where copywriters gild their sins
With “Greater Tolkiens”, “New LeGuins”,

“Beats Arthur Clarke”, “Equal to Niven”
– As if that awful thought were Heaven! –
Or “Starrier Wars” ... and Sturgeon there,
Here Budrys, “Masterpiece” declare,
“Not to be missed ...” Such feeble lies
Support a feebler enterprise
Of Royalties at 4%
Which scarcely serve to pay the rent ... (CT6)

Omni UK has appeared on the stands: advance rumours (such as belatedly printed in *Matrix*) hinted that the “re-launch” would have 16 pages of British material bound into the same old US edition. In fact the whole thing has more of a British look, the “disposable” 16pp merely containing all the SF content. “The emphasis is on the science side”, explains editor Jon Chambers ... who may edit only one more issue (out 29 Nov), since a searching *Ansible* investigation discloses that Sightline Publications Ltd, (a division of Northern & Shell, owning *Forum* and *Penthouse UK*) has merely bought rights to publish two trial issues of *Omni UK*. Despite pious hopes of “going monthly from early 1985”, the outlook is currently uncertain – better not rush all your *IZ* rejections to PO Box 381, Mill Harbour, London, E14 9TW just yet, as #2 closed on 12 Oct, two days after I was begged to rush in some reviews.

FTL Magazine (New York): putative editor Greg Costikyan announces this SF/games mag’s “abortion” owing to a prolapsed publication deal, and pleads for no more stories....

White Dwarf & Imagine, the UK role-playing game thingies, persist with rumoured circulations of over 40,000 for *WD*, well under 20,000 for *I*. The former shows signs of developing a fiction policy, i.e. publishing some; editor Jamie Thomson has been replaced by one Jon Sutherland. “I see Jamie has decided to call it a day after hearing about the Polaroid and the goat,” confides *I* editor Paul Cockburn, meanwhile bouncing a Langford joke about religious attitudes to D&D (“We all suffixed our mirth by saying ‘No, no ... we daren’t ...’”), and mentioning that 4500 words is about as bloated and verbose as a story can be for publication in *Imagine*.

Starlight SF News is that sort of “electronic *Ansible*” which has intermittently appeared on the Micronet 800 viewdata pages (moving confusingly and inexplicably between pp 6006207 and 8006207 – a Prestel

cockup has lately filled the former slot with a version exhumed from 1983, mentioning Asimov as GoH at Seacon 84 ... oh the shame. Its intermittent status was largely the result of communication problems, the electronic whizkids of Micronet being incapable of anything so low-tech as writing letters: a renaissance is hoped in the near future, and I may be able to pay m*n*y to contributors. Meanwhile I find myself connected to Prestel via bootleg hardware which conceals me under the secret identity "Radio Kent" (brother of the more famous Clark). I'm told I can receive electronic mail sent to the "address" 733 631 000. Um well.

Nova SF, the major Swedish mag, has acquired a managing Editor, writes co-Boss Editor, John-Henri Holmberg: "lacking anybody else with even a minimum of editing experience or spelling ability, we had to settle for Ahrvid Engholm." Rush your submissions (Ahrvid recommends sending traditional hard SF, or well-known prose with subtlety/emotion) to Palsundsgatan 1 A, S-117 31 Stockholm, for marvellously tactful rejections. John-Henri: "I rather liked it and have passed it on to our new managing Editor." Ahrvid: "John-Henri tossed a small paper plane in my direction, which when I unfolded it proved to be a story by you that he wanted me to reject."

Interzone has had an editorial reshuffle, with J. Clute, A. Dorey and R. Kaveney (the latter already absent from the IZ9 masthead) "promoted upstairs" as advisers, C. Greenland, S. Ounsley and D. Pringle as co-editors proper, A. Frost news editor as well as designer, and newcomers Judith Hanna and Lindsey Morris conscripted as "assistant editors" – their brains becoming cannon-fodder on suicide missions into the uncharted slushpile. An *Interzone Anthology* appears in Dent trade-paperback next April – 12 stories from issues 1-9 plus a new, long outbreak from Geoff Ryman. Added publicity for IZ was provided when Pseud's Corner (*Private Eye*) published J.G. Ballard's belief in adolescent women's pudenda (see IZ8) – I was glad to help out, folks, no trouble at all.

To The Stars, or more properly *L. Ron Hubbard's To The Stars*, was launched at LA-Con (my invitation to the party came two days beforehand, but even with this generous margin I failed to make it). It is a "NEWS, REVIEWS & COMMENTARY magazine of the SCIENCE FICTION – and all related – field of interest!" (sic) ... Methuselah Press, 3963 Wilshire Blvd #142, Los Angeles, CA 90010, USA. No fiction, apparently, except winners of the Hubbard Skiffy Comp which despite A39 remains open (all Fred

Harris's fault for not sending further details as promised): new – no more than 3 shorts published – writers can rush in stuff up to 17000 words until the final quarterly deadline 30-6-85; only one entry/quarter; authors name on covering sheet but not on MS proper; address 2210 Wilshire Blvd #343, Santa Monica, CA 90403; prizes zero to \$1000.

Fantasy Book, the new version, has turned up for review. Parts are quite good, though I can live without stuff like *yet another* po-faced Lovecraft pastiche from Brian Lumley (part 3 of a serial, yet). No foreign sub rates quoted; it's imported by the usual shops with £2 on the cover. Fiction rates 2½ - 4 cents/word. Needs fewer fantasy cliches, more risk-taking. Ed. Nick Smith, PO Box 60126, Pasadena, CA 91106, USA.

Fortean Times, edited from East Ham by former fan Bob Rickard, is getting computerized with an IBM PC ... or maybe not. "I've discovered 3000 subjects so far, and I'm only up to C," confessed BR as he discovered commercial database programs to be unable to cope with his "millions of new clippings" about rains of frogs, blood, crabs and small portions of Richard Bergeron's brain (among other arcane phenomena).

Peter Nicholls News! At long last the dispute between PN (also D. Langford & B. Stableford) and Roxby Press, regarding the lack of money from *The Science In SF*, has come to a suitably messy lack of conclusion. Old-time readers may dimly recall that RP deducted some £46000 from the gross receipts before calculating royalties, thus enabling the authors to subsidize the cost of printing the book. The PN/RP contract is a shambles (leading to PN's later sacking of his then agents). Our Peter has now obtained Counsel's opinion to the effect that (a) there would be an 80% chance of getting RP to cough up via a High Court case; (b) however, if PN/DL/BS lost the case, costs of up to £15000 might have to be paid; (c) the few thousand involved is unfortunately too much to chase through the Small Claims Court. This will be absolutely wonderful news for all publishers.

Peter writes: "*The Encyclopaedia Of Fantasy*, companion to the *Enc. Of SF*, has awoken from its 3½ year slumber and is sending out tendrils of new growth. It will be edited by myself and Clute, and Granada are considering it v.seriously right now. Even if they cannot find a US co-publisher the project will not die, because Clare, Clute & I will probably set up a small packaging company and do it ourselves, selling to Granada here and to whatever

intelligent American finally wants it over there.... Apropos of all this, you may also report that Maxim Jakubowski has, in recent months, been writing to every semi-prozine in the USA telling them that *he* is doing an Encyclopaedia of Fantasy (with Allen & Unwin), designed to be a companion volume to Nicholls's *Encyclopaedia of SF*. Jakubowski is a cretin, and has no right to make claims of this sort without prior consultation with either Nicholls or Granada.... Love and kisses ..." (PN, 27 Aug)

Maxim was last seen at packagers Rainbird, commissioning books in all directions (like a Georgette Heyer Companion by Garry Kilworth, the mind spung) and clutching the typescript of *The Helliconia Encyclopaedia*, which Mr Aldiss hopes will do for the trilogy what Eliot's notes did for *The Waste Land*.

Come to Sunny Milford **Paul Kincaid**

The Compton Hotel is a small, comfortable hotel in the salubrious south coast resort of Milford-on-Sea; an ideal setting for a quiet, relaxing break. Wander country lanes to the sea, enjoying splendid views of the Isle of Wight. Lounge by the pool, play pool or table-tennis in the games room. Regular guests are quiet and you'll find it easy to unwind in their company, or join in the regular games and entertainments. Pat and Don Emberson, our hosts, will make you welcome with delicious cuisine and a well-stocked bar. All in all, you are sure to leave Milford feeling rested and refreshed.

More accurately – come along to the Milford SF Writer's Workshop. A somewhat shortened Milford this year, taking place over the weekend of 28 Sept – 1 Oct. And with just nine ~~saerificial~~ attendees.

The Compton is inconveniently situated for the train – four miles from the nearest station, in New Milton, or further still for Lisa Tuttle. Travelling on the last train of Friday night, Lisa got the New Milton only to find all the doors of her carriage locked. After a few tantalizing moments in the station she was carried off willy-nilly to Bournemouth, where a ticket collector scratched his head and said wonderingly, "Yes, we've had a few complaints about that." People in the know might suspect that Lisa's story was an elaborate excuse to avoid a lift from David Garnett, whose car appears to

have been cobbled together years ago from rusting fragments found on a scrap heap by someone who didn't really know what cars are supposed to be like. That it still runs must be counted as one of the wonders of modern science. They built 'em to last in 1954.

A warm welcome is guaranteed – provided there's actually anybody there to welcome you. I arrived feeling very hungry and more than a little damp. The hotel looked deserted. I rang the bell, knocked on the door: no answer. I checked my invitation to see if I'd got the right place and the right date. I had. Included was a dadaistic map showing the hotel and a pub down the road where, I assumed, Milforders tended to congregate on the first night. So I repaired there for a drink and a meal, but found no sign of my fellow workshoppers. Returning, I found the hotel still devoid of life, until eventually a shamefaced Langford (with Hazel in tow) appeared. "Oh, er, sorry boss. You been waiting long?" Pat and Don, it appeared, had gone out to frivol; the Milforders had shifted to a pub not listed on the Langford map....

Saturday appeared bright and sunny enough for group exercise – a route march along muddy lanes to within a stone's throw of the sea. At least Mary Gentle threw stones at it; then agonized over whether she'd hurt it or not. This walk was an aberration; our most strenuous later exercise consisted of helping ourselves to drinks from the bar, and playing unending games of pool. Mary and I regularly stayed up into the early hours, each totally incapable of beating the other at this silly game. Decorum was maintained throughout, with cues only occasionally broken over the opponent's head and language restrained to near-publishable levels.

Otherwise ... mornings were spent feverishly trying to read a six-inch pile of manuscripts, and afternoons in tearing these manuscripts to bits. One should not minimize the tremendous generosity shown by everybody at Milford. They would dispense their sharpest criticisms lavishly and with great bounty, never letting their smiles fade throughout this strenuous attention that was surely beyond the call of duty. Between such bouts of intense intellectual activity, Geoff Ryman kept us entertained for hours with colourful descriptions of the grosser aspects of plastic surgery, while Peter Beere proved expert in various country practices involving sheep. Lisa Tuttle did her famous imitation of a big-mouth frog; Colin Greenland kept up the charade all weekend, croaking piteously as his voice gradually faded to

nothing.

Speaking of charades, a game did develop on Sunday night, after an especially good and well-lubricated banquet laid on by the hotel. Garry Kilworth proved remarkably adept at thinking up titles like *Confessions Of A Justified Sinner*, while Geoff Ryman's performance of *The House At Pooh Corner* should be preserved in a thespian hall of fame. Elsewhere, a no-holds-barred, bare-fisted game of Scrabble erupted in furious controversy over Dave Langford's spelling of "jism".

Speaking of bodily fluids, David G. had arrived in apparent rubicund health to announce that he had a cold. With remarkable open-handedness, he proceeded to share his good fortune. Thus, on Monday morning, as we slowly emerged bleary-eyed and hungover, many of us had this extra souvenir of our visit to take home.

[Other, equally welcome souvenirs included the unfortunately ineradicable memories of G. Kilworth's jokes. It was Mr Garnett who contributed the most harrowingly memorable scene in any story, a detailed yet inadvertent description of a flasher in what was *supposed* to be a space-opera for kids.... DRL]

In truth though, it was a marvellously stimulating and enjoyable weekend, one of the best I've had, and I can only hope I'll be invited back next year (please!). I also hope for a return to the week-long format. A weekend that good, extended over a full week, would be worth experiencing. (PK)

Cassandra Workshop 1984 • Charles Stross

So where were the slaving publishers, waiting to snap up first serial rights to the masterpieces served up at this workshop? It began quietly, as one by one the hesitant writers appeared in the door of the hotel bar. There, these exotic, unknown beings from alien locations who wrote such particular things were snorkelling *la!ger* and *ci'de'r* and such esoteric brews through their appendages. Ian Watson appeared quite smug, possibly due to Gollancz's decision to feed him better in return for more volumes of *The Book Of The River*. Dave Clements considered translating his contribution from the American for those of us who live on this side of the great undrinkable. Sue

Thomason caused controversy by her absence due to lurgi (shall we or shall we not wait till closing time?) ... aggravated next day when, in the quiet and dignified Westone Hotel conference room (grovels – we may need it again), it was agreed that her piece was worthy of good publicity – the kind with royalties attached.

Saturday passed without anyone quite crawling through the door whilst trying to stem the flow from the jugular. It wasn't as self-congratulatory as it might have been; no one escaped some degree of red pencil, though a couple were told by Ian in no uncertain terms to “get it off to ——” (fill in your favourite mag here). The event hinged on guru Ian's presence; his criticisms were detailed, effective and helpful; we all owe him. Sunday morning passed in a haze of discussions on how to grab publishers by the throat and suck them dry (thank you, Dr Acula, for your keynote lecture), on the basis of which I predict a boom in SFWA (UK) memberships within the next few months. A good time was had by all, including the obligatory *Interzone*-bashing session: most of us had collected bloody ones (rejection slips, that is) from that worthy organ of the New Wave establishment ... hence our presence at Cassandra. Next year – see you there? (CS)

Ian Watson elucidates: “The first Cassandra SF workshop was held in Northampton, 24-26 Aug, in the idyllic surroundings of the Westone Moat House which laid on endless hot coffee, and notepads, while innumerable RAF officers held wedding receptions on the lawns outside. Ace organizer Bernard Smith ensured the workshop went instantly into top gear by distributing copies of everything beforehand. The world's forests should beware of Charles Stross, who submitted a highly saleable story and turned up with 2 awesome-looking novels apparently written in the previous 3 weeks and about to become trilogies. Simon Ings was commanded to transform his story into a portion & outline for the US fantasy editors. Stephen Bowkett confided he'd just sold a children's fantasy to Gollancz; so modestly did he confide that most present did not hear. Dave Clements & Jim England cautiously flashed the guilty secrets of their earlier Hale novels at each other, like secret agents comparing the halves of a torn-up fiver. Brains were set on fire that weekend; enthusiastic demands to hold another workshop mere weeks later were, in the end, trounced by sanity; the next Cassandra workshop will occur next August bank holiday. Bernard was urged to transform CASSANDRA magazine into a full-scale commercial venture,

perhaps funded from the excess profits of a convention he could organize in Northampton. Naughty things were said by many participants about INTERZONE, to the amazement of the Chairperson, who remained nobly impartial throughout.” (IW)

Ramsey Campbell: “From the press handout of *Children Of The Corn*, produced by Terry Kirby, directed by Fritz Kiersch: ‘During the filming of *Stephen King’s Children Of The Corn*, Kiersch and Kirby made judicious use of cameras.’ Who knows, it may even catch on.” (RC) [Which brings us to closing credits for John “E-Stencils” Harvey and Jim “UK87 Logo” Barker.]

Editorial

The results of our latest in-depth readership survey were that (a) no one else should (or wants to) take over *Ansible*, which is OK by me provided you (meaning everyone but Abigail) can cope with the irregular schedule; (b) a massive majority of over 400 subscribers did not care to vote in the 1983/4 Poll – owing to apathy, inability to cope with the enormous intellectual effort of preparing a bit of paper, or conviction that the relevant period was too long ago for memory (or too dull for attention). Interestingly, the pitiful scatter of votes hinted at an overthrow of the boring old names – including me, thank goodness – and acknowledgement of New Talent. Another couple of dozen votes and the thing may be worth printing; otherwise it looks like bye-bye till 1985. Your cue. (See A39.)

Cons

Mexicon 2 has been having trouble finding suitable and affordable hotels – hence its postponement to a tentative Feb 1986. “We couldn’t even afford one *day* at the last place we tried,” groaned Greg Pickersgill, adding that hotel managers had readily confessed that (a) if they didn’t get Mexicon they’d have an empty hotel and lose money, but (b) they still wouldn’t reduce their charges in the slightest. “Weird,” commented Ealing’s guru. Official press releases promised soon; meanwhile, until ’85, registration is £6 to Mexicon at 24a Beech Rd, Bowles Pk, London NW11 2DA. **Aussiecon II:** Chairman John Foyster has fled (family problems), replaced by David Grigg,

with Carey Handfield as the Deputy Chair ... **Camcon 85** should be the 6th Unicon, in Cambridge; the Committee is reportedly still searching Mexican-style for an affordable and unbooked college venue. £1 presupp (“returned if no con possible”) to 63 Drake Rd, Chessington, Surrey, KT9 1LQ ... **SF Foundation AGM** on 15 Nov!! (Control yourselves) ... **European Trek Conventie** (see A39): Maureen Porter passes on a partially coherent note from the con’s organizer, explaining that it won’t take place on 2-4 Nov 84 but 1-3 Nov next year ... **Yugoslavia** is dead keen to host a Worldcon at the end of the decade, says Ian Watson, adding that they need a UK agent. Mastermind: Miha Granda, Vrajema 5, 61000 Ljubljana, Yug. (tel 061-443-629) ... **Yorcon III** surges onward (5-8 April 85) with no more than the usual appalling rumours of events at committee meetings. Surely there can be no truth in the story that chairman-in-all-but-name Graham Jones remarked that the only good thing about the con would be the fan room; that Alan Ferguson queried this remark, coming as it did from the person organizing the main programme; that GJ wittily riposted by seizing AF and starting to drag him from the room with cries of “You’ve been getting at me all this meeting, we’re going to settle this outside”; that the remainder of the committee gave a remarkable Still Life performance for some seconds until Arnold Akien stood to remonstrate with GJ; that GJ, pausing only for brief abuse (“You’re just a joke in fandom, Akien!”) burst out the room to sulk; that several committee members then resigned, one (Pete Lyon) for the second time, but were coaxed back in the interests of Total Committee Unity and Cosmic Harmony; that ... but enough of these evident smears which have reached me. Yorcon is no doubt strong and vital....

Space-Ex 84, that huge but shifty event, proved not to be strong and vital (*Ansible* editor represses cry of “I told you so!”). Ace reporter Marcus Rowland turned up on the supposed first day, 6 Aug, to find at the Westminster Central Hall a sign saying SPACE-EX IS CANCELLED. Investigator D.M. Sherwood reports that the event was moved to Bank Holiday weekend (in a blaze of non-publicity): “Hall managers were a bit dodgy about letting Mike Parry (De Boss) have the place for a week on the slate but were persuaded to OK 3 days (fools). This was decided about a week before the old date. Set decorations weren’t finished at beginning of Aug; of course they weren’t paid for. P ordered 50 uniforms for Starship Ushers (gophers), all the same size, to be paid for out of profits (!). Just about all GoHs dropped out. Other P. stories: the time he sold carpets and furniture

from under his 7 kiddies' feet to finance a previous con; the time he organized a quiet buffet for about 100 and 35 came, so he had to accost startled passers-by in the street and tout ½-price tickets; the time he [etc, etc] ..." (DMS)

The Crass, Commercial and Unfannish Page [books for sale]

[Omitted from the rekeyed edition.]

COA

Justin Ackroyd, GPO Box 2708X, Melbourne, Vic 3001, Australia :: Brian Aldiss, Woodlands, Foxcombe Rd, Boars Hill, Oxford, OX1 5DL :: Henry Balen, Dept of Environmental Sciences, Lancaster U, Lancaster, LA1 4YQ :: Frank W Barron, 26 Ashville Tce, Leeds, LS6 1LZ :: Peter Beere, Lower Thrushgill, Tatham Fells, nr. Wray, Lancs, LA2 8QY :: Linda Blanchard (& rich brown), 13404 Forest Glen Rd, Woodbridge, VA 22191, USA :: Terry Broome, 45 Hykeham Rd, Lincoln, LN6 8AA :: Pamela Buckmaster (formerly Bulmer), "Danescroft", Goose Lane, Little Hallingbury, Bishop's Stortford CM22 7RG :: Bill Carlin, 43 Finlay Dr, Dennistoun, Scotland, PA23 8LB :: Peter Colley, Room 9, 36 Sherriff Rd, West hampstead, London, NW.6 :: Bob Day, The Cottage, Wood Corner Farm, Green End Rd, Fillongley, Coventry, CV7 8EP :: Dermot & Perdy Dobson, 22 Ramsay Rd, Headington, Oxford, OX3 8AX :: Malcolm Hodkin, 45c South St, St Andrews, Fife, KY16 :: Christina Lake (& Peter-Fred Thompson) 235 Iffley Rd, Oxford, OX4 1SQ :: Mike Lewis, 12 Parkwood Close, Broadstairs, Kent, CT10 2XN :: Steve Mowbray, 96/2 Nicolson St, Edinburgh, EH8 9EW :: Joan Paterson, 205 Coldham's Lane, Cambridge, CB1 3HY :: Lee Pelton, 1032 N Winchester, Chicago, IL 60622, USA :: Geoff Rippington: in transit, but most frequently c/o 128 Whitley Wood Rd, Reading, Berks, RG2 8JG :: Geoff Ryman (now a fulltime freelance writer – the rest of us are on the run): back at 18a Ridgmount Gdns, London, WC.1 :: Joyce Scrivner, 4629 Columbus Ave, Minneapolis, MN 55407, USA :: Ken Slater, Fantast (Medway) Ltd, PO Box 23, Upwell, Wisbech, Cambs, PE14 9BU :: Dick Smith, 2007 W Howard St #3D, Evanston, IL 60202, USA :: Kevin & Diana

Smith, 33 Derbyshire Rd, Sale, Cheshire, M33 3JG :: Margaret Welbank (& Nick Lowe), 64d Parkhill Rd, London, NW3 2YT :: *Vanished Without Trace*: Camilla Pomeroy formerly of 130 Ashbrook Rd, Birmingham B30; R. Capes, formerly of PO Box 383, Princeton Jct, NJ. Any clues? ::

Infinitely Improbable

The Last Dangerous Visions: “Harlan is claiming that he’ll have the MS in to his publishers in October; all he has to do is pry in the last purchased story, bought over Worldcon weekend from non-attending Steven Bryan Bieler (c) ...” (Thus Jerry Kaufman, who adds:) “Tell C. Atkinson I have a horrible picture of her from the Brit in 87 party, in which she looks sour, suspicious and hostile. Did I capture the true Atkinson?” ... **Fantasycon Awards**: Peter Straub’s *Floating Dragon* (novel), Karl Edward Wagner’s “Neither Brute Nor Human” (short), Ro Pardoe’s *Ghosts And Scholars* (small press), Rowena Morrill (Artist), *Videodrome* (film), Don and Elsie Wollheim (having been around a long time). At the con an outraged Tanith Lee demanded that the vile Neil Gaiman be cast out onto the street for general malpractice: he got his comeuppance at an Unwin launch party where to his disgust he learnt that several fans thought his *Knave* bits were by D. Langford (perish the thought). “Such an obvious *pseudonym*, after all,” said Colin Greenland sweetly ... **Rob Holdstock Shaves Off Beard!** (What d’you mean, “is that all?” When Frank Herbert shaves off his beard he gets front-page coverage in *Locus* – isn’t our Rob news too? Oh) ... **Cheap Printing**, or rather photocopying (up to A3 size) is offered to fans by Mike Costello, who eagerly awaits your SAEs-for-details at 17 Langbank Ave, Rise Park, Nottingham, NG5 5BU ... **APAs**: The blight continues to spread, its latest outbreak being provisionally titled **Da Organization**, run by Stan Eling at 124 Galton Rd, Smethwick, Warley, Birmingham. In reaction the Astral League has announced **Apa Astral**: “THESE SOCALLED APAS ARE NOT IDEOLOGICALLY SOUND ... THE ASTRAL LEAUGE WILL TAKE MEASURES. You are advised hereby for the final time not to take notice of any except APA ASTRAL. This is FOR YOUR OWN GOOD. In other APAs it is all trivial like whether Tedy Bears have feelings or if rubber is bad for the skin but in APA ASTRAL it is more COSMIC which is IMPORTANT.” 50p to the usual address. By the way, D. West appears to have landed a job as part-time librarian and bought a suit. He’s in the

children's section. Please close your eyes for one moment and imagine this....

Folies Bergeron: the biggest downer of 80s fandom, for me, has been Richard Bergeron's§; incredible, vindictive accusation that Avedon Carol fiddled TAFF in favour of a Welsh boyfriend. In RB's weird world, the statement that D. West's domino games are a boring spectator sport ranks as crafty poisoning of voter's minds against dynamic extrovert D.: and so on, and on. I can't cope ... **TAFF** ballots will circulate at Novacon etc: Patrick and Teresa Nielsen Hayden vs. Rich Coad, victor(s) travelling to Yorcon III, deadline end '84, more from Hansen, 9a Greenleaf Rd, East Ham, E6 1DX. **SEFF** (to Swecon, Aug 85) looks like Steve Green vs Hans-Jurgen Mader, nominations (to C. Fine or A. Engholm, addresses elsewhere) close 1 Dec ...

Booker Horror! J.G. Ballard's failure to win (I hope not because the judges reacted against media enthusiasm for JGB, or his "shady SF background") was the big news, eclipsing the actual winner – Anita Brookner's *Hotel Du Lac* ...

Troutmania: in the afterglow of Albacon 84, the Glasgow mob has been speaking expansively of bidding for a Eurocon, a Novacon (!), a Worldcon ...

Updates: instead of the \$1M+ rumoured in A39, Clarke flogged his next 2 novels for \$1.10 (10 cents for *Songs Of Distant Earth*, \$1 for *20,001: The Final* – you should be so lucky – *Odyssey*), anticipating colossal royalties. His reaction to his success in getting USSR editor V. Zakharchenko sacked (he serialized *2010* and failed to notice that ALL Russian characters are named for dissidents) is not known ... *Citadel Of The Autarch* won the JWC memorial award ...

To The Stars will carry fiction despite preliminary ads. (*SFC*) ...

Britain In 87 pre-supports well over 600 and rising steeply ...

Births / Marriages / Deaths: Babies have emanated from Pat (& Graham) Charnock – Daniel, b. 14 Oct – and Helen (& Mike) McNabb – Nicol, b. 17 July. Further ones are expected from Kath Mitchell (& Leroy Kettle: they got married on 20 Oct to celebrate, with J. Brosnan officiating as best man with his usual tact and taste, and a rare sighting of Peter Roberts) and Faith Brooker – hers and Chris Evans's is bound to be fannish, the words "conceived at Mexican" being on many lips ... Deaths were many, especially in medialand (cf. Richard Burton's posthumous appearance in 1984): most notable SF-linked obits are Walter Tevis, Aug 10, and J.B. Priestley, Aug 14 ...

Greg Benford rang on 18 Oct to say he was in Britain, had just been in Moscow and was about to be in California ...

Judy Lawrence has been trying to flog something called *The Tabby Tarot*, intended to lure fans of both cabbala and cats ...

Geoff Ryman topped the *Interzone* reader's poll with

“The Unconquered Country”, to appear ere long in book form. (Wonderful mag, they’ve bought one of my stories at last. *The Plain People Of Moreton Pinkney*: “H’m, sold out, have you?”) ... **R.I. Barycz** reports on the film of Bongyear’s “Enemy Mine”: “Wolfgang (*Neverending Story*) Petersen into the director’s chair with enough clout to junk several megabucks’ worth of film already shot. Now there is not only going to be your noble Earth Pilot & your alien in a rubber suit crash-landed, but also a young woman pilot *and* (wait for it) a little boy ... *Space Vampires* now known as *Lifeforce* & scheduled for June 85 release. Feeble title. Something tells me it will end up as *Space Vampires* by then ... *Bug Jack Barron* apparently to be made as a mundane, not SF, flick – sort of Russell Harty with more teeth & charisma – as Costa Gavras doesn’t want to do skiffy. *The Stars My Destination* (Bester) definitely set for Sept 85 starts at Elstree on \$30M budget!” (*RIB*) ... **Trufan** = “dedicated fan of *Star Trek*”, says R. Green’s *Newspeak*....

§ Hazel’s Language Lessons #31: Swahili

hatinafsi (n.) used of a person taking an action without consulting anybody because he thinks they may try to persuade him not to do it.

ANSIBLE 40: Dave Langford,
94 London Road, Reading,
Berks, RG1 5AU, ENGLAND

***Ansible* 41**

December 1984

ANSIBLE 41 confronts the impending horrors of 1985, but not with any great effect. Still in charge: DAVE LANGFORD of 94 LONDON RD, READING, BERKSHIRE, RG1 5AU, England. Predictions of grossly inflationary subscription increases are borne out by our NEW RATES: 5 issues for £2.00 sterling. Notes to me, cheques/money orders to *Ansible*, Girobank transfer to a/c 24 475 4403, \$3.50 US to agents Mary & Bill Burns, 23 Kensington Ct, Hempstead, NY 11550. The mysterious silence of Leigh Edmonds has delayed plans for a handy Aussie subscription rate & local address (anyone else interested?). Cartoon by ATOM, mailing labels lovingly hand-crafted on vellum by KEITH FREEMAN, last issue's collation by Chris Hughes and Andrew Stephenson – not to mention the debut of FANG the electric stapler. Mailing label explanation: let's face it, no one ever understands or reads this bit, but the secret is to SEND MONEY unless your label says TRADE or features a number higher than 41. Date: December 1984.

The Small Print: *Brian Stableford* is looking for cheap copies of his sf novel *The Walking Shadow* (which did so well as to sell out completely in 7 weeks, whereupon Fontana declined to reprint) and is interested in hearing from you at 113, St Peter's Rd, Reading, Berks, RG6 1PG. *Horst G. Troster* of Escherscheimer Landstr 319, D-6000 Frankfurt/M 1, W Germany, is eager to contact anyone with tapes of the original Hitch-Hiker series with a view to p*r*cy/purchase/swap. **Hazel's Language Lessons** are real and come from real dictionaries (to assure new subscribers who've expressed Doubt). *Andy Richards* sends background from *Pages From The Book of III: A Prydain Glossary* (TK Graphics) ... "*Hazel Nuts Of Wisdom*. These remarkable nuts, which enabled the eater to understand the language of animals, grew on only one hazel tree in Prydain ..." No comment from Hazel. [ISSN 0265-9816]

Novacon 14

Birmingham 9-12 Nov 1984

One awesome fact loomed above all others at Novacon, and that was guest of honour Rob Holdstock's imminent change of address to **54 Raleigh Road, London, N.8**, phone 01-348-5727. ("I'm famous," he said. "I want a big *prominent* CoA notice, none of your mingy little duplicated bits at the back." OK, boss.)

Convention sensawonder began for us in a semi-infinite, rain-lashed NEC car park. "We're late for our Contravention meeting at the exhibition hotel!" shrieked Chris Hughes, hurling Hazel and me dextrously from his car and rattling off with Jan to plot the future of Eastercons. Several monsoon seasons later we found a station, a train, Birmingham, the Grand Hotel and a closed bar (in that order). The venue change from the Royal Angus freshened the con no end, with so many more rooms in which to see the programme not happening; layout was particularly eldritch, inexplicable flights of stairs in mid-corridor and a behind-the-scenes labyrinth recalling *The Name Of The Rose*. One hoped short cut between floors led me after many adventures to a forbidden balcony full of lighting gear, overlooking the main hall.

Merciful oblivion surrounds my Saturday morning blither, misdrafted on Wednesday while Steve Higgins duplicated millions of fanzines mere inches from the back of my neck; it was, by request, all about *The Leaky Establishment* and the jokes are far too classified to quote. Later, R. Holdstock confronted me: "You *bastard*," he said. "I hear your talk was so good, my GoH speech is going to be a pathetic anticlimax. I'll *get* you for this ..." John Brosnan, it seemed, had been cheering Rob with not wholly sincere reports of 10 minute standing ovations – I should be so lucky. Rob's speech I rather liked; it moved from nervous fannish jokes (and declarations of true lust for Jan Huxley) to a thesis on Arthurian Myth In The Novels Of Robert P. Holdstock. A few fans' minds proved insufficiently cosmic to cope with both. I contrived to miss the "Krapton Factor" game and never discovered the nature of its dreaded food assault course (when questioned, those in the know turned delicate avocado-colour and clapped hands over their mouths). An art auction saw staggeringly colossal bids, enough to make my bank manager put on the black cap, while Pete Lyon's tatty con-clothes began somehow to look like the affectation of an eccentric millionaire. Chuck Harris, surprise revenant fan of the con, was heard to ask the cost of paint-by-

numbers kits.

Most soothing party: Beccon's, whose olde-worlde atmosphere revived the dying art of party chat. Most street-credible: Mexicon's, of course, with its merciless right-and-left assault of Disaster Area rock music and Agent Orange punch. (I stopped being street credible a while ago.) Best Rumour: that Bob (fake) Shaw, whose book trade is said to have diversified into porn, had arrived on his motorbike for a Novacon at the usual time and place: several hundred yards away and a week before. This, as a ghastly example of what happens when you let your *Ansible* subscription lapse, went straight into the Too Good To Check pigeonhole.

Linda Strickler James took me warmly by the throat and explained that last issue I'd been naughty, chiefly by failing to realize her Yorcon II rank of "co-ordinator" is what in lesser cons would be called "chair". Mike Sherwood confided that Space-Ex 84's revised August Bank Holiday date was cancelled with seconds to spare, that 40 of several thousand expected fans turned up, and that the whole debacle was now "put forward" to 1986 – oh God! Bob Shaw said he'd never buy a word processor, even as Chris Priest, far off in America, was slowly succumbing (after years of denouncing the vile machines he's bought himself an Apricot). Barry Bayley said he never worried about being remaindered, and had some more drinks while I gnashed my teeth over Arrow's perfidy (the usual: *Space Eater* remaindered, without warning, in breach of contract, and newish Arrow MD Nick Webb thinks he can smooth it over with a flabby apology – ha!).

The closing ceremony was weird. Nova awards went to Dave Wood's *Xyster* as best fanzine (runners-up *This Never Happens* and *For Paranoids Only*), D. West as fanartist (2nd Atom, 3rd Margaret Welbank) and Anne Warren as fanwriter (2nd me, 3rd tied between Mal Ashworth & Nigel Richardson). It was evident that of possible voting blocs feared by paranoids – born-again 50s fans, 70s elitists, apas, women – *all* had successfully manipulated the award! Huge cheers greeted the Concrete Overcoat Fan Fund presentation; detailed voting figures would appear here had proprietor Kev Clarke sent them. The Big 3, says my notebook, were Ian Sorensen (73 votes), Novacon chair Steve Green (100) and, winner with 149, Richard Bergeron. Puerto Rico being far away, Rob Hansen accepted the trophy on Richard's behalf, not without the shadow of some emotion passing over his face. Then – controversy! Rob Holdstock having often told the committee that as GoH he

wished to be fawned on by bevvies of naked dancing girls, they took him approximately at his word and hired a “kissogram” greeting – only for a rumoured Hidden Hand to pay the extra £60 for a “strippogram”. The Holdstock grin froze as things jiggled in front of it. Bob Shaw wailed his regret at having missed it all; others were less keen, and protests both verbal and written were duly delivered to the committee (doubtless very properly, though Hazel and I had the rebellious thought that when public breastfeeding and the odd bare bosom in the Fancy Dress are seemingly OK, it seemed a trifle much to express huge horror that “*children* should be subjected to the display”. Hell, she kept her g-string on ... [*]). Subsequently one committee member dropped out of fandom, while Steve Green says he’ll attend no more big cons except –

Novacon 15 passes into the hands of Phill Probert and will cost you £7, to 32 Digby House, Colletts Grove, Kingshurst, Birmingham, B37 6JE. I rather look forward to returning to the Grand, where we had a hell of a good time.

[*] *Others have since insisted that the observation “she kept her g-string on” was incorrect and that the Novacon stripper did in fact Reveal All. Correction accepted. All this was near the close of a somewhat alcoholic weekend.*

Frankie Comes from Hollywood Neil Gaiman

Frank Herbert turned up for a brief press conference on the *Dune* debacle – er, film – a few weeks ago. There were only two people there who had actually read anything he’d written – myself, and a bald journalist in a shabby mac (yes, I know that describes most of them) who tended to ask magnificent questions like “I read *Dune* the first time it came out and the thing that struck me then as indeed it seems to have struck most of the reading populace is that it’s a great story, a wonderful story, I thought the way it unfolded, the way it was sustained, there was so much imagination involved in it. Later on as the years went on, I suppose people have read things into it, I suppose the same thing happened with *Lord Of The Rings* and lots of other things. The whole SF genre in general ... I’m sorry I shall get to the question ... is entertainment still your first priority, Mr Herbert?”

Herbert: I'd feel a helluva lot more comfortable if you'd call me Frank, guys.

Bald Journalist in Mac who Woffled: Er, thank you, er, Frank ...

Herbert: Yes it is. Next question?

... etc, etc. Mainly he said what a nice, good, great, magnificent, marvellous, fab, cool, groovy, hip, zowie-gosh film *Dune* was. He also answered questions like, "As a science fiction writer, people will of course assume you are a weirdo who believes in UFOs?"

Herbert: Well, I do believe in UFOs – unidentified flying objects. Please don't hear that as anything else.

Reporter: No, no, of course, understood, yes. Do you get a lot of people giggling at you because of your beliefs, being seen as a crank etc? [Visions of I HAVE SEEN THE SAUCER PEOPLE SAYS DUNE MAN headlines leaping about him.]

Herbert: I don't think you entirely understood me ...

It might have been a livelier time if *anybody* there had seen the film, but since it still hadn't been previewed a scant month before release date ... (I think they're scared. Preview is 2 days before it goes on release!) (NG)

Amazing Literary Revelations from the Usual Moles

Brian Aldiss: "Germany has just phoned to say I have won the Lasswitz award for Best Foreign Novel of '83 (*Helliconia Spring*). The Lasswitz is the Booker Prize of Westphalia, by the way ... It would have cheered you to be at the Priest pad for Halloween, where a number of magical realists told spine-chilling and gonad-warming ghost stories." (BA)

John Brosnan: "Bob Shaw isn't the only one to have a 'spontaneous combustion' book coming out from Granada in paperback. My own – now called, I think, *Torched!* after originally being called *Sizzle*, then *The Searing* – will be leaving a fiery trail through the publishing firmament in mid-85. It's very different from Bob's, being a sleazy exploitation job with which I'm quite pleased. It will give a whole new meaning to the term 'hot flushes' ... Isn't it time you gave a plug to the sterling efforts of Harry Adam Knight, especially as his 3rd book will be out by your next issue? It is, of course,

called *The Fungus* and is so disgusting that two copyeditors at Star had to be hospitalized while working on it. [So far I've been lucky and received no review copies of any HAK books. Nor invitations to the sumptuous launch parties. DRL]

“Sad news from *Starburst* mag – editor Alan McKenzie has had enough and has resigned. The management threaten to change *Starburst*'s format and make it ‘more juvenile’. No need for obvious jokes like ‘How?’ – countless others have got there before you. But seriously, such a change will mean an end of the few intellectual bits of the mag – Chris Evans's book review section and my column, for example. The management are waiting to see how the special *Ghostbusters* and *Gremlins* issues do before their final decision. Even if they don't change the format they insist future issues will be in much ‘larger type’. A sign of the times. [Chris Evans since tells me he's got in with a pre-emptive resignation: D]

“And now a gem for your collection of Great Moments From The Slushpile, from an Australian MS I was sent to read. ‘He gasped. “I've never seen anything like this. Even remotely. What's its form of space propulsion?” / “Yes,” he said eagerly as he activated his sensor converter. / “From what I've been told, I think it will somehow overcome the laws binding the dimensions together, up to the sixth. And then, using a mix of gravity and anti-gravity, a controlled space whirlpool with the power of the big bang is formed. But in a tight beam so that only the ship which is enveloped in a special negative dimensional field, is sucked into the vortex.” / “You've explained that quite well, Trisha,” Jesse complemented [sic] as he walked towards the awesome ship.’

“From the same MS, a classic line: ‘She was a fish out of water in a man's arms.’ Aren't we all?” [John Brosnan – who's only half the man Harry Adam Knight is.]

Malcolm Edwards: “I'd love to think that our bog has been immortalized by Tom Disch. Maybe so, but I should just point out that Gollancz didn't turn down *The Businessman*. Tom turned down our offer ... Take a look at Howard Jacobson's new novel *Peeping Tom* (widely praised of late). There is a character called Dr Rowland Fitzpiers, ‘large and dark and affable’ with ‘heavy black brows’ and a beard. He is an academic grown keen on sf, and is first seen explaining how all the great 19th century novels are really sf. He

also has lots of girlfriends who are ‘all the ex-wives or mistresses of sf writers.’ I’m sure even those of us who met Jacobson when he was best man at Peter Nicholls’s and Clare Coney’s wedding will realize that there are no *roman à clef* elements in this characterization.” (ME)

Maxim Jakubowski: “Being called a cretin by Peter Nicholls (A40) is, I feel, a worthwhile achievement and I now consider myself a genuine part of the Nicholls Pantheon. Seriously though, the Allen & Unwin encyclopaedia project has sold to the US at Frankfurt and as soon as all contractual matters have been finalized I shall enter a major period of commissioning.” (MJ) [who like PN is doing *The Encyc. of Fantasy ...*]

Ian Watson: “Once more into the political fray! Last night I was adopted as Labour candidate to contest the fair city of Lactodorum, more recently known as Towcester, and its surrounding demesnes, in the May County Council elections. Incumbent: a Liberal. Tory White Hope: Lord Hesketh.” (IW)

Arthur C. Clarke’s new puffsheets lists the 2010 UK film debut (9 March), and in the same month the start of an “ITV series” called *Arthur C. Clarke’s World Of Strange Powers*. Egad....

William Gibson sends a poster for Katebushcon 1 (Winnipeg, June 84); in revenge I quote his *Neuromancer* p44: “the interzone where art wasn’t quite crime, crime wasn’t quite art.”

“The Usual Vile Lies & Slander” Martin Morse Wooster

World Fantasy Con: my spy Deep Troll reports the most thrilling scene was at the Sunday afternoon banquet. This was held at 2pm by con organizers who apparently forgot that the last southbound flight from Ottawa was scheduled at 4pm. 88 fans were booked for it, and during the banquet the crowd became strangely depopulated as they fled to avoid another night of Arctic terror; Peter Straub went so far as to disappear before a scheduled award presentation. Imagine the delighted fannish mob discovering at the airport that the flight was, alas, cancelled. More famous agents and authors apparently disgraced the airport’s coffee shop than anyone would have the right to expect....

Amsterdam In '88? This is the goal of notorious New York fan Neil Belsky, who recently discovered the enormous subsidies given by the Dutch Minister of Culture and is planning a Netherlands Worldcon bid comprised entirely of American fans. Reportedly Kees van Toorn was approached, but Belsky is going full steam ahead, talking at endless length to anyone who will listen about thrilling plans for subsidized airfares, subsidized hotel rooms, &c.

The Sagan Watch: Imminent publication of Carl Sagan's famous novel *Contact* (*Ansible, passim*) has caused numerous moles and hatchetmen to emerge from the woodwork with this vile rumour – *C* has apparently been farmed out to a hack we will call Sci-Fi Writer X. X is to receive 10% of the gross in return for ensuring that *C* remains a credible sf novel, that the plagiarisms are kept reasonably restrained, and that the writer Deny All if asked about ghosting. Speculation abounds as to who Mr X may be, but the most likely candidate is Jerry Sohl.

[EDITORIAL NOTE TO ON-LINE EDITION: Mr Wooster's fantasies about Carl Sagan are included for historical completeness and should by no means be regarded as gospel.]

The situation was masterminded by Simon & Schuster's Ron Busch, whose first encounter with sf came in 1976 when he was at Ballantine and Judy-Lynn del Rey rushed into his office with stills from an obscure project called *Star Wars*. "We could make millions from this" Ms del Rey said. "Little girl, why don't you take your toys and go home," Mr Busch reportedly replied. "We grownups need to work." Del Rey proceeded to make millions from *Star Wars* while Busch lost \$3M on Doctorow's *Loon Lake* and \$1M on John Irving's *The Hotel New Hampshire*.

The person ultimately responsible for *Contact* is none other than Francis Ford Coppola. In 1979 Mr Coppola, looking for a way to save the ailing Zoetrope Studios, discovered that sf films made zillions of dollars and proposed an sf mini-series to NBC. He reportedly thrashed about for a Big Name to attach to this to make it sell – someone large, cosmically minded ... Carl Sagan! CS agreed to participate; S&S, sensing that the Coppola/Sagan collaboration would make zillions of dollars, agreed and gave Sagan the fabled \$2M contract. The Coppola floundered, dropped out, and left the world with a forthcoming novelization for a never-to-be-made Coppola movie. So it goes. (MMW)

Cymrucon 2-4 November 1984

Dave Wood has desperate fun in S. Wales:

The 1984 Cardiff con has cym and gone with a massive turnout in the wake of poor advertising and the really inspired notion of running it a mere week before Novacon. Rumour has it that the fake Bob Shaw will be advising next year's committee on the benefits of holding it on the same week as Novacon 85. Sydney Jordan is to be approached ... 42nd Squadron, flushed with their triumph as Seacon, were in full force, the Dez Skinn Appreciation Society swelled the audience to approx 300 (committee estimate) though to an impartial observer i.e. self the place seemed deserted – one could get to the bar with no problem, the battle was to attract the attention of the massive bar contingent and *he* always seemed to be round the back in the kitchen ... Fannish-world count added up to a baker's dozen who sat bemoaning that it had All Gone Wrong. GoH Ken Bulmer fought his way to the rostrum amid cheering support from an audience of 45, following committeeman Neil Burgess's rousing intro ("You all know him and so I won't waste any time introducing him," etc). Bulmer, analyzing the potential of his audience, launched into Future Sex in SF – a serious talk, honest ... By 4 pm Sat one Newport fan was seriously debating whether to stay or go home for a bath; thanks to the efforts of Martin & Katie Hoare plus quantities of Brains SA found in a variety of seedy hostelrys, he was still there inebriated and unwashed on Sun afternoon, eyeing up the knickers of various females. Amazing incidents were few. The 24-hour "we won't be closing" bar had shutters down at 8.30am on Sunday, thus defeating attempts by Dave Wood, Mike Sherwood and A Certain Newport Fan to get a pre-breakfast pint. One exciting moment came when Katie H breathlessly announced she'd heard there were *hookers* in the basement. This was greeted with a surge of apathy by all present, though for the next ten minutes male members of the party kept having to visit the loos in the basement. I found no trace of the ladies in question. Finally made my escape amid cries of "see you at Novacon" and blooded oaths that *nothing* would induce us to return to Cardiff 1-3 Nov 1985, see you there?

The certain Newport fan – initials AH – cannot be mentioned as (following the backlash of Security Fear in fandom?) there was no sign of any checking

as to who had registered for the con: this gentleman never got round to actually laying out hard cash for his scintillating weekend. He was the lucky one. (DW)

*** *Later, the Certain Newport Fan gloated that when he returned legless from Sat-night pub crawling an off-sober committee overcame hotel suspicions by guilelessly vouching for the CNF as a Cymrucon member. Shock horror, etc. (DRL)*

Cons

Silicone is a (surprise) Silicon-style event: 15-18 Feb in the Doric Hotel, Edinburgh, £4 to 191 Easter Rd, Edinburgh, EH6 8LF. If I can face the trip I might even be there....

Dragoncon 3: 27 Jan (10am-10pm) The Bull, East Sheen with Anne McCaffrey (“provisionally”) & Jack Cohen. £7 to 131 Sheen Lane, London, SW14 8AE....

Yorcon III persists with membership said to be approaching 300 (is that all?) and a sensible proposal from Paul Oldroyd – not wearing his committee hat – that two-year Eastercon bidding be introduced in 1986....

Beccon 85 is fully booked (i.e. waiting list for accommodation) and has produced *The 1984 Eurocon Press Report*, a handy 18pp A5 booklet on (basically) how author Jon Cowie press-officered Seacon 84, with hopeful 87 Worldcon tips. 75p post free from 75 Rosslyn Ave, Harold Wood, Essex....

Albacon 85: 19-22 July, Central Hotel, Glasgow, GoH H. Ellison & A. McCaffrey. £8 to 20 Hillingdon Gdns, Cardonald Glasgow, G52 2TP ...
Camcon aka **Unicon 6:** 13-15 Sept 85, New Hall Coll, Cambridge, CB2 3QY....

Contravention, unusual among 86 Eastercon bids for not picking Glasgow as venue, has settled on the Birmingham Metropole near (but not using the hangar-like halls of) the NEC. Think I’ll be voting for them – we could certainly use a “new” Eastercon venue ... (*Glasgow Fandom*: “Sod you, Langford.”)

TAFF Bits

A Statement By D. West: “As the losing candidate I wish to make it absolutely clear that I have no complaints whatsoever about either the result or the administration of the 1983/84 TAFF election. I consider that the attacks made upon the integrity of Avedon Carol as North American TAFF administrator are wholly unjustified and unjustifiable and represent nothing more solid than slurs and innuendoes arising from personal animosity and malice. To date no evidence at all has been produced to show that Avedon Carol is guilty of any wrongdoing, and I therefore call upon those concerned either to produce their proofs without further delay and equivocation or to make a full public withdrawal of their allegations. In the event that this is not speedily done I urge fans everywhere to join me in publicly condemning with the utmost severity the behaviour of Avedon Carol’s attackers.” (DW, 24 Oct 84)

[No proofs have appeared, though the astonishingly malicious Puerto Rico fan – whose name will no more disfigure these pages – has indulged in further spitefulness which he calls proof but shows only his wish to hurt and wound.]

Important. Vaguely connected with the above is a further attempt to use TAFF as a weapon, by Central US fans wishing to settle scores with the East and West coasts. The idea is to swamp the voting with endless write-ins for one Martha Beck (who’s showed *none* of the transatlantic interest which should be a sine qua non for candidates). Votes are being whipped up at Central US cons, by appeals to local chauvinism and efforts to stir up resentment between “con” and “fanzine ” fans. If successful, this would incidentally disenfranchise British fandom altogether (cf. the Hugos) and kill TAFF – what Brit will bother when the US block vote will always have the final word? *Please* use the TAFF ballot with this issue. I particularly recommend the Nielsen Haydens for your vote.

COA

Jeremy Crampton, 168 West Hamilton Ave, State College, PA 16801, USA ::
Mike Dickinson & Jackie Gresham, 6 Skelgill Rd, Putney, London, SW.15
 (“But that’s Helen Starkey’s address,” you say, baffled. Hang on) :: Colin

Fine, 205 Coldham's Lane, Cambridge, CB1 3HY :: Rob Holdstock – don't look here, it's Page One news! :: Ake Jonsson, Sernanders vag 1/519, S752 61 Uppsala, Sweden :: John C. Kerr, 84 Fordwych Rd, West Hampstead, London, NW2 3TJ :: Naveed Khan (back at last), 6 Kelvinside Gdns East, Glasgow, G20 6BE :: Steve Mowbray, 96/2 Nicolson St, Edinburgh, EH8 9EW :: David S. Power, 13 Hawthorne Rd, Chippenham, Wilts :: Geoff Rippington, 8 Ravensbourne Dr, Woodley, Reading, RG5 4LH :: Helen Starkey, Top Flat (Left), 112 Polwarth Gdns, Edinburgh, EH11 1LH (“But that's Owen Whiteoak's address,” you say, baffled.) :: Pascal J. Thomas, PO Box 24495, Los Angeles, CA 90024, USA :: Owen Whiteoak has not, we believe, moved :: *ANSIBLE* RETURNED IN “GONE AWAY” HORROR – whither Matt Sillars formerly of 8 Beaverbank Pl, Edinburgh? :: Oops, a late item – Linda Blanchard and rich brown appear to have moved in different directions to, respectively, c/o Weatherlow, 21339 Willow Lane, Stringsville, OH 44136, USA *and* 1014 N. Tuckahoe, Falls Church, VA 22046-3645, USA (“But that's Ted White's address ...”).

Infinitely Improbable

***600200#** is what you type at any Prestel terminal to get to the utterly triffic Langford-edited SF news/reviews pages. Practically the first thing I did was to break the current “no political activity on Prestel” rule and insert an electronic petition form enabling everyone to protest against the sinister Treasury proposal to slap 15% VAT on books, etc. Interested fans can collect signatures locally, to the WE ARE AGAINST VAT ON READING petition, and bung them off to Nat. Book Committee, Book House, 45 East Hill, SW18 2QX. 105 fans signed this at the December One Tun! A lot were also signing the Pickersgills' petition to “protest the use of British TAFF funds to support candidates who have no contact with or interest in British fandom” – details from 7a Lawrence Rd, S Ealing, London, W5 4XJ ... **Roz Kaveney** has resigned as Chatto & Windus SF person: “a matter of principle” after decisions to cut back SF etc were taken without consultation while she was away in hospital ... **Britain In 87** has expanded with a bidding committee reshuffle – Martin Tudor has left and several new fans have joined, including Paul Oldroyd, Chris Donaldson and Linda Pickersgill. US agent Marty Cantor reports that the opposing US bid, Phoenix in 87, “decided to convert

their bid to a NASFiC bid. They are leaving their name on the Worldcon ballot but are now actively campaigning for NASFiC. Bruce Farr, bid leader, handed me a flyer announcing these intentions.” Marty further conveys that LA-Con profits look to be some \$75,000, of which \$250 goes to TAFF though not until R. Hansen publishes his complete report. (Ouch) ... **Appeals:** **Ian Watson** begs “a noble Spanish-speaking soul to translate (unpaid) an essay of splendid quality on Argentinian SF of about 12,000 words for *Foundation*. Said volunteer (please contact me via *Ansible*) will receive eternal fame and 2 years’ free sub to *Foundation*!!” **Paul Barnett**, presuming on Hazel’s and my enormous gratitude at being featured in the dedication of his new “John Grant” novel *The Truth About The Flaming Ghoulies* (h’mm), is interested in testing his theory that SF fans tend not to be amateur cricket players and vice-versa. All cricket-playing *Ansible* readers are begged to write to him (84 Wykes Rd, Exeter, EX1 2UD). No, I don’t know why ... **John Piggott Writes!!** “Bloody hell – Kettle nuptials shock! It’s enough to make one glad one’s sub to *Risible* has expired. Mind you, the spectre of the forthcoming Kettle infant pales into insignificance when compared with the Piggott three (no. 3 born 26 May this year, making 1 girl, 2 boys), which explains some of my continuing inactivity.” (JP) ... **George Hay** has achieved great kudos as guest editor of the special “Applied SF” issue of *Science & Public Policy* (Oct 84); its 331 pages will cost you a mere £13.60 ... **GUFF:** nominations deadline extended to the end of December. The candidates are ever-cuddly Eve Harvey and ever-cool John Jarrold (whom I seem to have nominated) ...

This fanzine supports PATRICK & TERESA NIELSEN HAYDEN for TAFF; CONTRAVENTION for Eastercon 86; and JOHN HARVEY for doing this issue’s usual electrostencil. (DRL)

Hitch-Hiker’s Guide – The Movie is to start filming in May with the same production team as *Ghostbusters* (thus D. Adams on LBC radio recently). It’ll contain material from the first three books but, wisely, not the fourth ... **LAZLAR LYRICON** (25-27 MAY, Strathallan Hotel, Brum) is a Hitcher con costing an appalling £16.50 to 10 Bourne Parade, Bourne Rd, Bexley, Kent DA5 1LQ ... **The Barycz File:** “More media bits to put in A where they, rather than items of importance, may be obliterated by the postmark.” (Oops, I’ve been rumbled – DRL) “Lucas being sued by one Lee M. Seiler of

SanFran, artist/modelmaker, over creatures in *Empire Strikes Back*. Unfortunately he says his original drawings were destroyed in a 1979 flood and the judge won't allow substitutes as evidence. Now one of the alleged thefts is/was a 'Garthian Sprinter': I remember issue 1 of *Unearth* (US SF mag, 1978) had a full-page ad for skiffy type models featuring the words 'Garthian Sprinter'. Later issues had irate letters: fans sent cheques (cashed) but got no skiffy models. *Unearth* ed commiserated: ad placer hadn't paid for his ad, final demands were coming back marked 'gorn away' etc. The sweet irony of it all, if it has anything to do with Mr Seiler that is ... **OBITS:** Richard Brautigan (49) of *Hawkline Monster*, *In Watermelon Sugar* and others which, like much 60s West Coast scribbling, used sf elements. Francois Truffaut (52) who directed *Fahrenheit 451* and appeared in *Close Encounters* ... Spielberg writing script for *POLTERGEIST II* in special ink supposed to fade instantly if exposed to light from a duplicating machine. A very old one, not the new types with 0.001 sec double flash; also he seems blissfully aware of mini-cameras etc. Precaution seems excessive – it's going to be about mobile rotting corpses of a restless disposition, everybody knows that.... Warner's being sued for \$17,000,000 unpaid royalties on *ET* computer game and others, \$14M for *ET* alone. Seems video game freaks don't want to spend their quarters helping *ET* phone home, they'd much rather kill quadrillions of little green wogs ... R. Corman does his *Conan The Barbarellian 2* ripoff with something called *The Warrior & The Sorceress* with a full page ad of David Carradine taking his sword to the tentacles of an octopus plant. Assume he's the Warrior & it's the Sorceress he's busy rescuing from this affectionate piece of vegetation. She'll be tricky to cast. The ad shows she has to have four tits." (R.I. Barycz) ... **Serious Science:** Bob Shaw's 1982-84 Eastercon speeches are now available: £1 (£1.50 signed) from Eve Harvey, 43 Harrow Rd, Carshalton, Surrey, SM5 3QH, or – since this is to fund a Shaw visit to Aussiecon – Marc Ortlieb in Australia. Learn why "near Basingstoke there is a pond full of newts which bear an uncanny resemblance to Dave Langford" ... **John W. Campbell's Collected Letters** – George Hay exults over vol. 1 of this many-year project, now in proof from Perry Chapdelaine (USA) ... **D. Langford** loses further street credibility, flogs poem to *Amazing*, hopes no one will notice.

Hazel's Language Lessons #32: Sinhalese

akshauhini: a complete army

consisting of 109350 foot, 65610
horse, 21870 chariots and 21870
elephants.

atura: tying cocoanut trees together
from the top, to enable toddy drawers
to walk from one tree to another
without descending when they are
extracting toddy.

miyuru: peacock; liquorice; frog

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Ansible 42

March 1985

ANSIBLE 42 is the ultimate answer to ... well, it must have been a pretty bloody stupid question. Other such questions are: who edits it? (Dave Langford, 94 London Road, Reading, Berks, RG1 5AU, UK). What is it? (A: a tasteful SF newsletter bringing you the latest edifying information from SFWA etc. B: a loathsome and far too infrequent scandal-sheet wallowing in all manner of moral decay. C: Hold Over Funds.) How can its unfortunate addicts get their almost regular fix of 5 more issues? (A: £2 cash/cheque/money order to *Ansible* at the editorial address. B: Girobank transfer to a/c 24 475 4403. C: \$3.50 US to Mary & Bill Burns, 23 Kensington Ct, Hempstead, NY 11550, USA. D: \$4A to Irwin Hirsh – our NEW AUSSIE AGENT – 279 Domain Rd, S. Yarra, Vic 3141, changing in April to 2/416 Dandenong Rd, North Caulfield, Vic 3161, Australia. E: Don't know.) Who did the cartoons? (A: Alexis Gilliland. B: A very clever Alexis Gilliland parodist.) And the mailing labels? (A: Keith Freeman. B: But really Keith Freeman's tame computer. C: But really the long-suffering tax-payer via long-suffering educational budgets....) And the collation? (A: William T. Goodall and Alison Haston last issue. B: Dunno who this issue. C: You mean like a cold collation?) What does LASTISH 43 mean? (A: Your subscription runs out next issue. B: At least it didn't say SUB DUE, meaning you ran out THIS issue. C: It says *****? Boy, you really are in trouble. Better not to ask.) Why is this issue so late, then? (A: No award. B: Conservative. C: March 1985. D: Don't know. E: Hazel's Language Lesson was contributed by famous Nigel E. Richardson.) Can I phone you on 0734 665804? (A: No. B: Pardon?) What's happened to the typeface this issue? (A: Rampant technophilia. B: Laziness. C: A new Apricot PC. D: Chris Priest. E: Pangolin Systems Ltd. F: Most of the above.) Why? (A: Why not?)

PRIEST FILM TERROR Having mastered his new word processor to the extent of a 12,000 word short called "The Ament", Chris deliriously reports: "*The Glamour* has sold film rights to Lawrence Schiller, who produced and directed *The Executioner's Song*, and who is currently making *Peter The*

Great. When asked for his reaction to the news, Mr Priest said, ‘I’m over the parrot, John’ ... ‘The Ament’ is appearing in a book called *The Seven Deadly Sins* (Severn House, May). The sin I was encouraged to write about was Anger. I requested Random Violence, but this was not on the list. I was disappointed to be reminded that Sloth is a deadly sin, since I have always seen great virtue in this. (PS: The writer who wrote about Sloth was late delivering ...) I’m currently in negotiation with Channel 4 over a one-hour television play.” (CP)

HARRY HARRISON RAVES AGAIN “I been misquoted – the McCaffrey item [in A39?] was not my imagination or mad ravings – but FACTS from an *interview* in an Irish paper. Print instant correction, *Ansible*, or I’ll get Harlan’s lawyer to SUE you!” (HH)

SCOOP REVIEW – well, it would have been if I’d published in December. Jaded, youth-worn Michael Ashley reports: “Hanging around a street corner in Balham jeering at passers-by, I was deemed by a passing Market Researcher to be a member of the general public and given a free ticket to a preview of *Morons From Outer Space*, 1985 release. I went. It’s a comedy about some aliens who crashland on the M1, the comedy stemming from the fact that the aliens are utterly non-alien. (Sample humour: hanging in the cockpit of their spaceship are two furry dice.) I stayed an hour before walking out so I don’t know much of the plot. During this hour I laughed 3 times (one good joke: guy in space helmet clearly going to sneeze and looks desperate. Finally can’t hold it, sneezes violently. Result: space helmet splattered with green gob). The audience wetted themselves uncontrollably at every joke, so it’s probably a safe bet to take your drippy girl/boyfriend on a Friday night if there’s nothing else on. Interesting to note that the makers wouldn’t dare make jokes about race or sex for fear of getting their Arts Council Grant cut off, yet still wring a few jokes from the mentally ill. Laugh? Well, some people did ...” (MA)

RAMSEY CAMPBELL CHANGES NAME TO RAMSEY CAMPBELL “When I came into fandom it was quite a good joke for the Liverpool Group to claim John Campbell as a member, but it’s been a good few years since then. In the interim I’ve grown to dislike being called by the forename, so I’ve had my solicitor rid me of it once and for all.” (RC)

Woostergram

“**Douglas Adams** roared through Washington recently, pausing to catch his breath and hawk the Hitchhiker computer game and *The Meaning Of Liff* to some 500 glazed and scruffy students at the U of Maryland. He revealed that, yes, there will be at least one more Hitcher novel but insisted that there will *not* be any Hitchhiker’s toilet paper. Adams also reported that the long-awaited movie was still in progress, and mentioned a peculiar occupational hazard which only afflicts writers in his tax bracket: ‘I had problems with the script, so the producers put my proposal on the shelf and made another movie you might have heard of – *Ghostbusters*. So now every time I step into the producer’s office, I have to dodge large piles of cash.’ Would that we all had Mr Adams’s problems.

“*Dune* had its world premiere in Washington (3 Dec), and all the world, or at least all of fandom, was there. Your correspondent fulfilled his fantasies of being Tom Wolfe by showing up in a white tuxedo. The stars were present, including Dino de Laurentiis, director David Lynch, vacuously handsome lead Kyle McLachlan, surprisingly aged Francesca Annis, and of course such vastly more important people as Ted White, whose tuxedo was surprisingly clean, and the renowned Avedon Carol, who wore a dress for the second time in recorded history. ‘I *know* things about you,’ she said to me before slinking back into the shadows.

“Frank Herbert subsequently proved his rank of Sci Fi megastar by being invited to a White House state dinner, where he told any illiterate hack who would hear him that ‘There’s a lot of metaphor in my book.’ Producer Rafaella de Laurentiis was more effusive: ‘*Dune* is the story of a charismatic leader. Ronald Reagan is a charismatic leader.’ Oh. What will Joseph Nicholas say?

“**Arthur C. Clarke**, perhaps wondering if Herbert would rise above megastar status to become (gasp!) a Dean of SF, rushed about giving 5,271,009 interviews about *2010: The Sequel*. In an interview he maintained that he was far more than a well paid Del Rey hack: ‘People ask me, do you work for NASA? And I tell them, of course not, NASA works for me.’

“**Tom Disch** is making a video of ‘Pyramids for Minnesota’. The producer is ... my brother-in-law, Steve Meyer. Sci-fi lives!” (*Martin Morse Wooster*)

BSFA CENSORSHIP FUN Monthly BSFA pub meetings developed a hiccup when the formerly hospitable King of Diamonds pub announced

without prior warning that the society was to be banned for filthy practices, such as mentioning CND. Mighty organizer Judith Hanna issued a “shocked” press release, spurring *City Limits* mag to interview the KoD landlord: “It’s not political,” he wailed, “they don’t spend enough. And they have things from Greenpeace and Save the Seals which isn’t science fiction.” Like listening to the old Norwich lot saying “It’s not right, you drink and have fun, which isn’t SF ...” Judith’s replacement venue is the Troopers Arms, Flood St (convenient for Sloane Square but nowhere else): check first on 01-821-8627.

1984/5 TAFF RESULTS Congrats to Patrick & Teresa Nielsen Hayden, whose simple majority victory is detailed in the attached thingy from UK administrator Rob “Full of beans” Hansen. P&TNH’s flyer *Tafflivia* reports a US kitty of \$4417.82 (gosh), mentions that they’ll be here from 29 March to 14/21 April, and offers an “open, publicly accountable forum” for discussion of TAFF – possibly alluding to a current US “open forum” which soothed British fears about That Midwestern Campaign (*A41*) by censoring all references to it in the letters published. (Interesting to see that the divisive campaign defeated itself: horrified reactions swelled voting to a record level.) I gather there’ll be a meeting at Yorcon at which all views on TAFF may be aired.... And now a titbit for those who persevered through the boring parts: TAFF wars having fostered Avedon’s and Rob’s romance (those who noted their extremely occasional and exhausted appearance at Albacon II may find other words springing to mind), Carol/Hansen nuptials are definitely scheduled! Avedon’s early hopes of getting married in some noted fannish home, with D. West officiating, has fortunately been scuppered by British law....

WELL, WE HAVE TO MENTION *DUNE* Instant movie review from Avedon: “Great camera work, fine cast, terrific sets – actors underutilized. I had to look away from the screen during the scene with the Baron. And when I did I saw the rest of the audience looking away from the screen. The beginning drags: as Ted White put it, ‘They followed the book – to a fault.’ I think they could have omitted a lot of that expository sand. But the food at the reception was great.” (*AC*) Biggest laughs at the UK press preview were at the inadequately prefigured line “Your water will mingle with ours” and, in the scene alluded to above, “It is a pleasure to prick your boils, my lord.” I admired the way that subtle Voice training became a vocal kung-fu rapidly taught to recruits (shout at rocks and make them shatter, etc), while the long-

term ecological stuff was neatly sidestepped by having God signal the goodies' victory by laying on a miraculous rainstorm. Gawd. (DRL)

R.I. Barycz adds: "It's almost *Dune* from the Baron's point of view, that's where the director's sympathies lay, not with them dumb Atreides and their mewling brats. Insufferably noble the lot of them, whereas the Baron floats around being wicked and enjoying himself hugely despite suffering from a fashionable case of AIDS (or acne) and overindulgence in the good things of life, like wet male flower arrangers in clingy cheesecloth. Puts his nephews quite in the shade he does – well, one of them can only bully dwarfs and the other's so shy he takes a bath in his wingèd jockstrap ..." (RIB)

C.O.A JUSTIN ACKROYD, GPO Box 2708X, Melbourne, Vic 3001, Australia • WILLIAM & JANE BAINS, c/o 100 Galley Lane, Arkley, Barnet, Herts, EN5 4AL • CATHY BALL, 1812 Vine, Norman, OK 73069, USA • PETER COHEN, c/o Broadside, Admiral's Walk, London, NW3 6RS • RAMSEY CAMPBELL, 31 Penkett Rd, Wallasey, L45 7QF • JONATHAN COLECLOUGH, 13 Queens Cottages, Reading, RG1 4BE • LILIAN EDWARDS, 72 Gordon Rd, Finchley, London, N.3 • WILLIAM T. GOODALL & ALISON HASTON, oh god I've lost the new address, can someone help? • ALUN HARRIES, 42 Stelvio Pk Dr, Newport, Gwent, NP9 3EJ (nay, stare not so, it's the postcode that's changed) • MELVYN HUNTLEY, 23 Borley Rd, Creekmoor, Poole, Dorset, BH17 7DT • PHIL JAMES, 57 Icknield Close, Ickleford, Hitchin, Herts, SG5 3TE • RUSSELL PARKER, 2/37 Elizabeth St, Toowong, Queensland 4066, Australia • JOAN PATERSON, see Tibs • MIKE & DEB ROHAN, 46 Vesper La, Leeds, LS5 3NR • JOYCE SCRIVNER, 3212-C Portland Ave S, Minneapolis, MN 55407, USA • MATT SILLARS, 2 High St, Nairn, IV12 4BJ • AL SIROIS, 72 Hubinger St, New Haven, CT 06511, USA • KEVIN & DIANA SMITH, 33 Derbyshire Rd, Sale, Cheshire, M33 3FD (another postcode change) • PETER SMITH, 262 Rochford Gdns, Slough, Berks, SL2 5XW • HELEN STARKEY (again!), 91 Mexfield Road, Putney, London, SW.15 • DAN STEFFAN has moved: dunno where • CHARLES STROSS, 22 Pk Ave, Leeds, LS8 2JH (non-COA: "ignore spurious address in Cassandra") • SUE THOMASON, Merioneth Press, Unit 4, Marian Mawr Industrial Estate, Dollgellau, Gwynedd, LL40 • TIBS, see Joan Paterson (oh, all right, 59 Brookfields, Cambridge, CB1 3NZ) •

HUBBARD FUNNIES Awestruck Brian Earl Brown reports that "El Ron's

group is running a contest over various radio stations, with the prize a bit part in the movie *Battlefield Earth*. Some people will do anything to get into pictures ...” Kev Smith had “a shock when looking for a nice quiet read of an accountancy magazine”: *Accountancy Age* (7 Feb) ran a vast photo of *Battlefield* clutched by smirking Trev D’Cruz (who started Quadrant Books chiefly to publish the thing)....

1984 BSFA AWARDS Mike Moir sends the final ballot. NOVEL: *Empire Of The Sun* (Ballard), *Nights At The Circus* (Carter), *Neuromancer* (Gibson), *Mythago Wood* (Holdstock), *The Glamour* (Priest). SHORT: “The Object of the Attack” (Ballard), “Unmistakably the Finest” (Bradfield), “Spiral Winds” (Kilworth), “The Unconquered Country” (Ryman), “The Man Who Painted the Dragon Griaule” (Shepard). MEDIA: *The Company Of Wolves*, *Dune*, *Nineteen Eighty Four*, *Star Trek III*, *The Transmigration Of Timothy Archer* (as played at Mexican). ARTIST: Jim Burns, Peter Jones, Ian Miller, Bruce Pennington, Tim White.

“SEX AUTHOR SLAMS VAT ON BOOKS” ... was reportedly the modest headline surmounting Oxford *Star* coverage when “well known sex author Brian Aldiss” protested plans (A41: now scrapped?) to tax books and magazines at 15%. Will this revelation boost sales of the filthy *Helliconia Winter*? Or of his lewd essay collection *The Pale Shadow Of Science*, being produced by Jerry Kaufman for Westercon (120pp hc, 500 copies, \$10.75 post free from JK, 4326 Winslow Pl N, Seattle, WA 98103) ... Brian’s buddy Ian Watson is also big news, with his council election campaign against Lord Hesketh (Con): “Extremely miniature headline in the *Towcester & Brackley Post*: SPACEMAN WILL TAKE ON LORD H.” (IW)

BORING OLD NEBULAS The final Nebula ballot for 1984 work has the following cosmic items (all British stuff having been mercifully eliminated in earlier stages) ... NOVEL: *Frontera* (Shiner), *The Integral Trees* (Niven), *Job* (Heinlein) *The Man Who Melted* (Dann), *Neuromancer* (Gibson – favourite, with 50% more nominations than no.2), *The Wild Shore* (KS Robinson). NOVELLA: “The Greening of Bed-Stuy” (Pohl), “Narrow Death” (Swanwick), “Press Enter” (Varley), “A Traveler’s Tale” (Shepard), “Trinity” (Kress), “Young Dr Eszterhazy” (Davidson). NOVELETTE: “Bad Medicine” (Dann), “Bloodchild” (Butler), “The Lucky Strike” (KS Robinson), “The Man Who Painted the Dragon Griaule” (Shepard), “St Theresa of the Aliens” (Kelly), “Trojan Horse” (Swanwick). SHORT: “The

Aliens Who Knew, I Mean, *Everything*” (Effinger), “A Cabin on the Coast” (Wolfe), “The Eichmann Variations” (Zebrowski), “Morning Child” (Dozois), “Salvador” (Shepard), “Sunken Gardens” (Sterling).

Comings & Goings

Kath Mitchell & Leroy Kettle announce a side effect of their fanac, called Jennifer, as of 16 Feb. **Lisanne Norman** writes: “Stuart and I now have a little boy. He was born on 11 Feb and he’s called Kai – as in King Arthur’s foster brother.” (Can’t imagine why I expected him to be named John.) **Coral & Rob Jackson**’s Xmas card bore the cryptic PS “No.2 expected in July”, possibly a reference to *Inca*. **Clare Coney’s & Peter Nicholls**’s first tiny collaboration has a tentative October publication date. **IPC**, it’s shyly whispered, may be gravid with plans for a new SF magazine, and the Norwegian *Nova* (no relation to British or Swedish mags) is launched this spring – Cato Sture, Plantv. 10, N-9020 Tromsdalen, Norway.

But **Omni UK** went the way of all flesh before reaching the Second Trial Issue promised for 29 Nov: commissioned contributions would be paid for, reported editor Jon Chambers from the deathbed, but no one’s seen any actual money ... **Alexis Gilliland** slipped on ice and broke his leg (17 Jan) but hopes to transcend his plastered state (8 Mar) and perhaps visit Britain (late June) ... **Waldemar Kummig** suffered a bad heart attack in late 1984, but is recovering well. **William & Jane Bains**’s baby daughter **Catriona** died last year, her condition from birth having been such that this was in the nature of a merciful release. **Francois Truffaut**, director of *Fahrenheit 451* etc and featuring in *Close Encounters*, died last October. R.I. Barycz writes: “**Obit Sam Peckinpah**, well known for flix treating the human body as what it actually is, viz. a soft bag of flesh filled with red fluid under high pressure that leaks in spectacular and messy fashion when perforated by bullets, knives, etc. Thanks to his pioneering work, if you now have a flick in which the hero in a white shirt is hit at close range in the chest with a .45 he does not just go ‘ow’ and fall stainlessly forward. Wot has this to do with skiffy? Nothing, save that according to *Variety* Peckinpah rewrote (without credit) *Invasion Of The Body Snatchers* – the original, not the feeble remake – and also appeared in it in a cameo. He wanted to make *Something Wicked This Way Comes* but it came to nothing.” (RIB)

Convention Calendar

Yorcon III, 5-8 Apr, Dragonara & Queens Hotels, Leeds: 36th Eastercon, GoH Greg Benford, FGoH Linda Pickersgill. £10 att to 45 Harold Mt, Leeds, LS6 1PW (£12 at door); last minute queries 12 Fearnville Tce, Leeds, LS8 3DU. Low registrations suggest there's still time to book: PR3 announces cheap rail fares (Persil tickets are cheaper still) and beer (75p for Dragonara fizz, less for real stuff in Queens).

Parcon 85, 26-28 Apr, Pardubice, Czechoslovakia. Info: Anhaltova 41/987, 169 00 Prague 6, Czech.

Gocon III, 3-5 May, Gothenburg, Sweden. Info: Bjorcksgatan 36 B, S-416 52 Goteborg, Sweden. £7 approx.

Sol III, 3-6 May, Adelphi Hotel, Liverpool: 19th official UK Trekcon, GoH Mark Lennard, Lisa Tuttle, James White. Info: 39 Dersingham Ave, Manor Park, London, E12 5QF.

Italcon XI, 23-26 May, Fanano, Italy. Info: Via San Pietro 5, I-16035 Rapallo, Italy. Brian Aldiss announces that this will be preceded by the WORLD SF ANNUAL MEETING, 21-22 May. WSF liaison: Patrizia Thiella, Corso Italia 32, I-21047 Saronno, VA. Italy.

Lazlar Lyricon, 25-27 May, Strathallan Hotel, Birmingham: Hitchercon. £16.50 (blimey) to 10 Bourne Parade, Bourne Rd, Bexley, Kent, DA5 1LQ.

Coloniacon, 15-16 Jun, Koln, Germany. Info: Reiher Weg 1, D-5000 Koln 30, West Germany.

Nasacon 6, 6-7 Jul, Stockholm, Sweden. Info: Maskinistgatan 9 ob, S-117 47 Stockholm, Sweden. £4 approx.

Albacon 85, 19-22 Jul, Central Hotel, Glasgow: Glasgow's 10th con, GoH Harlan Ellison, Anne McCaffrey. £8 att to 20 Hillingdon Gdns, Cardonald, Glasgow, G52 2TP. "We really and truly honestly do have Ellison and McCaffrey for Albacon 85 ... both have confirmed in writing ... Albacon 84 has finally been wound up and the following donations made: Shaw Fund £50, Head Appeal £200." (O. Dalgliesh)

Beccon 85, 26-28 Jul, Basildon, Essex: GoH Richard Cowper. Info: 191 The Heights, Northolt, Middlesex, UB5 4BU. Waiting list for hotel (full up); day

memberships OK.

Barcon 85, 9-11 Aug, Berlin. Info: INCOS e.v. Goltzstr. 35, D-1000 Berlin 30, Germany.

Swecon, 15-18 Aug, Stockholm: GoH Lisa Tuttle, Chris Priest. Address: as Nasacon. "Continental Hotel, central Stockholm. Room prices ca. £45 for a double (and that is considered cheap here); memberships ca. £14 (but the committee usually want interesting foreigners to be special guest stars etc, which means free or half-price membership). One PR in English, two in Swedish." (A. Engholm)

Camcon, 13-15 Sept, New Hall Coll, Cambridge. £7 att, rooms £16.10/person/night. C/o N. Taylor, Perspective Design Ltd, Top Floor, 9 Pembroke St, Cambridge, CB2 3QY.

Milford Writers' Conference [UK], 22-28 Sept, Compton Hotel, Milford-on-Sea, Hants. Info: Lisa Tuttle, me.

Eurocon 85, 1-6 Oct, Riga, USSR. No further data.

Beneluxcon 85, 26-27 Oct, Hotel Nieuw Minerva, Leiden, Netherlands. GoH Annemarie van Ewyck. Info: Postbus 1189, 8200 BD Lelystad, Netherlands.

Novacon 15, 1-3 Nov, De Vere Hotel, Coventry: GoH Dave Langford, James White. (Gosh!) £7 att to 86 Bearwood Farm Rd, Wylde Green, Sutton Coldfield, Birmingham, B72 1AG.

Cymrucon 85, 1-3 Nov *groan*, Centre Hotel, Cardiff. Bossperson Neil Burgess mutters of skipping '86 and shifting to a less crowded time of year in '87. Info: none yet.

Mexicon 2, 7-9 Feb 86, said to be in the Strathallan Hotel, Birmingham: £9 att to 24a Beech Rd, London, N.11.

Ballcon, 3-6 Jul 86, Zagreb: thus Krsto Mazuranic's name and hoped date for Eurocon 86. FGoH Roelof Goudriaan. GoH uncertain ("expected VIPs: Moebius, Giger, Brothers Strugatski, Dumarest ..."). Info: c/o SFera, Ivanicgradska 41a, 4100 Zagreb, Yugoslavia.

Confederation, 28 Aug - 1 Sept 86, is the 44th Worldcon, in Atlanta, Georgia, USA. GoH Ray Bradbury, Terry Carr, toastmaker Bob Shaw. I'm mysteriously short of info on the increased 1985 fees, as is UK agent Colin

Fine (205 Coldham's Lane, Cambridge, CB1 3HY): ask him for the latest.

WORLDCON BIDS: Britain In 87 has published a PR Zero dated Dec 84 (coff coff). Presupporters approaching 700: rush your £1 or \$2 to 28 Duckett Rd, London, N4 1BN, whence a fiver will also bring you a white/grey/red/blue/yellow bid t-shirt with Jim Barker design (state small, med, large, enormous). USA: \$10 to Marty Cantor, 11565 Archwood St, N. Hollywood, CA 91606. **Phoenix** (AZ) remains technically in the running for 1987 but has ceased to campaign for the Worldcon. **1988: New Orleans** is bidding; for **Yugoslavia**, Krsto Mazuranic says "RSN there's going to be issued a statement on whether the Bid will resume its active life and speed ahead towards victory; or whether it will regroup for 1990; or whether it's dead and haunting the culprit for its demise." **1990** will be impossibly tough for non-US bids: **LA-Con** has published a breakdown of its \$194,000 surplus, of which a full \$20,000 is reserved for 1990 bidding. (Other big chunks: \$65K to reimburse con workers and speakers, \$10K to air-condition Los Angeles SF Soc HQ; \$10K to bail out ConStellation, \$3K to TAFF, DUFF & GUFF [six \$500 chunks, payable on production of completed trip report], \$2K to Aussiecon, \$65K uncommitted, etc.) **1992: New York** committee in formation. (F770)

THE OBLIGATORY DAVID GARNETT PUFF "GARNETT: a lone hero desperately battling for survival in a stark, chilling world where any friend may be a traitor and every precarious moment of life may be the last ..." [*And that's just his letterhead: DRL.*] "You know this idea about the BBC showing adverts – as usual, I'm ahead of my time. They are advertising my latest publication every week. It's called *The Pickwick Papers*, which ties in with the tv serial on Sundays. Can't really call it a novelization, as it's only around 18,000 words. Maybe a noveletization. It's based on an old book by some other bloke, but at 900 pages who would buy the original? And my version is packed with stills from the serial." (DG)

OUR MAN WITH THE POPCORN: MORE R.I. BARYCZ "Lucasfilm talking with Disney World about setting up a Lucasworld at EPCOT by 1988. Somehow I don't think there'll be any more SW films. Lucas is taking the short money: the Ewok movie, Lucasworld and now two animated features for the Ewoks and R2D2 and C3PO ... Leonard Nimoy has got his star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame ... Paul Maslansky who made *Police Academy* is to

make Asimov's *Pirates Of The Asteroids* with Zoran 'I made Superman fly' Peristic for the SFX. £8M budget (\$ rather – ah, the bliss of parity) ...

“By now Holdstock will have phoned you at three in the morning with the news that he's doing the Penguin novelization of John Boorman's *The Emerald Forest*, which film is to have its premiere at Cannes this year and which *Variety* deems a scifantasy feature but which I recall as your everyday tale of a juvenile South American kidnapped by Amazon headhunters and brought up as one of themselves in something not a million miles from Tarzan. Said juvenile played by Boorman's own son: publicity pic of him squatting ferocious in warpaint, feathers, poison darts and Gucci loincloth rises unbidden in the memory ...” (RIB)

Big Rob will now say a few words: “I worked really hard on that book, I spent months of my life making it a real novel, not just a novelization, a book with my very soul written deeply into it, and ten fucking American publishers bounced it *sight unseen* because they don't like Boorman ... argh!” (RPH)

Infinitely Improbable

Cheap Truth Goes Silicon: the appalling Texan samizdat zine has expanded as “the world's first on-line SF fanzine ... SMOF-BBS is accessible at 300 baud through modems anywhere on the planet. Plug in and call 512-UFO-SMOF.” (512-836-7663 for those of us with all-figure dials.) Look, punks, the world's first on-line fanzine was and is Starlight SF on Micronet: Prestel page *600200, mailbox 733631000. Mine, all mine!

BBC Horror: the Beeb's decision to suspend *Star Trek* (“we said we'd rerun them all, but not when”) and axe *Dr Who* (“too expensive”) generated several billion responses in mere days to an electronic petition put on-line by sensuous Starlight media editor Barbara Conway.

Trials Of Windhaven is now announced by Corgi as “No.6 in this sexy historical saga with series sales now approaching 5 million.” Hadn't realized George Martin & Lisa Tuttle had switched to this obvious pseudonym (“Marie de Jourlet”) ...

CRIES FOR HELP: Lianne Norman wants volunteers for an undescribed Becon costume piece – “we especially need anyone going who has a Motor

Bike.” (Or a goat.) 22 Wakefield Rd, Norwich, NR5 8JE. **John Boardman** (writes Ethel Lindsay), wants the UK edition of the “Trivial Pursuit” game and offers the US version in exchange (234 E 19th St, Brooklyn, NY 11226).

Malcolm Hodkin “will forego major parts of his anatomy in easily negotiable currency to anyone who can provide him with Firesign Theatre recordings: 45c South St, St Andrews, Fife, KY16 9QR”. (*Boring Voice Of Pub Landlord*: “This isn’t SF, get out of here.”)

Yo-Ho-Ho: imagine Mike Rohan’s surprise and delight at finding his “The Insect Tapes” reprinted in an Octopus collection imaginatively titled *2001: A Space Odyssey*. Seems the initial publishers David & Charles resold the rights, pocketed the money and hoped Mike wouldn’t notice.

Dunegate is the latest, thrillingly boring US fanfeud. Was it vile abuse of power when the Gillilands, marking a Washington SF Assoc membership list at the request (one hour’s notice) of Those Who Distribute Free *Dune* Tickets, neglected several famously prestigious authors I’ve never heard of? Surveying irate flyers, ad hominem assaults and alternative “protest” WSFA meetings, *Ansible* has little hesitation in saying ZZZZZZ ...

Official Michael Moorcock Society: \$10/year US/Canada, \$15 elsewhere, to A. Pool, 321 Kenilworth, Memphis, TN 38112, USA. Can British interest in MM be so sparse that it’s not worth having an agent here?

Strange Egoboo: something called *Rat 2080* has arrived, Serbo-Croat version of my first book, and I must say it looks just triffic; as Vincent Omniaveritas wrote to me, there’s a quality in a good translation that you can never quite capture with the original. Meanwhile, trying to make me feel good, Cathy Ball writes: “I do enjoy *Ansible*. But then I enjoyed the *Patchin Review*.” Um.

Space Opera: world premiere of *Marriages Between Zones 3, 4 And 5*, opera version, on 10/11 April, 8pm, Palace Theatre, Duke’s Rd, WC.1 – bookings 01-387 0031. Sounds nearly as exciting as *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus: The Movie...*

New Year Scandal: which glamorous Harrow author was seen locked in, er, deep editorial discussion with which *SF Chronicle* reporter and BFS leading light at the Edwards/Atkinson New Year party? Shame on you, expecting us to answer that.

World War III Safe – Official! “We must get rid of the idea that such a war would destroy all life on Earth ... the planet would recover very quickly ... the southern hemisphere would not be involved and would not be damaged....” Thus Michael Allaby’s *2040: Our World In The Future* (Gollancz, March 85). Invited to comment on this dazzling presentation of current “nuclear winter” theories, hero Gollancz editor and CND stalwart Malcolm Edwards said, “Er um well, nothing to do with me, boss....”

Forrest J Ackerman offers \$100 reward to the coiner of a suitable term to describe sleazy, exploitative pseudo-SF of a medioid nature (SFC). You may have thought one existed, but FJA desperately wants his own coinage “sci-fi” to be rehabilitated. Too late, mate....

GUFF, SEFF: races are under way and ballots are enclosed where postage permits. Cool, streetwise Eve Harvey and huggable John Jarrold are contending for a trip to Aussiecon; little-known Hans-Jurgen Mader and even littler-known Steve Green have sights set on Swecon 85....

Riots In Fife – Malcolm Hodkin reports. “Just recovering from a visit by Jim Barker and Ian Sorensen. They popped over to give the first, and by the sounds of it not the last, performance of a fannish pantomime they called ‘Fandarella’. This was mainly an excuse to throw apple and pork pies into the faces of the St Andrews SF Society, but we showed ’em! By skilfully not telling them anything about it we were able to devastate our guests and the audience with our own brand of humour, turning a simple but weak ending into a simple and messy bloodbath. The Magnum 4.4 is, you know, the most powerful cap pistol in the world, and it shoots twelve shots so most punks are unlacing their shoes when you finally get around to popping the question: ‘Well, punk. Did I shoot eleven, or was it twelve? Make my day, punk!’ Yet more hapless proles were forced into obtaining Albacon memberships, whilst Barker tried to sell Siliclone to a bunch of not-even-neos. It could make you cry, or even support Contravention.” (MH) I’m glad Fifeshire’s a long way away....

Aussiecon: Jean Weber begs fanzines for display or sale at the 85 Worldcon fanroom. Rush all your old, cast-off *Ansibles* to GPO Box 2708X, Melbourne, Vic 3001.

Charles Platt Married: On 19th January 1985. In New York presumably. That’s as much as he’s telling....

Hazel's Language Lessons No.33:
Kurdish [from Nigel E. Richardson]

berdirkane party given on occasion of wearing a new suit of clothes for the first time.

binêsk what remains of a tablet of soap when it is nearly used up.

kingexishkê self-propulsion along the ground on one's buttocks.

ANSIBLE 42

from

DAVE LANGFORD

94 LONDON ROAD

READING

BERKSHIRE

ENGLAND RG1 5AU

[ADDENDUM typed at bottom of *Ansible* Fan Poll ballot]

LAST BITS • Con Calendar: addenda. Confederation sends current rates, to rise again in August: \$25 supporting, \$45 attending, \$25 att if you voted in 1986 site selection at LA-Con. Worldcon bids not mentioned: Boston in 89, St Louis and Columbus-Cincinnati (i.e. a Cincinnati bid by Columbus fandom) in 88. Aussiecon PR3 contains a Phoenix in 87 bid – for, as promised, not the Worldcon but the North American substitute event (NASFiC) held when Worldcons come to e.g. Britain. Aussiecon membership 1365 as of Feb.... **Patchin Review RIP:** final issue of shit-stirring Plattzine to hand, offering subscribers a chance to convert subs to “*Ansible*, an irreverant, amusing British monthly” [sic] – good old Charles, sarcastic to the last.... **Support Yorcon Now, Dammit:** “Yorcon is pretty close to broke, already....” (*Tom Shippey*) **Encyclopaedias Of Fantasy:** both Maxim Jakubowski's and Peter Nicholls's delayed by US sale setbacks.... **Furry Gloves, Woolly Hat** left at our New Year party: owner please claim.... **Credits** to A. Stephenson (stencils) and C. Suslowicz (paper)....

Hibbert/Connor Scandal: damn! no room.

***Ansible* 43**

May/June 1985

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Further misrepresentation from DAVE LANGFORD, 94 LONDON ROAD, READING, BERKSHIRE, RG1 5AU, UK. Subscriptions: 5 issues may be effortlessly obtained by sending me £2 in sterling notes (I have given no thought whatever to the imminent phasing out of the pound note); cheques/money orders to *Ansible*; Girobank transfer to a/c 24 475 4403; \$3.50 to hero US agents Mary & Bill Burns (23 Kensington Ct, Hempstead, NY 11550); \$4A to dynamic Aussie agent Irwin Hirsh, 2/416 Dandenong Rd, North Caulfield, Vic 3161. Other ways to acquire *Ansible* include grovelling requests copiously accompanied with stamps; paying twice as much if you're an Institution which insists on messing round with invoices rather than fork out like an honest fan; or subscribing to *Patchin Review* and unwisely allowing Charles Platt to switch your sub to *Ansible* when he folds. Loud, clear, patient phone calls to Reading (0734) 665804; electronic mail to Prestel mailbox 733631000. Lavish small-print credits: TARAL (guest cartoonist), CHRIS HUGHES (collation), and KEITH FREEMAN (finely crafted mailing labels which everyone misinterprets: panic only when yours says SUB DUE or, shudder, *****). This issue goes to 440 addresses.

A Statement of Editorial Policy

“A *Zine* is classed as a terror weapon. It rends and distorts, twisting the structure of the target completely out of shape.” (Philip E. High: *Come, Hunt An Earthman*) ...Yes.

Schizophrenia at Yorcon III

Lots of things must have happened at our 41st Eastercon, and I wish I could remember what they all were – clearly I had desperate fun. (The panel I was scheduled for was really good; pity it happened several hours before I

reached Leeds.) The usual feeling that All The Action Is Somewhere Else was amplified by the provision of an actual, oppressive Somewhere Else in the form of a second hotel for obscure and specialist doings: art show, book room (dealers bitched, as usual, about profits being down 50%), video and film programme, guest of honour speech, etc. (Am baffled still by the unattributable rumour that GoH Greg Benford “turned out to be a CIA agent and tried to recruit David Pringle”.) The bar of the Dragonara, main Yorcon hotel, exerted its normal fascination.

Programme items? Tom Shippey gave a further impersonation of F.R. Leavis in the grip of homicidal mania, powerfully arguing that much “juvenile” fantasy is all about things like assassinating one’s parents. (Hysterically enthusiastic audience: “So what’s new?”) Publishers were as usual shifty and evasive about publishing, authors all too informative about the unspeakable horror of the literary life. A hi-tech programme (or program) spot featured Martin Hoare on the mysteries of hacking, showing by example that Computer Crime Does Not Pay since (a) it takes several subjective months to set up your (or at any rate his) equipment, by which time it has become obsolete; and (b) only by the most herculean efforts can one even “break into” public access databases, let alone the ultra-secret Yorcon sex files....

Up in the fan room, Greg Pickersgill donned his genial Mr Evil persona for purposes of public communion with, *inter alia*, Dave Wood (“GOD, WOOD, YOUR FANZINE IS SO FUCKING AWFUL, HOW CAN YOU BE SO SMUG ABOUT YOUR UNMERITED NOVA AWARD WHEN YOU *DON’T FUCKING EDIT?*” Audience struck dumb by this grasp of structuralist critical terminology) and born-again Fan GoH Linda Pickersgill, who had “trudged up from the darkness into the true light of fandom”, only to marry Greg, who demonstrated by example that there was still a Dark Side of the Force. Popular TAFF winners Patrick & Teresa Nielsen Hayden displayed remarkable resource by dividing up the expected duties of transatlantic visitors: he nobly attended to the consumption of much native beer, and she as nobly did the falling over. Fans of yore were everywhere underfoot, notably Walt & Madeleine Willis (Walt and I discovered a deep, hitherto unsuspected mutual interest in hearing aids), Chuch Harris (whose Compromising Situations were too many and outrageous to list; in his finest hour he burst into a crowded and – unbeknownst to him – hushed con hall with the varying reported but at any rate stentorian cry “I didn’t come 200

miles to meet fucking John Brunner!”), and even John Collick. The latter resumed where he’d left off, videotaping a deathless new epic wherein a nonentity (Phil Palmer) goes on a psychopathic rampage owing to the poor reception of his fanzine (“We all had to line up and Laugh Cruelly at him” – PNH), necessitating that rough, tough detective Grubby Herbert (JC) shoot lots of people, his perennial line “You’re asking yourself, has he shot six, or only five?” constantly interrupted by walk-on appearances of uncomprehending hotel staff from a passing lift. Could this be science fiction?

Parties kept happening, the most chaotic being Contravention’s with its paper-plane simulation of a multi-strike nuclear exchange escalating to spasm level. “I wouldn’t have voted for their bid,” sniffed small but perfectly formed visiting fan Tom Weber: “they totally failed to control the paper planes.” A Contravention spokesman (ever-paranoid Chris Hughes) later commented: “Aha! The throwing of planes ... the plane-throwing which was started by Ian Sorensen of the rival Eastercon bid! *I see it all.*”

Sure enough, Sunday morning saw the victory (by a mere two votes) of Contravention over Albacon III as the 1986 Eastercon venue – shortly followed by a recount and the victory by a mere five votes of Albacon III over Contravention.

In an exciting innovation borrowed from old Novacons, the Sunday-night nosh and presentations spot was made a buffet affair. We draw a veil over the slight queue problem, there being a discrepancy between the advance sales of buffet tickets (on which demand estimates were apparently based) and the 500 last-minute customers from whom uninformed hotel lackeys were happy to accept cash at the counter. The customary pork pie race followed: mathematicians long ago proved that there is no rational way to convey the concept of pie, especially across forty feet of dance floor, and unlikely transportation led to expected appalling scenes such as Rob Jackson giving the kiss of life to a giant maggot. Norman Spinrad and a low-powered panel of judges struggled in vain to rank the performances: their feeble efforts at decisiveness made no difference to MC Brian Burgess’s unilateral prizegiving.

BSFA awards were presented to Jim Burns (artist), *The Company Of Wolves* (media), Geoff Ryman’s “The Unconquered Country” (short fiction) and Rob

Holdstock's *Mythago Wood* (novel): how can one sneer properly at awards when they go to such triffic stuff? Voting was "nearly twice the usual", administrator Mike Moir furtively confides. BSFA magazines, meanwhile, ring with outraged cries of "How dare *Empire Of The Sun* allow itself to be so much as nominated for this award when *it isn't science fiction?!*" Here we go again....

On Monday there was an active attempt at forming a Convention Gestalt Mind, as unwary fans were herded into seminar groups under the nominal leadership of hungover publishers. Parts of this were fun.... Deftly skirting difficult issues like the question "Why do editors always send my manuscripts back?", Granada's Nick Austin held my own group enthralled and wove the many threads of debate into a triumphantly integrated lack of conclusion. Since he wisely sneaked off home before the afternoon's "plenary session", and since this session took place before the bar's final closure, I do not report the ultimate, cosmic conclusions reached.

Overall it was an euphoric weekend. Everything shimmered through a haze of well-being, even Leeds railway station, even Graham James. With a shrewd grasp of fans' true needs the committee arranged an extension of Monday check-out time to late afternoon, ensuring glowing con reports by sending most of the membership home late and happy. Let's not talk about the following few days, shall we?

I Suppose I've Got to Do It

... type out the Hugo nominations. Death, where is thy sting?

NOVEL: *Neuromancer* (Gibson), *Job* (Heinlein), *The Integral Trees* (Niven), *Emergence* (Palmer – who?), *The Peace War* (Vinge – V not J).

Novella: "Cyclops" (Brin), "Valentina" (Delaney & Steigler), "Summer Solstice" (Harness), "Elemental" (Landis), "Press Enter []" (Varley).

Novelette: "Bloodchild" (Butler), "Lucky Strike" (KS Robinson), "Silicon Muse" (Schenck), "Man Who Painted the Dragon Griaule" (Shepard), "Weigher" (Vinicoff & Martin), "Blued Moon" (Willis), "Return to the Fold" (Zahn). **Short:** "Crystal Spheres" (Brin), "The Aliens Who Knew, I Mean, *Everything*" (Effinger), "Rory" (Gould), "Symphony for a Lost Traveller" (Killough), "Ridge Running" (KS Robinson), "Salvador" (Lucius Shepard).

Nonfiction: *Sleepless Nights in the Procrustean Bed* (Ellison), *Dune Encyclopaedia* (McNelly), *Faces of SF [Omitting Those Outside N America Because They Don't Count]* (Perret), *In the Heart or In the Head* (Turner), *Wonder's Child* (Williamson). **Pro Editor:** Terry Carr, Ed Ferman, Shawna McCarthy, Stanley Schmidt, George Scithers. **Pro Artist:** Vincent diFate, Tom Kidd, Val Lakey Lindham (?), Barclay Shaw, Michael Whelan. **Dramatic Presentation:** *Dune*, *Ghostbusters*, *Last Starfighter*, *Search For Spock*, 2010.

Semiprozine: *Fantasy Review*, *Locus*, *SFC*, *SFR*, *Whispers*. **Fanzine:** *Ansible*, *File 770*, *Holier Than Thou*, *Mythologies*, *Rataplan*. **Fanartist:** Brad Foster, Steven Fox, Alexis Gilliland, Joan Hanke-Woods, Bill Rotsler, Stu Shiffman. **Fanwriter:** Leigh Edmonds, Richard E. Geis, Mike Glycer, Arthur Hlavaty, Dave Langford (coff coff). **John W Campbell Award** (not really a Hugo, caveat emptor, may be hazardous to the health, etc): Bradley Denton, Geoffrey Landis, Elissa Malcolm, Ian McDonald, Melissa Scott, Lucius Shepard.

Statistics: 223 ballots received. The easiest category in which to pick up a Hugo nomination is clearly Fanzine (only 7 votes required), unless you count the JWC Award (6). For the rest: Fanwriter 8, Semiprozine and Short 9, Fanartist 10, Novelette and Pro Artist 15, Nonfiction 16, Editor 20, Novella 22, Novel 26, Dramatic 40 ...

The Uncontroversial Letter Column

Colin Greenland: "I've resigned from *Interzone* and thought I should tell *Ansible* why before there's any gossip. David Pringle wants complete control of the magazine (no, not *Ansible*, *Interzone*). He thinks everything I do is part of some secret plot to seize power for himself, as if nobody could possibly have any motives but his own. I can't work any longer with someone who tells me to 'knuckle under or piss off'. So I'm pissing off, to Colorado in fact, to spend a couple of months concentrating on the novel Allen & Unwin have commissioned from me.... Meanwhile in California, at UC Riverside, they've just given me this year's J. Lloyd Eaton Award for *The Entropy Exhibition*. Delighted and much gratified, I wonder how a book published in 1983 can be eligible in 1985. Something to do with the International Dateline, probably."

[CG] **Stephen Jones:** “I feel I must complain at the scurrilous piece of gossip headed ‘New Year Scandal’ on the back cover of *Ansible* 42. I don’t know who leaked this particular piece of false information to you, but as the *SFC* reporter and *BFS* leading light obviously alluded to, I can categorically deny that I got up to any, er, ‘funny business’ with Lisa Tuttle. However, I am sure that she will not take exception to your describing her as a ‘glamorous Harrow author’ ... I strongly suspect those two troublemakers Jo Fletcher and Chris Priest of spreading this malicious rumour.” [SJ]

Vincent Omniaveritas: “Lisa Tuttle was in town and dropped by CHEAP TRUTH CENTRAL, where I dazzled her with my mind reading act, based on bits of inside Tuttle gossip gleaned from *Ansible*. She has become a computer widow ... won’t touch her husband’s sinister devil-machine. ‘He keeps bursting out of his room,’ she said, ‘and I ask him if he’s gotten any writing done, and he says No, but I just figured out how to make it do something great!’” [VO – now in *Penguin*]

Terry Carr: “I’m buying SF novels (no fantasies ... let’s get that straight) for Tor Books: an extremely good outfit, headed by Tom Doherty, the only publisher I’ve ever met whom I vastly respect both for honesty and knowledge of the business. I can buy SF novels, either completed or on the basis of portion-&-outline, provided you’ve never sold a book to Tor before (that’s in my contract. The point is that they don’t need me to buy books from authors with whom they’ve already had dealings, like publishing their books). Tor pays as much money for advances as does anyone.... I’m also fiction editor for the forthcoming magazine *To The Stars*, whose rates are 6½ cents a word, the highest in the field (*Omni* excluded as not basically an SF magazine), and they don’t slide downward as word-lengths get longer; they’re the same even at 30,000 words – try to get *that* from any other SF magazine! Which doesn’t mean I want longer stories more than shorts; I just think word-rates ought to be word-rates. No particular ‘policy’ for fiction except that it must all be SF, not fantasy. I hope to buy as many as possible that evoke the ‘sense of wonder’, because I think that’s the heart of SF to most people and it’s sadly been in little evidence in magazines for several years. And yeah, they’d better be well written, because in that respect at least I’m a snob.” [TC, 11037 Broadway Tce, Oakland, CA 94611, USA]

Ann Looker: “Noticed you contributed to *Ghastly Beyond Belief*. Amazed to find this passage from *Second Stage Lensmen* not included: “Dearly beloved

...“ The grand old service – short and simple, but utterly impressive – was soon over. Then, as Kinnison kissed his wife, half a million Lensed members were thrust upward in silent salute.” [AL/EES]

Avedon Carol: “There is a profound inaccuracy in the information provided you by Martian Moose Worship [A42]. He maintains that I wore a dress to the premiere of *Dune* at the Kennedy Centre here last December. This is incorrect. I can no longer be induced to wear dresses unless I am being paid to do so. I wore a tuxedo. With all due respect to Mr Worship, he’s as blind as a bat if he thinks black trousers and a tie constitute a ‘dress’” [AC. Or DC. Who knows?]

Ian Watson: “Mark Ziesing is going to produce a posh expensive limited edition of my wit & wisdom in the near future, called *The Book Of Ian Watson*, with non-fic from places like *Vector*, and about 50,000 words of unpublished fic, including a 21,000 word novella cum verse drama about animated Ushabtis – tell Hazel and stun her. You see, I know what Ushabtis were really intended for; all the Egyptologists got it wrong. They were intended to ... This is a shameless attempt to persuade Hazel to fork out untold dollars on a copy of the book; for the answer will truly amaze her.” [IW]

Incredibly Boring Event Updates

Triple-S Con, 12-14 July, Ladbroke Hotel, Newport, Gwent: GoH Lord Young of Dartington (blimey). £11 att (to 15 June, then £12); rooms £15.50/person/night (shared twin only). 162 Kingsheath Ave, Rutherglen, Glasgow. This emanates from the “Space Settlers Society”; I suppose the taming of barren, inhospitable new frontiers may as well start with Newport....

Excalibur, 12-31 Aug inclusive, Heriot Theatre Upstairs, 30 Grindlay St, Edinburgh. A home-made play stirringly titled *Quest For The Midnight Tower: The Legend Of Idra Khan* makes its debut in the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, as above. Maestro David Norell explains: “At last there exists a Theatrical Company [Excalibur] specializing in Fantasy material.” (Ken Campbell *will* be pleased.) “May the Kadark never ravish your homeland!” (A sentiment one can but echo.)

Silicon 9, 23-26 Aug, Grosvenor Hotel, Newcastle. £5 att; nine different room rates, from £8.90 in a labour camp to £29.90 for your entire family including in-laws. 14 Eskdale Tce, Jesmond, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE2 4DN. Heavy breathing welcomed on (091) 2814607 after 6pm and before 3am....

Fantasycon, 6-8 Sept, Royal Angus Hotel, Birmingham: GoH Rob Holdstock, MC Charles L. Grant. £1.50 supp £9 att (BFS members £8); all rooms £17/person/night. "Has gained the reputation of 'The Professionals' Convention'", says the flyer, but I believe fans are admitted if they dress nicely. 130 Park View, Wembley, Middlesex, HA9 6JU.

Camcon (Unicon 6), 13-15 Sept, New Hall, Cambridge. Details as last issue; GoH announced as John Christopher.

Eurocon 85, 1-6 Oct, scheduled for Riga, USSR, has been axed on the unlikely ground of "lack of meeting rooms". The political climate is generally blamed; possibly it was leaking through the meeting rooms' roofs.

Albacon III is the '86 Eastercon: Central Hotel, Glasgow. £6 att (for now); twin/dbl rooms £12.50/person (£16.50 with bath). 80 Hillington Gdns, Glasgow, G52 2TP. GoH: well, Vince Docherty rang to ask if I knew Stephen King's address....

Eastercon '87: to be voted at Albacon III. (Likewise Eastercon '88 if the recommendation, made at Yorcon is upheld.) Two bids so far ... **Beccon '87** is run by the usual mob: £1 pre-supp to 191 The Heights, Northolt, Middlesex, UB5 4BU; of terrific subcutaneous ructions owing to Beccon's original alleged plan to announce their venue before the Yorcon voting and thus "sabotage Contravention": happily they thought better of it.) Little is known of the rival **Harrogate** bid save that Ron Bennett and the fake Bob Shaw are involved. Cons make strange bedfellows.

Worldcon '88: the **New Orleans** bid is seeking a British agent, notes Linda Pickersgill, who personally "declined due to the fact that it would put me in contact with Guy Lillian, a name, face and personality that I try to avoid as much as possible." Anyone less timorous and more eager for limitless future fame and power (albeit no spare time) should contact John Guidry, Box 8010, New Orleans, LA 70182, USA.

BSFA Open Meetings, for those who didn't get a scrawled correction last

issue, are in the *Coopers* (not Troopers) Arms. And “organizer Judith Hanna” was an easy-to-make misprint for “organizers Nick Trant & Roy Macinski”.

[Fan fund flyer inserted approximately here: The Northern GUFFblower 12 ed. Joseph Nicholas, as archived online at taff.org.uk/news/tng12.html. And, added on its blank verso:]

At the Eleventh Hour

... trusty correspondents save you from a blank sheet here.

Charles Platt: “More than 200 SF ‘professionals’ descended on New York’s Warwick Hotel on May 3-4 for this year’s Nebula Fest. At the preliminary part on Friday night I met Terry Carr and chided him for editing L. Ron Hubbard’s SF magazine, thus helping sanitize Hubbard’s name; Terry riposted that Scientology is ‘no worse than est, and I’ll defend est any time.’ He also defended Fred Harris, who runs Hubbard’s publicity machine, as having ‘a great sense of humour’.

“At the editors’ panel next day, Lou Aronica of Bantam Books surprised attendees by remarking that ‘SF is no longer a category’. According to Lou, most Bantam SF is packaged and distributed according to its merits, ‘like ordinary books’. Other editors on the panel did not attempt to conceal their scepticism. Lou added that a big factor in a book’s success is whether it achieves ‘spine-out’ or ‘face-out’ display: if a bookseller takes 6 or more copies, they can be turned so the cover faces the buyer, without consuming additional shelf space. Writers present seemed sobered by this hard-headed marketing savvy ... The banquet featured as guest speaker a representative from Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts, who heightened the festive mood by 40 minutes of legal advice on copyright and plagiarism. Nebulas were then dispensed to Gibson, Varley, Butler and Dozois, all of whom mumbled humbly in the usual manner.

* G (elsewhere), V ‘Press Enter Blot’ (novella), B ‘Bloodchild’ (novelette), D ‘Morning Child’ (short).

“At the subsequent party, Harlan Ellison came over to where I was talking to Ed Ferman, grabbed me by the throat, shouted ungrammatically ‘This one’s from Larry Shaw, motherfucker, who’s dead,’ and hit me on the jaw.

Evidently he was less than pleased with a column I wrote last year, referring to his worldcon tribute to Shaw as an ‘obituary preview’ redolent with so much melodrama that some of the audience thought at first it must be a joke. Having hit me, Harlan attempted a stranglehold which he maintained for a minute or so, although his arthritis prevented it from being entirely effective. Then, having avenged the dead, he left me to continue my conversation. Such is the level of violence in modern America, the incident attracted little attention (although Jerry Pournelle did take time out to give me a friendly lecture on weapons for personal defence, and entertained me by quoting line-for-line from Kipling at some considerable length) ...” [CP]

Martin Morse Wooster: “NEBULAS ... Second best fight: Tom Disch punching out William Gibson for reasons unknown. FRANK HERBERT recently passed cosmic wisdom to the *Washington Times*, including a claim that Nixon was Herbert’s favourite president (‘the wisest foreign policy adviser we’ve had in the executive branch of government this century’). He reported the *Dune* movie was to be turned into a *Dune* mini-series (apparently 12 hours’ worth of script was filmed and then condensed, as if the film were thrown into a trash compactor) ... TED WHITE has jumped back. into prodom as editor of *Stardate*, an SF media magazine: controversy has already erupted between him and the publisher, an unreconstructed Trekkie who wants much more Trek material. As Ted White’s opinion of *Star Trek* is only slightly above his opinion of, say, Marty Cantor, bets are already being taken as to when the project will fail ... BRIAN ALDISS’s publicists for *Helliconia Winter* here have really outdone themselves. Publicists at Atheneum list his awesome achievements; to them the most noteworthy is not his Hugo, his Nebula, his Prix Jules Verne, not even his appearances in *Ansible* ... no, they love Aldiss for being ‘one of the few non-American members of the SF Writers of America.’ Right up there with Claude Avice ...” [MMW]

Last Bits: DAN MORGAN is toiling at a film treatment of his “Mind” books ... SOUTH OF THE MOON, the apa index, begs info at 112 E Burnett St, Stayton, Oregon 97383, USA ... TED KLEIN is leaving the TWILIGHT ZONE editorship ... EVEN LESS ROOM than last time for astonishing, new, scandalous revelations about (oops)

Oh Gawd, More Awards

William Gibson's *Neuromancer* is doing nicely: Nebula award as Best 1984 Novel, Ditmar (Australia) as Best International Fiction, P.K. Dick Award as Best Paperback Original ... Accepting the last (\$1000 and a Calligraphed Thing), Mr Gibson reportedly mused on Spider Robinson's habit of bringing his awards to conventions and inviting fans to see them: "I'll be able to say, Would you like to come up to my room and see my Dick?" Dick runner-up: Kim Stanley Robinson's *The Wild Shore*.

Further Ditmars went to *Beast Of Heaven* by Victor Kellaher (Best Aussie Novel) and Merv Binns's *Australian SF News* as Best Australian SF News. *Thyme* (our info source) got a bit derisive after this, noting that only about 20 people voted, that no one knew what Bruce Gillespie had actually got his Best Editor of 1984 award *for*, and that the Atheling Award – won by George Turner's autobiography *In The Heart Or In The Head* – is rather supposed to be for SF criticism. Oops.

As for the remaining Nebulas, my ace newshounds were distracted by far more interesting fisticuffs, as Harlan Ellison smote Charles Platt for his snide comments about the (now) late Larry Shaw. Mere awards could not compete.

C.O.A

KEN BROWN, Flat 4, 29 Davigdor Rd, Hove • AVEDON CAROL (as of 29 May), 9a Greenleaf Rd, East Ham, London, E6 1DX • BENEDICT S. CULLUM, 18 Valley Rd, Rickmansworth, Herts, WD3 4DS • NEIL GAIMAN, 73 High St, East Grinstead, West Sussex, RH19 3DD • WILLIAM T GOODALL & ALISON HASTON, 2 Spark Tce, Cove, Aberdeen, AB1 4ND • ROELOF GOUDRIAAN, Noordwal 2, 2573 EA Den Haag, Netherlands • STEVE & LEAH HIGGINS, 200 Basingstoke Rd, Reading, Berks, RG2 0HH • LUCY HUNTZINGER (who promises not to move again for a whole year), 2315 Bush St, San Francisco, CA 94115, USA • PAUL HURTLEY, 270 Winthrop Ave, New Haven, CT 06511, USA • BOB JEWETT, 105 Craigton Rd, Gowan, Glasgow • ROBIN JOHNSON, 30 Mona St, Battery Point, TAS 7000, Australia • KEN JOSEPHANS, PO Box 191, East Lansing, MI 48823, USA • MIKE LEWIS, 4 Smallman St, Stafford, Staffs, ST16 3PF • BRUCE J MACDONALD, 23 Leslie Cres, Ayr,

Scotland • MIKE MOLLOY, 301 Langlands Rd, Drumoyne, Glasgow, G51 • KEITH & KRYSZYNA OBORN, Bishops Cottage, Park House Lane, Reading, RG3 2AH • LINDA PICKERSGILL (temporary, May-July), c/o Arthur Krawecke, 8508 Dumonte St, Metairie, LA 70003, USA • PETER PINTO, 80 Eastham St, Lancaster, LA1 3AY • JIMMY ROBERTSON & ANNE WARREN, 62 North End Rd, Golders Green, London, NW.11 • PETER SINGLETON, 5 St Andrew's Rd, Claughton, Birkenhead, L43 1TB • FRAN SKENE & WILLIAM C.S. AFFLECK ASCH LOWE (it says here), 302-2326 Eton St, Vancouver, BC, Canada V5L 1E1 • SUE THOMASON, 1 Merrick Sq, Dolgellau, Gwynedd, LL40 1LT • NICK WEATHERHEAD, "GAFIAH", Kinlochbervie, via Lairg, Sutherland, Scotland ("I have bought an Hotel near to Cape Wrath. After 30 years in the book trade I need a change!") • MARGARET WELBANK & NICK LOWE. 52 Mansfield Rd, London, NW3 2HT • CHERRY WILDER, 19 Egelsbacher Str, D-6070 Langen/Hessen, W Germany • ALEX ZBYSLAW, 197 Herbert Ave, Poole, Dorset, BH12 4HR •

Paul Barnett Has Fun at the Fair

This year's London Book Fair (10-12 April) was excitingly different from those held in previous years, in that to a large extent it was dead as a dodo. Most people realized this on the opening Wednesday and so didn't bother attending the rest of it; your correspondent, by contrast with the rest of the sheep, turned up on the Thursday.

Actually, it was a shame. Most companies exhibiting had decided this year that it would make more financial sense not to bother sending editorial people, so stands were staffed by hardbitten sales types. Unfortunately, booksellers and librarians, presumably having discovered last year that the only exhibitors were editorial people who didn't know how to take their stock orders, stayed away in droves. So the halls were filled with sales people responding "No, sorry, our editor isn't here. Say, would you like to buy a copy of ..." The only mass-market paperbackers who seemed there in strength were Corgi (on the Bantam stand) and Sphere (on the Oh shit we've just been taken over by Penguin stand: Penguin themselves didn't have a stand). Also recently taken over by Penguin were Rainbird, on whose stand Maxim Jakubowski was in fine fettle. He told me the takeover made no differences

except good ones, and contrived to seem remarkably pleased about it all. Already the Rainbird list has a slightly more skiffy-ish look to it than in days of yore.

High point was the New Era stand, whose sole project on display was *Battlefield Earth* – the paperback hits the bookshops on 6 June. As if that wasn't enough to make your gonads atrophy, New Era also displayed the album of the soundtrack of the book, composed by El Ron himself using “tomorrow's state-of-the-art computers” and featuring “top recording artists Chick Corea [no relation of Huntington, one assumes], Gayle Moran, Nicky Hopkins and Stanley Clarke”. Well, I've heard of Nicky Hopkins. The soundtrack itself – “This is the first book to have a musical soundtrack!”, for some reason – resembles 1960s musak, which no doubt shows that aesthetic taste is cyclical ... Moreover, “*Battlefield Earth* is being made into two multi-million dollar movies. Directed by internationally acclaimed Ken Annakin ... produced by William Immerman, senior executive on the *Star Wars* production.” Wow!

I missed the episode in which a twelve-foot Psychlo posed with a scantily clad blonde outside the Barbican in high winds and sub-zero temperatures, but was able to watch it on video later. Actually, I wonder if someone at New Era isn't likely to be cast into outer darkness without even an E-meter. Can one detect a trace of irony in the publicity puff: “Terl, the alien Psychlo ... enjoyed enormous popularity during his tours promoting the hardback release. But his ego was not satisfied – now he plans an even bigger comeback ...”

This year's winner of my annual Great Idea For An International Coedition Someone Had At An Editorial Meeting And Nobody Ever Got Around To Stomping On It award was found on the Blandford stand. A fat, lavishly produced book, it was called *National Anthems Of The World*. Finally, exclusive confirmation from Arrow's Nick Webb (while choking on a sticky bun) to your correspondent that it was not he who invented the generic description “a cocaine and blow-job novel”. [PB]

All the Myriad Fan Funds

TAFF constitutional revisions were hammered out in a practically smoke-

filled room at Yorcon, containing enough present and past administrators to have changed the course of the simultaneous '86 Eastercon voting (see above – a fact which did not go unnoticed by the Contravention committee as they subsequently poured beer over me). Upshot: future winners probably need to pick up a minimal 20% of final (adjusted) votes in both Europe and N America. If no one evinces such multi-continental appeal, the victor is presumably deemed to be “Hold Over Funds”. (Pete Presford comments, as at one stage did I, that no one objected when Justin “You Don’t Know Me – I Don’t Know You” Ackroyd came over and, in the event, won all hearts as GUFF delegate. But the massed TAFF sages felt that being known in the host country was very much part of TAFF’s ancient, unwritten tradition.)

GUFF results are probably in an enclosed flyer, but in summary: Eve Harvey 42 UK votes, 25 Aussie, total 67; John Jarrold 22, 1, 23; write-ins for Martha Beck (1), Roelof Goudriaan (3) and Paul Skelton (1). Eve will thus travel to Aussiecon in Melbourne later this year, together with famous husband and chattel John.

DUFF results are definitely not in an enclosed flyer, so no need to mention them ... hang on a minute. Marty & Robbie Cantor get the big chance to meet the Harveys (plus incidental perks such as Aussiecon); after an Australian ballot running to five counts the figures boggle the brain, but Mike Glicksohn was the last contender to be eliminated, preceded by Joni Stopa, before whom rich brown (sic) bit the dust. Minimal votes went to “Hold Over Funds” and four write-ins: John Bangsund, Bill the Cat, Martha Beck, Dana Siegel.

SEFF: Old news now ... nervous Jim Barker was belatedly persuaded by Swedish admirers to stand against Steve Green and Hans-Jürgen Mader as an, er, “official write-in candidate”, with a plug for him on the reprinted ballot. The trip is to Swecon in August; there may be time to rush 50p and a vote for your favourite by 1 June to Colin Fine, 205 Coldham’s Lane, Cambridge, CB1 3HY.

Infinitely Improbable

Plagiarism Shock! John Dallman forwards an entry from I.F. Clarke’s skiffy bibliography *The Tale Of The Future* (1961): “[1914] Anonymous (Carrel, F.) 2010. T.W. Laurie, 249p. A super-scientist leads the world towards peace

and happiness: ‘human nature was divested of its weakness, its baseness, its cruelty and crime’.” And of Jupiter.

Comings & Goings: RIP **Larry Shaw**, long-time SF editor, who died aged 60 on 1 April.... Soon to be put down for his first convention: **Graeme Martin Wallace**, who entered fandom on 24 April for reasons thought not unconnected with Alison & Jon Wallace.... Long-denied suspicions of author “**Richard Bachman**” were confirmed when his cover burst open, and out poked (*Alien*-fashion) the head of Stephen King. Ace reviewer Chris Priest reports that “Bachman’s” latest, *Thinner*, “is everything a hack novel should be”.... **Mr Priest**’s latest literary offspring is *The Glamour*, again: he agreed with Doubleday editorial criticisms, and in a merciless assault on completists’ wallets has rewritten the book (especially its ending) for the coming US edition.... **Avedon Carol & Rob Hansen** are having a wedding party in June irrespective of whether they contrive to arrange a wedding.... **The Ansible Poll** is hereby laid to rest in an unmarked grave, an idea (judging from response) whose time is clearly past.

“**Do You Remember** when humans were heroes, androids didn’t have social hang-ups and the only good alien was a dead one?” Thus the flyer for Hamlyn’s VENTURE SF line, edited by Andromeda Bookshop stalwarts Rog Peyton and Rod Milner. The first 3 choices (two reprinted from famous quality publishers Robert Hale) amply fulfil the flyer’s brutish promise. Venture publishes all “action adventure – no short stories, no fantasies, no boredom.” Most people probably won’t struggle far enough into choice 3, David Drake’s awful *Hammer’s Slammers*, to find it’s a collection of short stories....

The Fungus was the latest nasty from Harry Adam Knight, really John Brosnan and Leroy Kettle reluctantly foregoing personal notoriety in order to be able to put “The New Stephen King – *Starburst Magazine*” on the jacket. This might otherwise have lacked street credibility, the *Starburst* puff being of course written by Mr Brosnan, though rumour has it that those actual words were intelligently cut by *Starburst*’s editor.... A fungal launch party saw billions of SF celebrities shoehorning themselves into a club bar which faithfully recreated the Black Hole of Calcutta. The contingent from mycotoxic publishers Star Books contrived to seem wholly unembarrassed by the fact that all was being paid for by the authors ... which was perhaps why Leroy kept reducing peoples’ appetites by relating *Fungus* scenes so

disgusting that even Star and John Brosnan had made him take them out. (Among the bits left in was a very consciousness-raising rape sequence, with the vile aggressor so ravaged with Fungus [a sort of cross between dry rot and athlete's foot] that in mid-rape an important part of him snaps off. Quite right too.) As your unbiased reviewer wrote, "This book degrades mushrooms."

Wimps vs Morons: More leakage from the bent administrators of famed unpopularity poll COFF: as of 8 April the leading item was "The Wimps Who Protested About Rob Holdstock's Stripogram" (27 votes), hard pressed by "The Morons Who Gave Rob Holdstock A Stripogram" (25 votes). Graham James followed with 10, but not really, since people's friend Steve Green had 12 less 5 *negative* votes (a concept thrust on COFF by dynamic Katie Hoare). Trailing were Greg Pickersgill (7) and sunshine twins Abi Frost and Joy Hibbert (5 each)....

The Notional is an Aussie newszine from Ditmar fanwriter award winner Leigh Edmonds, and Valma Brown. They scheme to make mock of *Ansible* by unscrupulous use of Regularity and Frequency, not to mention striking low blows at *Thyme* by inserting Layout. \$10A for locals; outlanders' rates \$15A per year to PO Box 433 Civic Sq, ACT 2608, Australia.

Mags: erstwhile office boy Ian Marsh gloats that he's taken over as power-crazed *White Dwarf* assistant editor, thus doing all the work "except select the sexist covers and write the editorials." Rush your scenarios for "Fandom: the Fighting Fantasy Game" to him at 27-29 Sunbeam Rd, London, NW10 6JP. Meanwhile Jack Schofield of *Practical Computing* instructs fans to piss off and stop sending him fiction since he "just hasn't got room for SF any more." *Computing: The Magazine* has leapt to fill the breach by offering a plush £88 per thousand words for computeroid SF (55 Frith St, London, W1A 2HG), but so far has contented itself with reprints.

Editorial. For those who feel short-changed by the new format: you still get lots of words, honest, just less paper to hang in the bog. All readers are instructed (doubtless in vain) to buy *The Third Millennium: A History Of The World Ad 2000-3000* by Brian Stableford and yrs truly, out late June from Sidgwick & Jackson; an in-joke or two may be found within, but the real laughs will come from the authors' photos in the more downmarket Sunday colour supplements. One artistic loon frogmarched us round Reading U

campus in search of surreal backgrounds: watch for the pained look on Brian's face as he draws the line at posing in a tree.

Hazel's Language Lessons No.34: Grebo

(or, First Aid in South West Liberia)

pea gyie Finger rubbed in pepper or medicine which is put down the throat to induce vomiting.

kye di gobo Grasshopper used for getting rid of hard spots on the skin. Salt is sprinkled on the spots, and the grasshopper eats the salt, also the spots.

saa Peppered water forced up the nose of children either as a punishment or as a medicine.

ANSIBLE 43

from

DAVE LANGFORD

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READING

BERKSHIRE

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That is not dead which can eternal lie, and with strange aeons even DAVE LANGFORD, 94 LONDON ROAD, READING, BERKSHIRE, RG1 5AU, UK, may publish. Subscriptions: 5 issues for £2 sterling: cheques/money orders to *Ansible*, Girobank transfer to a/c 24 475 4403. Or: \$3.50 to US agents Mary & Bill Burns (23 Kensington Court, Hempstead, NY 11550); \$4A to Aussie agent Irwin Hirsh, 2/416 Dandenong Rd, North Caulfield, Vic 3161. Sample issue: send SAE or IRC (but if reading this you hardly need a sample, do you?). Phone: Reading (0734) 665804. Electronic mail to Prestel mailbox 733631000. Printed labels by KEITH FREEMAN and handwritten ones by new database manager HAZEL: labels should be nearly self-explanatory (carrying the issue number to which you're paid up, or T for Trade, or some frightful Egyptian imprecation). Cartoons are by BRAD FOSTER (right), ALEXIS GILLILAND (within) and TARAL (back cover). *Ansible* 44 goes to 450+ addresses. Didn't think I could do it, a whole masthead without mentioning the Hugo ... oops.

Silent Summer

The question which failed to be on fans' lips through the summer of '85 was, "What happened to bloody *Ansible*?" Many things, beginning with Rob Hansen and Avedon Carol.... Madly we'd volunteered to host their wedding reception here in June. In preparation, Hazel scraped the thicker accumulations of filth from the walls – revealing an attack of house cancer in the form of the dreaded Dry Rot. The £1800 repair bill (paid largely out of *Ansible* subscriptions, of course) drove your editor to expend valuable brain cells on mindless and degrading jobs, including computer software and reviewing Piers Anthony novels – anything for quick cash – while the round file bulged with pathetic letters from fans demanding their *Ansible* fix, and Irwin Hirsh conveyed displeasure by mailing us dead wombats. This issue

reaches you only because Hazel (finding a broken, enfeebled Langford trying simultaneously to concoct three review columns, a VAT return and a bit of the unwritten novel for which Arrow have already printed the covers) took the mailing list firmly into her own hands. Farewell, computerization. Of course Hazel at once went down with 'flu, and....

The Carol/Hansen wedding was suitably bizarre, and took place amid much ethnic rain, in a portion of London even more slum-like than East Ham. ("I haven't been warm *once* since I got here" – AC.) The bride wore her famous black tuxedo and trousers in hope that Martin Morse Wooster would once again describe this ensemble as a dress. ("But Avedon, he's not going to be here." "Since when has that stopped him?") The bridegroom wore clothes. When the soggly radiant couple were hauled off for pre-ceremony indoctrination, British fandom lost no time in explaining to US visitors that this was because marriage according to the law of this land requires on-the-spot proof of ability to consummate the union. In the ceremony, it was Malcolm Edwards who gleefully whispered that the registrar "looked just like Marty Cantor": thus unnerved, this functionary uttered the fatal phrase "Mrs Hansen" and was swiftly hospitalized.

A reception at *Ansible* HQ followed next day (22 June). Cast out by Hazel's No Smoking edict, the "cancer party" huddled under a dripping pear-tree, heartened against the raging elements by Ted White's inexhaustible supplies of wicked substances. Abi Frost's bra strap achieved fame as (enthusiastically assisted by Atom) she detached a safety-pin for roach-holding use. Saner people crowded the Food Room, the Booze Room and the Dry Rot Viewing Room, with a breakaway party of bibliophiles upstairs appraising the library – Vince Clarke checking price tags while Chuch Harris (Sole Prop., Daventry Academy of Caprine Studies) wheedled nubile ladies with offers of free first editions. Chris Priest talked about computers and Lisa Tuttle yawned. Alexis Gilliland dashed off vignettes for posterity. Only two gatecrashers were recorded, neither from Puerto Rico. "This is a *convention*," declared Mr White: to complete the Total Experience I let him sign my battered Ace double of *Android Avenger*. (And forgot having done so, leading to a wholly spurious account of this incident in *SF Chronicle* – sorry, Andy!) When all was over, the body-strewn floors resembled the last act of *Hamlet* sprinkled with potato crisps.

Several thousand book launch parties occurred at London's "Forbidden

Planet” bookshop, all attended by the same crowd of hacks and freeloaders (save for the strangely depopulated launch of the paperback *Battlefield Earth*). Newly famous **Wm Gibson** was among those feted, having flown over to discuss an incipient film of “Burning Chrome”: his polished expression of bemusement provoked much local admiration.

Glasgow’s summer **Albacon** reportedly fell into two categories, the boring, lacklustre bits and Harlan Ellison. *Ansible* missed both, though not the prior pub meeting at which Messrs Gamma & Tate (the Forbidden Planetoids) grumbled about having to dispose of countless expensively printed flyers when HE switched the date of a signing session ... and then many more when he switched it back again ... after which they cancelled the whole thing in pique. Lightning event report from Avedon: “We all got together at a pub and listened to Holdstock talk to Ellison about sex while he wanted to talk business (perhaps buying a Holdstock story for *Last Dangerous Visions?*).” Amazingly, HE was still worried about whether I carried a 9-year-old grudge: after a tearful rapprochement, he departed with the happy assurance that his conscience need no longer feel, as it were, tweaked.

Beccon happened too: I don’t remember much, since during my brief visit I got to drinking with Barry Bayley, a fatal mistake if you value your brain cells, or kidneys.

Summer, such as it was, ended with what after persistent hotel stropiness and growing local exhaustion may have been the final **Silicon** up in Newcastle. (Advance omen at Disclave: a woman passed out flyers for “SILiCON 1 – Instead of talking about imaginative fiction, guests at SILiCON will live it!”: informed by Ted White that there’d been a Silicon for years, she was quite worried until told ... “Oh, it’s *British!* They don’t count.”) Instead of talking about SF, guests at Silicon were forced to live the usual silliness, culminating in a “Sex Game” wherein crack male and female teams vied to display superior, er, sensuality. A blindfolded Mike Glicksohn, trying to identify a slimy vegetable salad by touch, hazarded: “Martin Hoare at the end of this weekend.” Greg Pickersgill, failing to detect the taste of Bovril dissolved in yoghurt, made several deeply obscene guesses. Laura Wheatley, after not identifying leather by its smell, cried: “You can’t expect me to get that, I’m a vegetarian!” Female superiority was duly established. We mercifully omit Chris Evans’s serious literary analysis of “The Science Fiction of Margaret Thatcher”, replete with examples like Maggie’s alleged

SF novel of First Contact, titled *Sod Off, Fuckface*. Alasdair Gray, meanwhile, displayed his usual horizontal bonhomie.

[Another famous Langford Mishearing here. Chris Evans's far subtler Thatcher sf title was in fact *Sod Off, Frog-Features*.]

Traditional foul beer drove a small party away for Sunday lunch, helping me miss the fabled Malcolm Edwards Phone Call From Australia. **Britain in '87** was official, and ... I've met with many unnerving receptions on staggering back from the pub, but never before a standing ovation. Thanks, folks.

Bloody Hell!

Here's the Hugo list, courtesy of Aussiecon's amazingly speedy Roy Ferguson. Do you want the detailed statistical breakdown? I thought not. There were 443 valid and 23 invalid ballots, the winners being: **Novel** [395 ballots cast]: *Neuromancer* by William Gibson (Chris Priest, as UK agent for Mr G, turns handsprings). **Novella** [355]: "Press Enter *" by John Varley. **Novellette** [349]: "Bloodchild" by Octavia Butler. **Short** [345]: "Crystal Spheres" by David Brin. **Non-Fiction** [313]: *Wonder's Child: My Life In SF* by Jack Williamson. **Dramatic Presentation** [413]: *2010*. **Pro Editor** [358]: Terry Carr. *Pro Artist* [330]: Michael Whelan. **Semi-Prozine** [325]: *Locus Fanzine* [284]: *File 770*. (After F770's victory, Mike Glyer declared a "withdrawal" from future competition – something not covered by the rules. Meanwhile, weary of losing to *Locus* in the semi-prozine category, Dick Geis has declared his *SF Review* to be once again a fanzine.) **Fanwriter** [284]: Dave Langford! **Fanartist** [287]: Alexis Gilliland. **John W. Campbell Award** [291; not a Hugo]: Lucius Shepard.

The Open Conspiracy

The name of our 45th Worldcon (in Brighton, of course – both the Metropole and the mighty Conference Centre) is, for no evident reason, **Conspiracy '87**. It ousted the Phoenix (Arizona) quasi-bid by 400 to 100 votes. Guests of honour are Alfred Bester, Doris Lessing, and (fan) Ken & Joyce Slater, plus Jim Burns as Artist GoH and me as "special fan guest", and Brian Aldiss in the role of toastmaster. Address is now: Po Box 43, Cambridge, CB1 3JJ;

attending membership is £19.50 (USA \$30, Australia \$A40), supporting £10 (\$15, \$A20), with a £2 (\$3, \$A3) discount for paid-up presupporters. Agents include Mary & Bill Burns (US, as masthead) and Justin Ackroyd (GPO Box 2708X, Melbourne, Vic 3001, Australia).

Reports of **Aussiecon** are understandably incoherent. Some 1800-2000 fans were present, the largish Brit contingent being swelled by freebies from official Conspiracy airline British Airways. (The most mysterious free ride must be Paul Heskett's. "Fred Harris rang me on the previous Monday asking if I'd like to go to Oz. I had nothing better to do....")

Chris Hughes & Jan Huxley summarized the city: "Melbourne (Melbun, as they say here): trams, MacDonalds, palm trees, awful coffee, cheap steaks and wine, fountains, strange conventions.... Fantastic." [CH/JH]

Joseph Nicholas's postcard showed the 1880 Victoria Hotel, "the site of the fan programme, which was itself pretty good despite various irritating snarl-ups.... Valma Brown will be standing for GUFF for a trip to Brighton in 1987. As one of her nominators, I can say that she's ideologically sound and will struggle against global hegemonization wherever it may be found: she is therefore the candidate to vote for." [JMN]

Martin Morse Wooster was diverted from the trail of scandal and horror: "Inimitable presence of J. Nicholas has caused me to talk about American politics, New Zealand politics, Aussie politics.... Now I know what American cultural imperialism *really means*." [MMW]

Paul Dormer sent his notes to *Small Mammal* (the bum), thus: "The heavy voting for Conspiracy was a result of bribery: British Airways had freighted over a large quantity of Brighton rock. This served to keep those fans manning the British table fed. The con committee suggested the sticks ought to be peace-bonded under their weapons policy.... On a panel, Frank Herbert stated that he'd never written a *Dune* book for money. The masquerade was a bit of a shambles – the stage was so low that most people had difficulty seeing the contestants, particularly 'Conan the Baby'. The Hugo presentation was rather better, though the slides used to announce nominations always seemed to be in the wrong order ... also the best novella winner was flashed up on the screen as 'John Varley, Pless Enter *'.... British presence was strong in the fan programme, including a Bob Shaw talk and a demonstration of the Astral Pole by Joe Nicholas (the report is unclear as to whether Judith

Hanna's cry of 'Joseph Nicholas stop biting your nails this instant' occurred before or after this demonstration)...." [PD/SM]

A surprise Worldcon bid (as hinted in *A41* before Kees van Toorn told me to shut up) is **Holland in 1990**, with a steering committee of Kees & Angelique van Toorn, Lynne Ann Morse and Roelof Goudriaan. Pre-supporting memberships £4 (blimey, 400% inflation), \$5, or 15 guilders, to PO Box 95370, 2509 CJ The Hague, Netherlands – or to “a rapidly growing network of international agents”. This should fill US fans with paranoia: Conspiracy won its bid in Australia and (as I understand recent rule changes), Holland in 1990 will be voted at Conspiracy. An un-American plot! The domino theory!

The 1990 opposition provoked **Irwin Hirsh** to paranoid speculations of his own: “A comment on LA-Con II's allotment of money for bidding for the 1990 Worldcon: at today's prices it would cost about \$40 to take out a supporting membership of the '88 Worldcon and vote in the Site Selection. So \$10,000 can buy 250 votes, about 20-25% of votes usually cast. A scary thought.” The amount set aside by LA-Con was in fact \$20,000. Which links with another problem reported in US newszines – the increasing interest of US Internal Revenue in profits of “non-profit-making” cons. Seems the “charitable foundation” position is being made untenable by taxmen's discovery that private individuals (especially dealers and artists) make vast spinoff profits.... [F770]

Thus **Teresa Nielsen Hayden** reveals an Informed Source's proposed slogan for one future bid: “If Boston wins the bid for 1989, and LA for 1990, they'll have so much left-over money that they'll *need* Baltimore in 1992.”

Change & Decay in All Around I See

Imagine magazine bit the dust in August, the issue on the stands being appropriately numbered 30. This is all TSR's fault: “Der Fuhrer Amerikanisch has ordered the final solution,” wailed erstwhile editor Paul Cockburn. “You lucky sod, Langford, you're the only contributor to issue 31 who's being paid,” report envious (and premature) games fans. Within hours of the sinking, ace film reviewer Colin Greenland was scuttling aboard the rival ship *White Dwarf* (where his column resumes in January).... **Chris Priest & Lisa Tuttle** have separated – she remains at the old address. Chris's

customary gloom was intensified by the collapse of an almost finalized \$200,000 film deal for *The Glamour*.... **A Plague Of Babies** continues, with Leah (& Steve) Higgins and Jenny (& Dave) Raggett in an expectant state – likewise recidivists Rochelle (& Alan) Dorey and Margaret (& Terry) Hill. As for Coral (& Rob) Jackson, travel back with me in time to *Checkpoint 98*, June/July 1979, in which Leroy Kettle wrote: “Dr Jackson and his lovely wife Dr Mrs Dr Jackson are building an extension to their mansion to house the expected new arrival, which they will call Hugo.” Again SF predicts the future: with a double dose of Gernsback homage, the new outbreak is named Hugo Ralph Jackson....

Stu Shiffman underwent 12 hair-raising hours of brain surgery at the end of July: all now seems well. “He’s missing most of the hair on the back of his head, but hey, he always likes wearing those snappy broad-brimmed hats anyway” [PNH]. In an exclusive bedside interview Stu proudly revealed that his medical bill (“med insurance is taking care of *most* expenses ... I hope”) had reached \$10,075.... **Knave** editor Ian Pemble has abandoned girlie magazines for a job in advertising: will his successor be as eager to pay vast sums for old Langford fanzine articles? Stay tuned.... **Paul Skelton** begs me to tell the world he’s folding his fanzine SFD (“Look, I know it ranks, on the scale of fannish importance, about on a par with Keith Walker discovering a typo, but –”).... **Avedon Carol** wishes to make it clear that “no version of my name or any name I have used in the past or plan to use in the future contains any of the following: Hansen. Mrs. Rob.”.... **Jon Cowie** complained of vile allegations about Beccon last issue, though the rest of the Beccon committee didn’t seem to mind much.... **Lucy Huntzinger** has published (in Robert Lichtman’s nifty *Trap Door*) details of her open-secret marriage to Phil Palmer, and claims that in a brave attempt at contraflow consummation, Phil will be moving to San Francisco....

Late RIP Note: Theodore Sturgeon died on 8 May aged 67; the eulogies are long past, but it remains a deeply depressing event. (Dan Morgan was unkeen on the widely syndicated Aldiss tribute: “I admired Sturgeon’s writing for its human yet fantastical qualities. Pity Brian didn’t see fit to dwell on those rather than drivelling on about the poor sod’s sexual proclivities, which are completely irrelevant at this stage. God save us from obits written by such friends!” [DM]) **Jack Gaughan**, famed professional artist since the early 60s and winner of several Hugos, died of cancer on 21

July, aged 54 [SFC].... **Bill Evans**, long-time Washington fan and bibliographer (e.g. the legendary Pavlat/Evans *Index Of Sf Fanzines*) died on 24 June, aged 64 [SFC].... A skeletal hand burst in July from the grave of the horror/fantasy fanzine *Gothique*, bony fingers clutching a 20th Anniversary Issue courtesy of the British Fantasy Society. (80p inc. P&P from editor Stan Nicholls, Flat 2, Allison Ct, 43 Parkhill Rd, London, NW3 2YD). Your reporter is not afraid to admit having stuffed himself with free food at the merry exhumation party.

Complaints Dept. • Letters

Teresa Nielsen Hayden: “A splendidly wretched story is going the rounds regarding doings at Pocket Books. They recently brought out yet another Star Trek novel, called *Killing Time* (seems to be an unlucky title), by Sondra Marshak & Myrna Culbreath. The original MS had K&S overtones: you know, amateur-written ST universe spinoff stories, some book-length, ranging from suggestive-but-mushy romances [that run heavily to Liebestod endings] to hardcore porn, all featuring a homosexual relationship between Kirk & Spock. Bizarre stuff, but it has a fair-sized, intensely loyal, rather secretive, and overwhelmingly female following. Anyway – Paramount Studios *loathes* K&S, and when the MS was sent for approval someone there marked all those passages for deletion. Time passes; Pocket prints 250K copies and ships out some 100-150K of them. *Killing Time*’s been on the stands for a while now, and even though Pocket is pulling every copy it can lay hands on, and shredding the copies in their warehouse, it’s much too late to get them all back. Apparently, somewhere in the period circa Mimi Panich’s departure from Pocket and Karen Haas’s arrival, an unidentified and gremlinish hand went through the MS and carefully marked ‘STET’ next to all the passages Paramount has asked to have deleted. The friend who told me about this snafu read one of the objected-to scenes to me over the phone, and while it isn’t the really raunchy ‘He’d wondered if *it* were green, too’ stuff, the tone is unmistakable. Cognoscenti are snapping up all the still-available copies; it’s bound to become a collector’s item, and as everyone observes, it couldn’t happen to a more deserving publisher.” [TNH]

Ted White: “Words cannot express the emotions I felt when I discovered that Martin Morse Wooster had done it again: Made A Few Factual Errors in

his High Class Reportage....

“First, I am *not* the ‘editor of *Stardate*’. Dave Bischoff is *Stardate*’s editor; I am editorial director.

“Second, it is *wholly untrue* that ‘controversy has already erupted between [me] and the publisher’, and equally false to say that the publisher ‘wants much more Trek material’. I have no idea where Martin picked up these bits of gossip, but it certainly wasn’t from an informed source. The publisher, by the way, is Dana Lombardy, who may or may not fit Wooster’s description of him as ‘an unreconstructed Trekkie’, but is the author of the gaming columns in *Analog* and *Asimov*’s, and thus no stranger to sf magazines.

“*Stardate* will *not* be a ‘Trekkie magazine’ but a multi-media sf magazine – the first such, in fact. While *Star Trek* will have its place in the pages, so also will *Dr Who*, sf role-playing gaming, comics (starting with Steve Stiles’ ‘On the Brightside’) and straight sf. To ensure we achieve high standards of quality, we have set up a budget which offers 10 cents a word – making *Stardate* the highest paying magazine in the sf field (sorry about that, Terry). The appeal to me is to reconcile all these elements in a dynamic magazine.

“I’m amused to hear that bets are being taken over our failure. Could this be wishful thinking on Wooster’s part? At the just-past Disclave he and Darrell Schweitzer (two of my favourite people) could be seen with their heads together quite frequently, apparently praying for our speedy failure. (Darrell now flinches and turns away when he sees me coming; is he afraid I’ll follow Harlan’s example and punch him out for repeatedly calling me ‘the worst editor in the history of sf’? If he is, I’m afraid he overestimates himself....)

“Speaking of Disclave, the highlight (or *something*) of that convention was the Meet The Pros In Their Underwear party. An amazing sight, and not one for the squeamish. I had never before realized how many of this country’s lesser pros were overweight men with tiny dinkies pointing aimlessly through the stained fabric of their jockey shorts. There were a few women in similar states of undress, but unfortunately those who exposed the most had the least to reveal. A pathetic party, all in all; I left at the point when Darrell Schweitzer was stripped to his none too clean underpants. I’ve seen monkeys in zoos before.

“PS: *Stardate*’s editorial address is: 1010 Vermont Ave NW, Suite 910,

Washington, DC 20005. Phone: 202 393-5233.” [TW]

Greg Benford: “I hazard a guess that the ‘unattributable rumour’ you cite in *Ansible* arose from my describing my trip to the USSR to David Pringle, and mentioning that as is usual, the CIA came and asked me questions about it. This is a loooong way from being an agent. It does raise the amusing idea of the intelligence community trying to infiltrate *Interzone* through Pringle, and finding it resembles the Balkans in 1913....

“Actually, I heard in the USSR that Eurocon 85 was axed because the KGB couldn’t see monitoring all those people with their weird habits....” [GB]

David Pringle: “I wish Colin Greenland had not decided to air *Interzone*’s dirty linen in public, and I have no desire to make a detailed response to his remarks in A43. Yes, there was a dispute – an argument which dragged on for several months – and yes, Colin has resigned from the magazine. I’d like to correct one of his statements. ‘David Pringle wants complete control of the magazine,’ he says. That is not so. In fact, I now share editorial responsibility for *IZ* equally with Simon Ounsley. I am very happy with this arrangement, and confident that it will last for a long time. Moreover, since Colin’s resignation we have ‘promoted’ Judith Hanna from Assistant to Associate Editor: she will be closely involved with the magazine’s day-to-day running and will have a full say, with Simon and me, in the choice of stories.” [DP]

[Simon wrote making the same points, slightly obscured by an elaborate metaphor involving vibrators, grapes and fudge.]

Joseph Nicholas: “BALLARD SHOCK HORROR! Which famous, Booker-nominated, *Guardian* Fiction Prize-winner, invited to review a book for CND’s magazine *Sanity*, spurned the offer with the statement that he was strongly pro-Bomb and totally opposed to CND and all its works? None other than the author of *Empire Of The Sun*, actually, whose letter now hangs on the wall of the CND Publications Office beneath the legend ‘Attention All Ballard Fans!’ In the light of this, can David Pringle still proclaim Ballard to the skies?” [JMN]

[To quote Mr Ballard in RE/SEARCH 8/9: “I want *more* nuclear weapons! ...I want my own cruise missile at the bottom of my garden.” He should like my *The Leaky Establishment*.]

Brian Aldiss: “Last night, glamorous Central London Poly was the scene of

a meeting for many celebrities, *artistes*, & notorious intellectuals, as Channel 4 videoed *A History Of Psychiatry*. The latter was an amazing, one-man, spontaneous, ad-libbed, free-association caper by John Sessions. Gavrilo Princep started the 20th century, Freud had his room decorated by a Mr Schicklgruber, etc. The whole masterminded by *Ken Campbell*, genius of Theatre, Mime, and N.4. Glimpsed in the 100-strong audience were singer Dotti Green, Gerry Webb, Brian Aldiss....” [BA, 26 June]

Charles Platt: “Andy Porter has quoted a large chunk of my *Ansible 43* piece without permission or attribution. I seriously think you should complain about his stealing your news. (All he had to do was call me and get a fresh quote from me.)” [CP]

[Semi-professional Andy, whose *SF Chronicle* ethical standards are an example to us all, has jolly decently issued a correction and acknowledgement in his September issue. He’s also cancelled Charles’s “Gabby Snitch” column in *SFC*, owing to horror at a quite funny Platt hoax in *Fantasy Review* – inventing an obscure, pseudonymous Stephen King porno novel to pull collectors’ legs. King’s lawyer failed to see the joke, and demanded mass grovelling: *Ansible* has thus reluctantly shelved its similar expose of early J.G. Ballard contributions to the *News Of The World* and *Beano*.]

Benedict S. Cullum: “I’m halfway through a subscription to *Warrior* and was dismayed, on returning home from college, to find I’d received no copies since Easter. I rang up Quality and learned that the Marvel/Quality action was over; that the writer involved (Alan Moore, I think) had reluctantly agreed to change the name of his *Marvelman* strip; that *Warrior* was currently being redesigned; and that the reason for this was the return of issues 25/26 by the wholesalers.

“It seems that W.H. Smith Wholesale love *Warrior*. WHS Retail, though, don’t know where to put it, won’t take it, and leave the wholesale department to return 40,000 copies to Quality with the message that they’ll stock it, perhaps even *sell* the odd copy, provided Quality change the format. It’s not a juvenile publication and with its present design cannot be marketed elsewhere on their shelves.

“Quality reckon they’ll have the new format ready soon. What gets me is the total control WHS seem to have over such ventures. I remember that you,

when associated with *Extro*, had similar problems. I'd like to contact someone with a bit of clout in the WHS organization but I've got this horrible vision of any publication I mention being put on a blacklist by some faceless director as a punishment for having the kind of readership that answers back. Any ideas?" [BSC]

George Hay: "Met Karl Edward Wagner and his lady the other day, and heard how, because he is now doing story treatments for films, he gets limited-English-vocabulary phone calls from Dino de Laurentiis. Thus:

"'Karl – you know about Rambo?'

"'Yes, Dino, I know about Rambo.'

"'You know about kidnapping in Beirut?'

"'Yes, Dino, I know about kidnapping in Beirut.'

"'You know about Delta Force?' (Apparently this is some Italian Special Task Force.)

"'Yes, Dino, I know about Delta Force.'

"'Well, Karl, I was thinking, suppose Rambo goes with Delta Force to take out terrorists in Beirut, would make good film, no? You want to make film outline treatment?'" [GH]

R.I. Barycz: "*Starman* enjoyed greatly. Not much can be said about it as film – the plot was swiss cheesy as usual, the visuals impressive, the science suspect (as usual) and even the non-science, e.g. the incredibly touching episode where the Starman brings a dead deer tied on the bonnet of a hunter's car back to life. All together now: aaahhh. But I recall some natural history TV programme on US National Parks etc that allow deer hunting and I'm sorry to say that before ye noble hunter ties his kill to his bonnet he takes his Bowie knife and disembowels the creature to (a) reduce weight and (b) stop his venison tainting as the vegetable matter in the deer's guts ferments away. Very chauvinist pic, too – he leaves the heroine pregnant but with *his* baby entirely, genetic inheritance and all. Well, what else did one expect from a Starman with seven balls..." [RIB]

Charles Stross: "Would the 1985 Cassandra Summer Workshop bear any resemblance to last year's, or would the nature of the beast be transformed by the presence of Bob Shaw? I was disabused of this notion when Ian Watson descended on me, looking more like Ken Livingstone than ever. Unlike his wife. Bob proved himself genuine by virtue of his attitude to alcohol ('I like

about four cans of Special Brew as a nightcap before I go to bed, sometimes'), relieving me of the inevitable fear that Bernard Smith had corralled the wrong Mr Shaw. The workshop got off to a flying start, and as before everybody seemed to get something out of it – mostly a lot of abuse from the rest of us. It was revealed that Bob had the honour of publishing the last story in *Imagine* (issue 30) and had just completed a 120,000 MS for Gollancz, provisionally titled *Invisible Mountains* until he can think of something more catchy. With regard to *Imagine*'s demise, Hilary Robinson opined that it was because the US parent company felt their own, indifferent product *The Dragon* was being threatened by the British zine which was outselling it in the States as well as at home.... This workshop might even get to be a regular annual event if everyone feels about it in six months what they felt on leaving. Anything that hurts so much *must* be good for you." [CS]

The Becon Scenario

Marcus Rowland

Becon feels like one of those institutions which has been around forever (like a Burgess pork pie) – though 1985's was only the third, and the fourth, if it ever happens, will be the 1987 Eastercon. I always think of Becons as taking place in hot sunny weather: in this year's drizzle and gloom, the bar stayed packed throughout the weekend, rather than the crowd spilling on to the hotel lawn....

Actual events on Friday were low-key, e.g. Colin Fine's "Cards Sharp" quiz (notable for the most incomprehensible rules I've ever seen) and Jon Cowie's fannish talk on computer prediction, the Club of Rome, and Thatcherite economics. It's a law of nature that overhead projector reliability is inversely proportional to the need for visual aids: Becon's broke down two minutes after the first transparency, leaving 15 acetate sheets circulating around the audience. Minutes before the end, the committee's technical wizards cracked the problem: the mains supply had failed!

Saturday moved towards two climaxes: the GoH speech and the midnight fireworks display. A certain D. Langford arrived expecting to see the *Spock In Manacles* stage show, a bad move since this took place on Sunday. Richard Cowper's speech was witty, informative, but somehow a little

forgettable; the display was the most impressive yet, accompanied by Ride of the Valkyries (sans helicopters), the 1812 Overture and Handel's Royal Fireworks Music. A highlight was the large ground-level detonation whose shockwave rattled teeth and hotel windows: reportedly a honeymoon couple had booked into the hotel half an hour previously, and few fans could resist the line "Did the earth move for you, darling?"

Sunday's main event was the afternoon premiere of *Spock In Manacles*. [*This is what Teresa meant by K&S.... DRL*] Fine performances by Pete Gilligan (Kirk), Geoff Ryman (Spock), Laura Wheatley (Yeoman Lotta Bottle), Graham Head (McCoy and Scott) and Caroline Mullan (Nurse Chapel) were counterpointed by Kim Campbell as a slightly OTT Amazon Queen, Steve Lawson as the chief expendable security guard and shop steward, and Brian Ameringen as the goat. Music by Ian Sorensen included "Bestiality's Best" (to the tune of "Tie Me Kangaroo Down"). A collection raised hundreds of pounds for Live Aid; sales of scripts, books and tapes should bring in funds for some time. Next morning saw survivors tearfully parting in the lobby, and driving home through torrential rain. Only one worry about the future of Becon: given the steady escalation of the fireworks displays (soon to violate SALT agreements) and the proximity of the planned '87 venue (NEC) to Birmingham International Airport ... h'mm. [*MLR*]

C.O.A

ALYSON L. ABRAMOWITZ, 132 Burnetts Grove Circle, Netean, Ontario, Canada K2J 1S9 • BRIAN AMERINGEN, see Caroline Mullan • ARROW BOOKS (now "A division of Century/Hutchinson Ltd"), Brookmount House, 62-65 Chandos Place, Covent Garden, London, WC2N 4NW • MICHAEL ASHLEY, 5 Woodville Terrace, Bradford, W Yorks, BD5 0JH • WILLIAM & JANE BAINS, 146 North Rd, Combe Down, Bath, BA2 5DL • DAVID V. BARRETT: new address "not for publication" • RICH BROWN, 1808 Lamont NW, Washington, DC 20010, USA • PETER COHEN, 16 Greenhill Close, Winchester, Hants • SHAREE CARTON, 2315 Bush St (1), San Francisco, CA 94115, USA • OSCAR DALGLEISH, 201 Chiswick Village, London, W4 3DG • JOHN DALLMAN, Flat 4, 27 Terront Rd, Tottenham, London, N.15 • LILIAN EDWARDS, 1 Braehead Rd, Thorntonhall, Glasgow, until 1 Oct: then Queen's College, Cambridge • AHRVID ENGHOLM & LOTTIE

ERIKSSON, Renstiernas Gata 29, S-116 31 Stockholm, Sweden • ALAN FERGUSON, 52 High St, Sawston, Cambs, CB2 4BG • ANNE HAMILL (not Anne Warren, please): as before • MALCOLM HODKIN is temporarily indeterminate. On 27 Sept: “Baidland”, 19 Lade Braes Lane, St Andrews, Fife, KY16 • AKE JONSSON, Regementsgatan 53, S-723 45 Vasteras, Sweden (NB: Ake never actually moved, spurious complications arising from the existence of Ake Jonsson [with an umlaut on the O] in Uppsala.) • BERNARD LEAK, 50 Searle St, Cambridge, CB4 3DB • PETE LYON, 9 Church Ave, Leeds, LS6 4JX • LYNNE ANN MORSE, Noordwal 2, 2513 EA Den Haag, Netherlands (also correct for Roelof Goudriaan: ignore A43 misprimp) • CAROLINE MULLAN, 9 Graham Rd, Wealdstone, Harrow, HA3 5RP • ANNE PAGE, 304a Main St, High Blantyre, Glasgow, G72 0DH • IAN PEMBLE, 139 Andrewes House, Barbican, London, EC2Y 8BA • CAMILLA POMEROY, 42 Heol Gleien, Cwmtwrch-isaf, Swansea, SA9 2TR • DAVID POWER, 40 South Ave, Abingdon, Oxon, OX14 1QR • CHRIS PRIEST is heading for Pewsey, Wilts • DAVE & JENNY RAGGETT, 288 Ashley Down Rd, Ashley Down, Bristol, BS7 9BQ • LEAH ZELDES SMITH, 2007 West Howard St, Evanston, IL 60202, USA • IAN SORENSEN, see Anne Page • NEIL THOMPSON, 37 Southwold Place, Beaconhill Green, Cramington, Northumberland • BOB TUCKER, 2516/H East Washington, Bloomington, IL 61701, USA •

My Bit

In beer veritas. I was in the pub talking to Steve Higgins about the theory of fanzines, an awkward subject since he actually HAS a theory of fanzines and I’m not sure that I do. He lashed out with the sort of cruelly penetrating shaft of savage wit with which people are always flaying my sensitive ego (i.e. “When’s the next *Ansible*, Dave?”), and I was interested to hear my mouth say: “I’d been thinking of changing *Ansible* a bit ... it tends to boil down to exquisite, crystalline condensations of COA listings and who’s won what, owing to my Duty to the Public, and I’d thought of loosening up with some more personal stuff – as in earlier days.”

“Great,” he said. “What sort of stuff?”

“Er, well, maybe I could take a tip from all those fascinating SFWA

raconteurs and write about my word processor.”

For some reason Steve went very silent and thoughtful. Still, there are personal oddments which can't be flagged as hot news (“*Ansible* scoop! Langford squeezes spot!”)... For example, I mentioned SFWA up there (they *do* rabbit on about word processors). I dropped out recently owing to lack of money – also, because of an Interesting Contrast. I was having a desultory fight with Arrow, whose sales department remaindered my *The Space Eater* without notifying either the editorial department or, as required by contract, the author. I'd wanted to buy up the books and flog 'em to you lot for vast profits (I do have a few, if you're desperate) – and suggested that compensation for said lost profits would be in order. Arrow said, approximately, “All right, we apologize, now piss off.” Informed of this, SFWA said, approximately, “Sorry, we'd have to sue them to get anything and we don't do that.” The Society of Authors, however, despatched a barrage of rude letters and in short order had extracted compensation from an enfeebled Nick Webb (then Arrow boss – now deposed as a by-product of the Century takeover). No hard feelings, and the compensation wasn't *that* huge, but it was strangely easy to decide which writers' organization I stayed with....

Nick Webb, meanwhile, has slavishly followed me to Sphere Books. The first copy of their paperback *Leaky Establishment* (a thinly disguised chunk of Langford autobiography) has just arrived, and nearly gave me a heart attack, since under my name it says *Hugo Award Winning Author*. They wouldn't! They couldn't! On closer inspection: they hadn't, but editor Colin Murray is a mean man with the Letraset. Autographed copies will be almost unescapable at Novacon.

Another likely Novacon publication is *The Transatlantic Hearing Aid*, a revised and damn nearly posthumous one-volume edition of my TAFF report, even now being finally pasted up by Rob (Inca Press) Jackson. To anyone who since 1980 has maintained unwavering faith that this monster *would* appear, I offer thanks and polite disbelief. Cost: around £2 plus an uncertain amount of postage. To break up the tedium of the prose, cartoons have been provided by fanartists who are household names: Stu Kellogg, Alexis Hoover, Rob Heinz.... Place your order yesterday! Act without thinking!

Manual for An Atomic Swede

Ahrvid Engholm

Bad days have hit the Swedish prozines, in the form of economic troubles. *Nova SF* is cutting down from bimonthly to quarterly, and will from this autumn be published as a paperback magazine to save production costs. (Meanwhile we have less money and fewer pages to publish stories on: there's a bundle of stories labelled "To be bought" and D. Langford's is on top of it, but we have to wait a while yet.) The other prozine, *Jules Verne Magasinet*, has cut down from 80 to 64 pages and announced a fat increase in subscription fees. (At the same time, Ahrvid Engholm has sold his *first* story to *JVM*, a short piece called "Manual for an Atomic Bomb". No connection, we hope.) A central Swedish fanzine library is being started by the Alvar Appeltofft Memorial Foundation, with a view to reference and fan-historical work. The keystone of the collection of Sam J. Lundwall's Swedish fanzine collection (bought by the Foundation in April)... SEFF is now open for nominations for next year's race (probably to the British Eastercon, but nominators can vote on this too: since SEFF has no "natural" goal each year, it's possible to have different conventions as goals for the different candidates)... Swedish fandom is presently stricken by a feverish outburst of incomprehensible feuding between many top fans; another popular occupational therapy is ... hush ... secret APAs. At least half a dozen have started this year, and every one has been revealed since there's always someone among the handful of members who can't refrain from telling someone else.... John-Henri Holmberg and Per Insulander, editors of *NOVA*, are planning a huge **Scancon** in Stockholm next summer: "We aim for 1000 attendees." [AE]

Infinitely Improbable

"**Hold Horns High!**" writes Brian Aldiss: "I shall expect you to join the Aldiss Appreciation Triad...." Incipient groupies can now rush £8/annum to Pauline Valentine, 25 Margarets Ave, Long Eaton, Derbyshire, receiving in exchange a lapel badge ("I'm Backing Brian"?) and such quarterly joys as "news of Brian's activities ... hopefully Questions from Members and a Brian W. Aldiss Answer Page." Fame, at last.

Unsuitable: Charles Platt's new fanzine *REM* reveals with deadpan glee that he took legal advice about a possible damages suit following the Ellison Assault (A43) – only to be informed by a regretful attorney that, for the purposes of a lucrative case, “Mr Ellison just isn't quite famous enough.”

Fanfundery: declared candidates for the '86 **TAFF** race, UK to Atlanta, are Judith Hanna and Simon Ounsley. **TAFF** '87 is aiming (by popular US demand) for Eastercon rather than Conspiracy: Brian Earl Brown, Allyn Cadogan and Jeanne Gomoll have emerged from the closet, which contains at least one more sucker.... **GUFF** '87 will run from Australia to Conspiracy, aspirants so far consisting of Valma Brown. **SEFF** (Europe to Swecon) was won by write-in candidate Jim Barker: JB 72 first-place votes, Hans-Jurgen Mader 32, Steve Green 21. A late Swedish campaign swung the result; in the absence of write-ins, Steve would have just won. One or two bitter Midland voices have been heard comparing this with last winter's **TAFF** trauma: one can't deny that it was something of a blow for the two candidates actually on the ballot. Interestingly, though, the broken-down voting figures **JUST** meet **TAFF**'s new “20%” requirement (A43)....

COFF: this major unpopularity poll's voting leak (A43) was denounced as “unreliable” by fans who asked questions like “What about all the votes I put in for Katie Hoare?” Steve Green and Kev Clarke are now co-administrating the concrete overcoats: 10p/vote still, to 191 Valley Rd, Solihull, West Midlands. Future leaks will be Guaranteed and Official, and the uncoveted trophy itself will be presented at Novacon. In a feeble attempt to be even more controversial, Steve writes that “one plan to liven up Novacon 14 which might have overshadowed even the stripper was a guest appearance by well-known sf fan Ken Livingstone; sadly he was unable to attend.”

Unidentified Foot-In-Mouth Object? Our pseudoscience expert John Grant reports that lovable sceptic Ian Ridpath made a clot of himself in a recent radio (LBC) debate, his savagely reasoned assault on Jenny Randles and her *Science And The UFOs* (with Peter Warrington) being slightly deflated when he was “shown not to have read the book”. Inflamed by this and by a Ridpath review in *New Scientist*, Ms Randles is rumoured to be contemplating legal action.... [PB/ED]

Convention Mentions: **Articon** (4-6 Oct) is another Hatfield Poly “Shoestringcon”: £2 supp £4 att to 17 Royston Rd, St Albans, Herts....

Novacon 15 (1-3 Nov): fascinating committee punch-ups were rumoured, over subjects like *Who Types The Souvenir Fiction Booklet* (this year an Ace Double). Sign up now or GoHs White & Langford will sulk. £7 to 86 Berwood Farm Rd, Wylde Green, Sutton Coldfield, Birmingham.... **Mexicon 2** (7-9 Feb) has reportedly shifted to a second Birmingham hotel (did someone mention the Angus?) after horrified study of the Strathallan's performance at Lazlar Lyricon. Still £9 to 24a Beech Rd, London, N11 2DA.... **Albacon III** (Easter, Glasgow) has GoH Joe Haldeman and FGoH John Jarrold (a Special Mexican Guest).... **XIIcon** (29-29 Sept 86, Glasgow): GoH is Harry Harrison. £6 att until 26 Sept 85, to "Beachfield", Calfmuir Rd, Lenzie, Glasgow, G66 3JJ.... **Perth** (the Australian one) is reportedly bidding for the 1994 Worldcon....

Asimov's SF Magazine is, these days, being edited by Gardner Dozois (380 Lexington Ave, New York, NY 10017, USA).

BSFA Coup! A rumoured takeover plot was greeted with eager yawns from everyone except the committee (whose dim lustreless eyes glowed for the first time in years, at the glorious thought of being thrown out). Rumoured arch-conspirator Dave Hodson is practising a baleful stare after the manner of old and tired Chairman Dorey, but so far tends to overdo it....

Spinrad Banned Again: Norman S's *The Iron Dream* is back on the Index of "youth-threatening writings" in Germany – no advertising, no display, under-the-counter sales only [SOB]. Since the book's attack on fascist elements in SF/fantasy is sound stuff, we assume the federal inspection board fears that kids will pick up Spinrad's writing style....

Da Organization: this Birmingham-based APA has seceded from the Birmingham SF Group, and sprouted a "fund-raising" paramilitary wing of water-pistol sharpshooters led by grim-jawed hitperson Cath Easthope. Current Organization address: c/o Eunice Pearson, 32 Digby House, Colletts Grove, Kingshurst, Birmingham, B37 6JE. Meanwhile, vibrant **Frank's Apa** has fallen into the administrative hands of Ron Gemmell (79 Mansfield Close, Birchwood, Warrington, WA3 6RN) after intending administrator Maureen Porter's discovery that recent departures – on the order of legendary lemming swarms – had shrunk the membership below her Minimal Acceptable Level of 15, or 10, or 2, or whatever it was....

The John W. Campbell Memorial Award for best SF novel of 1984 went

to Frederik Pohl's *The Years Of The City* (published here by Gollancz) – continuing the trend of giving novel awards to books of more or less linked short stories....

Another Bloody Award: Arthur C. Clarke has been persuaded to put up a regular £1000 to fund an annual Clarke Award for best British SF novel. Twiddly details are under discussion at the Science Policy and SF Foundations (e.g., popular vote or Select Judging Panel? One SFF person incautiously cried, “Our own Booker Prize at last!”). [*George Hay*]

More Clarke: “Talking of megastars, I spoke to Arthur Clarke on the 'phone when he was over here recently to tell us how wonderful 2010 is and meet Charles, Di and Wogan. He's seen the film three times now and says it gets better each time. Can you take anything the man says seriously? Once was quite adequate for me....” [*A Cravenly Unattributable Source*]

Gatherings: The New Southern Friends In Space meets “every 3rd Sunday” (?) from 15 Sept: Wellington Tavern, Waterloo Rd, near Waterloo Station.... **The Reading SF (Reading) Group** now fails to discuss sf on the 3rd Thursday of each month in the Fishermen's Cottage, Kennetside, 8.30pm onward (waifs & strays should ring the Usual Numbers for directions)....

The A. Carol Farewell-America Party “...was marred only by the tendency of the attendees to periodically throw themselves upon Avedon and sob hopelessly. The T-shirt she wore that night, now encrusted with salt, has been forwarded to the Gary Farber Museum of Fanhistory, where the curator will lose it. A belated attempt to appoint a new Charismatic Leader was made; after giving due consideration to Stu Shiffman, Ted White was selected via mystic processes and informed of his new status. ‘Who, ME?’ he yelped, his eyes bugging out in a way that, with practice (on the part of the beholders), could be considered Charismatic. Later Ted made his first pronouncements as C.L., announcing the creation of a new trufannish Lodge: the fwa Order of Magnitude. This is to contain 360 successive hierarchical degrees, arranged in a circle to guarantee that OM adepts arrive right back where they started from; to prevent the Order's levels being infiltrated by frivolous-minded conventioners, advancement will be obtainable only through posted on-paper activity ... that is, these are mail-order degrees....” [*Teresa NH, 5-85*]

Lisa Tuttle, writing up her *Starburst* interview with Colin “Lifeforce” Wilson, strangely neglected to include the Gorran Haven Sage's main line of

conversation – dealing with such mysteries of the occult as how attracted Mr Wilson is to young lady interviewers in tight jeans. CW hopes to collaborate with A.E. van Vogt on a sequel to *The Space Vampires*, a prospect to make grown critics pull their own heads off....

Eric Bentcliffe sends a tiny newspaper clipping from, evidently, an alternate world: “New Jersey in the early 50s. Harlan, an accountant, becomes obsessed with catching a man who keeps stealing his milk.” Not as alarming as the headline sent by indefatigable Dave Wood: WEST JOINS JESUS FURORE....

“**But This Looks Good ...**” An SFC listing of October (US) books features *Contact* by Carl Sagan. Publishers Simon & Schuster say it’s “*not* science fiction. It is an engrossing, believable novel, rich in detail and peopled by characters about whose lives we *care*.” Yep, including the aliens.

Robert Hale Ltd “have no intention of publishing SF/ fantasy ‘within the foreseeable future’”, reports Charles Stross, presumably after his 17 novels were bounced. Famous “Venture SF” editor Rog Peyton meanwhile repudiates *Ansible* claims that his first two novel choices were Hale reprints: no.1 wasn’t, the publishers having merely *claimed* Hale paternity in hope of increasing the series’ prestige. Further rash Peyton statements (concerning how many Venture SF books he himself has been able to finish) are, alas, unquotable....

Hazel’s Language Lessons #35: Greek
contributed by Vince Clarke

rafanizou to thrust a radish up the
fundament; a punishment for
adulterers in Athens.

ANSIBLE 44, 94 London Rd, Reading, Berks, RG1 5AU.

1986

***Ansible* 45**

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Just as a desperate hope was beginning to enter fans' eyes and rumours of a fold had reached even the most inefficient of newshounds (me), it's more from DAVE LANGFORD, 94 LONDON ROAD, READING, BERKSHIRE, RG1 5AU, UK. Subscriptions: still 5 issues for £2 sterling: cheques/money orders to *Ansible*, Girobank transfer to a/c 24 475 4403. Or: \$3.50 to US agents Mary & Bill Burns (23 Kensington Court, Hempstead, NY 11550); \$4A to Aussie agent Irwin Hirsh, 2/416 Dandenong Rd, North Caulfield, Vic 3161. Sample issue: send SAE or IRC (but if reading this, do you need a sample?). Phone: Reading (0734) 665804 and be ready to shout. Electronic mail: no more, since I have finally and happily said Poot to stingy Prestel. Mailing labels, as I write, are in turmoil and doubt: credit probably goes to Hazel. **Data Protection Act:** should you be unwilling to have your name, credit rating and intimate sexual details kept in computer storage, please send a postcard with this standard form of words – “Dear Dave, kindly remove my name from the computer and spend the rest of my **Ansible** subscription on beer.” Art by Pete Lyon (right [here, above]), D. West (within), Dan Steffan (back); clipping via T&P Nielsen Hayden.

Professional Fouls

BSFA Award: the final ballot has just arrived, and has its moments of exceeding tastefulness. Shortlisted: **Novel** *Helliconia Winter* (Brian Aldiss), *The Anubis Gates* (Tim Powers), *Kiteworld* (Keith Roberts), *The Warrior Who Carried Life* (Geoff Ryman), *Free Live Free* (Gene Wolfe); **Short** “A Young Man’s Journey to Viriconium” (M. John Harrison), “Cube Root” (me, whoopee), “Kitemistress” (Kite Roberts), “O Happy Day!” (Geoff Ryman), “The People on the Precipice” (Ian Watson) – all from *Interzone* and its anthology; **Media** *Brazil*, *Mad Max II – Beyond Thunderdome*, *Max Headroom*, *The Terminator*, *The Tripods*; **Artist** Jim Burns, Peter Jones,

Rodney Matthews, Ian Miller, Tim White.

Rob Holdstock (for it was he) received *Ansible*'s award for most memorable award acceptance speech, when at the BFS Yule party he was given his World Fantasy Award (for *Mythago Wood*) by sensuous Jo Fletcher. The World Fantasy Award, you will recollect, is a head of H.P. Lovecraft bizarrely crafted by Gahan Wilson. Rob regarded this for a timeless moment, and said, approximately, "This is going to be an amazing day to write up in my diary! Got up – went to the pub – had a great time – was given head by Jo Fletcher...."

After which Geoff Ryman's bemused reception of a similar trophy for his "The Unconquered Country" (best novelette) had in it I know not what of anticlimax. Other WFAs went to Barry Hughart's *Bridge Of Birds* (tie with *Mythago Wood*), *Clive Barker's Books Of Blood* (collection), Scott Baker's "Still Life with Scorpion" and Alan Ryan's "The Bones Wizard" (tie: short), Edward Gorey (artist, and about time too), Chris van Allsburg's *The Mysteries Of Harris Burdick* (wot?) and Stuart David Schiff's *Whispers* (semipro thing). Theodore Sturgeon got a long overdue Life Achievement trophy as the customary reward for being dead, and Evangeline Walton had a Special Award for her literary triumph of being World Fantasy Con guest of honour.

Lisa Tuttle notes: "There's a new(ish) US magazine called *Stardate* (billing itself as The Multi-Media SF Magazine), edited by David Bischoff, and though it doesn't have British distribution, David is eager to have stories by British SF writers. So he's asked me to act as a kind of agent/first reader, in case the cost of US postage seems prohibitive. Anyone wishing to sell stories to *Stardate*, therefore, can send them to me and (if I like them – the stories, I mean, not the writers; buying me a drink at the Tun is *not* obligatory) I'll pass them on to David. Stories under 5,000 words preferred, although after the magazine goes monthly (February) they will also be buying some longer stories, up to 10,000 words. No fantasy or horror – stories must be SF, although what *kind* of SF is flexible." (1 Ortygia House, 6 Lower Rd, Harrow, Middlesex, HA2 0DA)

Down The Tubes in 1985: *Space Voyager* and *Starburst*, the latter subsequently flogged by Marvel to an unpromising outfit called Visual Imagination, who produced issue 88 (full of stuff for which Marvel had

wittily paid off invoices at 50%) and subsided in a scuttle of contributors fleeing new, *even lower* word rates.... John Brosnan's film column was first to go, being regarded by the new order as inadequately supportive and toadying: "In my final column I ripped to shreds Chris Priest's favourite movie, the execrable *Cocoon*. So I'm going to relish the thought of all those *Cocoon* fans frothing at the mouth and writing in to complain, only to discover that the magazine has finished and their letters attacking me will never see print. Heh heh." [JB]... Melbourne's famous *Space Age Books* has had to go into liquidation: "our main American supplier really screwed us up by not supplying all the books we needed," says Merv Binns (see COAs)....

Colony Earth is a UFOlogy mag with the characteristic stigmata of total credulity and partial literacy: famous unpublished novelist Charles Stross bought the "pre-launch" issue and responded with a novel-length critique which (after a flurry of phone calls from worried publishers Bracebeck Ltd – anyone heard of them?) seems to have put paid to the whole project. An example of *CE*'s rigorous analysis: the "Here men from Earth first set foot on the Moon" plaque is severely criticized for its assumption that the Moon dwellers to whom it is obviously addressed would be able to read English....

BFS Open Night: the usual drunken fun was had on 29 Nov, albeit with serious purpose – raising cash for noted fantasy author Manly Wade Wellman. Details of what happened to him tend to have been glossed over, no doubt for excellent legal reasons, so I'll stick to a hypothetical case based on remarks by Jo Fletcher, thus: Should one enter hospital, comatose and with a broken arm, and should a doubtless wholly justifiable failure to turn one in bed lead to (in succession) bedsores, gangrene and the amputation of both one's legs, one might be a trifle depressed were the hospital to charge in excess of a quarter of a million dollars for its care and attention. Back in reality: Wellman ran out of medical insurance, forcing the sale of his home and entire book collection. US friends including David Drake and Karl Edward Wagner are reportedly trying to organize something on the legal side ("could take six years"). Meanwhile, Di Wathen of the BFS can accept cheques, to "British Fantasy Society" with "Wellman Fund" on the back, at 15 Stanley Rd, Morden, Surrey.

Nothing Exceeds Like Excess

So what *have* I been doing all these aeons? Embarrassed hanging of head, shuffling of feet. In October, I and erstwhile author Chris Priest got involved in being “Ansible Information”, peddling literary software to the gentry, gaining vast egoboo from computer-mag reviews, getting shortlisted for British Microcomputing Awards, and generally mortifying our sensitive fannish souls in the temple of Mammon. Where will it all end? Probably in court, since old habits die hard and in spare moments I’ve been gleefully libelling incompetent manufacturers and shifty dealers all over the country....

On a still less elevated literary plane, “John Grant” and I have delivered *Earthdoom*, the ultimate disaster novel, in which *every* disaster happens. The awesome pattern of doom escalates from tiny beginnings (Nick Austin of Grafton buys the book) to the final Armageddon of a review in *Vector*. This exclusive extract from a draft blurb (which Nick may or may not have the sense to tear up) should give the flavour: “*HAD THE SUN GONE NOVA?* Astronomers had trained their mighty infrared telescopes upward, night after night, to unravel the enigma. But then ... *it happened!*” Wait, in dread, for 1987.

The Transatlantic Hearing Aid is the collected Langford TAFF report, lovingly produced by master craftsmen at Inca Press (oh, all right, Rob Jackson): 74pp of photo-reduced print enshrining cosmic truth, inner secrets of US Worldcons, and both my popular jokes. £2.25 post free; or a mere £2 if you collect it in person from my soiled hands.

Lastly ... extremely sincere thanks to those *Ansible* subscribers who didn’t complain about the gap between issues occasioned by all the above. Both of you are just wonderful.

Shameless Self-Promotion: the Letter Column

Wm Gibson: “Dear Fellow Hugo-Winner ... I would like to point out, for the benefit of my massive and utterly devoted British following, that the version of my second novel, *Count Zero*, which will run in serial lumps (three) in *Asimov’s SF*, is a special Lite version with reduced *motherfucker*-count and no graphic but intensely poetic and moving descriptions of oral sex. ‘At *IASFM*,’ I was told, ‘you can’t come in anybody’s mouth.’ I should also point out that these changes were made under my supervision and with my express

approval. I agreed to go along with them, after due soul-searching, when it was pointed out to me how urgently young people in small towns in the US need fiction of this sort, and how much my new car is going to cost.

“But with Gollancz, friends, you get it ALL!” [WG]

Jeffrey Archer (replying to George Hay’s plea for the Conservative Party to “enlist the interest of British youth in space developments”): “Thank you for your recent letter expressing your ideas for helping with unemployment in this country, especially in the context of expanding the frontiers of Space. I read your letter with great interest but I regret that I do not consider myself a great expert in scientific affairs and I think would be unable to contribute with any knowledge to your debate....” Practised Parliament-watchers have interpreted this to mean “Piss off.”

Joseph Nicholas: “I see you misspelt globalized hegemonization (in one of my bits) as global hegemonization (whatever that may be). Tut. This dreadful lack of acquaintance with contemporary political theory....”

[LATER] “I can just about understand your objections to ‘globalized hegemonization’: at first sight, it does appear to have one too many suffixes, and is in any case rather a mouthful both to say and to read; but to omit that crucial suffix from the first word of the pair is to completely alter its meaning, to transform a process into a property, and abstraction into a reality: to de-theorize one of the crucial (several yards of political rhetoric omitted in the interests of sustaining your attention). Improving Marxist texts to rectify this deficiency will follow shortly.” [JMN]

This reminds me of the no longer hot news item that Joseph was not only planning to stand as a Labour councillor somewhere in darkest London, but had applied to become a magistrate (JP) with summary powers of high, middle and low justice over counter-revolutionary parking offenders throughout the breadth of Pimlico. Attempts to publicize the Nicholas name have already been noted in the *Grauniad* Foot In Mouth competition results: “Bearing in mind that competition rules excluded Jeffrey Archer, entrant after entrant put up *Lord Gowrie* for saying his £33,000 ministerial salary was not enough to live on in central London. The winner is Joseph Nicholas (who lives in Pimlico in central London, but does not give his salary) for the citation: ‘The noble lord demonstrated his deep insight into and understanding of the problems of inner city deprivation.’” [2 Jan]How well I

remember that lightning wit which once had crudzine editors trembling from Lancaster to, er, Lancaster.

John Brosnan: “The despicable plot by Birmingham door knob manufacturer Peter Weston to interrupt Rob Holdstock’s GoH speech at Fantasycon with [another] stripper-gram was foiled when his henchman Leroy Kettle lost his nerve and cancelled the stripper at the last moment.

“Weston, who wasn’t at the convention on the day of the speech, had set up the plot the previous night, phoning to book the stripper and handing a drunken John Brosnan a cheque for £28 to give to the stripper’s minder. ‘I had no idea what I was doing,’ an ashen-faced Brosnan said later. ‘Weston and Kettle tricked me into it. when I woke up the following morning I was overcome with a wave of sexist guilt. I then managed to persuade Kettle to call up and cancel the girl....’

“When Kettle, posing as Weston, rang the stripper, she said with surprise, ‘But Mr Weston, I just rang your wife and she confirmed the booking.’ Kettle thought fast and told her that his wife was at home whereas *he* was at the convention and therefore aware that the GoH, Mr Holdstock, had been taken ill and was in no condition to be subjected to a lot of bare female Birmingham flesh.... As for the cheque, Brosnan later sent it to Oxfam. ‘Serves that running dog of a capitalist right,’ he said. ‘And a fitting use for money originally intended for evil, sexist purposes.’

“Mr Weston was too busy taking over another small door knob company to comment.” [JB]

Martin Morse Wooster: “Well, *Contact* has been published. No, I’m not reading it, even though Gloria Norris of the Book of the Month Club says that Sagan is ‘a lively mind taking an H.G. Wellesian (*sic*) relish in conjecture ... [his extraterrestrials] make the standard creatures of space literature – the blobs and ET’s and little green men with antennae on their heads – seem dull and simplistic.’

“Meanwhile, the *Washington Post* asked a certain Peter Nicholls to review the timeless drama. ‘It is a rather preachy book,’ Mr Nicholls reported, overflowing with ‘a good many discussions about religion in which the word “numinous” plays a prominent role ... the tone is earnest, very much that of a youngish university lecturer talking about the state of the world after a few

but not too many drinks.’ Golly, Mr Nicholls, what about the *plot*? ‘The plot itself is one that will be recognized by SF fans who like books by professors of astronomy, for it is very similar (in the first half at least) to a book called *A For Andromeda....*’

“Back in the publicity department, the Book-of-the-Month Club invited cosmic-minded people from around the world to ask Sagan questions. Mr Arthur C. Clarke of Unsafe, Sri Lanka, had all sorts of questions, but only one is worth retelling. ‘Why is the hero of *Contact ... a woman?*’ (Shock! Horror!)

“*Ghastly Sentence Of The Month*: ‘The peculiar DNA complement I call my own echoed her momentary objectivity.’ – a memorable love scene from *The Gallatin Divergence* by L. Neil Smith.” [MMW]

Anthony Burgess (“whose” letter accompanies a doctored copy of a glossy freebie mag about Jaguars):

“Dear Mr Langwood,

“Greetings! Here is your voucher copy of the first issue of our brilliant new monthly magazine, *Legend*. We hope you will agree that it is streets ahead of other amateur magazines, such as your own, for instance.

“*Legend* (pronounced ‘Leg-End’) is published by the newly formed Aldiss Appreciation Society in conjunction with Jaguar Cars. We aim, as you see, to cater for the chief interests of both groups, starting with a modest print of one quarter-million copies.

“Each month we plan to bring you more fascinating insights from the glamorous world where literature, leisure, limousines and litigation meet. Our next issue will contain an all-new novella by Brian Aldiss entitled *Helliconia Hardtop*. Be sure to look for it!”

(This particular Anthony Burgess appears to have borrowed a well-known Oxford SF author’s typewriter.)

Sue Thomason’s Milford Report

Scant weeks after my first public appearance as a neopro at Milfcon ’85 (guests of honour John Clute, Richard Cowper, David Garnett, Neil Gaiman,

Colin Greenland, Gwyneth Jones, Garry Kilworth, Paul Kincaid, Rachel Pollack, Alex Stewart and Lisa Tuttle) I received my First Commission, in the form of a grubby postcard from the Editor of This Esteemed Scientifictional Journal. They warned me things like this might happen after Milfcon.

“Okay, Dave,” I riposted mentally, inserting a nice fresh piece of unsullied blank vagueness into my mental typewriter.

Richard Cowper instantly manifested in his avuncular Gravesian role of The Reader Over My Shoulder. “Well ...” he gestured expansively. “There are far too many adjectives here. And here’s a split infinitive, and you haven’t accurately imagined your typewriter which you earlier described as a word processor. Have a glass of wine,” he smiled.

“Aren’t you going to tell them about the swimming pool,” inquired Lisa Tuttle.

“Oh, you mean how I jumped in after John Clute’s splendid attempt to decapitate someone with a frisbee? That man’s a homicidal maniac manque, AND he gets up at 5.30 in the morning ...” I quipped.

“No,” she expostulated. “I was thinking of the time I went swimming, and discovered that the whole bottom of the pool was *crawling* with spiders. Also I think you should mention all those walks we had down on the beach....”

“Not *all* of us,” Garry Kilworth intoned, laying aside his trombone and suspending himself horizontally from a lamp-post. “Garnett swears he never has been down to the sea at Milford, and he never will. It’s a matter of principle.”

John Clute wandered in, scowling like a bear, then wandered out again.

“What’s he doing?” gasped Kilworth.

“Oh, I’ve mislaid something,” Clute lipblatted, wandering in again.

“What?” Kilworth strained.

“Oh, just an entablature of salamanders performing a myoclonic can-can***,” Clute interlocuted, wandering out again. “I’m sure it’s round here somewhere....”

“What about the time I was telling them about a drug that you snort by

sticking a five-foot-long blowpipe up your nostril, then inhaling as someone blows the drug down it from the other end? It's supposed to make you feel as though you've been hit on the nose by a brick, then you drip green snot all over everything for about five minutes; then you have to do it all over again with the other nostril," Gwyneth Jones reminisced, obviously contemplating the tasteful additions this effect would produce on her THIS WAS SEPPUKU t-shirt.

"Yes, and Colin Greenland whipped out his notebook and pencil and asked if anybody knew the name of the stuff," laughed Paul Kincaid.

"Bet you can't make *that* into a limerick, Neil," challenged Alex Stewart.

"Five minutes," Neil Gaiman retorted. "I did it for *Lord Of The Rings*, I can do it for *that*...."

"Do you want your Tarot reading now, Sue?" called Rachel Pollack from the garden.

"Oh, my *dear* girl, I don't really think that this will do at all," twinkled Richard Cowper. "You set yourself up as a fantasy writer, but *look*; this report hasn't got a map, it hasn't got a glossary, I admit it's got some silly character-names, but *nobody sings*. Have a glass of wine."

We also read and criticized a couple of stories.

APPENDIX A

words superlatively misdefined in a session of Call My Bluff
gleet • lentor

APPENDIX B superlative definition of a forgotten word in Call My Bluff

"Tasmanian god, who instead of creating the world, went out to the corner shop for a packet of fags and was never heard of again."

APPENDIX C a word John Clute didn't know at Scrabble
eft

*** **Editorial Footnote.** The starred phrase, from John Clute's story, became a byword. Alleged exchange: "Isn't that rather a far-fetched image?" "No, in chapter 2 I actually *introduce* an entablature of salamanders performing (etc)...." • Worst kept secret of the week: the contemporaneous publication of *The Voyeur's Guide To The Movies* by "Tom Peep" (Futura), a heavily veiled

D*v*d G*rn*tt's guide to cinematic rude bits. "This book tells you what you need to know.... How much bum and tit are you going to see? And whose?"

DO YOU REMEMBER NOVACON 15?

A long time ago, you know, in a Coventry far away: it all feels hazy now. Even the bar prices seem shifty and uncertain – come to think of it, they were at the time. Had the De Vere Hotel really shrunk so much since 1977? I was a guest but nobody wanted me to do anything before a talk scheduled 48 nail-biting hours into the con. James White (the more famous guest) and Peggy managed to forgive a certain cretin for parodying the Sector General stories in the GoH souvenir fiction booklet (an Ace Double). Obligatory programme collapse was hastened by the non-appearance of various promised speakers such as Robert Rankin. As time oozed gently by, appalling rumours did the rounds: surely Chris Chivers hadn't learned only days before that he was (a) coming, and (b) organizing the sound systems? Surely Gerald Bishop didn't discover only at Novacon that he was supposed to be showing films *all* Saturday night? Fans were not deterred from having fun (apart of course from those who suffered the Langford speech. "Too humorous" – *Brum SF Group Newsletter*), but the committee bared their teeth at one another, quite a lot.

Lovable Toby Roxburgh of Futura gave one of his cosy fireside chats about the wonderful world of publishing. He worries deeply about being embarrassingly quoted in *Ansible*, but only the most innocuous snippets reached my notebook: "I feel no social responsibility in this at all ... Sex does *not* sell ... Out there the public is not as stupid as we think ... If books are worthy, we don't publish them ... Plagiarize, for Pete's sake!" Strangest programme item was a "debate" chaired by Greg Pickersgill, between macho, MCP "Venture SF" (Rog Peyton and Rod Milner) and life-enhancing Women's Press, perpetrators of the "SF anthology with the dreadful title" (*Despatches From The Frontiers Of The Female Mind*), who may not previously have realized they were in opposition. As an added fillip, the committee neglected to invite any WP representatives: the gap was plugged by Avedon Carol and Sherry Francis, to the vast later annoyance of genuine WP person Sarah Lefanu ("Who *are* these people? How can they speak for us?"). Gosh.

I contented myself with having a great time except on Sunday night, which

saw me cornered at a room party by the most boring/belligerent fan in the universe. Tact was of no avail. Shouting “Fuck off!” was of less avail. Eventually the remnants of the party ran for it, with Tedium Incarnate in lumbering pursuit, emitting coherent beams of Scots ennui on wavelengths which paralysed the forebrain. “In here!” cried escape artist Jan Paul Smit, and we found ourselves partying in whispers and a bathroom while pyjama-clad Larry van der Putte, Hero of the Republic, denied everything. Later, a mass break-out made it to the fire stairs before Nemesis (“I’m waiting right here till you come out!”) could mobilize his flab. Only much later did I learn that this ghastly presence had lingered in the Smit/van der Putte room until 6am, delivering himself of maudlin death threats and painting a grisly picture of what he’d do with a broken bottle to one Langford. Who said Novacons are predictable?

Earlier memories of Sunday night are mercifully few. Cap’n Probert and First Mate Eunice (plus sister Carol) were over the side and swimming hard at first sight of enemy COFF awards, leaving the rest of the committee glazedly watching Novacon go down on an even keel. Nova Awards went to John Jarrold’s *Prevert* (fanzine, “clear winner” over runners-up *Stomach Pump* and *Nutz*); Abi Frost as fanwriter (D. Langford and Linda Pickersgill gnash their teeth in outer darkness); Ros Calverley as fanartist (while Ashley Watkins and Dave Harwood continue in obscurity). Quoth John Jarrold later: “Alun Harries cheered me up with, ‘Congratulations, John. I thought Steve Higgins should have won it...’” Did I really fill a gap by drunkenly presenting fifty awards while inexplicably garbed in a mortarboard and gown? Enough, enough.

Steve Green provides a sunny afterword: “The usual secret process has taken place and Martin Tudor has duly ‘emerged’ as Novacon 16 chairman in much the same way Margaret Thatcher became Tory leader: the venue is the De Vere again. Looks like Novacon 15 will not make a loss after all – the BSFG is investigating the wording of its insurance policy, and Rog appeared quite optimistic when we spoke. Novacon 14, meanwhile, has cleared its bank account, having donated £90 to the Head Appeal [SF for the blind], which Matt Sillars assures me is all that’s required to get the tape into production (we did debate making that a block vote in favour of a story by Rob Holdstock, seeing as he was our GoH, but decided that would be unfair), plus £20 to COFF (no target nominated) and £10 set aside to answer an appeal

from the Soviet ‘Winds of Time’ SF group for an SF text (we’re sending the Nicholls encyclopaedia).” [SG] Sickeningly virtuous, eh wot?

CONDOM

“**Camcon** [Unicon 6, Cambridge] was a very good con,” says Colin Fine in a PS, “though those staying in the college complain that it was very cold. Considering that the entire committee were new at it, a very creditable performance, with no glaring hiccups, and (I thought), innovative programming. John Christopher was a welcome addition to the ranks of the professionals to be seen at cons – though they were a bit thin on the ground at Camcon, it must be admitted: Alex Stewart is the only other one that comes to mind. Arch-whinger was Ken Lake, who afterwards wrote a letter to the committee explaining why it was a rotten con, chiefly for the cardinal sins of having members who didn’t talk to him in the corridors, and not having Brian Aldiss or Bob Shaw as members. He seem to be happy enough to me during the con, but I must have caught him at a moment when somebody was talking to him, i.e. me. They apparently made a profit, even after passing the required sum on to Unicon 7...” [CF] See CONSEPT, below.

Cymrucon, which readers will recall was cleverly scheduled to clash with Novacon, was at the last minute put forward to clash with Mexicon, and then shifted again to March.... Our man in S. Wales, Mike Sherwood, gleefully reported “there’ll supposedly be a flyer out to all who’ve actually sent any money; it may be the first cancellation sent out after the publicized date of occurrence. The Central Hotel is still [mid-October] under the impression that it’s booked up for the weekend!” [Later:] “At least 30 turned up to find no Cymrucon. Complaints to the only man in Cardiff who’ll admit to being on the Committee ... ring Cardiff 563005.”

28-31 Mar: **Albacon III** (Eastercon), Glasgow. GoH Joe Haldeman, Fan GoH John Jarrold, Artist Pete Lyon. Membership £9 to 1 March, then £12: 20 Hillington Gdns, Glasgow, G52 2PR.

10-13 July: **Ballcon** (Eurocon), Zagreb, Yugoslavia. \$12 (US) supp, \$25 att: c/o SFera, Ivanicgradska 41 A, 41000 Zagreb. No recent information. Anyone there, Krsto?

18-20 July: **Mythcon**, Nottingham. GoH Marion Zimmer Bradley. £10 to 53 Glencoe St, Hull, N Humberside, HU3 6HR.

8-10 Aug: **Consept** (I know it's the 7th Unicon, but the name still seems a bit odd for August): U of Surrey. £4 supp £8 att to 9 Graham Rd, Wealdstone, Harrow, Middlesex HA3 5RP.

22-25 Aug: **Rubicon**, Chequers Hotel, Newbury, Berks. Intended to fill the vacant shoes of Silicon. £5 to K. Oborn, Bishops Cottage, Park House Lane, Reading, RG3 2AH.

Ditto: **Koancon**, Warwick U ... clearly a fantasy games con, the GoHs being noted games groupies Pete Tamlyn and D*ve L*ngf*rd. SAE to Alex Zbyslaw, 123 Hollis Rd, Stoke, Coventry.

28 Aug - 2 Sept: **Confederation**, 44th Worldcon, Atlanta GA, USA. GoH Ray Bradbury, FGoH Terry Carr, "Toaster" Bob Shaw. \$25 supp \$45 att to Colin Fine, 205 Coldham's Lane, Cambridge, CB1 3HY (who is also UK agent for Holland in 1990, below, and supposedly able to supply info on Ballcon, above).

13-14 Sept: **Rocky Horror Shock Treatment Weekend** (oh god!) at Shepperton Moat House Hotel, Denton. Info: 16 Tonbridge Rd, West Molesey, Surrey, KT8 0EL.

26-29 Sept: **XIIcon**, Glasgow. GoH Harry Harrison (who let slip to an *Ansible* mole that he *had indeed* done the peculiar alien words in *West Of Eden* by first-drafting in English and using the "global replace" on his word processor – I wonder if C.J. Cherryh, who now writes her letters in fifteen typefaces on a laser printer of colossal ostentation, does it this way too?). £3 supp £9 att: "Beachfield", Calfmuir Rd, Lenzie, Glasgow, G66 3JJ.

Nov: **Novacon 16**, De Vere Hotel, Coventry (I think). £8 to 86 Berwood Farm Rd, Wylde Green, Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands, B72 1AG.

13-15 Feb 1987: **Conception**, Leeds. A celebration of 50 years since the first-ever SF con (Leeds 1937). £6 to 12 Fearnville Terrace, Oakwood, Leeds, LS8 3DU. (This fashion for names with the "con" at the beginning rather than the end is snowballing. Is a limited fannish vocabulary to blame? Be nice to see an **Ostracon**, at which COFF voting would involve scrawling committee members' names on potsherds....)

27 Aug - 2 Sept 1987: **Conspiracy '87**, 45th Worldcon, Brighton. GoH Alfred Bester & Doris Lessing, FGoH Joyce & Ken Slater, special fan guest me. £19.50 att to PO Box 43, Cambridge, CB1 3JJ – please note this IS the right address even though several letters have ended up with the former owners of PO Box 43 (Pye) and come back marked “unknown”. This is a genuine GPO error, British-made through and through. “Not Our Fault,” explained chairman Malcolm Edwards. “The first of many cock-ups,” clarified a passing Leroy Kettle.

1988: the **World Fantasy Con** comes to Britain, c/o Jo Fletcher, Steve Jones and anyone they can draft. Jo confides: “It was forced upon us and we accepted ungraciously.”

1990: Roelof Goudriaan begs a plug for the **Netherlands Worldcon Bid**, now “all-Dutch” despite US beginnings (*Ansible, passim*) and with 100+ presupporters before Eurocampaigning began. £4 presupp. Honorary Dutchwoman Lynne Ann Morse edits the bid newsletter *High Tide*, c/o Holland in 1990, PO Box 95370, 2509 CJ The Hague, Netherlands. *Ansible* has already been hopelessly subverted by committee “El Presidente” Kees van Toorn’s cunning ploy of buying a Langford story for his glossy Dutch SF mag *Orbit*....

THE TRANSFINITE C.O.A. LIST

Some of these are a bit musty by now, but One Has One’s Duty: ALYSON ABRAMOWITZ, 132 Burnetts Grove Circle, Nepean, Ontario, CANADA K2J 1S9 (NB one-letter correction to the *A44* typo which enraged Alyson to the tune of many a sarcastic postcard.) • HENRY BALEN, 69 Castlehill Drive, Newton Mearns, Glasgow, G77 5LB • DAVID V. BARRETT, 23 Oakfield Road, Croydon, CR0 2UD • SALLY BEASLEY & DAVE LUCKETT, 69 Federal St, Tuart Hill, Western Australia 6060 • MERV BINNS, 1 Glen Eira Rd, Ripponlea, Victoria 3182, Australia • LINDA BLANCHARD, 605 Ballard Road, Seagoville, TX 75159, USA • DAVE BRIDGES, as Linda Blanchard, it says here, following a “postal romance”.... • KEV CLARKE, 191 Valley Rd, Solihull, W Midlands (COFF voting address; also enquiries since “we’re now taking ads.” Ads?) • CONFEDERATION (44th Worldcon), Suite 1986, 3277 Roswell Rd, Atlanta, GA 30305, USA • JEREMY CRAMPTON, Dept of Geography, 302

Walker Bldg, Pennsylvania State U, University Park, PA 16802, USA • STEVE DAVIES, 78 Bay Rd, Bullbrook, Bracknell, Berks • LILIAN EDWARDS, 1 Braehead Rd, Thorntonhall, Glasgow, G74 5AQ (“this address is now PERMANENT and any other[s] totally DEFUNCT”) • DANIEL FARR, 1750 Kalakaua Ave (403), Honolulu, Hawaii 96826, USA • AL FITZPATRICK, PO Box 90, Pequannock, NJ 07440, USA (Al is remorselessly efficient about sending in COAs on Xmas cards addressed to 22 Northumberland Avenue, which we left in 1982.) • JEANNE GOMOLL, Box 1443, Madison, WI 53701-1443, USA • ANNE HAMILL (forget the Warren, folks), 46 Woodville Rd, Golders Green, London, NW11 9TN • RICHARD KENNAWAY, School of Information Systems, U of East Anglia, Norwich, NR4 7TJ • CHRISTINA LAKE, 1st Floor Flat, 47 Whiteladies Rd, Clifton, Bristol, BS8 2LS • BERNARD LEAK, 115 Histon Rd, Cambridge, CB4 3JD • STEVE LOCKLEY, 173 Derlwyn, Killay, Swansea, West Glam • SETH “Stop printing boring news about Ted White and Avedon Carol!” McEVOY, RR3, Box 342, Ridge Rd, Sag Harbour, NY 11963, USA • PATRICK & TERESA NIELSEN HAYDEN, 75 Fairview (2D), New York, NY 10040, USA (another one-letter change but an important one: former apartment 2B is now inhabited by a mail-eating beast in human form) • ANDIE OPPENHEIMER, 69 Clare Ct, Judd St, Bloomsbury, London, WC1H 9QR • PAUL PAOLINI, 186 Titwood Rd, Pollokshields, Glasgow, G41 4DD • CHRIS PREIST (careful now), 72 George St, Stoney Stanton, Coventry • DAI PRICE, Flat 2, 569 Green Lanes, Haringay, London, N8 0RL • CHRIS PRIEST, 78 High St, Pewsey, Wilts, SN9 7AQ • JIMMY ROBERTSON, as Anne Hamill • CYRIL SIMSA, 2 The Hexagon, Fitzroy Park, London, N6 6NR • KATE SOLOMON, a new name in fandom, does not wish to be known as Kate Davies, nor even Kate Chafen, OK? Her hubby, whose name I forget, still prefers to be called Malcolm Davies. • DAVID STRONG & CAROLINE SAWKINS, 8 Five Acres Close, Lindford, nr Bordon, Hants, GU35 0SJ • PHILIPPA SUTTON (see below), 38 Fern Ave, Jesmond, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE2 2QX • MARTIN TUDOR, 121 Cape Hill, Smethwick, Warley, West Midlands, B66 4SH • LESLEY WARD, F103, Mulberry Court, Mulberry Street, Liverpool 7, Merseyside • GLEN WARMINGER, Top Flat, 80a Waddington St, Norwich, NR2 4JS • ASHLEY WATKINS, Flat B, 5 Avenue Rd, Westcliffe-on-Sea, SS0 7PN • D. WEST, alas, was reportedly about to leave home and family in Bingley after a Split. • MATT WILLIAMS, c/o 74 Grosvenor Rd, Coventry, CV1

PECULIAR ACRONYMS ENDING IN FF

TAFF: the 1986 race is already open, between Simon Ounsley, Judith Hanna and Greg Pickersgill, who appear in this not very alphabetical order in the ballot. To vote, rank them in (some other) order and rush either £1 to R. Hansen, 9a Greenleaf Rd, East Ham, London, E6 1DX, or \$1 to P&T Nielsen Hayden as above. Said administrators will be glad to provide the ballot form, now too huge for inclusion here. As the 15 May deadline fails to loom, America trembles at the candidates' hidden assets: will Confederation be afflicted with glands, shingles or Joseph Nicholas? Meanwhile Eric Bentcliffe has discovered traces of his TAFF report in god knows what antediluvian recess: "a few near-mint copies at £6 or \$10, and some few more slightly soiled at £3/\$5" (17 Riverside Crescent, Holmes Chapel, Cheshire, CW4 7NR). And Mike Glicksohn adds his name to the announced candidates for TAFF 1987.

GUFF is also beginning to stir into life for Conspiracy '87, as evidenced by death threats from our dynamic Down Under agent Irwin Hirsh ("Nominate me or I'll crumple up all those *Ansibles* you aren't sending"). Approximately 8 other Aussies are rumoured in *Thyme* to have delusions of Brighton's desirability, including Jean Weber and Valma Brown.

DUFF (Australia to Confederation) is also under way, with ballots featuring Sally Beasley, Terry Frost, Mark Loney & Michelle Muysert, and (take a deep breath) Lewis Morley & Marilyn Pride & Nick Stathopoulos. An acerbic source who insists on being nameless notes "the *unusual* level of vapidness in the candidates' platforms this year.... Will DUFF become the Fan Fund of Cretins?"

COFF's 661 unpopularity votes raised £66.10 for TAFF & GUFF, though "Kev Clarke the administrator did not enjoy being threatened and manhandled by an irate ex-Novacon chairman and COFF winner ... [and] was seriously considering scrapping the award" (Martin Tudor). Top scorers were (1) Phill Probert, 253 votes; (2) Joy Hibbert 146; (3) Naveed Khan 50; (4) The Wimps Who Complained About Rob Holdstock's Strippogram; (=5) The Morons Who Got Rob Holdstock A Strippogram & Dave (Andromeda)

Holmes; (7) Marty Cantor; (8) Steve Green ... after which it gets a bit crowded.

SEFF's UK administrator is now Jim Barker, whose "short report from Swecon will appear in *Ansible*" (oh yeah?), according to Ahrvid Engholm, who continues: "We've decided to have two SEFF races in a row to Britain, in order to be able to send a SEFF candidate to Conspiracy, as well as Albacon this Easter. Technically SEFF is open for other cons in Europe besides the Eastercon, but nobody seems interested in anything else but 'the real thing'." Jim promises a vibrant flyer which may well be enclosed, you lucky people, you.

OUR MAN WITH THE POPCORN: R.I. BARYCZ AGAIN

When did it become customary to refer to the Strategic Defense Initiative (note Yankee spelling) as "Star Wars?" A long time ago in a galaxy not too far away, but nary a peep of protest from Lucasfilm as long as SW meant extreme severe disapproval of such things as DEWs, railguns, smart rocks, X-ray lasers, neutral beams.... Until the scientific/military empire struck back with a series of TV ads in the USA in favour of DEWs, smart rocks, railguns etc, whereupon Lucasfilm roused itself and hit them with a writ to stop referring to the whole idea as "Star Wars" on the grounds it was a trade mark applied to biscuits, icecream, bedsheets, plastic figures etc and we don't care that the TV ads present both sides of the argument for and against DEWs, railguns, smart rocks etc, small children could get confused. They had no luck with the judge – no way, he said, it is stretching the copyright and the trademark too far.... [RIB]

INFINITELY IMPROBABLE

King Equals Wyndham. Andy Lusic sends a *Library Association Record* clipping, wherein one Chris Kearns extols *A Readers' Guide To Fiction Authors* (Loughborough U), intended to make it easy to find a book like the one you just read: "I first tested the *Guide* by looking up Stephen King. The suggested alternatives are Ray Bradbury and John Wyndham ... It seemed to me that a good alternative to King is James Herbert, so I looked up *his*

suggested alternatives. They are Ray Bradbury, John Wyndham and Isaac Asimov! Despairing of horror, I next turned to SF. Who would the suggested alternatives to Philip K. Dick be? Answer: Ray Bradbury and Isaac Asimov. What about Robert Silverberg? Isaac Asimov and Ray Bradbury. Robert Heinlein? Asimov, Bradbury and Wyndham. The *Guide* lists Asimov, Bradbury and sometimes Wyndham as alternatives to *all* SF authors, from Verne to Ballard...” This vital reference work was compiled by computer analysis of questionnaires filled in by 600 “practising librarians”, and is even more indispensable for crime fans. “Raymond Chandler and James Hadley Chase are good alternatives to John Dickson Carr ... P.G. Wodehouse is a rather neat substitute for Dorothy L. Sayers.” A fanzine readers’ version is clearly much needed.

Ideologically Invertebrate: John Brosnan reveals that “Kim Newman, film reviewer for London listings mag *City Limits*, described the plot of *Cocoon* in his review as ‘broken-backed’. But the ideologically sound copy-editor protested at the term, calling it prejudiced against disabled people! ‘I was described as “disablist”,’ said a stunned-looking Kim.” Mr Brosnan has been commissioned by the BBC to outline a film about his speciality: giant zeppelins in Australia.

See Gygax And Die: “TSR has called on the US Consumer Product Safety Commission to check Dungeons & Dragons for safety. This resulting from a *60 Minutes* investigation which determined that about two dozen teenagers committed suicide after having curses placed upon them in D&D games. However, *60 Minutes* did not interview any right-wing fundamentalists seeking to have D&D banned as a Satanist plot...” [MMW]

The Glasgow Enigma: Why should anyone (anonymously) send *Ansible* a copy of a “Service Document (actions for payment of money only)” relating to Charles Robert Saunders, Collector of Taxes, Glasgow North, and his wish to extract £795.92 from “the whole partners of the now dissolved firm of Messrs [Fake Bob] Shaw and [Neil] Craig”? Fandom is strange.

TIBFP may or may not be the official acronym for a new “independent British fan poll”, titled with pithy wit The Independent British Fan Poll and sporting a set of categories weirdly reminiscent of the departed *Ansible* poll (plus Best LoC Writer, and Best Interior Illustration – you have no idea what effort it takes me not to make a joke here about Mr Higgins’s *Stomach*

Pump). Organizers: Rob Hansen, Steve Higgins, John Jarrold, Pam Wells. Ballots from any of these. Period covered: all 1985. Deadline: 28 February.

Urban Terrorists In Sussex Firebomb Assault! “CREMATED: my 1954 Morris Minor, veteran of 7 Milfords and more than a few conventions. Innocent victim of an arson attack. ‘It wouldn’t die, they had to assassinate it,’ says sci-fi writer Garnett, aged over 21, sobbing into his beer....” [David G]

Barry Bayley took notoriously evil publishers Allison & Busby to court, having previously been unable to extract any accounts or royalties from 11 subsidiary editions (both here and abroad) of 7 SF titles from 1976 to 1979. Judgment: contracts all terminated, rights back to Barry, A&B to cough up £5360 plus costs and interest. Take that, scum!

R.I.P: a depressing number of people with SF connexions died recently. In no particular order: Italo Calvino (Sept 19 *aet* 61), who wrote some of my favourite fantasies and occasioned a dismal display of US parochialism when given the 1982 World Fantasy Life Achievement Award (“How *dare* he get it, we’ve never heard of him,” etc); Orson Welles of Martian and much other fame (Oct 10 *aet* 70); Robert Graves of the SF novel *Seven Days In New Crete* aka *Watch The North Wind Rise* and the, er, seminal fantasy *The White Goddess*; Philip Larkin (OK, not much connexion, but I’ve always wondered whether a certain Heinlein was influenced by “If I were called in / To construct a religion / I should make use of water” ...); Yul Brynner the berserk robot of *Westworld* (Oct 10 *aet* 64); Bernard Wolfe of *Limbo* aka *Limbo 90* (1952) and two condescending pieces in *Again, Dangerous Visions* (Oct 31 *aet* 70); Taylor Caldwell, who besides her best-sellers wrote preachy SF like *Your Sins And Mine* (Aug 10 *aet* 84); Grant Williams the *Incredible Shrinking Man* of film (July 28 *aet* 54); Walter B. Gibson, magician and pulp novelist who as Maxwell Grant created *The Shadow* for Street & Smith in the 30s and 40s (*aet* 88); L. Ron Hubbard, who needs no introduction (Jan *aet* 74); and, in a sort of way, that entire Shuttle crew. Charles Platt questions the good taste of premature obituaries on Judy-Lynn del Rey, whose Oct 17 stroke and continuing coma provoked LOCUS to eulogize her in the past tense and SFC (to which thanks for some of the above dates) to cheerfully explain, “Generally, people born as dwarfs do not live to great age, succumbing to a variety of diseases....”

Long Black Glistening Streaks Of People-Eating Death! Such is the subject matter of the “really triff book” described in a press release from Roy Kettle. “Its author is a bright new star in the horror firmament – SIMON IAN CHILDER. He is absolutely no relation to the late HARRY ADAM KNIGHT whose ashes were recently scattered over the customers in several remainder bookshops as per his dying wish.” Once HAK, now SIC....

Trivial Titbits from Neil Gaiman: “Arthur C. Clarke entered the ‘win a copy of 2010 on video’ competition in *Video World* magazine. And lost. His entry (words to the effect of getting HAL to sing Daisy Daisy to a disco beat) was deemed ‘crap’ by the editorial body. (It was a photocaption comp. He must really like that movie.) ...And on the subject of ACC, my copy of *The Sentinel* lists him as author of *Arthur C. Clarke’s World Of Strange Towers ...* which is nearly as good as Sphere advertising *The Leaky Establishment* as by David Longford.” Mr Gaiman is also good at cheering up authors with snippets like “I was talking to XXX at Sphere about *Leaky* and she said, ‘Oh, we’re not doing any *publicity* for it, so do give it a plug if you can.’” Purest invention. I hope.

Chris Priest has just enjoyed the sensation of having his *second* film deal for *The Glamour* fall through, but (swiftly donning his other hat as The People’s Agent) has sold Wm Gibson’s *Count Zero* to ever-perceptive Nick Austin, who for a trifling five-figure sum secured the book for Grafton.

Headless Monster Threatens Fandom! Ever since the resignation of Chairman Dorey (“Just for a handful of nappies he left us”), the BSFA has been having a leadership crisis, i.e. no leadership....

Court Circular. Kev and Sue Williams write: “Michael, the heir to the overdraft, arrived 3 Dec – backwards – henceforth to be known in fandom as ‘Wrong Way’ Williams.” Philippa Grove-Stephensen has married again, instantly acquiring “two half-grown sons” courtesy of husband Mike, and is now Philippa Sutton (COA above). But: “Rumours of my marriage are premature,” declares Lee Smoire in response to a suggestion in Leigh Edmonds’s *The Notional* that her alleged “Help me immigrate” wall-signs at Aussiecon had been successful....

Robert Silverberg, interviewed in *The Australian*, said nothing to astonish: “Very little in American SF now pleases me – except the sales figures. Frank Herbert or Isaac Asimov could write something in iambic pentameter and get

it published, but otherwise the public wants the same simple-minded escapism they see in the George Lucas movies.” And in the Majipoor books, perchance?

This Zine For Hire: Vince Clarke sends the beginning of his Total Fanzine List (indexed by editor), with the complete opus due “probably in March”. All items will be madly available on loan to the pure in heart, for the cost of postage. Send a few stamps for a copy of the List, to 16 Wendover Way, Welling, Kent, DA16 2BN.

Award Oddments: At a 1985 “fourth birthday party” for *City Limits* mag, tediously many awards were handed out, including one to Adams’s *So Long, And Thanks For All The Fish* as best book of its year (!)... Ballard’s “The Object of the Attack” topped the *Interzone* readers’ popularity poll, with runners-up by Kilworth, Bradfield, Langford and McAuley; Jim Burns was most popular artist, trailed by Pete Lyon and Ian Miller. In the Nebula preliminaries, Orson Scott Card’s *Ender’s Game* remains in the lead. **British Fantasy Awards:** **Novel** *Incarnate* (Ramsey Campbell), **Short** “In the Hills, the Cities” (Clive Blood), **Small Press** *Whispers*, **Film** *Ghostbusters*, **Artist** Stephen Fabian, **Special** Manly Wade Wellman.... **Mike Glyer** would have it known that his *File 770* “Hugo withdrawal” was meant to cover 1986 only – not 1987 or future years. “I *am* a bit dubious about making the world safe for Geis to win another Hugo, if Atlanta makes the mistake of accepting *SFR* in the Best Fanzine category....” Mike also got upset about other coverage: “After having the misfortune to witness Malcolm Edwards’s gracelessness in almost every public forum at Aussiecon Two, when I read [Rob Hansen’s] report of his presentation of Langford’s Hugo, and what he said, I was afflicted with a world class case of sour grapes. Something to do with his statement, ‘The Fanwriter Hugo has finally been sent to its rightful home: Britain.’” Cruel words, indeed.

Serious And Constructive: Patrick Nielsen Hayden is secret SF master of *Twentieth-Century American Literature Volume III* (Chelsea House). “You share presence in the Heinlein section, not only with longwinded wallies of serious litcrit like H. Bruce Franklin, but also with Walter A. Willis, from his in-depth character study of Mr Heinlein from ‘Chicago Chicago’, in that deconstructionist periodical of the SF field *Hyphen*. By contrast, I didn’t use anything at all by the Panshins – ‘each sentence more exciting than the next’.” [PNH]



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Inexorable as an amok sloth, hard-hitting as eiderdown fluff, fast-moving as the continental glaciation of your choice, DAVE LANGFORD offers a further Valium-paced issue of the semi-annual newszine about which it was once said, but not any more. Late-breaking news (we handle no other sort) and irate cancellations to 94 LONDON ROAD, READING, BERKSHIRE, RG1 5AU, UK. Still 5 issues or a lifetime subscription, whichever comes first, for £2 sterling: cheques/money orders to *Ansible*, Girobank transfer to account 24 475 4403. Or \$3.50 to US agents Mary & Bill Burns (23 Kensington Court, Hempstead, NY 11550); or \$4A to Aussie agent Irwin (For GUFF) Hirsh, 2/416 Dandenong Rd, North Caulfield, Vic 3161. Phone: Reading (0734) 665804 – please shout. Cartoon: Jackie Burns. Language Lesson: deferred. Inertia (c) Isaac Newton, 1679.

ME

Oh, I've been fine, thanks, just a little reclusive (busy). Exciting literary news is that Baen Books want to reprint *The Space Eater*, and promise that theirs will be the first edition whose cover art doesn't seize prospective buyers by the eyeballs and hurl them violently out of the bookshop. I can hardly wait for February and my appearance alongside such favourites as David Drake and Jerry Pournelle. New creative efforts consist chiefly of outlining – with “John Grant” – *Guts*, a horrifying reading experience (“Inside every one of us there lurks a *monster!*”) which will make Stephen King look like Enid Blyton, or vice-versa. Alas, my best effort *Leaky Establishment* has yet again been bounced by a US editor who after lavish praise gave it the thumbs-down because the humour was “so indiginous”. Will anyone direct me to a nice American publisher who (a) can spell indiginous; (b) doesn't mind British books being it?

HUGE AND KNOBBLY, ETC.

There comes a time in every newszine editor's life when burning commitment to the Whole Truth cannot entirely eclipse the thought, "Oh God, have I got to type out sixty-three bloody **Hugo Nominations** again?" Not much controversy, either, though the Confederation committee tried its best by notifying pro but not fan nominees in advance (the latter had to find out from newszines, and were therefore not offered the chance of refusal, which would have tempted at least one easily misspelled fan "when I heard who the nominees were in the Best Fanzine category"). But who cares, really? I sense 90% of my readership preparing to skip the following....

569 ballots cast: **Novel** *Blood Music*/Bear (yay), *Cuckoo's Egg*/Cherryh, *Ender's Game*/Card, *Nuke 'Em Till They Glow, Then Shoot 'Em In The Dark*/Niven+Pournelle, *The Postman*/Brin. **Novella** "Green Mars"/K.S. Robinson, "The Only Neat Thing To Do"/Tiptree, "Sailing to Byzantium"/Silverberg, "The Scapegoat"/Cherryh, "24 Views of Mt Fuji, by Hokusai"/Zelazny. **Novelette** "Dogfight"/Swanwick+Gibson, "The Fringe"/Card, "A Gift from the Graylanders"/Bishop, "Paladin of the Lost Hour"/Ellison, "Portraits of His Children"/G.R.R. Martin. **Short** "Dinner in Audoghost"/Sterling, "Fermi and Frost"/Pohl, "Flying Saucer Rock and Roll"/Waldrop, "Hong's Bluff"/Wu, "Snow"/Crowley. **Nonfiction** *Benchmarks: Galaxy Bookshelf*/Budrys, *An Edge In My Voice*/Ellison, *Faces Of Fear*/Winter, *The John W. Campbell Letters, Vol.1*/Chapdelaine+Hay (ed), *The Pale Shadow Of Science*/Aldiss (nice one, Serconia Press), *Science Made Stupid*/Weller. **Dramatic** *Back To The Future*, *Brazil*, *Cocoon*, *Enemy Mine*, *Ladyhawke*. **Pro Editor** Terry Carr, Judy-Lynn del Rey, Edward L. Ferman, Shawna McCarthy, Stanley Schmidt. **Pro Artist** Kelly Freas, Don Maitz, Rowena Morrill, Barclay Shaw, Michael Whelan. **Fanartist** Brad Foster, Steve Fox, Joan Hanke-Woods, William Rotsler, Stu Shiffman. **Semiprozine** *Fantasy Review*, *Interzone* (yay), **Locus**, **SF Chronicle**, **SF Review**. **Fanzine** *Anvil*, *Greater Columbia Fantasy Costumers' Guild Newsletter* (yeah, words fail me too), *Holier Than Thou*, *Lan's Lantern*, *Universal Translator*. **Fanwriter** Don D'Amassa, Dick Geis, Mike Glycer, Arthur Hlavaty, me, Patrick Neilsen-Hayden (*sic*). **JWC Memorial** (non-Hugo) Karen Joy Fowler, Guy Gavriel Kay, Carl Sagan, Melissa Scott, Tad Williams, David Zindell.

Wouldn't you much rather hear about the **Nebulas**? No, I thought not, but for the record: **Novel** *Ender's Game*/Card, **Novella** "Sailing to Byzantium"/Silverberg, **Novelette** "Portraits of His Children"/Martin, **Short** "Out of All Them Bright Stars"/Kress, **Grand Master Longevity Award** A.C. Clarke. "Oh God," said an unnameable SFWA source, "we all put in nominations for Card out of er politeness because he was tallying the preliminary ballots, but we never expected...."

The best associated fun came from **Norman Spinrad's** unbelievable full-page paid ad in *SFWA Bulletin*, headed "A Matter of Literary Principle & Personal Pique". This loftily begins "WHEREAS science fiction has come under increasing attack from the mainstream critical establishment at a time when many of us are seeking to establish its bona fides as seriously-intended literary art –" After a few more whereases we come to the meat: "I therefore hereby withdraw my future work for consideration for the Nebula Award.... To those who surmise that I am doing this out of personal pique at having not received a Nebula nomination for *Child Of Fortune*, I freely admit that this was a consideration. That such a work failed to be nominated proves, if nothing else, that the literary standards of the SFWA as a whole have diverged so far from my own that to accept a future Nebula would, for me, be an act of cynical hypocrisy."

Further Spinrad announcements, we are unreliably informed, will similarly shame and refute the inadequate standards of the Pulitzer and Nobel prizes.

Back in Britain, I report a mindboggling coincidence. An official announcement at last arrived, confirming the long-rumoured **Arthur C. Clarke SF Award** (£1000 for the best UK-SF novel of the preceding calendar year, first presentation next Easter). In the *very same post* came a review copy of the hardback *The Songs Of Distant Earth* by Arthur C. Clarke! The "Arthur", promoted by energetic George Hay, is to be run by the BSFA, SF Foundation and for no apparent reason the International Science Policy Foundation, who will jointly prepare a shortlist of Approved Nominees. Noises have been made about the existing BSFA Awards fading away after 1987 in the face of this lucrative competition. One intermittently successful purpose of the BSFA Award was to publicize the name "BSFA". I couldn't get to Albacon to ask how much useful publicity the BSFA thinks it will gain from the new award's name....

Interest declared: 1986 **BSFA Awards** went to Brian Aldiss's *Helliconia Winter*, my own *Interzone* short "Cube Root", *Brazil* (media) and Jim Burns (best drunken artist).

As for fan awards, the **Independent British Poll** was nearly as ill-supported as *Ansible*'s last. *Still Life* and *Stomach Pump* tied for Best UK Fanzine, while Simon Ounsley's mythopoeic Novacon 14 report (*TNH*) was deservedly Best Article.

LETTERS AND THINGS

Ian Watson has been succouring his fellow men: "We entertained a tramp to tea, though he would only come in out of the sub-zero after we papered the carpet with copies of *Tribune*. Perhaps he was reluctant to yield to our genteel persuasions since he was aware that warmth brought out The Smell (back to horror fiction). This smell was interesting because it migrated around the house for untold hours in the form of discrete mobile pockets, like solid invisible balloons, which you as a physicist will recognize as quanta of smell. Discretion stopped us from asking the obvious question: 'Were you once a science fiction writer?'" [IW]

Marise Morland-Chapman is outraged: "The short story 'Tangents' by Greg Bear in *Omni* [Feb or March] is a direct pinch from Hal Clement's short story 'Star, Bright' published circa 1968. I'm sure you've read it so I won't document a list of parallels – believe me, they're *there*. Assuming that Bear & Clement haven't done some sort of a deal, I think this sort of thing's very unfair..." [MMC] Haven't read either, but these arguments tend to be fruitless. (Unconscious imitation? Independent creation? Who fished the murex up? What porridge had John Keats?) Let's see who, if anybody, sues....

Martin Morse Wooster has his finger on the pulse of something or other: "I've just returned from Corflu. It was full of appalling spectacle, such as the grisly bidding scene where the 'clean' Langford stack, full of character-building issues of *Extro* and the *Omni Book Of The Future*, went for a paltry \$10, while the 'dirty' Langford stack – two issues of *Knave*, full of lewd women wearing what mid-Atlantic fan Ms A. Carol explained were 'not garter belts, but *suspender* belts' – fetched a full \$15.... The *John W.*

Campbell Letters have just been published. Perhaps the most curious is one of March 4, 1959 to Heinlein's agent rejecting *Starship Troopers*. 'You could produce a profound anti-Nazi feeling in the readers by telling a story 100% from the viewpoint of a dedicated, fervent Nazi. I hear Bob [Heinlein]'s going to induce considerable anti-patriotism in a lot of readers by telling a story from the viewpoint of a 100% dedicated patriot.' Don't tell Joseph Nicholas.... R.I. Barycz goofed in his description of the Lucasfilm suit. High Frontier, a militarization-of-space lobby affiliated with Baen Books, Heinlein, and Jerry Pournelle, produced ONE commercial, a child's drawing that showed evil Soviet missiles melting like antacids against the firm protection of the, er, 'Peace Shield'. Lucasfilm's suit was thrown out of court, so anyone can call satellite systems 'Star Wars' or whatever." [MMW]

D.M. Sherwood was at Albacon: "The meeting for a possible constitution for Eastercons has been referred to a subcommittee; such scraps as I caught suggest that Talmudic exegesis lives (there seems no facing of the question of how enforcement would work; apparently we're all supposed to write to *Locus* and say what naughty boys & girls people have been). The big Bob (fake) Shaw confrontation scene at the registration desk was defused by a brilliant ploy – they let him in. Hyper-brilliant counterploy on his part: he did fuck-all, just sat in the bar and conducted a genial court-in-exile (except he wasn't in exile ...). Innovative question session by GoH Joe Haldeman – his wife wrote the questions." [DMS]

(I had some outraged prior correspondence copied to me by "Harrogeightyseven" person Andrew R. Bennett [some relation], with Albacon diplomatically writing "Nyahh nyahh, we're not letting Shaw into the con except maybe for the bidding session, so there," and the putative Eastercon bid replying with equal mature dignity, "Yah boo sucks, we're cancelling our bid and our memberships then.")

FGoH John Jarrold was there too: "I had a great time. Met Joe & Gay Haldeman on Thursday lunchtime in the bar (where else?) after a boozy trip up overnight, drinking beer with some Scottish sailors. Didn't go to bed on Friday or Saturday but eventually gave up the ghost around 7am Monday morning. Sang every night in the bar (aren't you glad you weren't there?) with the Haldemans, Toby Roxburgh, Neil Gaiman and other worthies. My throat is just recovering. Major surprise of the con was being asked for an autograph: this was after reading a Harlan Ellison story during a horror

reading that also included Clive Barker and Ramsey Campbell. A young fan came up to me in the bar with a copy of the *Books of Blood* and asked me to sign it. I didn't believe he was serious, so I questioned him closely, but he really meant it. Talk about a sense of wonder. I haven't mentioned this to Clive yet. I will, during some quiet moment, when there are several yards and a sturdy door between us." [JJ]

Dave Wood sends bizarre local headlines (NEW RIDDLE AS BODY IS FOUND / LAKE: WAS IT MURDER? / NICHOLAS FIRES THE GUNS) and another Magical Albacon Moment: "...the story of Greg P. being found snoring behind a locked toilet door up in Glasgow. He was identified by Mal Ashworth crawling on his hands and knees across the toilet floor and peering under the door. 'I realized it was Pickersgill when I saw the glasses on the floor,' he told me. Sad that the only way to recognize a trouserless P. is by his bi-focals...." [DW] Prospective Confederation members please note.

Lisa Tuttle pleads: "No more *Stardate* submissions from anybody, please. Sigh." All is about to be explained:

LETTER FROM AMERICA • STEVE BROWN

Stardate has achieved extinction. It is a long and depressing story. In the proverbial nutshell, our financier was a black sheep member of the DuPont family. He was born to the purple, and spent his life as a giddy wastrel. We have been calling him Arthur, after the Dudley Moore character. Arthur owns a \$400 million trust fund, which his family won't allow him to touch because he is such a flake. He is allowed by the family to eke out an existence on the interest from the fund – \$57 million *annually*.

Now I don't think that you or I would have much trouble making ends meet on \$57 million per year, but it is indicative of Arthur's financial acumen that he was continually running short and had to borrow on the forthcoming year's interest. Arthur loves to play with businesses. He owns hundreds of small businesses in a bewilderingly interlocked rat's nest of finances, yet his entire accounting dept. consists of one little old lady without a computer.

Arthur was certainly sincere about *Stardate*, and we did spend about half a million of his dollars, but the experience of prying more loose from him

became so byzantine that it killed us. Arthur never could understand that other people needed money on a regular basis, to fill the refrigerator, pay the rent, and other wastrel expenses. To Arthur, money is like air. It is always there, and if you need some, you just reach out and grab it. We came to a point where our phones were going to be shut off, the office staff worked for six weeks without pay, etc., while Arthur was taking an extended cruise of Antigua.

So, we had to die. We tried for a quick sale, but what passed for Arthur's people were incapable of getting the paperwork in order to allow a sale. It is possible that we may resurface by the end of the year, under a different name. Now that we have four issues to show investors, things look possible. Dana, our energetic publisher, is shuttling from coast to coast right now trying to interest investors. But I'll believe it when I see it.

For your troubles, I enclose a copy of the final issue. This may become a valuable collector's item someday, if only because of the Gibson story. The magazine was an infuriating mix of the ridiculous and the sublime, due to Arthur's indiscriminate contract signing before he found us. All that gaming stuff and the low-grade media material was contracted for, down to the very name of the magazine, which is a word copyrighted by Paramount Pictures (it is a *Star Trek* word). We had hoped that the quality of fiction would offset the erosion of credibility that sixteen pages of deadly dull gaming material would foster.

If you see Lisa Tuttle (*Stardate's* Person in the UK) wandering the streets of Soho, keening softly to herself, please comfort her. She was doing a great job, and had just sent us a truly brilliant Dave Garnett story that I would have killed to be allowed to publish. Now she, too, must make many embarrassing phone calls. As our office person, Heather, said when it had become apparent that *Stardate* was no longer viable: "Brown, do you realize that we have to contact over 3,000 people, from artists and writers to distributors, printers, store owners, advertisers, etc. and depressingly etc?."

Sic Transit Gloria Fictum.

...Your definition of that problematic word "cyberpunk" is the best one I've seen yet. "Praised in *Cheap Truth* and agented by Chris Priest," indeed. Not to blow my own horn too much, I'm in a better position to comment on this movement than most anybody. More by coincidence than anything, I know

all the writers grouped under that label personally. Bruce Sterling and I have been corresponding for ten years, I met and befriended Gibson before he ever wrote a word of fiction, and I am guilty of having known John Shirley for 15 years, and even sharing a house with him in the early 70s. Thus, I've known from the beginning just what an inaccurate label "cyberpunk" is. Shirley is certainly punky enough, but he hasn't a cybernetic chip in his body. Bruce is cybernetic as hell, but is a comfortable family man who writes superb, but "traditional", hard SF. Rudy Rucker is neither cybernetic nor punky, but he is a friend of Bill, Bruce and John, and shares some attitudes. His own fiction is kind of cartoonlike, and about as cybernetic as Bugs Bunny. That leaves Bill, who does fit the definition, but more or less stands alone, except for the emerging crop of imitators. Gardner Dozois coined That Term in the *Washington Post* a year ago, and like all labels it drastically simplified and pigeonholed a group of quite disparate writers whose main connection with each other is mutual friendship and the odd collaboration. Lord release us from the artistic bonds placed about our thighs by critics hunting for a quick and easy phrase! [SB]

"A TRIUMPH OF STYLE OVER CONTENT"

... thus Greg Pickersgill's heart-warming TAFF victory statement. 249 votes were cast: J. Hanna 61, S. Ounsley 84, GP 98, Hold Over Funds and write-ins 6, leading to eliminations and a second ballot with SO 114, GP 125, HOF 7. Greg therefore gets a chance to demonstrate how TAFF delegates should properly comport themselves (see my trip report, page 27), while the Pickersgill manse (7a Lawrence Rd, S. Ealing, London, W5 4XJ) becomes the throbbing centre of UK TAFF activity and fund-raising for the next two years....

(Speaking of the trip report, still available from this address at a trifling £2.25 post free, I note with vast gratitude and deep smugness that TAFF got \$500 from the LA-Con coffers and \$50 from Massachusetts Convention Fandom Inc as a reward for actually getting a report into print. Preen.)

Meanwhile, the declared 1987 TAFF candidates (Bill Bowers, Brian Earl Brown, Mike Glicksohn, Jeanne Gomoll) *had* been mostly sold on attending the '87 Eastercon as being more typical of UK fandom than a tacky old

Worldcon. This determination wavered “in view of the way that Eastercon and the British Worldcon later in the year are respectively shaping up” (P. Nielsen Hayden, *Taffluvia* 6), and all four now wish to attend Conspiracy. Because the latter looks so wonderful, or because of wicked rumours about Beccon’s fan programme? Can there be a connection with Steve Green’s and Kev Clarke’s withdrawal of their offer to run silly Eastercon games? My current low profile precludes me from knowing the answers.

Finally, 1976 NA-to-UK TAFF delegate Roy Tackett still has a soft spot for us, as evidenced in *Anvil 40*: “There is, somehow, something attractive about the thought of sitting back and watching the English get nuked.”

The *Ansible* Educational Supplement presents:

The Well-Tempered Plot Device

Nick Lowe

Perhaps once in a generation, the science of criticism is shaken by a conceptual breakthrough so revolutionary that the literary establishment can only dismiss it as deluded quackery. Such a breakthrough is described in these pages. If I draw comparisons with Darwin, Einstein, Lysenko, the sceptical reader may smile. Yet they laughed at Leavis; they creased themselves pink at Edmund Wilson; they barfed up gobs of lung tissue at Derrida’s *Of Grammatology*. To all such shallow-minded so-called “scientists” I say: go ahead and hoot! The High Speed Train of progress makes no unscheduled stops to pick up late travellers, nor can it be tilted in its tracks.

The failure of the old paradigm is simple. There’s a curious bias in the vernacular of critical discussion towards the qualities that make a book *good*. Most of the language traditionally used to describe a book’s achievement has to do with its positive qualities: the plot, characterization, style, ideas, significance. Moreover, it’s a bias that carries over into all those gruesome handbooks on How To Write Totally Brilliant Novels and Win Big Cash Literary Prizes. The reason nobody’s yet become a big time novelist by reading up on Diane Doubtfire is just that all the advice in such booklets is directed towards getting you to write a book full of plot, characterization,

style, ideas, significance. In short, a *good* book.

Now, it strikes me that this is completely misconceived. You've only got to look around you to realize that most books that get published are NOT good. This simple point makes a nonsense of conventional criticism, which lacks any sort of vocabulary to discuss badness in any meaningful way. And yet badness is the dominant quality of contemporary literature, and certainly of SF. All orthodox criticism can say of a truly awful book is that the characterization is terrible, or the use of the English language makes your bowels move of themselves. It fails completely to grasp that bad writing is governed by subtle rules and conventions of its own, every bit as difficult to learn and taxing to apply as those that shape good writing. But do you ever find workshops offering instruction in how to write the sort of really atrocious garbage that leers at you from every railway bookstall?

Already you can begin to understand why my theories are scoffed at by the neanderthal proponents of orthodox so-called "criticism". History will judge who has the final chuckle. In the following pages I will reveal:

- a whole new language of criticism
- the secret of success in science fiction writing
- and a revolutionary new technique of interpretation that will grant you instant and total understanding of *Star Wars*, *The Lord of the Rings*, *The Hitch-Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, and many far less reputable works.

And while I'm about it I'll propose a new definition of magic, account for the existence of Lionel Fanthorpe, and show you a way to derive pleasure from Stephen Donaldson books. (Needless to say, it doesn't involve reading them. *But* neither does it involve burying them under six foot of badger manure and napalming the lot, which you might think the obvious answer.)

In principle, these secrets can be exploited by anyone; but you may be interested before we start in testing your native aptitude through a couple of simple and deceptively irrelevant exercises.

1. Complete the Poem

Leonard Nimoy, currently [***](#) directing his own resurrection in *Star Trek III: The Search for Spock*, is the author of two books of poems rightly considered

too hot for bookshops to handle. They're distributed solely through Athena poster shops, in the same series of icky little volumes with tinted pages and silhouettes of weeds that has given the world the if anything even more deathless works of the legendary Susan Polis Schutz, the Colorado Sappho. (You must know the stuff: "Our relationship / is beautiful / because / it is ours / because / it relates / to us.")

All you have to do is read through the following (genuine) sample poem, and then use your skill and judgement to supply the missing lines from the ones that follow. (These include about 80% of the text of Nimoy's second book of poems, which by a novel inspiration consists almost entirely of excerpts from the first.) Then turn to the [end of the article](#) to find out how you scored. First, the specimen:

"Rocket ships / Are exciting / But so are roses / On a birthday

"Computers are exciting / But so is a sunset

"And logic / Will never replace / Love

"Sometimes I wonder / Where I belong / In the future / Or / In the past

"I guess I'm just / An old-fashioned / Space-man."

And now it's over to you:

(i) I love you not for what I want you to be ... (2 points for the missing line.)

(ii) I loved you then for what you were ... (3 points.)

(iii) I miss you / And not only you ... (3 points)

(iv) My love for you is not a gift to you ... (1 point.)

– and the hardest one: here you have two lines to guess of a three-line poem.

(v) I am me ... (2+4 points.)

2. Clench Racing

This is a social and competitive sport, that can be played over and over with

renewed pleasure. Playing equipment currently on the market restricts the number of players to six, but the manufacturers may yet issue the series of proposed supplements to raise the maximum eventually to nine.

The rules are simple. Each player takes a different volume of *The Chronicles of Thomas Covenant*, and at the word “go” all open their books at random and start leafing through, scanning the pages. The winner is the first player to find the word “clench”. It’s a fast, exciting game – sixty seconds is unusually drawn-out – and can be varied, if players get too good, with other favourite Donaldson words like wince, flinch, gag, rasp, exigency, mendacity, articulate, macerate, mien, limn, vertigo, cynosure.... It’s a great way to get thrown out of bookshops. Good racing!

•

Let me explain the tenuous relevance of these modest exercises to my main subject. Here we have two of the most accomplished of contemporary bad writers inadvertently showing off one of the most valued qualities in their art. I refer, of course, to *predictability*. Donaldson’s use of language is so repetitive and his characterization so limited to a few clumsy responses that he finds himself coming back again and again to the same beloved words, to the extent that you can predict their occurrence reliably enough to be able to leaf through and be sure of finding one almost immediately. Nimoy is even more adept in this esoteric art: his banal thought falls so naturally into clichés that you can predict whole lines at a time.

You think I’m jesting when I speak of an Art of the Predictable, but if you think about it it *is* an art. The grammar of cliché is a language all of its own that’s never had the study it deserves. How is it that we learn to spot the ending in advance? how do we *know* when a particular creaky old line is about to get trotted out? how do we come to anticipate the obvious platitudinous moral the story’s setting up? In the same way as we learn a language, by exposure to so many examples of usage that our brains construct, unknown to our conscious minds, an internal grammar of how they’re used in practice. After you’ve seen enough 50s SF films on the box, you come to *expect* the professor’s Faustian dabblings to destroy him in the end, while the young journalist hero clasps the daughter as they gaze on the smouldering wreckage of the laboratory. (“Oh Rick, it’s – horrible....” – “It’s all right, Jean, it’s over now. The nightmare is over forever.”)

And this is what I mean when I say there are rules governing bad writing that you simply have to learn if you're to become a successful manufacturer of exploitation fiction. Perhaps I ought to clarify what I mean by that last category as applied to SF: I'm thinking principally of escapist adventure stories with no particular pretensions to engage the higher cortical functions and consisting chiefly of well-worn ideas and storytelling techniques recycled more or less formulaically. But in a way that's the least interesting quarter of the field under survey, because you'll find in practice that the techniques of shoddy fiction have permeated SF to such an extent that you can observe these same rules in operation even in some jolly good books, and many more with pretensions to being jolly good. I'll be drawing illustrations from all these categories, but obviously it's the last one that intrigues me most. Predictability, you see, even though we use the term disparagingly, has become in recent years a very bankable commodity in SF and fantasy publishing. The publishers know the public knows what it wants: it wants more of the same. Safe books. No surprises. Familiar surroundings from page one. And this means that even writers with considerable literary pretensions have had to learn the Art of the Predictable as part of the basic equipment of their trade. In Gene Wolfe, who is rather a subtle writer, this only results in the occasional irritating embarrassment; in Stephen Donaldson, who is about as subtle as a lead brick, it results in contemptible gaseous claptrap. Examples follow in due course.

Well, by this stage, you're probably bouncing up and down in your seat with barely-continent excitement, thinking, "Wow, am I really going to learn to write like *Stephen Donaldson*?" I have to let you down as gently as I can and say no, it's not quite as easy as that. You have to remember that Mr Donaldson's spent years learning to produce a book so flatulent you have to be careful not to squeeze it in a public place. All I can do in the time available is to offer instruction on the first and most important element of crummy writing, which is (as my title suggests) bad plotting. I can't promise that by the time you've read these pages you'll have learned to write significantly more stereotyped characters, or that your style will have become significantly more leaden and clichéd. But I do promise that you'll be fully conversant with the many varieties of plot device, their use and function, and you'll be able to recognize and admire their handling in the works of the masters: Lionel Fanthorpe, A.E. van Vogt, and the early sword-and-sorcery novels of Michael Moorcock, to name only some of the virtuosi of the plot device I

haven't space to mention in what follows.

I choose plotting as the focus of my discussion for two compelling reasons. One is that it's been a persistently underrated art in all kinds of narrative all down the ages, and has rarely come in for any kind of analysis. I think the last person to say anything respectable about the art of plotting was Aristotle, who besides some famous remarks about beginning-middle-and-end laid down a few elementary precepts like events in the story having to follow in a relationship of internal logic, and having to appear to arise out of the interactions between characters rather than being obviously imposed from above by an author. Otherwise, nobody's ever tried to explain how to plot tightly or elegantly, and the whole skill of it's tended to be treated as a rather low form of creative activity, more appropriate to Feydeau farces and TV sitcoms than to high narrative art.

There's a reason for this, I think. Up until very recently, really elaborate plotting has only been possible in comedy, where you don't mind being reminded of the existence of an author by the absurd artificiality of the structure of events. Real life isn't, on the whole, especially well plotted, and as soon as the good plotting in a story begins to get obtrusive we lose that essential impression of a purely internal logic governing the progress of events within the story. It's only in the last few decades that serious fiction has begun to make serious reference to its own fictitiousness, which is how novels like *The Affirmation*, *Little Big*, or *If On a Winter's Night a Traveller* can come into being. Even so, you'll find that most of the highly plotted, highly self-conscious novels within and without the genre tend to be funny – as the various works of John Barth, William Gaddis, and John Sladek. It's significant that Sladek finds himself so attracted to the detective genre, about the only non-comic non-artsy-fartsy fictional tradition that still makes play with the reader's awareness of the plot as something basically artificial.

The other reason I've chosen plotting to talk about is that it's the ideal topic to illustrate my point about rules of bad writing; because, while it's comparatively difficult to formulate any very definite procedure for constructing a good plot, I hope to be able to show that there are all sorts of little rules you can follow to give you an easy, step-by-step recipe for a really creaky one.

This is the point to introduce you to the manual. In my experience, the book

that has most to teach about the mistakes to avoid in good fantasy writing, and by that token the one that can tell you most about the rules of hacking, is itself a work of fiction. It's not one that's likely to be familiar to all, and I'd like to take this chance to bring it to notice; because while there may be other books I don't know about that could serve equally well, this is the one I've found to stand head and shoulders above all comparable handbooks of instruction.

It's Lin Carter's novel *The Black Star*. For all I know, every other Lin Carter book may be exactly the same. I don't know; this is the only one I've ever finished. But I've read it more times than I can say, because practically any point you could wish to make about techniques of hackwork can be illustrated from the pages of this remarkable novel, to which I'll be making quite a lot of reference in what follows. It's hard to give any idea of the flavour of this astonishing text from just a few short citations, but here by way of introduction are four passages about the same character from different parts of the book.

Niane fled down the jungle path on frantic, stumbling feet. Her gown was torn. Her slim white legs were scratched and bleeding. She panted for breath, young breasts heaving and straining against the fabric of her gown....

He hastened to untie the girl. She was in a sorry state; most of her clothing had been torn from her, although she did not seem to have suffered any injury save the insulting touch of cold, sly hands....

"Tush, girl!" the old fellow said, blushing a little at the warmth of her words and averting his keen old eyes reluctantly from the generous glimpses of her maiden flesh rendered visible by the sorry condition of her gown....

In the crude intimacy of the cell they had shared, the temptation to touch her, to allow a comforting, soothing hand to venture an overt caress, to permit his eyes to taste the soft slenderness of her body so artlessly revealed through the sorry condition of her garments, had often been well nigh irresistible. Where another man would have yielded, perhaps reluctantly, to his need – which she as well felt – he but stiffened and grew colder, wrenching his thoughts aside from this insidious channel with distaste....

Unfortunately, I'm limited to discussing the plot. The storyline of *The Black Star* is simple enough – one might say, puerile. In the last age of fabled Atlantis, before the gods pulled the plug and sank beneath the waves that prehistoric continent that had linked Britain and the Falklands while the dagoes were still struggling with their Linguaphone courses in proto-Indo-European, Diodric the Warrior, Niane the Nymphet, and Nephog Thoon the Wizard with the Silliest Name in All Prehistory struggle against troglodytes, sorcerers, and militant anarchists to save the fabled jewel The Black Star from falling into the wrong hands, since the Gods seem to have a bit of a thing about it and will destroy civilization if it's lost. What relieves this at best “routine” (in the technical sense coined by the *SF Encyclopaedia*) story from total tedium is the fascinating use that Carter makes of plot devices in order to get the whole preposterous rattletrap of a story moving along its dried-up watercourse of a road.

Here I'd better pause and clarify what I mean by a plot device. In normal usage, when people talk of a plot device they mean something in the story that's just a little bit too obviously functional to be taken seriously. The most famous plot device in recent SF is the Babel fish, the joke about which is that it's such an obvious plot device that it implies the existence of an author. But the term is a flexible one, and I'm going to use a number of more specialized terms for some of the more specialized varieties of device. The Babel fish is an instance of the plot device at its simplest: a little bit of technology or whatever introduced into the story's world for the sole point of overcoming a little technical difficulty like the fact the characters can't speak to one another. All these FTL drives, instant translators, oxygen pills, and so forth: contrivances so basic to getting interplanetary stories off the ground that we no longer really worry about their implausibility.

This is a fairly innocuous kind of plot device, often quite institutionalized, and nothing you could fairly call a sophisticated hacking technique. For that, you have to move a level up....

“No time for words now, girl. I am sped, but ere I go down to the Kingdom of Darkness I must pass a terrible burden into your hands: alas, that it be so, but thus it must be, for I am near the end of my strength and there is none other here to take up That which I may no longer shield,” he panted, and she wondered at his strange, portentous words....

(And this goes on for a page or so, then:)

He plucked Something from the bosom of his robes and thrust it under her eyes. At the sight of the Thing which he held she voiced a small cry and would have recoiled in holy awe, save that his other hand grasped her wrist again, and dragged her near. “Girl! You know the meaning of this Thing? I read it within thine eyes.... Then take It, child.”

Well, of course, the Thing in question is the legendary Black Star, as we learn a hundred pages later: “While this Thing rested in the possession of the Divine Dynasty” (i.e. the good guys) “the favour of the Gods shone upon Atlantis. No Emperor could hold the throne unless he also held the Black Star....” which means that the wicked Trotskyite rebels that have temporarily overrun the kingdom will be overcome so long as the goodies retain the Black Star. Notice that the only causal connection between possession of the Black Star and victory is that enforced by “the Gods”, for whom of course read “the author”, and you perhaps begin to see why I like to term this kind of thing *Collect-the-Coupons* plotting. It would be much too complicated to have three goodies overcome the whole usurping army, or at any rate it would be far beyond the plotting powers of a Lin Carter. So what you do instead is write into the scenario one or more *Plot Coupons* which happen to be “supernaturally” linked to the outcome of the larger action; and then all your characters have to do is save up the tokens till it’s time to cash them in.

Obviously, this is an artifice which lends itself particularly well to fantasy writing, and is capable of widely varying subtlety of application. I think *The Lord of the Rings*, or *Lord of the Plot Coupons*, is the chief villain here, unless you want to trace it back to Wagner and his traditional sources. Tolkien, on the whole, gets away with the trick by minimizing the arbitrariness of the ring’s plot-power and putting more stress than his imitators on the way the ring’s power moulds the character of its wielder and vice-versa. But even so it’s a pretty creaky apparatus, and one whose influence has been wholly disastrous. It’s so *easy*, they all cry; you save so much energy by just smuggling a few choice plot coupons up and down the map.

Probably the most distinguished practitioner of collect-the-coupons plotting is Susan Cooper in those awful *The Dark Is Rising* books, in the course of

which the hapless goodies have to run down no fewer than nine different plot tokens before they can send off to the author for the ending. I quote from the end of volume two: “Each of the Things of Power was made at a different point in Time by a different craftsman of the Light” (odd how these discussions of the plot always seem to be signalled by bursts of capitalization), “to await the day when it would be needed. There is a golden chalice, called a grail; there is the Circle of Signs” (of which there are six separate components – very busy book, that one); “there is a sword of crystal, and a harp of gold. The grail, like the Signs, is safely found. The other two we must yet achieve, other quests for other times.” (Read: two more sequels.) “But once we have added to these, then when the Dark comes rising for its final and most dreadful onslaught, we shall have hope and assurance that we can overcome.”

We’ll come back to Susan Cooper later on. A collect-the-coupons plotter who runs her close, though, is the inimitable Stephen Donaldson. He tends to pad more than Ms Cooper, so it takes rather more pages to collect each token; but I should think by volume nine of the trilogy he may well outstrip her for sheer multitude of the wretched things. Here’s the crucial passage of insight and revelation from *The Wounded Land*, in which Thomas Covenant in a flash of wisdom perceives the whole point of volumes four to six. I’ve changed just one word throughout; see if you can spot what it is.

Covenant saw. The Staff of Plot. Destroyed. For the Staff of Plot had been formed by Berek Halfhand as a tool to serve and uphold the Plot. He had fashioned the Staff from a limb of the One Tree as a way to wield Earthpower in defence of the health of the Land, in support of the natural order of life. And because Earthpower was the strength of mystery and spirit, the Staff became the thing it served. It was the Plot; the Plot was incarnate in the Staff. The tool and its purpose were one. And the Staff had been destroyed. That loss had weakened the very fibre of the Plot. A crucial support was withdrawn, and the Plot faltered.

Of course, the word “Plot” in all this replaces Donaldson’s “Law” (with one of those significant initial capitals), and of course all Covenant has to do now, in a Lensmanesque escalation of the same basic routine he went through in previous volumes, is go chugging off to cut himself a new Staff of Plot from the jolly old One Tree. I don’t know how he does; four volumes was quite

enough, though I hear there's an amazingly silly bit with limpet mines in the fifth. Another fantasy first.

At any rate, there's another variety of ingenious plot device that's closely related to collecting the coupons, and that's *Saving the Vouchers*. As the name suggests, it's an activity that can amount to the same thing if your plot tokens happen to have an effective power of their own. A Plot Voucher is one of those useful items that is presented to the hero at the start of his adventure with a purpose totally unspecified, that turns out at an arbitrary point later in the story to be exactly what's needed to get him out of a sticky and otherwise unresolvable situation. ("This voucher valid for one [1] awkward scrape. Not transferable." Young Dirk stared at the object in bewilderment. "But what does it *do*?", he asked, putting it reluctantly away in his pouch. "Ah," said the old sage, "I am not at liberty to tell you that. But when the time comes, you will know its purpose.") There's a glorious chapter in *The Wounded Land* again where Thomas Covenant is visited by a rapid succession of ghostly characters from previous volumes "to give you gifts, as the law permits". Some of the gifts are a bit of a cheat, as they consist only in explaining bits of the story that don't make an awful lot of sense. But there are two authentic plot vouchers thrown in. "When the time comes," says one character, "you will find the means to unlock my gift." "He may be commanded once," says another of the handy sidekick with whom he saddles the hapless Covenant. "Once only, but I pray it may suffice. When your need is upon you, and there is no other help." Ho-hum. In the event, of course, the ink is scarcely dry on the page before Donaldson decides Covenant's need is upon him and there is no other help. He also turns out to take a decidedly flexible interpretation of this once-and-once-only clause.

I do recommend the use of plot vouchers to your attention if you're at all interested in writing multi-volume epics of quest and adventure, because they're terrifically easy to use and the readers never complain. You can issue your hero with a handy talisman of unspecified powers at the beginning of volume one, and have him conveniently remember it at various points over the succeeding volumes when he finds himself surrounded by slaving troglodytes or whatever, with no obligation to explain it until the series proves unsuccessful enough to require winding up and the loose ends tying. Lest anyone begin to suspect a veiled allusion to certain 1982 Nebula-winning novels, I'd better rip away the veil and confirm their suspicions;

because if the Claw of the Conciliator is anything more than a general-purpose plot voucher I'm bugged if I can see what. I confess I haven't got on to the *Citadel* yet [***](#), but can it really explain this kind of thing?

My lungs were bursting; I lifted my face to the surface, and they were upon me. No doubt there comes a time for every man when by rights he should die. This, I have always felt, was mine. I have counted all the life I have held since as pure profit, an undeserved gift. I had no weapon, and my right arm was numbed and torn. The man-apes were bold now. That boldness gave me a moment more of life, for so many crowded forward to kill me that they obstructed one another. I kicked one in the face. A second grasped my boot; there was a flash of light, and I (moved by what instinct of inspiration I do not know) snatched at it. I held the Claw.

And then the Claw bathes the scene in its wondrous radiance and Severian slips away while the beasties are held rapt. What a let-down, eh?

Even so, there are looser and lazier plot devices even than the voucher system. Don't forget that if you're absolutely stuck for anything for your characters to do, you can always issue them with little plot algorithms prescribing a sequence of more or less pointless tasks that they have to fulfil in order to achieve their end. Again, this is particularly easy to do in fantasy: an ancient prophecy, more often than not couched in mock-archaic verse, is quite sufficient. Susan Cooper is good at this; she's got a little rhyme to summarize the whole series in twelve lines, a shopping-list of plot tokens that encapsulates in a mnemonic nutshell the entire plot of the story, such as it is.

But perhaps the supreme manifestation of the plot deviser's art, and the point where hackwork shades over into genius by virtue of the sheer inspired brilliance with which the unwritten rules of short-cut plot creation are exploited, is what I call the *Universal Plot Generator*. A Plot Generator is a device written into your scenario that will create further stories as often as required, while laying no restrictions whatever on the kind of story produced.

What I think have to be the two most brilliantly conceived specimens of this rarest and most sophisticated of all plot devices came up in the DC comics of my childhood. I don't think this is any accident. The comics have always been a kind of elephant's graveyard of antiquated plot devices, because they've always existed under the three ideal conditions for the genesis of bad

plotlines: serial format with regular publishing schedules, an audience of adolescent Americans (arguably the lowest form of intelligence in the galaxy), and truly terrible writers. DC Comics in the middle sixties were a particularly golden age in this respect, because while other comics publishers like Marvel and Warren were making tentative sallies into character drama and the adult market, DC were still resolutely plumbing away in search of the lowest common denominator of all narrative art, under such marvellous hacks as the legendary Gardner F. Fox (whose novel *Kothar – Barbarian Swordsman* ranks among the classics of contemporary prose sculpture).

Anyway, the first of DC's great plot generators is almost too famous to warrant discussion, except that the sheer artistry of the concept is rarely appreciated in full. I'd like you to think for a moment about *red kryptonite*. There was a time when the hues and varieties of kryptonite were being boosted daily by new kryptonological discoveries, but I think green and red were the only ones that really lasted the course. The effects of red kryptonite, you remember, were as follows. Each individual chunk would affect Superman, but no-one else, with a completely unpredictable effect that would last exactly forty-eight hours. He would then revert to normal and that particular chunk of red K could never affect him again. The brilliance of this only becomes fully apparent when you translate it all into plot terms; because forty-eight hours happens to be the average timespan of a story in a DC comic. What red kryptonite amounts to is a random element in your scenario that can be brought on at any time and introduce any daft plot idea the writer happens to have kicking about; and at the end of the story it will disappear from the continuity as if it had never been. It's hardly any wonder that the series, at its peak, got through chunks of red kryptonite so frequently that someone calculated that, for that amount of planetary debris to arrive on Earth by chance alone, the original planet Krypton must have been about the size of a galactic supercluster.

There was only ever one plot generator among the many in DC's repertoire that ran red K close for sheer elegance (though others like *Dial H for Hero* proved more durable), and that's the little-remembered Idol-Head of Diabolu. The Idol-Head appeared for a couple of years as the continuity in the Martian Manhunter stories, and the way it worked was this. The Idol-Head of Diabolu was an ancient bust created by an evil sorcerer way back in the mists of flashback, and I think it got unearthed by an unfortunate archaeologist or

something. Thereafter, it would drift around from owner to owner or float around in the ocean and get washed up from time to time (which was odd, since the Head was carved from stone); and every full moon the top of the head would flip open like a Terry Gilliam cartoon and a new evil would be loosed on the world. Invariably these magical banes would find themselves being tackled by the Martian Manhunter, till eventually he managed to run the Idol-Head to ground and destroy it. What I so admire about this invention is that “every full moon” corresponds almost exactly to *the publishing schedule of a monthly comic book*; so that you had, written into the set-up, a device that would generate a guaranteed new villain or disaster every issue while leaving the scripter total freedom to fill in the details.

Sometimes, however, even the Universal Plot Generator breaks down. You may find, in the course of hacking forth your masterpiece from the living pulp, that none of the plot devices hitherto catalogued, none of these little enemas to the Muse, will keep the story flowing; that you can think of no earthly reason why the characters should have to go through with this absurd sequence of actions save that you want them to, and no earthly reason why they should succeed save that it’s in the plot. Despair not. If you follow the handbook, you’ll find there’s a plot device even for this – when the author has no choice but to intervene in person.

Obviously, this requires a disguise, unless you’re terribly postmodernist. The disguise favoured by most writers, not unnaturally, tends to be God, since you get the omnipotence while reserving the right to move in mysterious ways and to remain invisible to mortal eyes. There aren’t all that many *deus ex machina* scenes where the Deity actually rolls up in person to explain the plot to the bewildered characters, though Stephen Donaldson permits an extended interview at the end of *The Power That Preserves*. What tends to happen instead is the kind of coy allusiveness coupled with total transparency of motive you meet, for example, in *The Black Star*, where our heroes most improbably find a light aircraft in which to escape the overrun city:

It was by the most incredible stroke of fortune that Diodric and the Lady Niane should have stumbled upon so rare and priceless a memento of the eons. Or perhaps it was not Blind Fortune, but the inscrutable Will of the Gods.

One thinks irresistibly of Gandalf’s famous words to Frodo when explaining

the logic of *The Lord of the Plot Devices*: “I can put it no plainer than by saying that Bilbo was *meant* to find the Ring, and *not* by its maker.” Frodo, unfortunately, fails to respond with the obvious question, to which the answer is “by the author”.

But actually, it’s not always necessary for the author to put in an appearance himself, if only he can smuggle the Plot itself into the story disguised as one of the characters. Naturally, it tends not to look like most of the other characters, chiefly on account of its omnipresence and lack of physical body. It’ll call itself something like the Visualization of the Cosmic All, or Seldon’s Plan, or *The Hitch-Hiker’s Guide to the Galaxy*, or the Law, or the Light, or the Will of the Gods; or, in perhaps its most famous avatar, the Force. Credit for this justly celebrated interpretation of *Star Wars* belongs to Phil Palmer; I’d only like to point out the way it makes sudden and perfect sense of everything that happens in the film. “The time has come, young man, for you to learn about the Plot.” “Darth Vader is a servant of the dark side of the Plot.” When Ben Kenobi gets written out, he becomes one with the Plot and can speak inside the hero’s head. When a whole planet of good guys gets blown up, Ben senses “a great disturbance in the Plot.”

If this is beginning to sound like a silly little verbal game, think again. The reason you can play this sort of game in the first place is that the Force is one of those arbitrary, general-purpose, all-powerful plot devices that can be invoked whenever convenient to effect whatever happens to be necessary at the time. The only ends it serves within the logic of the story are those of the storyteller. And the reason you can decode so much of SF in this kind of way is that SF is absolutely addicted to crappiness; and while science fiction may not offer any more opportunities than any other kind of fiction for crappy character-drawing or crappy prose, the scope for crappy plotting is virtually limitless.

For instance, Lionel Fanthorpe could never have existed in any genre but SF. Everyone knows, I imagine, the story of the Flaz Gaz Heat Ray, perhaps the most outrageous *deus ex machina* ending in all literature. There the heroes were, stranded deep in an enemy sector of space, surrounded by an entire enemy fleet with the guns trained on them, when the maestro realized all of a sudden he had only one page left to finish the book. Quick as a flash, the captain barks out: “It’s no use, men. We’ll have to use the Flaz Gaz Heat Ray.” “Not – not the Flaz Gaz Heat Ray!” So they open up this cupboard, and

there's this weapon that just blasts the entire fleet into interstellar dust. One almighty *zap* and the thousand remaining loose ends are quietly incinerated. Where, but in SF, could you do that?

So this is your challenge. I hope that in revealing to you, for the first time in cosmic history, these precious secrets of how to tune and play your very own plot devices, I've given you some idea of the opportunities that exist for the talentless hack to abuse, short-change and exploit the mindless masses who put up with this garbage. Armed with this knowledge, you are now equipped to go out into the world and create science fiction stories worse than any that have gone before them. The earth will tremble; railway bookstalls will burst with the fruits of your typewriters; small-time hacks like the vermin who write for *Isaac Asimov's SF Magazine* *** will be swept away by the new torrent of drivel! From this moment on, the universe is yours. The only thing that could possibly stand in your way would be a united resistance from those contemptible snot-gobbed arthropods the readers themselves, crying out against cheapskate exploitation fiction and demanding stories that can hold the road without the author stepping in every five pages to crank the bloody things up. Small chance of that, eh?

I leave the future of SF in your hands. May the Plot be with you.

•

Answers to Complete the Poem quiz:

- (i) ... but for what you are.
- (ii) ... I love you now for what you have become.
- (iii) ... I miss what I am when you are here.
- (iv) ... it is a gift to me.
- (v) ... You are you. / Our love is us.

Rate Your Score ... 13-15 Excellent. The nation's greetings cards manufacturers need you. 9-12 Not bad, but damaging traces of poetic sensibility probably bar you from the big time. Try ghosting for Patience Strong. 5-8 Could do well in vanity publishing. Don't despair. 1-4 Alas! better stay dead.

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***** All-Purpose Editorial Footnote**

This piece started as a talk (Fencon, 1982) in rather different format – e.g. Clench-Racing was demonstrated in real time. Aeons later, Nick recast it as above for my and Kevin Smith’s fanzine *Drilkjis*, and galactic cycles after that it became apparent that *Drilkjis 7* would not appear. My asterisks are to remind you of time’s wingèd chariot, and that, for example, *Asimov’s* is very much improved under Gardner Dozois. [*Dave Langford, 1986*]

Brad Berry (1920-1986) **David S. Garnett**

The Fiction/Good Taste Supplement

The death has been reported of noted sci-fi writer Brad Berry, shortly after the publication of his first novel for over 20 years, *Bombing Is A Lonely Business*.

Mr Berry cancelled a European trip recently because of anticipated unfavourable reviews. He refused to visit Britain, believing it had become an editorial target after a *Readers Disgust* subscription campaign against Libya had been launched from bases in England. Mr Berry also called off a visit to France, as a protest against French publishers who had refused to allow mail shots to overfly their territory – they were concerned about possible readership losses in the home market.

Although its population is only one percent of that of the U.S.A., Libya’s influence as a centre of worldwide literary subversion is well known: their notorious sponsorship of “Number One International Bestsellers”, for example, although for security reasons evidence of the responsibility for the 1984 Booker Prize atrocity must be kept secret. Editor-in-Chief of Libyan House is Colonel “Mad Pencil” Qadhafi, who does not subscribe to *Readers Disgust* or its values, and who was attempting to set up an alternative magazine. Because the *Readers Disgust* special offer campaign had resulted in circulation cuts among readers of his own publication, Editor Qadhafi was believed to be considering a new publicity drive, using famous personalities to endorse his global policies.

Regarding Mr Berry as a representative of decent American Mid-Western values, it was rumoured that a special decommissioning editor would cancel his contract while he was in London. All Mr Berry's books would have been set on fire – a gesture designed as an ironic parody of his movie novelization *Burn, Commie, Burn* – and the author himself was to have received the ultimate censorship and been remaindered.

By refusing to leave the safety of his native country, Mr Berry avoided the devastating critical massacre at the Royal Connaught public house in London, which left the cream of Britain's sci-fi authors suffering from severe writer's block. Mr Berry was scheduled to be the special guest of the Supper Club, but he withdrew when he discovered that the date set for the meeting was May 1, the infamous pagan holiday. However, another American celebrity had arrived in London a few days earlier, and she graciously accepted the role of substitute. Wallis Simpson, better known under her pseudonym the Duchess of Windsor, had no fear of being terminally edited. As she was already dead, instead of giving a speech her final royalty statement was read out by a ghost writer.

Ironically, it was on the very same day that Mr Berry was mugged and shot dead a few yards from his own home, becoming one of the 10,000 Americans who are sacrificed each year to the Second Amendment. Mr Berry seems to have been the victim of one of the annoying mistakes which so bedevilled his own published works – a typo. Recent research shows that the 1791 Constitutional Amendment contained a misprint: the right to “bear” arms should have been “bare” arms. Alas, instead of having his sleeves rolled up Mr Berry's attacker was democratically armed with a handgun.

Mr Berry was arguably the world's most famous sci-fi writer. Everyone has heard of him, although nobody has read any of his books. He will probably be best remembered for his contributions to the visual media. As well as novelizing *Burn, Commie, Burn*, he scripted the famous video nasty *Moby Sick*. He reached his peak in 1953 with the release of two memorable movies based on his short stories: *It Came From Out Of Hollywood* and *The Beast From Washington DC*. Mr Berry will also never be forgotten for the television mini-series of his book *The Farcical Chronicles*, which raised model making technology to heights which had not been achieved since the heady days of *Thunderbirds*.

His penultimate novel, *Nothing Wicked From America Comes*, was made into another movie by Ricky Rat Studios; but until what will sadly be his last novel, Mr Berry had for two decades confined himself to short stories. Many of these appeared within the pages of *Masturbator*, the short story being an ideal length for the attention span of “readers” of this journal. A number of these were stuck together (as indeed were so many pages of *Masturbator*) into yet another film, *The Ignorant Man*, linked by the plot device of having the narratives written on the walls of a rest room.

Mr Berry had been planning to visit Britain next year, by which time he hoped that his bad reviews would have been forgotten, and that editor Qadhafi would have been sacked, thereby reducing the threat of literary agents to innocent authors everywhere. The World SF Convention is being held in September 1987, in Brighton – the English seaside town where one of the main hotels was the scene of an IRA structuralist critique during a recent annual conference of Conservative Press, resulting in several early redundancies. In a unique joint publishing venture, the Irish Readers Association is reported to receive many of its manuscripts from Libyan House, while publication of such novels is financed by voluntary contributions from freedom loving American patriots.

It is for this spirit of peaceful co-operation, international tolerance and world friendship that Brad Berry will be remembered as long as there are late night movies. [DSG]

[**Your Editor Adds:** This must be some kind of allegory. I certainly didn't see any famous American author failing to attend the SF Supper Club at the Royal Connaught. *Ansible* is as always completely irresponsible, for everything.]

C.O.A. (NOT ALL RECENT!)

MICHAEL ABBOTT, Flat 7, Bryanstone Rd, Talbot Woods, Bournemouth, BH3 7JE • PAUL BARNETT, 17 Polsloe Rd, Exeter, Devon, EX1 2HL • MERV BINNS (& AUSTRALIAN SF NEWS), PO Box 491, Elsternwick, Vic 3185, Australia • TERRY BROOME, 23 Claremont St, Lincoln, LN2 5BN • DENICE & BRIAN EARL BROWN, 11675 Beaconsfield, Detroit, MI 48224, USA • PETER COLLEY, 7 Sumatra Rd, West Hampstead, London,

NW6 • JONATHAN COXHEAD, 92 Histon Rd, Cambridge, CB4 3JP • GAMES WORKSHOP (where erstwhile *Imagine* boss Paul Cockburn is now in charge of everything interesting, Ian Marsh and most of the old mob having been expunged from the histories for unwillingness to move north), Enfield Chambers, 16-18 Low Pavement, Nottingham, NG1 7DL • ROY HILL, 8 Windsor Rd, Canterbury, Kent, CT1 3UN • TERRY & MARGARET HILL, 42 Chaplin Drive, Headcorn, Kent, TN27 9TN • PHIL JAMES, GSOC/MARCOL Team, DFVLR, D-8031 Oberpfaffenhofen, West Germany • LEIGH KENNEDY, 2 Alma Place, Marlborough, Wilts, SN8 1AF • KEITH KNIGHT, 164 Goldhurst Tce, West Hampstead, London, NW6 3HP • CHRIS LEWIS, UWIST, Redwood Bldg, King Edward VII Ave, Cardiff • MATT MACKULIN, 8 Upper Ashmount, Cloughfold, Rawtenstall, Rossendale, Lancs, BB4 7PS • IAN MARSH, Top Flat, 19 Rusholme Rd, London, SW15 3JX • TOM PERRY, PO Box E, Sugar Loaf, NY 10981, USA • DARROLL & RO PARDOE, 38 Marina Village, Preston Brook, Runcorn, Cheshire, WA7 3BQ • MAUREEN PORTER, 114 Guildhall St, Folkestone, Kent, CT20 1ES • ANDY SAWYER, 1 The Flaxyard, Woodfall Lane, Little Neston, S. Wirral, Cheshire, L64 4BT • JOHN SLADEK, Apt 2, 15201 Scenic Heights Rd, Eden Prairie, MN 55344, USA • KEVIN & DIANA SMITH, 19 Millford, Goldsworth Park, Woking, Surrey, GU21 3LH • SPHERE BOOKS, 27 Wrights Lane, London, W8 5TZ (NB: lovable editor Colin Murray has left, seeking new worlds to conquer) • ALEX STEWART, 47 St Johns Green, Colchester, Essex, CO2 7EZ • KEV & SUE WILLIAMS (temporary, pending permanent settlement in the civilized South), c/o Richardson Vicks Ltd, R&D Labs, Rusham Park, Whitehall Lane, Egham, Surrey, TW20 9NW • STEVE WOOLHOUSE, 19 Jaunty Mount, Sheffield, South Yorks, S12 3DR • Bob Lichtman adds a footnote: “Walter Willis of Stanford, California, recognizing the confusion he’s been inadvertently causing among 6th fandom fans everywhere, has voluntarily changed his name. He is sure his new name, Lee Hoffman, will rectify this problem.”

CONVENTION NOTES (OR, MORE BORING BITS)

Consept/Unicon 7 (8-10 Aug, Guildford) has GoH Tanith Lee; £4 supp £8 att; 9 Graham Rd, Wealdstone, Harrow, Middlesex, HA3 5RP. (They call it “Un7con”, perhaps meaning “Not Unicon 7.”)

Rubicon (22-25 Aug, Newbury) is Not Quite Silicon: £5 to Bishop's Cottage, Park House Lane, Reading, Berks, RG3 2AH.

Confederation (Worldcon, 28 Aug - 2 Sept, Atlanta): just too late to book in advance, and it's \$65 at the door. GoH Ray Bradbury, FGoH Terry Carr. (Suite 1986, 3277 Roswell Rd, Atlanta, GA 30305, USA.)

Fantasycon XI (26-28 Sept, Brum) claims its "high point" is a banquet cum awards ceremony, but this is probably a plot to deter undesirables. £2 supp £10 att to 15 Stanley Rd, Morden, Surrey, SM4 5DE.

XIIcon (26-29 Sept, Glasgow): GoH Harry Harrison. £3 supp £9 att; "Beachfield", Calfmuir Rd, Lenzie, Glasgow, G66 3JJ.

Beneluxcon 1986: there is no Beneluxcon 1986.

Nicon '86 (26 Oct, Belfast) purports to be the First Northern Ireland SF Convention, with GoH Anne McCaffrey. One day only; £1 supp £2 att, cheques to "Queen's Clubs & Societies". Thomas Ferguson, SF Soc, c/o QUBSU Bldg, University Rd, Belfast BT7 1PE. (Despite stiff competition from Mike Sherwood, Thomas F. has the worst handwriting of any *Ansible* correspondent. Our cryptanalysts are working on several letters from him, some of which may even be arranged into words.)

Novacon 16 (31 Oct - 2 Nov, Coventry): GoH Ted Tubb, who will dictate a Dumarest book as the first third of his speech, plus Chris Evans. £8 to 86 Berwood Farm Rd, Wylde Green, Sutton Coldfield, W Midlands. 5,271,009 fans claim to be "skipping Novacon" following a slightly over-the-top Chairman's Warning in PR1, but most will doubtless relent. (The warning? Usual stuff: castration and eviction for anyone caught importing booze, holding room parties, going barefoot, sleeping on floors, annoying hotel staff, etc. Chairman Tony Berry has not mastered the subtle art of at least appearing to be on the side of the fans rather than the hotel....)

Conception (13-15 Feb, Leeds) celebrates 50 years since a certain famous Leeds convention and aims to recreate intervening history, omitting the 1937 Temperance Hall theme. £6 to 12 Fearnville Tce, Oakwood, Leeds, LS8 3DU. To pinch a phrase from V. Omniaveritas, this one is so ideologically sound it should be mailed in a sealed train to Moscow.

Oricon (6-8 March, Essex) claims to be an Irwin Allen cum General Media con. Who's Irwin Allen? (I can probably live on without this information,

actually.) £12 plus – chiz chiz – 3 SAEs to 66 Burdett Ave, Westcliff on Sea, Essex, SS0 7JW.

Beccon '87 (Eastercon, NEC, Brum): GoH Keith Roberts, FGoH A.N. Other. £5 supp £10 att, rates to rise by £1 on 1 Sept.

Conspiracy '87 (27 Aug - 2 Sept, somewhere on the south coast) is still happening! Membership now £25/\$40/\$A50, firm to 30 Sept this year. The GoH list has swollen still further with the addition of Arkady & Boris Strugatsky (“dunno if they’ll really come,” said an unnamed chairman); persons not actually on the committee are running a “Three Fan Guests Are Not Enough, Let’s Have Terry Jeeves As Well” campaign, provoking the Conspirators to tumultuous apathy.... **Pam Wells** begs massive information input about fan groups worldwide – but especially UK – for purposes of official Fan Liaison. Ditto fanzines for fan room display: send to Pam at 24a Beech Rd, Bowes Park, London, N11 2DA, marked “Conspiracy” to prevent them vanishing into the recesses of the mighty Wells archive. RON BENNETT is doing the dealers’ room (tables £25/\$37.50, wall tables £30/\$45, rates for ceiling tables not given): bookings by 1 May with £10 deposit to him at 36 Harlow Park Cres, Harrogate, HG2 0AW.

INFINITELY IMPROBABLE

Ideological Horror At TWP: The editors of our all-female APA were ticked off by a resigning Joy Hibbert for their hideous gaffe of using cover artwork by one D. West, whose cryptic initial is believed to conceal the name of a m*n....

Paul (John Grant) Barnett is in the throes of a definitive Walt Disney encyclopaedia (he got a free research trip to California, too): “The task is roughly equivalent to writing the entire **Encyclopaedia Of SF** single-handed ... or even with the help of an Australian critic and editor. Oh joy. At least I haven’t had to watch *The Black Hole* or *Tron*.”

DUFF: the ballot for who gets the coveted trip from Australia to Confederation was won by (take a deep breath) the artists’ collective Lewis Morley, Marilyn Pride and Nick Stathopoulos. Good people, I’m told, but one does wonder about the precedent. Could the *Interzone* collective stand as

a single candidate for TAFF? The entire BSFA for GUFF? Spung!

A Load Of Old Cabellers: a couple of you asked after the James Branch Cabell society and its organ (“rampant in every member”) *Kalki*. Try Prof Dorys C. Grover, Hall of Languages 208, East Texas State University, Commerce, TX 75428, USA. Can one deduce, in a manner not convenient to describe, that Cabell has fallen into the hands of the academics?

Professional Controversy! Quite a bit of late. In the letter column of the *Grauniad*, Michael Moorcock launched a campaign to have vile John Norman banned, only to get into a fearful tangle when the W.H. Smith people started raising unfair points like “why was all censorship evil when *New Worlds* was being attacked, but not now?” ... Tom Disch used the columns of *The Nation* (USA) to be doubtful about SF, Shuttles, and space militarization, modulating gleefully into an attack on Jerry Pournelle – whose reported reply confines itself to not wholly cogent points like “My fans don’t carry toy guns, that’s Gordon Dickson” and “I have no special uniforms other than Boy Scouts of America” ... On the fan front, Ken Lake complained at wearying length about Colin Fine’s term “arch-whinger” in *A45* (“Lying comments ... cowardly sod ... I will welcome a grovelling apology when he has the guts to make it,” etc). Colin duly apologized. Enough of that.

R.I. P: the Ansible Book of the Dead is sadly outdated, but we can’t omit the deaths of Robert P. Mills (7 Feb, of heart attack), **Frank Herbert** (11 Feb, of cancer: his *The Dragon In The Sea* still means a lot to me, and *Dune* has its moments), **Judy-Lynn Del Rey** (20 Feb, following coma mentioned last issue), **Manly Wade Wellman** (5 April, following unspeakable experience also mentioned last issue), **Thomas N. Scortia** (28 April, of leukaemia) and **J. Allen Hynek**, one-time scientist who went barmy about UFOs and got a bit part in *CE3K*. In Britain, that long-term fan and pillar of the Swansea group **Roger Gilbert** died late in June, apparently from a brain haemorrhage. Another fan group, the Birmingham-area **MisFitS**, was officially pronounced dead on 28 June (“terminal membership loss,” says Dr Steve Green). And **Mal Ashworth** has issued his own obituary notice: “as of now I am Out – gafiated – fannishly flatlined.” Gosh, it’s like seeing Harlan Ellison sever every connection with SF, again....

Nebula Award Thrills! Marvel Comics have circularized SFWA members with copies of their *Moonshadow* comic and a plea for the institution (they

can't actually *spell* institution, but never mind) of a Nebula comics category. *Ansible* advises them to forget it. Our own far more heartfelt campaign for a Best Deaf Author category was rudely ignored.

Pro News Column (By Garry Kilworth): “Garry Kilworth goes semi-straight this August with a mainstream novel to be published by The Bodley Head, called *Witchwater Country*,” writes Garry Kilworth. “This is a novel *about* fantasy, not of fantasy, with its grotesque and macabre elements, such as could delight SF and fantasy fans, incorporated as part of the realistic world of the adolescent who finds it difficult to separate the supernatural from the mundane.” [GK]

Soviet News: “handwritten translations of Rob Holdstock’s short story ‘Thorn’ (the Novacon 14 souvenir booklet) are currently doing the rounds in Volgograd, courtesy of the city’s ‘Winds of Time’ SF group – Rob’s eyes clouded with visions of millions of roubles in lost royalties when given the news at Mexicon II, but calmed down when he realized the readership is barely into double figures.” [Steve Green]

Everything Must Go! Eric Bentcliffe is flogging vast numbers of SF books and mags collected over the past several aeons: much rare stuff, much dross, want lists appreciated, confidentiality guaranteed to Philip E. High completists.... (17 Riverside Cres, Holmes Chapel, Cheshire, CW4 7NR.)

James White Pushes Back Frontiers Of Good Taste! In his hard-hitting new Sector General book, “E-t body wastes and bedpans are dealt with in one sentence, but it is all done in the best possible taste.” [JW]

Concrete Overcoat Fan Fund: this may vanish after last year’s ructions – see Novacon 16’s PR2 for an attempt to Finger the Pulse of Fandom. Interim voting totals *circa* Albacon showed only three fans with an unpopularity in double figures (all 10): Vince Docherty, Robert Sneddon, Ian Sorensen. Postal votes at 10p each may be sent to COFF’s transparent *nom de plume* “Alliance & Leicester Building Society” c/o K. Clarke, 191 Valley Rd, Solihull, West Midlands. All cash to worthy causes, etc.

Skiffy Dean Speaks! Robert Heinlein emerged from seclusion to tell *The Wall Street Journal* his philosophy of literature: “To me the acme of prose style is exemplified by that simple, graceful clause, ‘Pay to the order of....’” [MMW] Meanwhile, the 1986 *Ansible* award for Being Influenced By

Famous Heinlein Narrative Hooks goes to S. Delany's *Stars In My Pocket Like Grains Of Sand*, wherein we find: "The door deliquesced." (No, really, it sort of melts into a puddle to let you in.)

Past Cons: Too much has already been printed about Mexicon (where Iain Banks incurred the dread fandom addiction, Joe Nicholas was inverted, and your editor was put in a poncho for being too clever by half) and Corflu (where Dan Steffan hurled a pie at GoH Teresa Nielsen Hayden ["I woulda decked him" – A. Carol], Patrick NH squirted cream up Dan's nose, and every membership badge said HELLO! I'M RICHARD BERGERON). Best bit: en route to Corflu, Rob Hansen had trouble with a US Customs thug who was deeply insulted by a certain Jim Barker cover. "'Is this supposed to show that while the guy behind the desk is going through these folks' stuff he's too dumb to see the other guy sneaking stuff by him?' he asked. I smiled a sickly smile and suddenly wished I hadn't agreed to carry all those copies of Dave's trip report over...." [RH]

The Savage Popcorn Of R.I. Barycz: "20th Century Fox is sueing LA Effects Group for falling down on SFX work for *Aliens*. You can tell this is a serious bit of sueing because Fox only want \$407,935.74 being their unpaid advance and \$176,000 in damages. The real kick is their also asking for a court order to say that 20th is not liable for the legal claims arising out of LA Effects' failure to complete the work. I translate this as Fox's attempt to stop the US cinema industry from sueing Fox for not delivering *Aliens* on a set date (a set hour of the day, even!) in 1986 – said industry and cinema owners having paid Fox \$25,000,000 in up-front non-returnable guarantees for the privilege of selling popcorn during the showing of *Aliens*. If they don't get what they paid for they will sue Fox for \$1000 million or whatever. Wot's that noise? Industrial Light & Magic riding to the rescue, again....

"The flick's action takes up either 30 seconds after the end of *Alien* or 57 years later when Ripley (and her pussy) are picked up by another space ship in a state of hibernation. A still in *Screen International* shows our heroine looking fraught and armed with a piece of lethal hardware (looks good), but she's also carrying on her other hip a small female child who looks winsome rather than fraught (bodes no good – not small winsome children in a skiffy movie)." [RIB]

Your Mailing Label Explained. T. Kevin Atherton speaks for you all: "I

write to thank you for happy little *Ansible* and to reaffirm my unwillingness to give you so much as a penny of my hard-earned money even if you were to claim you were going to use it to ship grain to Ethiopia. Rather than give in to such 'sub overdue' taunts as you might fling in my direction, I have decided to respond in kind. Please note that your subscription for the enclosed *Cri De Loon* is so fucking overdue that when your name passes through our computer an enormous brass gong is walloped on every floor of the *Loon* building and the beepers implanted in the flesh of our roving employees wail like air-raid sirens and heat 'til they glow like fresh-poured ingots of lead. Please send your check (cheque) or money order (munny ordur) with blinding speed or prepare your soul to receive a whole matched series of puling 'sub overdue' notices written in coloured inks that pass with each new letter through the entire spectrum beginning with violet. So there and take *that!*"
[TKA] Quite.

The End.

[This issue had a blank back cover rather than the first series' usual designed-in mailing label.]

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More from jaded DAVE LANGFORD, 94 LONDON ROAD, READING, BERKSHIRE, RG1 5AU, UK. Postal rates have soared by a staggering 1p, but 5 issues of *Ansible* still cost £2: cheques or money orders to *Ansible*, Girobank transfer to account 24 475 4403. Or \$3.50 to US agents Mary & Bill Burns (23 Kensington Court, Hempstead, NY 11550); or \$4A to Aussie agent Irwin (For GUFF) Hirsh, 2/416 Dandenong Rd, North Caulfield, Vic 3161. Subscriptions for fewer issues are also welcome, if you can handle the intricate mathematics involved: 40p for one, etc. Phone: Reading (0734) 665804 (talk loudly). Cartoons: ATom.

Hazel's Language Lessons, Incorporating *Ansible*

Last issue's absence of a Language Lesson plunged half fandom into war. Hazel had to burrow to the street through a mound of outraged letters whose size endangered the flight path of Concorde; I was compelled to subsidize the postman's new truss. Oh yes, the SF priorities of our readership are all too evident.... John Brunner was first to the rescue, with wisdom from a classic Chinese dictionary:

Wan: a small mouth. Some say a large mouth.

T'han: to pretend to look near whilst cherishing distant views.

Ch'huen Keih Seang Kwei: to bore a hole in the wall and peep at each other.

Chen: to stand still. To gallop at full speed.

Pee: a dog under the table. A dog with short legs. A short headed dog.

Mang: a species of bird with one eye and one wing, two of which when joined together are able to fly.

Kheih Iaou: various tribes of barbarians unacquainted with

marriage and knocking out the teeth.

Wang Jen: to side with anybody or everybody.

Chen is the interesting one: Hazel remembers a Coptic word meaning “Go” or alternatively “Stop”, and a Paul Jennings essay cites a Greek look-alike: (1) move quickly; (2) sit.

ME

My own personal lukewarm news takes a load off my mind and at last provides an answer for the millions of fans awaiting the publication and remaindering of that putative SF novel *Wilderness Of Mirrors*. I’ve scrapped it. The reasons are all too complicated, the results quite gratifying – your editor can once again write other SF without feeling guilty, and was quick to bash out a story for what was to be called *The Orion Anthology* or thereabouts.

(This, edited by Rob Holdstock and Chris Evans, is a “British SF showcase” collection to appear as an Orion [Unwin] paperback just in time for Conspiracy ’87. Its latest title is *Other Edens*, contributors besides the editors being Aldiss, Charnock, Garnett, Kilworth, Harrison [MJ], Lamming, Langford, Lee, Moorcock, Roberts [K], Tuttle and Watson. “Er, we mean British-resident SF,” the editors hastily added.)

Instead of nobly following up with an October *Ansible*, I went on a holiday which looks set to inspire several metafictional about shifting perception. When you visit Snowdonia in company with Martin & Katie Hoare, the surface reality of mountains and sheep begins to fade, revealing instead the hidden webs of *realalespace*. Yes, the flickering communications pulsing beneath our society follow high-tech networks constrained only by the shortest routes between pub and pub. The hell with Gibson and Sterling: realalepunk SF is going to be the cutting edge of the future, portraying as it does the deadly interface between humankind and chemical transcendence. I have seen the future and it *hic!*

(During odd sober moments of the holiday I read – as a respite from too much terrible SF for review – Kingsley Amis’s *The Old Devils*. “Bloody hell, this is good!” was my measured opinion, and sure enough, within weeks, the novel won the Booker Prize. It’s nice to know one has influence.)

Meanwhile, historically minded readers may have expected a change of direction or editor after *Ansible* 46. It was at that ominous number that weary Peter Roberts stopped doing *Ansible*'s predecessor *Checkpoint*, passing control to new editors (until issue 74, but that's another story). Item: *Ansible*, exhaustingly, now has more than five times the old circulation of *Checkpoint* (not to mention several times the wordage). Item: Your editor is medically advised that each time he types a COA or award nominations list, millions of his brain cells die. Item: There's something tempting about the half-century mark and/or the epochal period from one British worldcon (*Ansible* first appeared at Seacon '79) to the next. Tentative conclusion: I wouldn't subscribe beyond issue 50 if I were you.

MILFORD 1986, or 15 Characters In Search Of A Volume Control For Neil Gaiman Paul Barnett Was There:

There is more room in heaven for a flannel nightcap than for a silver codpiece.

Arriving some three hours before anyone else, I discovered for myself what metropolitan Milford-on-Sea thought about this annual invasion of skiffy writers. I strolled idly down to the seafront and into a cafe for an ice-cream. There the fifteen-year-old server and her fifteen-year-old hangers-on fell about laughing throughout the entire transaction. After a quick check – yup, them flies wuz closed – I danced away in glee: there were soon going to be fifteen other buggers just as hilarious as me.

Of course I don't believe it – I simply embrace it fervently.

Various catchwords and phrases emerged at Milford, not all of which are easily comprehended by the amateur. Here is a brief glossary:

Crawling Testicles: Term introduced by Alex Stewart in a short story. Describes feelings of male participants when their story is being discussed.

Spung! Dignified Heinleinian term for the reaction of the female nipple to sexual stimulation. This word was used whenever there was a conversational silence.

Untenable: Term used by US cyberpunk (qv.) writer Bruce Sterling to

describe stories either (a) not cyberpunk or (b) not written by Bruce Sterling.

Cyberpunk: Skiffy written by persons concerned with invasive technology – the gadgets that Definitely Will Invade Your Body. Dildoes deliberately excluded, even if coked up. Derivatives produced during the event included SCIFYBERPUNK and the much more digestible LOWFIBREPUNK.

Mirror Shades: Adopted as the uniform of cyberpunks (qv.).

Mazola Party: Term describing orgies so unstimulating that the participants have to use Mazola cooking oil to lubricate the parts that Heineken can't reach. According to Bruce Sterling (qqv.) such parties are engaged in by famous golden-age skiffy writers at worldcons. Your correspondent waved a block of cheapskate lard but got no takers.

Contabescent: A cold aerosol spray used in farming to wither the unwanted tumescences of billy-goats. (To think! – Call My Bluff used to be a clean game.)

Cutting Edge: Term used by Bruce Sterling (qqqv.) to describe cyberpunk (qv.). Cyberpunk is the cutting edge of skiffy. Us Brits are producing the frayed trailing edge. A stuffy rebuttal of this thesis by Neil Gaiman concluded: "We don't give a fuck. And you can't make us."

Bar Pixies: The mystical elementals responsible for the fact that only 57 pints were recorded at the bar during the sinking of an 80-pint barrel. The "missing" 23 pints were generally assumed to be those thrown away by toppers who, although eager, regarded a fistful of evil-smelling foam as undrinkable. (*This one will run and run....*)

You cannot kill a man with a poem. You cannot rule a nation with a sonnet. I will keep my guns, sir, and you may keep your verses.

All stories brought to Milford were generally peed upon, the only exception being Garry Kilworth's "Blood Orange", which was peed upon by a militant few because it was too perfect. Gwyneth Jones, using occasionally subtle trajectories, peed upon every story in sight on the basis that she hadn't written it, and was then astonished when her own incomprehensible piece vanished under a flood of urine. Bruce Sterling, whose mission was to persuade the Brits to take up the True Quill (i.e., cyberpunk) peed upon all stories until the moment his own was discussed; thereafter, having discovered what it was like, he mellowed. Diana Wynne Jones and Judy Blish, two very nice people, desperately tried to find something nice to say about *everything* – a difficult task, seeing as my story was one of those under consideration.

The battlefield is the place for blunders, not the cricket pitch.

Ah yes, my story. At 4750 words it was widely regarded as too long. What will they say of the 90,000-word *Earthdoom!*, I wonder. Too introspective?

*Bear-baiting, sir? 'Tis not for me
Unless the beast a maiden be.*

Various putative projects raised their heads during Milford. *Now We Are Sick*, edited by Neil Gaiman and Steve Jones, is to be an anthology of revolting verse for kids; surprisingly, money is being talked. David Barrett is soliciting contributions for a hypothetical series of short-shorts to appear in *Computer Weekly*; if this goes ahead the results will (or possibly will not) be collected to form a book. Neil Gaiman and your correspondent agreed to press famous Rupert Metcalf to allow us to try and flog a “Best of *Knave Fiction*” anthology: watch this space. It was generally agreed, too, that an anthology of sex skiffy was needed, and everyone except Gwyneth Jones and Bruce Sterling agreed to contribute. Alex Stewart was elected editor but doesn’t fucking well want unsolicited submissions. “I’ll get piles,” he confessed in an unguarded moment, “of masturbatory fantasies from all those teenage wankers who read *Ansible*.” The title of this editorial masterpiece currently wavers between the elegant *Spung!* and the catchy *Saucy Science Wonder Stories*. Who knows? Maybe some sucker of a publisher will buy the damn’ thing.

Chief of men? He is a chief of murderers. But I will piss upon his grave – I and a thousand others.

Chairman Colin Greenland – Uncle Colin With His Merry Games for Boys and Girls – led the evening sessions. Fifteen of us had heady fun while Mary Gentle had a cold. Games included: (a) Call My Bluff (hence “contabescent”); (b) a variation on Consequences introduced by Diana Wynne Jones, which led to unparalleled filthiness (rhyming couplets: “Ships that pass in the night/Are particularly hard on ducks”; “While we’re all playing with silly rhymes/ Dave and Mary are having a real good time” [*spung*]), and (c) a version of Call My Bluff in which the *Oxford Dictionary Of Quotations* was used. In this last the “host” gave the name and dates of an epigrammatist and the flock had to supply possible quotes from same. Hence the pithy epigrams cited herein – and hence a competition! The first person correctly to identify the authors of the quotes listed here will get a *free* copy

of John Grant's exquisite *Sex Secrets Of Ancient Atlantis*. The runner-up will get a signed one. You Too Can Be A Lucky Winner.

'Tis the good Lord's will that a rabbit goes well in a crust with onions.

During the week, Rachel Pollack got the news that a new book of hers had been sold to Thorsons. Your correspondent heard that a new Langford/Grant collaboration had been taken by Grafton. Neil Gaiman sold a piece to *Today* on Fantasycon, which summed up a ten-minute interview with nubile pouting authoress Lisa Tuttle in a single quote: "Fantasycon is just like a great big party." Oh how pleased she was.

*Hast thou heard, my little boy/Of famous Humphrey Davy?
He put the sodium in our salt/And argon in our gravy.*

Your correspondent and Paul Kincaid together won five games in a row of doubles pool on the last night, baffling all challengers. It was then agreed that they should play a singles game – a Duel of the Giants. The following morning, Kincaid refused to remember who had won.... [PB]

[Published authors wishing to join next year's literary fun (and not already on Milford's mailing list) should ingratiate themselves with the current Chair: Paul Kincaid, 114 Guildhall St, Folkestone, Kent, CT20 1ES.]

EPISTOLARY FICTIONS IN THE GOTHIC OR POST-GOTHIC MODE

Greg Bear: "Ellen Datlow passed on your issue 46, containing a letter from Marise Morland-Chapman, who does not know me. I am very fond of Hal Clement, and of his work, but I don't remember reading a story by him called 'Star, Bright' and I can't find it in reprint anthologies I have immediate access to. Where did it appear? (Harry's novel *Star Light* is not even close.)

"'Tangents' is deliberately similar (because I love them dearly) to half the stories in the Clifton Fadiman math fantasy anthologies, in the second of which, *The Mathematical Magpie*, there is a story by Mark Clifton called 'Star, Bright' (1952). Is this the story, misremembered? I've re-read it, and other than touching on children and the fourth dimension, it bears no resemblance to 'Tangents', certainly not in plot or treatment. Both stories

have a passing similarity to Padgett's 'Mimsy Were the Borogoves', even earlier. I have deliberately ripped off ideas in Rudy Rucker's *The Fourth Dimension*, but Rudy does not seem displeased; indeed, he's putting together a new anthology of math stories and is including 'Tangents', although, as he says (I paraphrase), 'Boy, you really did steal a lot from me, didn't you?'

"In short, Ms.Morland-Chapman, when I steal from someone, I let them know about it, and my charm is such that they immediately offer to reprint me.

"Thank you for the support for *Blood Music*. I'm really a very sweet guy, and hate lawyers and legal complications; I will not sue Ms.Morland-Chapman.

"By the way, by the time this letter sees print, I will be a father myself, and I will try to teach our child to see into the fourth dimension. Progress reports will follow. If my letters no longer carry stamps or postmarks...."

[A letter from Marise M-C, which I have brilliantly lost, conveyed that the Clifton story was indeed the one. She is apologetic about this mistake, but not apparently about anything else. So it goes. DRL]

Barry Bayley: "I promised to send you a note about Doubleday's constipated attitude towards reversion.... In April 1985 I – through my agent – made a formal request to them for reversion of *The Soul Of The Robot*, published in 1974 and long out of print, after Doubleday had turned down its sequel *The Rod Of Light*. They at first promised to revert or arrange to reissue within six months – until someone looked at the contract and saw that Dumbo Bayley had allowed himself to get stuck with reversion 'by mutual agreement' – virtually not a reversion clause at all. Doubleday then began to shilly-shally and to plead the lengthiness and difficulty of the reversion process. To date – a year and a half after request – the successive efforts of two agencies have come to nought. If there are any other authors as dim as me (which I doubt) I urge them not to be lazy over this clause...."

Ahrvid Engholm: "The Scandinavian SF Association (Sweden's BSFA) was mentioned in the Swedish daily *Aftonbladet* (second biggest evening paper here, with 500,000 readers) in a 2-page article about space/UFO clubs. SF activity was described as just another kind of UFOlogy. Quote: different space organizations have hard ideological fights amongst each other. The SF people think the UFOlogists crazy when they see green men everywhere. The

UFOlogists think SF is for dreamers – while *they* do something practical and useful....” [Now you know.]

Marcus Rowland: “The Irish games mag *Fantasy Chronicles* has begun to pay contributors. The money is OK, though apparently all future payments will be in Irish punts.... Although it looks a bit naff at present, the editors seem fairly certain that they can make it to at least issue 8-10 (the next will be 4), and say they intend a lot of improvements, like a Brian Lumley special issue (yet another one). All of their fiction to date has been uniformly lousy.... By the way, Nick [Lowe, in A46] is wrong to say that it’s only post-modernist authors who manifest the plot directly. One of the 1930s Saint stories (I forget which) has the hero saying something like ‘You can’t kill us yet, this is only page 96 – it would wreck everything if I got killed in the first story!’”

[Marcus has been busy introducing himself (overtly) into a plot in the role of God, as prescribed by Nick. His enthusiasm was somewhat dimmed by the discovery of the same ploy in a Lin Carter epic: it is not always cheering to find one’s imagination runs precisely parallel to Lin Carter’s. For the Saint book, try *The Holy Terror*, 1932. My favourite such line comes from the car chase in Edmund Crispin’s 1946 *The Moving Toyshop*: “Let’s go left ... After all, Gollancz is publishing this book.”]

U.E: “Do any of your tens of thousands of readers know of any publisher who would be interested in a pornographic F/F gamebook (and no, the F/F does not stand for Fighting Fantasy but something more relevant)? Also (but more respectable this time) a publisher for an educational gamebook, about the dangers of drug abuse....”

[Funny you should mention it: a filthy gamebook was one of several million ideas propounded by Langford and Barnett when trying to extract lucrative contracts from a kindly editor. This editor was not keen, since although the proposal was of course brilliant, hilarious, etc., he had his doubts about gamebooks in general: a bandwagon market, he opined, as with home computer books just a few years back, liable to fall apart under the sheer weight of new hopefuls leaping aboard. So much for my own experience: I flogged a short version to *Mayfair* and Paul did ditto to *Knave*, and there the matter rests in post-coital apathy.]

C.O.A.

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13TH FRENCH NATIONAL SF CONVENTION (LILLE, 3-7

SEPT 86) Ian Watson Reports

This was the best run French con for years, with the organizers pulling out all the stops of efficiency and hospitality, and even going without their own meals at times to labour harder – missing out on meals is a pretty remarkable sacrifice in France! Already there’s talk of Lille becoming the new Metz, now that the annual Metz festival has bitten the dust, assisted a bit by Ray Bradbury. Indeed the con was so efficient that the GoH speeches of Watson and Brunner were already printed, in French and English, and in the hands of the audiences. Fortunately most listeners hadn’t had time to read them, so the speakers were able to orate afresh. Programme items included panels on French and British SF, book signings, exhibitions, prize givings, municipal champagne and lots of visits to restaurants, the most memorable of which involved sitting in the street eating bushels of mussels. (Tip: use one empty mussel as a chopstick-cum-scoop to empty all the others.)

The con coincided with Lille’s annual city-wide rummage sale called the Braderie, when anyone can sell anything tax free – hundreds of streets for miles on end were choked with half of France and Belgium selling Land Rovers, antiques, African carvings, food, jewellery, clothes, books, paintings, junk, rubbish, broken china, old postcards.... Just a couple of miles from the old city (where the con happened) was the very strange “Site de l’Imaginaire”, described as a sort of French Disneyland. Superficially it seemed to be a warehouse cum arts lab down a back lane, offering spatio-temporal voyages, which most visitors assumed would be a dadaist joke ... until you started in, somewhere underground apparently, on an alien world very convincingly like the planet where “Alien” gets discovered. The alienness was very persuasive. If you’re in Lille, go there: 12 Rue de Doceur Rouz, 59650 Villeneuve D’Ascq. I think you have to book a group tour.

Another memorable moment was the convention’s pet rat wandering up and down the restaurant tables, a charming and polite animal that would only take food when offered. Numerous wonderful French writers, illustrators and translators attended, and there was a presentation for what will be one of *the* cons of next year: Comecon Montpellier 87 (28-31 May), held in the southern city of Montpellier, which has declared itself a city of the future and is thus supporting the con to the hilt. (Contact: “Science-Fictions”, Comecon, 112

avenue de Toulouse, 34100 Montpellier, France.) Try it out – and if Lille runs another con, head there too; Lille’s close, and the Belgian (and northern French) beer is beautiful.

One star of Lille was Kim Stanley Robinson, there from Switzerland with amiable Lisa Nowell (who’s working for the Swiss Gov as a water pollution chemist for a couple of years, which is how Stan’s in Switzerland). A radical-thinking American writer! Delightful chap too; only just being published in France, but at the rate he’s picking up French and using it, he should soon be the American writer for the French. Sadly he had to miss out on the mussels to take part in a baseball game with local Swiss devotees.... [IW]

SKIFFY PEOPLE

Leigh Kennedy has just been mugged and robbed during a visit to Madrid, and rescued from dishwashing only by the heroic mercy dash of **Chris Priest**.... **Brian Stableford** (engaged for some months to **Jane**, whose surname I have yet to catch) left Unicon in mild disorder, baffled by the apparent hostility of GoH **Tanith Lee** (“I’ve only reviewed her once and it was favourable”).... **David Brin**, winner of the John W. Campbell Memorial Award for his *The Postman*, will be in Britain for a year and has already been winning hearts by explaining to politically naive British fans (like **Chris Priest**) just why we need lots and lots of US nuclear bases here.... **Ian Watson** has been cited in the *New Scientist* letter column, his *The Gardens Of Delight* allegedly showing a better grasp of evolutionary theory than one recent *Ns* article.... **Charles Platt**, with permission, is writing the sequel to Piers Anthony’s *ChthoN* and *Phthor*, called *Spasm*. Sorry – *Plasm*. His enthusiasm for publicizing the latest Platt best-seller (*How To Be A Happy Cat*, ill. Gray Jolliffe) includes volunteering to dress in a giant cat suit and guzzle Kattomeat if it’ll help sell copies.... **David Garnett** is proud, or not, of writing “the Christmas sex story which is to appear in the next issue of *Mayfair*, with hero and heroine called Hugo and Nebula”.... **Harlan Ellison** has married **Susan Toth**, writes **D.M. Sherwood** (living in Swansea, he hears all this kind of thing).... **Vincent Omniaveritas**, visiting Britain to attend Milford under a transparent cyberpunk pseudonym, published one hit-and-run issue of his SF broadsheet *Cheap Truth*: this features a guest polemic on the need for an “SF Writers of Great Britain” organization, written by an alleged

Brit who thinks “critical mass” and “shrapnel” go nicely in the same metaphor. Investigation continues....

A North London Mole Writes: “Contrary to a report in *Locus* that he had been crushed by a filing cabinet, horror writer *Robert Faulcon* is still alive, kicking and working on the outline of a new occult series. All six *Night Hunter* books are being published in the US by Berkley in both trade and mass paperback. The sixth volume, *The Labyrinth*, will be published by Century Hutchinson in March 1987, together with a reissue in two volumes of the previous books. Faulcon is allowing the pseudonym ‘Robert Holdstock’ to appear on this sixth and final volume. All six books are very popular in Norway, but with titles like *Ondskapans Natt*, *Morkets Fyrstinne* and *Gravens Forbannelse*, this is hardly surprising.”

Ted White, as you may have heard, was busted some months ago for dealing in herbal substances. After a “farewell appearance” at the Worldcon (which brought some strange support from the woodwork, e.g. Jerry Pournelle begging to know how he could help), Ted was sentenced to 30 years – or rather, 3 concurrent 10-year stretches – but with 9 of each suspended. He should in fact be out in January; meanwhile, the address is “Theodore White, A5, Fairfax County Adult Detention Center, 10520 Judicial Drive, Fairfax, VA 22030, USA”. Personal letters are OK; no fanzines; no books unless mailed directly from the publisher. Patrick & Teresa Nielsen Hayden are acting as agents (as it were) for the White Letters From Prison, which may or may not become the fannish *De Profundis*. The first begins with the most damning thing the prosecution found to say about him: “This man has a sixties mentality.”

R.I.P. • Marjorie Brunner died on 5 August aged 65, having been ill throughout the summer after a stroke in April. Fandom loses one of its more unforgettable characters. John Brunner plans to hold a commemorative “Marjorie’s Last Birthday Party”. **Rob Gregg**, a relatively new fan best known as an enthusiastic letter-writer, died on 29 September after a long illness. His sister asks you all to stop sending fanzines. Author **Robert F. Young** (some of whose short stories helped hook me on less-than-hard SF) died on 22 June aged 71. [SFC] **Rex Warner** of *The Aerodrome* fame died on 24 June aged 81. And last issue I forgot to mention **Jorge Luis Borges**, the biggest shock about whose death at 86 was to learn from the obituaries that he never received a Nobel Prize. Good grief. One correction: the autopsy

on **Rog Gilbert** finally decided on a heart attack as cause of death.

CONDOM

Novacon 16: too late now for thrilling advance coverage, but I have a longish letter from Chairman Tony Berry (as well as dark intimations from Rog Peyton) concerning my frightful gaffe of recording in A46 what many fans were saying. Tony's chief point: it was essential, both as general policy and to placate a suspicious and paranoid hotel, to take a hard line RE "the tossers who did the damage and behaved like morons" at Novacon 15. Agreed. The trouble was that the uncompromising stuff ("In all these cases the committee will back the hotel.") was by an error of judgement extended to cover normal fannish naughtiness such as sneaking in bottles for a room party ... hence the disaffected muttering. "I know full well that people will do the things mentioned above, and it's fine by me as long as they are *discreet* about it," noted Tony, a truly wonderful human being (see DRL cowed by Peytonian threats of overwhelming COFF victory) who unfortunately failed to convey this subtext in PR1. Hotels are traditionally soothed by an unobtrusive note about corkage and the like. It would have been wise to clearly separate such lesser matters from the Heavy Warning which *was* seriously meant. OK?

"Star Wars: SF Dimensions" (North East London Poly Conf. Centre, 15 Nov): Duncan Lunan chairs an SF Foundation debate on SDI, with for-and-against arguments plus skiffy aspects. £10 att, inc. elevenses, lunch, tea. NELP, Longbridge Rd, Dagenham, Essex, RM8 2AS, more info Ellis Hillman on 01 590 7722 x4181. With D. Brin, F. Lyall, A. Nimmo, N. Turok, G. Webb.

Conception (Queen's Hotel, Leeds, 13-15 Feb): still £6 to 12 Fearnville Tce, Oakwood, Leeds, LS8 3DU.

Corflu 4 (Cincinnati area, 3-5 April): Bill Bowers is running the latest of these popular US "cons for fanzine fans". Cheques, or checks, to him (not "Corflu"): \$5.25 supp \$25.25 att, 2468 Harrison Ave, Cincinnati, OH 45211, USA.

Beccon '87 (Metropole/NEC, Birmingham, 17-21 April): FGoH (joint) Chris Atkinson & Malcolm Edwards. PR2 should be out by now. Hotel:

£17.50/person double/twin, £18.50 single. £6 supp £11 att; 191 The Heights, Northolt, Middlesex, UB5 4BU.

Sol III (Liverpool, 1-4 May, Trekthing): info from 39 Dersingham Ave, London, E12 5QF.

Connote8 aka Unicon 8 (New Hall, Cambridge, 3-5 July): GoH Geraldine Harris. £4 supp £8 att, to Connote8, Trinity College, Cambridge, CB2 1TQ.

Conspiracy '87 (Brighton, 27 Aug-1 Sept, Worldcon) develops a longer guest-list every day: the latest is Ray Harryhausen, the Jerky Stop-Motion GoH. £10 supp £25 att to PO Box 43, Cambridge, CB1 3JJ. PR2 now out.

Cymrucon (Central Hotel, Cardiff, now Feb 1988) has been oscillating somewhat, reports D.M. Sherwood. "Hotel is asking for money up front (guess why) – several alternatives have fallen through. It'll almost certainly have to have a new name as the cancelled 1985 one left debts, as in **DEBTS**, including an unknown number of advance memberships (the old chairman, *not* on the new committee, has misplaced the records. If people still have receipts for payment *maybe* something can be done as to membership in the new con ...). Contact man is Tony McCarthy, 28 Claude Rd, Cardiff, tel Cardiff 493590."

Follycon '88 (Adelphi Hotel, Liverpool) is one bid for the 1988 UK Eastercon. £1 pre-supporting to 104 Pretoria Road, Patchway, Bristol, BS12 SP2.

Norwescon '88 (unspecified hotel, Manchester) is the other bid, from the Warrington Group. £2 (such is inflation) pre-supp to 22 Summerfield Drive, Middleton, Lancs, M24 2WW.

Albacon '88 (?Central Hotel, Glasgow, July) – started as a Eurocon bid but is supposed to be going ahead (info: 105 Craigton Rd, Govan, Glasgow, G51 3RQ), though Eurocon turned out to be:

Eurocon '88 (Budapest, date uncertain): info Hungarian SF Soc, PO Box 514, H-1374 Budapest 5, Hungary. The selection is apparently a bit controversial, thanks to disastrous communications within the European SF Society (see *Shards Of Babel*, which also notes that Poland is after Eurocon 1990): for a start, after '86 in Zagreb, Eurocon should theoretically be rotating to the west....

Nolacon II (New Orleans, 1-5 September 1988, Worldcon): GoH Donald Wollheim, FGoH Roger (who he?) Simms, Toaster Mike Resnick. \$30 supp \$35 att to PO Box 8010, New Orleans, Louisiana 70192, USA.

Noreascon III (Sheraton-Boston Hotel, 31 Aug-4 Sept 1989, Worldcon), GoH to follow. \$20 supp \$40 att to PO Box 46, MIT Branch Office, Cambridge, MA 02139, USA. **Holland In 1990** (The Hague, Worldcon bid): *Ansible* is still keen on this, having been thoroughly intimidated by the clever clogs of Larry van der Putte. £3.50/\$5 pre-supp; Postbus 95370, 2509 CJ The Hague, Netherlands.

Footnote For The Confused: “Supp” means supporting (you get the literature only) and “att” attending membership (you can go to the con too). Cheques should be made out to the boldfaced con name (Cymrucon might be an exception: check first). “GoH” stands for Generator of Hackwork, and the F in “FGoH” is for “Failed”. OK?

WOOSTERGRAM

Thomas Disch has been in the news quite a bit lately. Not only did he reveal to the *Washington Post* that the model for “The Brave Little Toaster” was in fact the toaster in his apartment, but he granted a fifty-page interview to *Last Wave* in which he cast vile accusations at the works of Jack L. Chalker. Disch charged that Chalker’s books were designed to corrupt children: “he writes books that are sort of training grounds for nine and ten year olds to move on to Gor novels. They’re preliminary S&M fantasies. You go on from reading Jack Chalker to being more thoroughly corrupted by a John Norman and then go on to rape children.” Disch did not give specific examples.

Arthur C. Clarke unravelled his mind in the pages of *Playboy*, and quite a mind it was. He revealed that the monolith of *2001/2010* was nothing more than a plot coupon: “I like to think of the monolith as a sort of cosmic Swiss army knife – it does whatever it wants to do.” Clarke sidestepped disgusting charges about his sexual preferences, except to note that, in his eyes, both *Imperial Earth* and *Rendezvous With Rama* were homosexually-oriented novels, and that he has a “relaxed sympathetic attitude” towards bisexuality. “I’m not just a private citizen any more,” Clarke said. “I have to keep certain standards, or at least pretend to, so that I don’t shock too many people.”

Peter Dickinson became the first British fantasist ever to become the hero of an American cartoon when his *The Flight Of Dragons* was adapted by the same crew that had previously turned Tolkien into cartoon fodder. The film was so bad that it was shown three years after it was made, but there was a perverse thrill in hearing James Earl Jones, who played the villain, saying “Peter Dickinson! That contemptible fool!” in his best Darth Vader tones. (Dickinson was played by John Ritter. The show also featured characters from Gordon Dickson’s *The Dragon And The George*.) [Martin Morse Wooster]

ALL THE NEWS YOU’VE READ ELSEWHERE

After 46 issues there are still people who expect *Ansible* to contain news, however boring, familiar or outdated, and we must try to indulge their pathetic delusion. Thus:

Hugos: Novel *Ender’s Game* (Card), **Novella** “24 Views of Mt Guji, by Hokusai” (Zelazny), **Novelette** “Paladin of the Lost Hour” (Ellison), **Short** “Fermi and Frost” (Pohl), **Nonfiction** *Science Made Stupid* (Weller), **Dramatic** *BACK TO THE FUTURE* (but much applause for *Brazil*), **Pro Editor** Judy-Lynn del Rey (refused on her behalf by Lester del Rey, via a letter whose gist was that she was not keen on awards given chiefly for having died, and wouldn’t have fancied this belated accolade, seeing the voters had never thought her worthy when alive. In the audience, a deeply impressed Greg Pickersgill cried “Fucking integrity!” – this remark bowdlerized in certain reports ...), **Pro Artist** Michael Whelan (who withdrew from the 1987 Hugo race but not others to follow), **Fan Artist** Joan Hanke-Woods, **Semiprozine** *Locus*, **Fanzine** *Lan’s Lantern* (interesting statistic: “No Award” dominated the first count, only to fall back during the Australian-ballot elimination system and wind up in second place), **Fanwriter** Mike Glyer, **John W Campbell Award** (not a Hugo) Melissa Scott.

Australian SF Review has risen from its grave and is now published bimonthly: solid SF criticism in the heavyish *Foundation* mode, leavened with a bit more fun: “The Long Words objectors are just blatantly lengthist. ASFR defies them, rejecting their prejudice. Where a long word works better than a short one, nobody scares us out of using it.” £5 for six issues, to

sesquipedalian UK agent Joseph Nicholas, 22 Denbigh St, Pimlico, London, SW1V 2ER.

World Fantasy Awards will have been presented by the time most of you see this, so I'll merely mention the nominations for best novel: *The Damnation Game* (Barker), *Illywhacker* (Carey), *The Dream Years* (Goldstein), *Winterking* (Hazel), *The Vampire Lestat* (Rice), *Song Of Kali* (Simmons). Brits will be chauvinistically pleased that Peter Dickinson's "Flight" is nominated in the Novella category, and both Clive Barker and Angela Carter under "Collection/Anthology".

Eduard Markov is a Soviet SF author and fan who wants to move to the West but since 1979 has been denied permission on trivial grounds. He's asked for help, and the flyer going the rounds suggests that you write (urging the USSR to relent) to Leonid Zamyatin, Ambassador, Soviet Embassy, 18 Kensington Palace Gardens, London, W.8. For the flyer with further suggestions, contact Dov Rigal, 68 Eden Rd, London, E17 9JY.

British Fantasy Awards presented at Fantasycon XI went to: **Novel** *The Ceremonies* (Klein) – couldn't finish it, myself; **Short** "The Forbidden" (Barker), **Small Press Fantasy Tales**, **Film** *A Nightmare On Elm Street*, **Artist** J.K. Potter.

Les Flood has retired and passed the reins of the mighty Carnell Literary Agency to **Pamela Buckmaster**: the retirement occasioned a special Fantasycon award and a presentation at the SF Supper Club.

Transatlantic Cultural Barriers! Dennis Virzi published an "Open Letter to British Fandom" in *Texas Sf Inquirer*, begging to be told more about the grim alien land ("Are you Britfen as murky, downbeat and gloomy as your SF?") he means to visit next year. Some people got quite excited about his queries, and Kate Solomon (a disciple of Gerard "Try the famous echo in the British Museum Reading Room!" Hoffnung) wrote a long "Open Reply". Space and concern for international detente forbid full transcription, but here's the Solomonic response to Dennis's worried query "*Femmefans*. What's the scoop? ...Will there be enough to go around?"

"Judging by the lingo, old chap, this is one you should address to the frogs. But if you're interested in meeting (etc.) *British* ladies, try to remember that your formidable knowledge of meeting (etc.) *American* women may not

guarantee such good fortune with us British Memsahibs, despite our boundless admiration for you Stallone-like American hunks. No need to worry about supplies, though; there are certainly ‘enough to go round’: indeed, every machofan in this country possesses several ‘Memsahibfen’, so if you ask him nicely he might lend or sell one of us to you for the night. However, if you’re serious about extending your conquests to this side of the Atlantic, you must study and understand certain cultural differences between your American women and ourselves, before attempting seduction. Most importantly, you must realize that namby-pamby radical feminism hasn’t yet achieved the stranglehold on British ladies that it has on your own American harpies. So yes, Mr Virzi, you *are* expected to pay for meals. Also drinks, taxis, tips and entrance fees for any sightseeing you may do together. [...] Many British ladies have a soft spot for you hunky Texan Rambos, so provided you can prove yourself to be truly masculine, you should have no problems. Most of us female fans, however, are lesbians (*not* ‘gay’ – British ladies never adopt such uncouth labels), so you should be discreet before attempting any kind of advance. It’s understood that British Memsahibfen who are so inclined wear spectacles, so direct your flowers and chocolates at those of us who don’t. For an easy mnemonic, remember that ‘Boys Don’t Make Passes at Girls Who Wear Glasses’, and you should get on beautifully.” **[Kate Solomon]**

Mr Virzi (last seen poised to marry TSFE editor Pat Mueller) is reported to have withdrawn this particular query.

INFINITELY IMPROBABLE

Past Cons: I dimly remember **Koancon** over August Bank Holiday, a games event which successfully tried to shift from the “Compulsory D&D Tournament” approach to something more relaxed, not to say newted: to increase the soddenness there were GoH talks from Pete Tamlyn and, inexplicably, me. Hadn’t realized my SF column in *White Dwarf* made me a Representative Of The Industry ... like being Maggie Thatcher’s rep at a CND rally. The fannish **Rubicon** overlapped, but we arrived in time to try not to hear resurrected fan Ken Potter bellowing about astrology, while fastidious Julian Headlong (suave founder of Club Class Fandom) spoke tremulously of sharing a room with D.M. Sherwood (“I could cope with

finding Ken Potter and bits of corned beef on the floor, and even the cold baked beans in the bath; but when I found beans in the toothglass I had to vomit....”). **Sheepcon**, already alluded to, had as its high spot a Welsh Banquet in a historical cottage up a blasted mountainside. Climbing the granite-strewn grass-track from Ffestiniog, Katie Hoare was momentarily less proud of her open-topped car, thanks to thickening twilight and torrential rain: in the car ahead, Martin kept having to get out and open gates, leading to outbursts of wifely compassion (“God, I’m so glad he’s getting wet too!”). Our wine-soaked return was more exhilarating, with sheep clogging the track and being dislodged only by stentorian cries of “Mint sauce!”

Spinal Manipulations: I’ve been idly staring at the spines of Gollancz’s eight “Classic SF” reissues. Each has a tasteful logo comprising the quoted phrase in a triangle ... but one logo is extra-large, coincidentally adorning the only British selection to date (Clarke’s *The City And The Stars*). Can we theorize that American authors get smaller logos? Well, one logo is *extra-small* – on *Wolfbane*, the only choice which has *two* American authors....

Language Lessons: Malcolm Hodkin rushes to relieve the shortage with “another precision-turned, durable and cost-effective word from the Germans (guaranteed for five years against rust, Americanisms, misspelling and body odour):

“**Ansatz**, m. ear, lug, projection (anode), deposit, incrustation, sediment, attachment, added piece, shoulder, insertion, ingredient, mixture, scaffold (of a blast furnace), recess, mouthpiece, start, formula, expression, formulation, statement, charge, obstruction, extension, prolongation, tail, run (in series of parallel experiments), side arm or appendage (of a bulb or tube), adapter (phot.), relation, loss, nipple, setting into action, sending into battle, estimate, evaluation, rate, price, quotation, wing, root, bulge, sortie, assumption, disposition, arrangement, article, method....” [enough!]

Nigel Frith, Reanimator! Unwin author Frith got a letter into the *Literary Review*, making “a claim which might be investigated by your critical or followed by your authorial readers.” It concerns his epic fantasies: “obviously the work of more than a decade of research and experiment. They have been completed in isolation from the modern literary world, and I am aware that they reverse the processes of 19th and 20th century artistic fashions.... I have re-established the Homeric epic as a living form ... a new way for literature to

develop has consequently been opened.” Don’t all rush, now.

Novacon Trends: Steve Green notes that Novacon 15’s chair (Phill Probert) resigned during the convention, N16’s first chair (Martin Tudor) resigned after the formation of the committee, and N17’s putative chair (Maureen Porter) has outdone them both by resigning *before* the committee was finalized. Anyone wishing to carry it further by resigning in advance from the Novacon 18 chair should write to the Bureau of Useless Statistics, Birmingham....

Small Press Cuttings: Kerosina have come out with *Shades Of Darkness*, a ghostly 144pp novel by Richard Cowper (and winner of a coveted Malcolm Edwards Rejection Note from RC’s usual publisher): £10.95 hardback from Plovers Barrow, School Road, Nomansland, Salisbury, Wilts, SP5 2BY. A Keith Roberts novel, *Grainne*, follows next Easter.... In Sweden, LFP (Laissez Faire Press) offer *Fandom Harvest*, a 191pp hardback collection of Terry Carr’s fanwriting – enjoyable stuff despite the misprints, well produced and illustrated (by Grant Canfield). To get hold of it, send \$16, plus say \$2 postage, to John-Henri Holmberg at LFP, Rasundvagen 129, 171 30 Solna, Sweden. (My pleas for a sterling price were in vain.)

Fan Funds: The **GUFF** race (bring an Australian to Conspiracy) is in full thing: Valma Brown, Irwin Hirsh and Jean Weber are the candidates, and fans at this end of the world should rush their ballots and £1 voting fees to Eve Harvey, 43 Harrow Road, Carshalton, Surrey, SM5 3QH, by 31 January. *Ansible* is divided: the Hazel’s Language Lessons Dept supports Valma, doubtless hoping for samples of authentic Strine, while the Subscription/Mailing Dept cannot but respond to Irwin’s heartfelt plea (“Support me or I lose all the Aussie copies.”). Meanwhile Tim Jones of New Zealand offers himself as a write-in candidate.... **DUFF** is also back on the road, with candidates Lucy Huntzinger, Kathy Sanders, Laurraine Tutihasi and Tom Whitmore contending for the trip from America to Australia next year. There’s no UK administrator: the closest are Marty & Robbie Cantor, 11565 Archwood, N. Hollywood, CA 91606, USA. \$2 voting fee, 31 Dec deadline.... **SEFF** wants nominations for the lucky Swede to be brought to Conspiracy next year – administrators are Jim Barker and 1986 winner Maths Claesson (c/o Bjorck, Saltmatarg 14, 113 59 Stockholm, Sweden).... **COFF**, the Concrete Overcoat Fan Fund, will cease at Novacon 16 after its final sense-shattering presentation: “The fix is in!” said an unnamed administrator

with many a significant nudge and wink.... **TAFF** has gained a further candidate, Bob Lichtman: ballots should be out soon, and voting will continue until 14 March. More in our next.

Puzzle Corner. Which *Vector* editor slagged a “Witch World” book thus in 1974: “I never get on with *any* of [Andre] Norton’s books, which I find turgid in the extreme”? Which Gollancz editor is launching a new paperback imprint beginning with *three* Andre Norton epics, two of them from the “Witch World” series? Could they be related?

The Moral: So much (last para) for your typical *Ansible* twitting. It does not follow that the apparent contradiction (in fact one needn’t *like* a book to think it a sound investment) brands Malcolm as a wicked hypocrite. He might even have changed his mind. Nevertheless there is a pissy school of fannish thought which favoured us with a great deal of such logic in 1984-5, and is now at it again. (It was no good my asking to be removed from Puerto Rican mailing lists – the crap still comes, via Cincinnati.) Maybe the new target, Greg Pickersgill, is indeed a despicable exemplar of hypocrisy, criticizing TAFF in 1981 and winning it in 1986. It depends whether you accept the hypothesis, so useful when scoring cheap debating points, that there can never be any non-reprehensible reason for changing your mind.

Barycz Mediates Again: “My imaginary polish-viking grandmother once told me there were three trades it was very hard to go bust in: they were midwifery, cookery and undertaking. A few years ago she added a fourth: having producer’s gross points in *Star Wars*. Gary Kurtz had them and has now ended up with assets of £100 and liabilities of £3.3M. The reasons are simple enough – a Californian divorce which involved him paying off his wife’s debts, a small matter of \$5M from her publishing company; she screwed him for what was left and he made *Dark Crystal* and *Return To Oz*, neither of which set fire to cinema screens around the world. An impulse to set up something on the lines of Kurtz Aid comes now and then....

“A suspicion that Ballard’s *Empire Of The Sun* has been thrown into the Hollywood equivalent of a black hole, *viz* it is talked of as a Steven Spielberg project. Since Stevie, if one believes all the stories, is booked dead solid to 2870 AD with other projects, is this a polite way of saying the film is not likely to be made at all? Ho hum.

“The ubiquitous Empire Films are busy with something called *Robojox*, script

by Joe Haldeman, all about these huge robotic war machines that can transform to fight on land, in air, on and in the sea etc., fighting nations' wars by proxy. Espionage and romance also to be thrown in and Kenner Toys to do the merchandising with yet another bleeding line of transforming robots...." [RIB]

Licence To Print ... LA-CON/SCIFI has donated \$2000 to buy a photocopier for Vince Clarke's UK fanzine library project!

Great Moments In Hard SF (or, The R.L. Fanthorpe Plot Device Is Not Dead). Context: a slothful doomsday weapon must fire away for *150 years* to make Earth uninhabitable. Now read on, as one astute villain sees a potential difficulty:

“...What if you turn on the W-particle flow and then someone else turns it down in the course of the next fifteen decades?”

“Not possible, sir. Once the device is set, an internal atomic shift will freeze it in that position. After that, the process is irreversible....”

[I. Asimov, *Robots And Empire*]

Hazel's Language Lessons: Advanced Welsh

tacsi public conveyance

bws larger public conveyance

cwrs golff place of recreation

clwb snŵcer smaller place of recreation

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***Ansible* 48**

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Reasons For Publishing Your Belated Fanzine, No.48 (collect the set!): Greg Pickersgill tactfully intimates that sending out TAFF ballots before the deadline is on the whole less trouble than having broken bottles ground into your kidneys. Craven DAVE LANGFORD, cowering as ever at 94 LONDON ROAD, READING, BERKSHIRE, RG1 5AU, UK, has decided not to argue. Indecision about life after issue 50 still prevails: you take your solvency in your hands if you send £2 and hope for 5 issues (pro-rata for fewer). Cheques/money orders to *Ansible*, Girobank transfer to account 24 475 4403. Or \$3.50 to US agents Mary & Bill Burns (23 Kensington Court, Hempstead, NY 11550); or \$4A to Aussie agent Irwin (Famous GUFF Winner) Hirsh, 2/416 Dandenong Rd, North Caulfield, Vic 3161. Phone: Reading (0734) 665804 and shout. Art: Dan Steffan (without), Alexis Gilliland (within). Print run 600. Bloody hell.

LONDON FANDOM MEETS ITS WATERLOO

The inertia of fandom is a strange and wondrous thing. For years, on the first Thursday of each month, fannish pilgrims have travelled from the remote boundaries of known space to their ritual London meeting-place the One Tun pub ... there to spend an merry social evening complaining about the bloody awful crowd and the emetic beer, in terms suggesting that by comparison the Black Hole of Calcutta was an oasis of airy tranquillity. A select few pros (screened for ideological correctness by Malcolm Edwards) withdrew to the nearby Sir Christopher Hatton. A select many simply stayed home rather than face the Tun.

This steady decline was arrested by the decisive action of no less a 100% macho man than the One Tun's manager, who in January blew his top at scenes of sick depravity (reportedly, Oscar Dalglish with an arm round his

boyfriend) and banned the offenders. Suddenly it was solidarity time; outraged petitions were circulated; and February's meeting was definitely rescheduled for the Citty of York in Holborn. Or the Wellington near Waterloo, depending whose definite information you listened to. If I'd known it was that easy to trigger the long-overdue move, I'd have kissed Greg Pickersgill years ago.

The February Tun (as people kept calling it, followed by "You know what I mean.") was thus a bit scattered. The Wellington sounded most promising, but I made the mistake of following detailed route directions from Avedon Carol: "Right opposite Waterloo station." In the darkness of a winter evening it's remarkable how many hundreds of square miles of London turn out to be opposite Waterloo....

Situation reports and fans trickled into the vastness of the Wellington. The Citty of York contingent was suffering severe and familiar overcrowding. Hitch-Hiker fandom had apparently cried with one voice "Good riddance," and adopted the Tun for its own. [*] A few stakhanovites like Martin Easterbrook touched base at all three locations, spreading pro-Wellington propaganda with a will. Your editor had already allowed himself to be swayed, as it were, by the beer – not to mention the luxury of being able to breathe in without a prior written request to surrounding fans. Everyone seemed happy: the Wellington it is, henceforth. (From the Tube, aim for the *Waterloo Road* station exit, following *Old Vic* signs. Verb. sap.) This has been a Public Service Announcement, couched in Lofty Moral Tones. Pass it on.

[*] *False rumour, as Robert Newman got around to telling me in late 2002. "Belatedly, for the record can we get quite clear that at the January 1987 Tun meeting, the Towellies walked out with everyone else. We met at the Wellington for the Feb meeting."*

Me and H.G. Wells and the Continuum

Chris Evans

Novacon 16 Guest of Honour Speech

You may not know this, but I'm here as a stand-in for H.G. Wells. Originally

the Novacon committee wanted him to be their Guest of Honour: you can imagine what a coup it would have been. But someone pointed out that he doesn't like travelling these days, in common with a few other well-known SF writers. Isaac Asimov hates planes, Ray Bradbury has a habit of missing boats, and Robert Heinlein, so I'm told, once demanded that his fare to the UK be paid in pints of blood. Wells has none of these particular problems, but he's had a long career and his old bones are a bit stiff these days. So, reluctantly, the invitation was never made, and you're stuck with me instead.

Actually Wells and I have a lot in common as writers.

Neither of us has ever won a Hugo or Nebula (or even been nominated for one), we're not members of SFWA, we don't subscribe to *Locus*, and Harlan Ellison hasn't waxed eloquent about us in any of his *Dangerous Visions* anthologies. Like me, Wells hasn't (as far as I know) ever visited Mongolia or met L. Ron Hubbard. Certainly neither of us has read *Battlefield Earth*. On the more positive side, if Wells is a household name, then so am I – the household in my case being Flat 2, 191 Anerley Road, Penge.

Of course there are differences between us, I have to admit. Wells was a genius in his way, and became internationally known, his books read by millions. I, by contrast, am not a genius in any way I can think of – and believe me, I've tried – while my books are known only to a few. You wouldn't call them a select few, either, if you knew them as well as I do. I'd guess that a lot of you here have never read a word of my stuff: and fair enough. There are lots of other books jostling for your attention, and the three novels I've published under my own name since 1980 have hardly been huge successes.

The first, *Capella's Golden Eyes*, was greeted politely enough by reviewers, and the word "promising", while not actually being bandied about, certainly hung in the air ... as it almost always does with first novels. The reception was sufficiently favourable to convince me that I'd done the right thing in giving up my job to write full-time. If only I'd known.

In those days I was a particularly slow and painstaking writer. I'd begun a new novel by the time *Capella* appeared, but it was taking time to write and my money was rapidly running out. With the aid of a generous sponsor, I managed to get an Arts Council grant which let me finish the book at my own luxurious pace. This was *The Insider*, which actually got some good reviews

when it appeared in hardback in 1981. But a year or so later the paperback was pulped soon after publication, thanks to a warehouse move. (Though I've always had a sneaking suspicion that Rog Peyton bombarded the publishers with hate-mail about the book's lousy cover so that they withdrew it out of shame.) By then I was again embarked on a new novel, and again running out of money, and this time there was no grant to bail me out.

My third novel, *In Limbo*, took three years to write, mainly because I had to keep breaking off to do other, more commercial stuff – things like novelizations – in order to pay the bills. My idealistic vision of bursting on the scene in a blaze of glory had faded in the face of harsh economic facts. *In Limbo* would have been a better novel if I'd been able to write it in a shorter, more concentrated period, but even so I poured everything I had into the book, and it's me doing my best. When it appeared as a paperback original in 1985, the title proved prophetic. It promptly vanished, after a total of two reviews in the non-specialist press. (One, a short paragraph in the *Dublin Sunday Independent*, was little more than a plot précis. A slightly longer and more condescending piece in the *Yorkshire Arts Bulletin* concluded that my last few pages “contain a foreseeably eidotropic denouement”. I still haven't got a clue what this means.)

So much for three years' work ... or that's the way I felt. Don't get me wrong: I'm not bitter about any of this. Well, not exactly. *In Limbo* wasn't written as a commercial book, and the audience for it was bound to be small. But there's a certain sense of anticlimax in seeing three years' work greeted by almost total lack of response. Some writers can get by without feedback; their faith in their abilities needs no support. Not me. I need to know whether my stuff is registering in any way. (I'm even prepared to accept minor criticisms, provided they're served up with lavish dollops of praise.) Of course the books survive, for readers interested in seeking them out: but how many will be, when they don't even know of their existence?

Back in 1980, things looked rosier. I had vague plans of doing a novel every couple of years and writing short stories in between. I would concentrate on high quality work, in hope of building up a loyal readership. I didn't want fame, just a fair measure of acknowledgement for my efforts, and enough money for survival.... Instead, since finishing *In Limbo* in 1983 I haven't written anything I would regard as ambitious work (bar a few shorts). I simply can't afford to.

Thus I'm in a state of quiet despair about my work – the work I'm not doing. Formula novels and novelizations pay the bills but don't satisfy the soul. You could argue that if I was really devoted to High Art, I'd sacrifice everything in pursuit of it; and you could be right. But I've always worked best when I've had emotional and financial peace of mind, and I know plenty of other writers who feel the same.

Recently someone was talking about a “Missing Generation” of British SF writers: a kind of post-New Wave generation who should have emerged in the late 70s and early 80s. In a sense this actually existed, and I was a typical example – at least in that I exemplify What Went Wrong with the whole generation. (I don't in fact believe in any of this generation stuff, but let's use the label for now.) Around 1980 a few people talked about a “Faber Group”, meaning Rob Holdstock, Garry Kilworth and myself – all of whom published first SF novels with Faber circa 1976-1980 – and of course Chris Priest, who was presumably our mentor, being already established at Faber with a solid reputation.

Now this idea of groups is topical in the light of the current notion of “cyberpunk”, which writers like Bruce Sterling and magazines like *Interzone* are doing their best to promote. The Faber Group theory – a much more modest affair – wasn't unreasonable in principle. Besides the dubious distinction of being published in what was then the only prestige hardback SF line apart from Gollancz, Chris, Rob, Garry and myself were all close friends who shared similar feelings about writing. Three of us even had the same literary agents. But we reacted to the Faber Group idea with cringing horror. None of us wanted to be lumped into any sort of group, because this implies a shared identity; and each of us was very jealous of the individuality of his writing.

Happily the notion never caught on – partly thanks to Faber, who soon stopped publishing SF so that we went our separate ways: Chris to Jonathan Cape, Rob and Garry to Gollancz, and myself relegated to the sloughs of original paperbacks. Equally important was the fact that we did absolutely nothing to encourage the idea of such a group. And in the end it's always a writer's work which speaks louder than critical generalizations:

Chris Priest went on to novels like *The Affirmation* and *The Glamour*, which owe very little to genre SF. Rob Holdstock discovered his perfect imaginative

vehicle in a distinctive brand of fantasy typified by *Mythago Wood*. Garry Kilworth has been moving steadily away from SF, his latest novel *Witchwater Country* being a kind of pastoral with macabre overtones. And me? If *Capella* was a fairly conventional SF novel, *The Insider* was borderline, and *In Limbo* not SF at all.

So there's a sense in which all four of us have "deserted" SF – if you perceive SF as something whose traditions new writers should be committed to and should cherish and enlarge through their own work.

I can't speak for the others, but my move away from SF came about partly because of technical problems encountered in writing *Capella's Golden Eyes*, and more importantly because SF in the early 80s seemed increasingly bland and complacent – in addition to its perennial problem that so little of it is truly adult. Every time I came up with an SF idea, it struck me as either ridiculous or impossible to do justice to in a fresh, exciting way. I felt as stale as the stuff I was reading ... and envied Wells the fact that when writing his scientific romances he'd never read *Amazing* or *Asimov's* or any of the endless streams of SF pouring from British and American presses over the last thirty years. I kept trying to clear my head of all the genre clutter in the hope of finding a completely fresh approach. However, I don't have any aptitude for "new ideas" in the science-fictional sense, and not surprisingly I failed in my aim. The result was silence.

Elsewhere I've argued against thinking in categories and seeing SF as separate from the rest of literature, so these attitudes might seem strange. Why try to work in a tradition that you don't really feel exists? Well, one of the attractions of the field is that it encourages a community spirit, very alluring to the isolated writer trying to plough his lonely furrow in the field of literature. And the fiction itself presents a constant challenge to the ambitious writer precisely because so much of it is badly done.

Thus I've been veering back towards SF just lately, though I'm not promising anything radical or dynamic, and certainly nothing that's meant to represent a rallying call for the field. Perish the thought. I'm all for diversity, for individuals writing about what obsesses them. My only provisos are vague and woolly ones about being serious and dedicated and not short-changing readers ... though like many hard-pressed freelancers I haven't always lived up to these aims. Being serious, by the way, doesn't mean you can't have fun,

and being dedicated doesn't mean you can't be entertaining: they simply mean that the fun and entertainment will be of a higher order.

Such wishy-washy liberal attitudes are in stark contrast to so-called cyberpunk, whose writers (to judge by public pronouncements) are keen to promote themselves as a new breed, devoted to producing a new breed of SF, *and doing so with a shared ideology*. To my mind, this is suspect. Of course the idea of a new movement suits the spirit of the times; it's a good talking point; a good polemic always provides useful publicity; and for *Interzone* it's seemingly the radical cause which the magazine has been seeking ever since it started publication. Does cyberpunk actually exist, however?

The idea finds its most fluent and persuasive advocate in Bruce Sterling, who under his own name and that of Vincent Omniaveritas has produced some stimulating critiques of the genre and what needs to be done about it. He has a prospectus for modern SF, which he wishes to be carried out not only by himself but by others who are like-minded. He doesn't call it cyberpunk in public, though he has been known to mention the word in private. He talks of SF as pop culture, and of the need to create a native literature of the post-industrial society: technologically literate, global in its world-view, and (while well-written) above all about ideas.

Actually I think most of his notions are sound, though somewhat narrow. I've never been able to agree with critics who argue that only SF can deal with the modern epoch, or even that it has a monopoly on sense of wonder. This smacks of inverted snobbery – wanting to turn the ugly duckling of literature into a swan which can look down its beak at everything else. *All* really good writing fires the imagination, and you don't have to have SF trappings in a novel or story to show the impact of modern technology on humankind. The best novel I've read in the last six months is Martin Amis's *Money*, a determinedly unpleasant book which directly addresses the modern condition in the Western world – though probably not in a way that SF snobs would like. But let's not quibble. At least Sterling/Omniaveritas is stirring things up: SF has been needing a good kick in the pants for years. Yet if the cyberpunks are taking over in the USA, we seem to be lagging behind here. When Sterling recently visited Britain and attended the yearly Milford writers' conference, I gather he expressed some disappointment at the lack of exciting new British SF. Where were our cyberpunks? Nowhere to be found. Unfortunately there's really no such thing as cyberpunk in the US either, if

what's meant is a concerted movement of writers working along the same radical lines. When Omniaveritas describes the new SF he wants to see, it's unsurprising to find him wanting precisely the kind of SF that Bruce Sterling writes. Writers' polemics, as Chris Priest has pointed out, are almost always autobiographical.

Three names commonly mentioned as cyberpunks are Rudy Rucker, William Gibson and Sterling himself. Rucker's been around since 1978 and has proved himself a very inventive writer though slapdash and throwaway in presentation. Gibson made a big impact with *Neuromancer*, it's true, and he's the writer most people think of when cyberpunk is mentioned. Sterling published his first novel in 1977, and his latest, *Schismatrix*, has been well received. But if you compare two novels like *Neuromancer* and *Schismatrix* you'll find they couldn't be more different. The first is an SF thriller, heavily influenced by the cinema; the second owes more to the visionary impetus and traditional narrative style of Arthur C. Clarke and even Olaf Stapledon. Where Gibson is deft and punchy, brilliant at bringing individual scenes alive, Sterling shows less stylistic flair but is far more radical in his ideas. *Neuromancer* is all about glittering surfaces, *Schismatrix* about awesome depths. (In fact Gibson's work, with its hi-tech gadgetry/jargon and its near future redolent of entropy and drug abuse, strikes me as rather like the old New Wave with brass knobs on.)

But now I'm being bitchy, and I don't mean to be, because I think both writers are talented: their reputations deserve to grow. The point is that marshalling them under one banner is misleading. I also think it significant that Gibson, the most prominent "cyberpunk", is said to be unhappy with the term, even if content to let it be used as a flag of convenience. John Shirley is another writer who's been attached to the "group", and in a recent *Interzone* interview we discover that "Shirley is most often associated with cyberpunk or punk SF, terms he initially despised, but has now come to accept".

This smacks to me of a bandwagon. "Hey, did you hear people have started calling us cyberpunks? I don't know what the hell it means, but it sounds good, so let's go along with it for the ride." And as a label, it's undoubtedly better than something like the Angry Young Science Fiction Men.

So again, let's not quibble. At least all these writers are passionately committed to SF; they identify themselves with it and are eager to see a new

breed of it emerging. So why isn't the revolution also stirring here in Britain?

Put simply, I think it's because we have a fundamentally different attitude towards SF. It's always been more marginal here, at least in a genre sense, with writers tending to work much more as individuals and not generally feeling as if they're adding to some distinct corpus of literature with a real social position. They remain resistant to SF's community spirit, some of them writing it almost by accident and not seeing it as a special kind of literature at all. Such writers convey a strong flavour of their native country and attitudes. Richard Cowper, D.G. Compton, Keith Roberts and Chris Priest are among those who are happier closer to home. Their work is often firmly rooted in British landscapes, in internal rather than external experience, the tone meditative and restrained rather than brash and action-oriented. Almost they seem to be fastidiously declaring their uninterest in competing with the scale and swagger of American SF.

Of course there are exceptions aplenty. Some British writers make an effort to satisfy genre expectations (and the need to earn a living) by angling their material towards the American market. One could mention Bob Shaw and John Brunner here. Others, like Eric Frank Russell, became more American than the Americans themselves, while a few like Arthur C. Clarke have always been internationalists. Brian Aldiss has long practised what he preaches when arguing for less parochialism in British SF, for it to take on the grander themes and wider horizons beloved of Americans. Even that arch-individual J.G. Ballard has claimed that SF is the most important literature of our time and implies, with and without irony, that it should possess some kind of missionary zeal. Similarly, Ian Watson has argued the case for taking SF out of literature and using it as "a tool to help us think". Many of Ian's arguments, first elaborated ten years ago, foreshadow strongly what writers like Sterling are saying today.

One interesting thing about Aldiss, Ballard and Watson is that all three have spent significant periods living overseas in exotic places, Aldiss in the Far East, Ballard in China, Watson in Japan and East Africa. (Compare Sterling's years in India, and Clarke's in Sri Lanka.) Obviously the experience of culture shock can bring later commitment to SF as a vital medium with global rather than nationalistic perspectives.

Looking at SF in the large, it can be argued that the American product is as

parochial or as nationalistic in subtle ways as anything produced here, but I'm concentrating on the more serious kinds of SF. Ambitious US writers have tended to range far more widely in setting and theme than their British counterparts, a reflection of differing national characters. We Brits are as a national more insular, lacking the frequent open-mindedness of Americans, their generosity, their sense of scale and scope. We're more obsessed with private concerns. If it was Wells who created the template for modern SF, then it's American writers and editors who created the genre and took its wide-eyed view of the universe to their hearts.

Why there and not here? Well, the USA is the most technologically advanced nation on Earth, with new ideas and life-styles impinging most rapidly on people there. Is it any wonder that SF, custom-built to deal with the impact of social and technological change, found its ideal home there? But there's more to it than that. A country's literature is profoundly influenced by its geography and history. Simplistically, America remains a big open place with plenty of wilderness where presumably it's still possible to feel something of the pioneer spirit. The "log cabin" syndrome still survives: a feeling that it really is possible to go out into the wilds and set up home, against all the odds. Nowadays, of course, it's easier to do this by the power of the pen or word processor rather than the six-gun. Instead of building a real log cabin, create a paper spaceship which can fly you to the other end of the universe ... and there you can really show your pioneering spirit.

Here in Britain we're a bit disdainful of that sort of thing. There's no wilderness here to speak of, and certainly no pioneering spirit. If we have a particular historical syndrome dominating our present literature, it's the "End of Empire" theme. America has yet to experience this, apart from a small echo of it following the withdrawal from Viet Nam: it'll be interesting to see what happens to their SF when American political and economic power does finally begin to wane. (Though perhaps none of us will be around to see it.) It also occurs to me that the echo of Viet Nam already has begun to influence American SF: Sterling's call for a more global outlook reflects a new humility in the realization that the USA cannot really expect to dominate the planet for ever and ever.

Meanwhile, on this tight little isle, we're still churning out stuff about the British in India. SF hasn't escaped the "end of empire" syndrome, either: almost every well-known British SF writer has done a disaster novel of some

description, or one whose background shows Britain invaded or slowly falling apart. Off the top of my head I can think of Wyndham – obviously – Aldiss, Ballard, Christopher, Cowper, Roberts, Priest.... Even Orwell and Amis have had a go. And yes, I've done one myself with *The Insider*.

Such books appeal to the masochistic side of the British character, but unless they have something else to offer, American editors tend to greet them with as much enthusiasm as if you'd dropped a long-dead kipper in their laps. I've never managed to sell *The Insider* in the US, though I did get it published in Germany, a country with a historical tradition more similar to our own.

“Too British” is the common American verdict on “British gloom”, as if this were explanation enough. Many of us here have a love-hate relationship with the American SF market, as represented by its editors. We want to write our own stuff, but we're very conscious that without American sales we're going to struggle financially.

All these factors – historical, geographical, economic – combine to make British SF a marginal affair, and that's why I think it's unlikely that a distinct “British movement” committed to SF will ever emerge. (The original *New Worlds* “new wave” was actually an *anti-SF* movement in many ways, and even then American writers like Disch and Sladek were always heavily involved.) What tradition exists here tends to be one of UK writers doing their own thing against the odds, or making efforts to give their material a transatlantic flavour. We haven't the market potential to support a home-grown SF industry which could exist without reference to the US product ... the notion doesn't even enter heads except as a vague occasional yearning.

I don't want to sound too gloomy. (Think of our continental cousins in France, Germany, the Netherlands and so on, who have an even bigger problem: overcoming the hegemony of the English language.) New SF writers *are* emerging here and finding success on both sides of the Atlantic: Mary Gentle is a recentish example. Feminist SF also seems vigorous in Britain and America, and it's still an area with a lot of potential. Perhaps John Clute is also on to something when he writes in *Interzone* than Brian Aldiss's *Helliconia* books have “established for British SF in the 1980s an adult model for writing large-scale epic narrative”.

There are certainly signs that British SF is becoming a bit more cosmopolitan, more prepared to tackle a larger canvas. Gwyneth Jones travels

widely in her SF; Garry Kilworth and Ian Watson have been taking us to exotic little corners of the globe for years. And I've heard rumours that Iain Banks is writing something akin to space opera....

Overall, I still find myself unable to sort out my feelings on SF. I veer between enthusiasm and despair. In a sense, every SF writer in the world is labouring in the shadow of H.G. Wells. None has achieved his mastery of the form, his originality and invention. Of course Wells had the advantage when he was writing that practically the whole field was there for the making. And make it he did.

I don't know whether modern SF will be able to solve the problem that the longer it goes on, the harder it is to find something fresh to write about. In these moods I'm a kindred spirit with Lee Montgomerie, who muses (again in *Interzone*): "Sometimes I think time is wearing out for SF, locked in a desperate energy crisis. So much of its conceptual fuel has already been burned up, exhausted, reprocessed into advertising, comic books, claptrap movies and video games.... Sometimes I think SF is already dead, long since expired from cognitive anaemia in the early flush of youth, and that the literature we have now is just its ghost, endlessly and pointlessly revisiting its old haunts, saying nothing."

All too often I have similar feelings; but the optimism doggedly endemic to the field strikes back. Maybe we've simply yet to discover – as Aldiss and Wingrove suggest in *Trillion Year Spree* – new metaphors to embody the ideas of modern science in fiction. Or maybe SF has simply emerged at last from a playful childhood where everything seems new and wonderful, into a belated adulthood which entails returning to its roots to confront all its myths and dreams with a new maturity. Prognostications about SF's future have tended to be gloomy ever since I started reading SF criticism, yet still it lumbers on in its promiscuous, punch-drunk way. Even lost sheep keep coming back into the fold.

Fired by the feeling that British SF *has* been in the doldrums of late, Rob Holdstock and I recently took up an idea of David Garnett's for doing an anthology of new British short stories, published to coincide with Conspiracy. The result is called *Other Edens* – out from Unwin next August.

Now if I were Harlan Ellison, I'd be telling you that this is a revolutionary, state-of-the-art anthology the like of which you've never seen, which shows

British SF as vital and alive and radical and innovatory and altogether incredible and unbelievable. But with typical British restraint I'll simply say that Rob and I think it's a good solid collection of stories which coincidentally tends to support my view that British SF is very much a collection of individuals who, left to their own devices, write stories not quite like anyone else's at all. And if that seems like a modest claim – I disagree. It's the most radical thing of all.

This speech has gone on far too long in my opinion, and probably yours as well. I've been generalizing wildly in places; you can probably think of lots of examples to disprove what I've been saying. (I can think of a few myself.) All my musings and misgivings about "cyberpunk" could be regarded as jealousy that I was never part of a vigorous, thrusting new group with dynamic ideas. My complaints about American editors could be seen as sour grapes growing from the feeling that my own stuff's been neglected. Or I could just be indulging in my own bit of polemic as an aid to self-publicity. It's all part of the game, isn't it? I'm off now to see H.G. Wells. We have a few things to talk about, though mostly he does the talking and I listen. But I've got some bad news for him: Rog Peyton thinks his covers are lousy. Still, he's in good company on that score.

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COMPLAINTS DEPARTMENT: LETTERS

Unsigned (Glasgow postmark): "*LANGFORD!* We, the 10th of October Scottish Committee for the Furtherance of Cyberpunk (OctoberAlbaCyberpunk), are shocked and disgusted at the scumbaggish treatment meted out to Bruce Sterling within the pages of your pustulant, despicable, libellous, nose-dredging excuse for a fanzine! Sterling is an artistic writer of considerable – nay, consummate skill, and to mention his name or any of his works in your purulent, grotty, shoddy, meretricious feuilleton indicates a staggering presumption on your part! Let it be known that our OctoberAlbaCyberpunk minions are everywhere, monitoring your every move and recording your every utterance and typed letter by the use of ultra-sophisticated hardware totally alien to the feeble mind-sets of limp flaccid Home-Counties-SF writers such as yourself! Our intent is to compile

a dossier of your terrifying and nauseating pastimes and release it to Fandom worldwide. Never again will you be able to hold your head high in convention bars – indeed, your only solace will be that found in the snore-hung darkness of post-midnight film programmes. We dare you to print this letter and thus avoid the even more horrifying retributions we have in store!

“WIDGIE ROTUND BOLIVAR (ON BEHALF OF COMMITTEE).”

[I wasn't so terrified as to miss the American spelling "libelous" in the original of this. H'mm.... DRL]

Dave Collins: “Terry Broome & I are collecting money within fandom to be donated to charity in memory of Rob Gregg. Closing date is 30 April; cheques should be made out to me.” [21 Exleigh Close, Bitterne, Southampton, SO2 5FB]

Alexis Gilliland: “On [my novel] *Wizenbeak*, the third payment from Bluejay, due three months after publication, was not forthcoming. At the Atlanta Worldcon Jim Frenkel bought me lunch and said it would be mailed out in a week or two. The end of the month I called him three times, and when the calls weren't returned I sent a letter saying that if I wasn't paid by Oct 31, the contract was void and the rights reverted to me. October rolled by. On the 31st, I called and asked the person answering the phone to return the MS for the sequel which had been in submission since mid-May.... At WSFA's fifth Friday party that very evening, Jack Chalker told me that Bluejay was going down the tubes. It figures. I'm about 70,000 words into volume 3 of the trilogy, and should finish it up this month [November]. When I do, I can try to market all three as a package, *Wizenbeak* (rights having reverted), *The Shadow Shaia* (which Frenkel liked but never offered a contract for) and *The Lord Of The Troll-Bats*. How did we ever get so far ahead of the publisher, finishing book 3 before he made the third payment on book 1?”

[Andrew Stephenson later reported that Frenkel had given up publishing and switched to packaging. DRL]

CONDOM

Novacon 16 (long gone, snows of yesteryear, this is the kind of news *Ansible*

prefers) definitely happened. From a smoking trail of charred synapses I reconstruct: On arrival at the De Vere Hotel, Coventry, we were personally met by Chairman Tony Berry Himself, merry as a funeral bell: “Hello. It’s not very good so far. The bar’s pretty nasty, I’m afraid....” To inject spontaneity, the committee had neglected to brief speakers and panellists on when the printed programme said they’d be appearing (“Bloody hell”, quipped Terry Pratchett, arriving late Friday evening to find his panel was already supposed to have happened) or, in extreme cases, that they were appearing at all (I got a letter two days beforehand, asking me to run a panel. Instantly I rang to say “No, I hate running panels, I’m lousy at it, Brian Burgess could do better than me,” etc. It was too late. “Oh dear, we’ve printed the programme now.”) But all this is traditional and I enjoyed the con a lot. Famous US author Kim Stanley Robinson and David Brin made a terrific impact in mere hours: G. Pickersgill was seen dancing around the latter at 3am, crying “This man is a fucking *alien*, he has got to *die!*” – causing tolerant Avedon Carol to rail against anti-American bigotry and explain that David B. was a sociobiologist, so one must make allowances for this infirmity. New Era (the L. Ron Hubbard publishing outfit) confined their campaigning to a popular free-beer party with a table full of The Books, all of which were duly signed by ever-witty Malcolm Edwards (“Yours in decay, Ron”, etc.) who never noticed that he was being stared at throughout by a New Era person not quite courageous enough to tick him off. The Nova award results (fanzine and fan writer both to Owen Whiteoak, for his *Pink Fluffy Bedsocks* alias practically any name you can imagine; fan artist to ATom) were popular; less so the stunning announcement by Novacon 17 boss Bernie Evans that despite Tony Berry’s detailed mathematical proof in the programme book that Novacon could never be squeezed back into the Royal Angus, 1987 would see a return to the Royal Angus. Apparently this year’s was the first Novacon ever to have *fewer* people attending than were listed as members in the program book (i.e. dropouts exceeded walk-ins), which may have had something to do with the decision.

BFS Open Night (3 Apr, upstairs in the Royal Connaught, High Holborn, WC1): free to all from 6pm.

Fanderson 87 (3-5 Apr, Caister, Norfolk): a mere £12 for days of non-stop bloody Gerry Anderson, to 147 Francis Rd, Leyton, London, E10 5NT.

Beccon 87 (17-21 Apr, NEC, Birmingham): Eastercon with ever-swelling

guest list, now including Ian Watson and Jane Gaskell. £6 supp £11 att to 191 The Heights, Northolt, Middlesex, UB5 4UB.

Telly-Con (18 Apr, New Imperial Hotel, Birmingham): TV-fantasy affair with Patrick Macnee, Joanna Lumley, Gerald Harper: £8 to 132 Cambridge Drive, Marston Green, Birmingham.

Nat. Con Of Poets & Small Presses (25-26 April, Festival Hall, Corby): “strong SF presence” with Cassandra group and Bob Shaw (on “open day” Sat, not “poets’ day” Sun). £5 to Tom Bingham, 82 Dresden Close, Corby, Northants, NN18 9EN.

Sol III (1-4 May, Liverpool): Trekkie fun, data from 39 Dersingham Ave, London, E12 5QF. See AMOK TIME again!!!

Rubicon II (29 May - 1 June, Chequers Hotel, Newbury): the substitute Silicon rides again, with a substitute date owing to Conspiracy. £5 to Bishop’s Cottage, Park House Lane, Reading, Berks, RG3 2AH.

Albacon 87 (19-23 June, Central Hotel, Glasgow): GoH Josie Saxton, Brian Stableford. £4 supp £10 att (£12 from 19 May) to “Burnawn”, Stirling Rd, Dumbarton, G82 2PJ.

Connote8 (3-5 July, New Hall, Cambridge): Unicon 8, £4 supp £8 att to Trinity College, Cambridge, CB2 1TQ.

Conspiracy 87 (27 Aug - 1 Sept, Brighton) has considerably de-emphasized its awkward given name in recent flyers, preferring to stress the **45th World SF Convention** bit. (Cheques to the latter name.) £30 to 1 April, £38 to 31 July; PO Box 43, Cambridge, CB1 3JJ.

Fantasycon XII (4-6 Sept, Midland Hotel, Brum): GoH J.K. Potter. £3 supp £10 att, to 15 Stanley Rd, Morden, Surrey.

Nicon II (late Oct, Belfast): “80% positive” GoH Katherine Kurtz, Robert Anton Wilson, Jim Fitzpatrick. £2 supp £5 att (£6 after Easter, £7 after August) to 60 Melrose St, Belfast 9, N.I. Insider Thomas Ferguson quotes 1986 NIcon highlights: “Yes, Peter Morwood is a prat.” (Anon). “She terrified me!” (Anne McCaffrey escort). “Who the fuck is running this bloody mess ... I’ll murder the bastards...” (Various voices as the con committee unanimously vanished on Saturday night).

Congregate (10-12 June 88, Peterborough): £5 supp £11 att, or find out more

(this is all I know) from 67 Ayres Drive, Stanground, Peterborough.

Nolacon II (Worldcon: 1-5 Sept 88, New Orleans) has persuaded Linda Pickersgill to be UK agent: she hasn't had any other information whatever, but might know £ rates real soon now: 7a Lawrence Rd, South Ealing, W5 4XJ.

Eurocon XIII/Hungarocon IX (10-14 Aug 88, Budapest): an enthusiastic but vague flyer hopes this will be "the first Eurocon where there won't be travel problems on account of money restrictions, so fans from East and West can meet." Info: Hungarian SF Society, Eurocon Committee, Budapest 5, PF.514, H-1374, Hungary. (Address from flyer letterhead: in my ignorance I trust part of it isn't a phone number....)

Somethingorothercon (1988 or 1989, Somewhere In South Wales): "We, the Swansea group, are half thinking of putting on a con," writes, if that's the word for what he does to hapless postcards, D.M. Sherwood: "It (there's no name yet) may or may not be at the Grand, Port Talbot (a place with all the refined charm of the Central, Cardiff, provided the carpets haven't been stripped out yet). It may include items for fantasy games computer buffs, folk/filk singers and anything else on the cheap. SAE for info to my address pretty please." PO Box 23, Port Talbot, SA13 1DA.

Contrivance 89 (Eastercon bid) plans to offer a Jersey venue, following a Novacon straw poll at which Jersey votes exceeded those for other suggestions (Birmingham, Brighton) by factors varying from approximately fifty to approximately infinity. Pre-supp £1 to Tim Illingworth, 63 Drake Rd, Chessington, Surrey, KT9 1LQ.

Noreascon 3 (1990 Worldcon, Boston): GoH Andre Norton plus Ian & Betty Ballantine. Info: UK agent Colin Fine (see COA).

Contravention (1990 Eastercon bid) woos fans with dulcet, honeyed phrases: "In 1990 you'll get what you want whether you like it or not!", says the flyer, and suggests that you send £..... [sic] for pre-supp membership to Chris Donaldson, 35 Buller Rd, London, N17.

Holland In 1990 (my preferred Worldcon bid): a savage clog sank into my groin at Novacon thanks to *Ansible's* mention of a £3.50 pre-supp fee when really it should be £4 ... to Colin Fine at his new address (see COA) or Ian Sorensen.

LA in 1990 (other Worldcon bid) got missed out last time, by accident rather than cunning pro-Holland design. A recent circular announces the demise of that controversial plan to fund the bidding with \$20,000 of past LA-con profits (wise decision!). Instead, members of the bidding group SCIFI Inc are “paying an assessment of \$25 a quarter” while “name” fans/pros are being invited to contribute \$25 and become Associate Bid Committee Members with GoH voting privileges.

C.O.A.

DAVID BRIN (for some months yet, I think) 26a Gayton Rd, Hampstead, London, NW3 1TY • TERRY BROOME, Ward 7, Harlow Wood Orthopaedic Hosp, Nottingham Rd, Mansfield, Notts, NG18 4TU (“for anyone wishing to send funeral cards”) • BILL BOWERS, 1874 Sunset Ave, Apt 56, Cincinnati, OH 45238, USA • JOHN BROSNAN, 6 Lower Rd, Harrow, Middlesex, HA2 0DA (“I now reside in Chris Evans’ old flat in Ortygia House – the building that has nurtured so many other great literary talents. I expect to see an improvement in my work any day now.”) • ALLYN CADOGAN, 1324 E Cotati Ave (103), Rohnert Park, CA 94928, USA • MIKE CHRISTIE, 38 Gloucester Rd, Acton, London, W3 8PD • JONATHAN COLECLOUGH, c/o Digital Type Systems Ltd, Standard Wharf, 60 Wapping High St, London, SE10 9QR • MALCOLM EDWARDS c/o Victor Gollancz Ltd, 14 Henrietta St, London, WC2E 8QJ (mark letters PERSONAL) • DAVID ELWORTHY, 151 Victoria Rd, Cambridge • COLIN FINE, 28 Abbey Rd, Cambridge, CB5 8HQ • LINDA GERSTEIN & ELI COHEN, 440 West End Ave (14E), New York, NY 10024, USA • CAREY HANDFIELD, PO Box 1091, Coulton, Vic 3053, Australia • LEE HOFFMAN, 401 Sunrise Trail NW, Port Charlotte, FL 33952, USA • KIM HUETT, PO Box 649, Woden, ACT 2606, Australia • SUE JONES, 89 Sutton Rd, Shrewsbury, SY2 6ED • JON LANGFORD, 164 Harehills Rd, Leeds 8 • BERNARD LEAK, H1 Whewell’s Court, Trinity College, Cambridge, CB2 1TQ • KEITH MITCHELL, 19 Meadowplace Rd, Edinburgh, EH12 7UJ • MIKE & DEBBY MOIR, 27 Hampton Rd, Worcester Park, Surrey, KT4 8EU • KIM NEWMAN, 45 Church Lane, Crouch End, London, N8 8DR • KEVIN K. RATTAN, 150 Bow Common Lane, Bow, London, E.3 • GRANT SINCLAIR, 2/5 Sturt Ave, Toorak Gdns,

SA 5065, Australia • BRUCE STERLING, 4525 Speedway, Austin, TX 78751, USA • SUE THOMASON, 31 Barfield Rd, Muncaster, York, YO3 9AW • JEAN WEBER & ERIC LINDSAY, 6 Hillcrest Avenue, Faulconbridge, NSW 2776, Australia • OWEN WHITEOAK, temporarily c/o 24a Beech Rd, Bowes Park, London, N.11 •

The Insanity Offence

Charles Platt

The Fleisher/Ellison/*Comics Journal* Libel Case

The case sounded ridiculous. Harlan Ellison, interviewed by Gary Groth for *The Comics Journal* in 1979, had made a few offhand comments about the work of Michael Fleisher, author of the notoriously violent DC Comics *Spectre* series. Ellison said the series was “bugfuck”; you had to be crazy like Robert E. Howard or H.P. Lovecraft to write like that. Fleisher said he was “devastated and appalled” by Ellison’s remarks, and decided to sue for libel.

Late in 1986, the case reached Southern District Federal Court in Manhattan. Judge Vincent Broderick’s court room was smaller and more intimate than I’d expected: I wandered in on 11 November and had to pick my way between lawyers and defendants sitting on ancient green-vinyl-upholstered chairs, ranged around three big wooden tables. As I sat down in one of four plywood pews reserved for (nonexistent) visitors, the prosecuting counsel had just started his opening statement.

Attorneys can say what they like in opening and closing statements, which are exempt from the strict procedural rules observed while interrogating witnesses. Fleisher’s attorney told the jury of 5 women and 4 men that Ellison was “a controversial person. Controversial people stir up trouble, they attract attention ... Not only does he not deny this, he markets it.” As for *The Comics Journal*, it was an “elitist, muckraking” magazine: “every time you open it you can find some kind of hate, some kind of argument.” Their transcript of Ellison’s 5-hour interview was “nasty, hostile and attacking.” Ellison attacked John Wayne, and he attacked John Updike, but he attacked Michael Fleisher worst of all. The libel supposedly consisted of three separate statements:

First, Ellison variously described Fleisher as crazy; certifiable; twisted; derange-o; bugfuck; and a lunatic.

Second, Ellison (mis)quoted a *Publishers Weekly* review as having said *Chasing Hairy*, a novel by Fleisher, was “the product of a sick mind”. The review had said no such thing.

Third, Ellison said Fleisher’s *Spectre* series had been discontinued by DC because “they realized they had turned loose a lunatic on the world.” In other words, DC killed Fleisher’s series because they thought he was mentally unbalanced.

As a result of these statements, Fleisher’s “business reputation has been destroyed.” The attorney summed up: “Freedom of speech doesn’t go this far. There is no protection for lies that are knowingly published.” As compensation, he was asking for total damages of \$2,000,000 from Ellison, Groth and *The Comics Journal*.

After lunch, Groth’s attorney took his turn. He claimed that Fleisher’s gross income had actually doubled in the years following the supposed destruction of his career; that Fleisher had described *himself* as “a lunatic” in an interview; and that Fleisher’s work was indeed deranged. For instance, in his comic-book story “The Night of the Chicken”, a farmer picked up a prostitute, forced her to dress in a chicken costume, hacked her to pieces with an axe, then fed her to his chickens. And Fleisher had stated that out of all his stories, this was one of the three he was most proud of.

As for *Chasing Hairy*, it portrayed foul-minded men acting out their hatred for women. (In a deposition under oath, Fleisher had explained that “hairy” refers to “pussy”.) At the climax, after getting a female hitch-hiker to participate in “unnatural sex acts”, they poured gasoline over her in the back seat of a car, set light to it, and watched the explosion scatter her parts across the landscape.

But Ellison hadn’t been condemning Fleisher when he called such stuff “bugfuck”. On the contrary, he was *praising* it. “Bugfuck”, the defence claimed, was a word Ellison used to describe people he admired. he even used it on himself. At other times (the attorney said) Ellison had happily described himself as “crazy as a bedbug”.

So Ellison had described himself as crazy; and Fleisher had described *himself*

as crazy; but the trouble started when *Ellison* said *Fleisher* was crazy.

In case the jury might think there wasn't really much to choose between the behaviour of these two mature adults, Ellison's attorney tried to elevate the proceedings to a higher plane. He reminded the jury of the vital importance of writers who take a radical stance. The work of Thoreau was a powerful influence on Gandhi, who liberated a whole continent from colonial oppression. Gandhi in turn inspired Martin Luther King, whose marches through the South ushered in liberation for American blacks. And guess who participated in those courageous marches? Why, none other than Harlan J. Ellison! (It so happened that of nine jurors listening to this homily, three were black.) Ellison, like Thoreau, was a brilliant writer, who had won every imaginable award for excellence in his field. Yes, he was outspoken sometimes – even using hard-hitting language like “bugfuck” – but that's the way great radicals are. He certainly shouldn't be confused with mere *comic-book* writers.

The implication was that from his lofty literary plane, Ellison knew little of comicdom; consequently he couldn't have known that what he said about Fleisher wasn't true; and without deliberate untruth, or reckless disregard for truth, there could be no libel.

Fleisher's lawyer didn't buy this. He didn't think Ellison was as naive about comics as he made out: next day he had him on the witness stand, admitting that he had received as much as \$3000 for being a celebrity at comics cons, had written comics scripts for both Marvel and DC, and had often allowed his stories to be adapted for comics. At this point the attorney pulled out a stack of lurid magazines whose paper had turned yellow during the years taken for the legal machinery to bring this case to trial. Wasn't it true that Ellison once planned to adapt a story he co-wrote titled “Would You Do It For A Penny?”

Imagine the confusion of a juror at this point. There you are, a retired subway token-booth clerk, perhaps, or an insurance salesman. You walk into the court to discover one writer suing another for stating he's insane. The term “writer” makes you think of poets or best-selling novelists. But no: it turns out that Fleisher used to write comic books describing motorcycle gangs, zombies and psychopaths chopping women to pieces with axes and power saws. He's the one sitting meekly at the table nearest the judge – a shy, stooping man with glasses and thick bushy hair, like the protagonist in the

movie *Eraserhead*. The other writer, Ellison, is wearing a dark blue blazer with gold buttons, like an elderly diplomat, or something out of *Lifestyles Of The Rich And Famous*. His grey hair is immaculately coiffed, and he has an air of grim detachment, as if he can't believe he's being forced to associate himself with such lowlifes. Ellison's attorney lists Ellison's literary awards, claims he even helped to liberate the American Negro, for heaven's sake. But now Ellison's on the witness stand, and Fleisher's attorney is showing him back issues of *Heavy Metal* and a comic called *Creepy*: "Is this your story, here? Did you write this?" And Ellison is reluctantly agreeing that he did. So you, the juror, begin to wonder: How can it be that this latter-day Thoreau sold his stuff to the same kind of sleazoid publications that printed Fleisher's sicko stories about people getting hacked into a bloody pulp? Harlan Ellison – and most SF readers – wouldn't agree, but *to the outsider*, comics, horror and SF can seem much the same, all using lurid images to give kids cheap thrills. Is Ellison's award-winning "I Have No Mouth And I Must Scream?" really that much better than "Night of the Chicken?" Maybe it's better written, and maybe it has an implicit social message, but *to the outsider* it looks as if we're making microscopic distinctions between two grades of trash.

This case initially promised to be a serious test of a respected writer's legal right to express trenchant literary criticism. As I sat there, however, listening to the list of absurd story titles and the asinine, inaccurate epithets that had been exchanged, the veneer of respectability began to seem totally bogus. SF people have a notorious tendency to take themselves too seriously, and here they were all dressed up in business suits, paying attorneys thousands of dollars a day to make them sound impressive, while the case really seemed little more than a namecalling competition.

I'm not questioning anyone's sincerity. During the trial I began to realize that Fleisher had been genuinely distressed by the "crazy" epithet. At first he recoiled in seeming horror when I introduced myself and said I might write something about the case. But as the days wore on, the artificial environment of fluorescent ceiling panels, acoustic tiles, scuffed plywood panelling and wrinkled brown carpet seemed to close in: like hostages who learn to love their captors, everyone developed a guarded camaraderie. I filched a copy of Fleisher's novel from one of the defence attorneys and found, contrary to the way it had been described, it was a carefully considered, perceptive book

about the inhumanity of common men – the kind of novel, in fact, that Ellison claims to write himself, yet never seems to publish. *Publishers Weekly* did not, as Ellison stated, call it “the product of a sick mind ... so twisted and nauseating, it has absolutely no redeeming social value.” They said simply that it was “a very ugly book” about “hideous sexism”. I found it no more ugly or hideous than the realities it rather objectively described.

So Fleisher wasn't a mere comics hack, and did feel genuinely wronged, and had genuinely suffered, despite the efforts of the defence attorneys to portray him as a venal, perverted opportunist.

However, proof of libel doesn't depend on the personalities involved, or even on emotional distress. Four circumstances must exist. A defamatory statement must have been made (one likely to subject a person to ridicule and abuse from friends or co-workers); the maker of the statement must have known it was false or must have acted with reckless disregard for the truth (that is, with awareness of probability of falsity); and actual injury must have occurred to the *reputation* of the victim (not just his feelings). Only after libel has been established can damages be assessed: these can then reflect any distress that may have occurred.

In this case, libel was never established. On the afternoon of 9 December, after four weeks of tiresome quibbles between lawyers, scurrilous attacks on the integrity of witnesses, half-truths delivered under oath, mountains of xeroxed documents showered on the jury, and a final summation by the judge that filled most of one morning and referred repeatedly to “Harvey” Ellison ... the jury took less than 90 minutes to acquit Ellison, Groth and *The Comics Journal* on all counts.

In a sense, it was the right decision. The case seemed personally important to Fleisher, but to everyone else it seemed silly. Henry Holmes, Ellison's second attorney, who flew in from LA for some of the proceedings, said that on the West Coast no judge would have accepted the case for trial in the first place. But consider the four circumstances for establishing libel. In my opinion (opinions based on public facts are generally exempt from libel), Ellison's statement *was* defamatory; it *was* false; and it *was* made with reckless disregard for the truth. He himself almost admitted as much in the interview: after describing Fleisher as “certifiable”, he added, “that's a libellous thing to say.” Under cross-examination he claimed the remark to

have been a joke: but Fleisher's lawyer suggested that Ellison realized (at that moment in the interview) he had "gone too far", which sounded about right to me. Moreover, after the interview was published and protests were received, Ellison referred to his own "unnecessary vitriol" in a letter to Groth. and added "I am unsettled. I am remorseful. I must watch my mouth."

The fourth requirement for proving libel – injury to Fleisher's reputation – was harder to demonstrate. As Ellison's attorney put it, "If someone is injured in his professional reputation, it will show up on their income-tax return." Fleisher's returns showed an increase in gross writing income from about \$27,000 in 1979 to \$50,000 in 1983. In at least one instance he seemed to benefit from notoriety: after Ellison's interview compared his craziness to that of Robert E. Howard, Fleisher was commissioned to script a *Conan* comic....

But, as Fleisher put it: "I found myself having difficulties with my work that I had not experienced before ... I was unable to produce the plots that I was required to do ... It's intrusive to go through life dealing with people ... who've been given the impression you're some sort of lunatic." There was indeed evidence that professional colleagues no longer viewed him the same way, especially after *The Comics Journal* started publicizing and ridiculing his lawsuit. "Month after month they used his name to promote their magazine and to mock him." At one point they even mailed invitations that said, "One of the reasons we're giving this party is because we're making Michael Fleisher so unhappy." Nor were they entirely fair when they gleefully described *Chasing Hairy* as "the most repulsive piece of fiction ever written in English." One could only admire their prescience, though, when in an ad for a back issue that said, "Bet you this turns up in some legal paper." The ad itself was offered as an exhibit by the prosecution.

Personally, I don't believe in libel laws, because the only kind of printed statement that really hurts is the kind that exposes truth [***](#), and in the USA, truth cannot be libellous. People sue when someone offends their dignity, or when they take a statement more seriously than it was intended. If Fleisher had been able to laugh at Ellison's accusations, everyone would soon have forgotten them. By choosing to sue, Fleisher attracted the notoriety he said he sought to avoid.

So I feel Fleisher was wrong to bring the suit (and I ventured to tell him this

in person); but having brought it, it seemed to me that he should have won it.

In a way, justice was still done: Fleisher refused to say how much the case had cost him, but I suspect much of his legal costs to have been on a contingency basis – his attorney wouldn't receive the full fee unless he won damages. By contrast, Ellison, Groth and *The Comics Journal* had to pay their four attorneys at least \$150 an hour, win or lose. Insurance may have covered some of the magazine's expenses, but Ellison was telling people that the case had cost him \$85,000. Perhaps this will be an incentive for him to speak a little more circumspectly in his next interview – or, at least, check some of the facts before publication.

**** Editorial disagreement registered at this point.*

Though I cut Charles's report with the usual tasteless savagery, it appears at length because I'm fascinated and terrified by the thought of frames of reference switching suddenly from fannish give-and-take to courtroom analysis. "The accused, Langford, a being erect upon two legs, and bearing all the outward semblance of a man, and not of a monster, took it upon himself to state in print – heedless of damage to my clients' reputation and finances – that the announced organizational plans for their science fiction convention were ... 'daft'. This cold-blooded accusation of mental imbalance ..." etc. I have some sympathy for H.E. – Dave Langford

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INFINITELY IMPROBABLE

Cover-Up Scandal! Long-term readers will know I've often been danced on by irate persons in spiked boots for printing some tasty little factoid. Brian Earl Brown adds a new twist: he reckons I have no journalistic integrity because of something I *didn't* cover in *Ansible 46*, to wit, Ted White's drug bust (see A47. TW, by the way, was released on 4 December). Why, asks Brian, this shameful cover-up? I will admit it. Secretly my every action is controlled by alien radio waves beamed by Ted White into my brain. Past unflattering references to Ted in these pages are of course just camouflage. It is no use to plead in pathetic mitigation that owing to 1986 reclusiveness,

when *A46* appeared my only hard information about the arrest had come from Ted himself ... in confidence. Brian demands higher journalistic standards: confidences should be ruthlessly violated when it comes to “major news” (his phrase) of a fan’s misfortune. Must try harder, Langford.

Grand Old Man Lashes Out! Informed that his next paperback blurb quotes John Fowles *again*, Chris Priest worried that the “young” in “One of our most gifted and poetic young writers” might now violate the Trade Descriptions Act. “Go on Chris, just ONE more time,” said Gollancz persuasively.... In future, Mr Priest will be insisting on “Dean of British SF”.

Stolen From *SF Chronicle*: A new US mag *SF International* has appeared, featuring worldwide fiction: Andromeda Press, 99 Teardrop Ct, Newbury Park, CA 91320.... Nebula novel nominations dominated by Orson Scott Card’s *Speaker For The Dead*.... St Martin’s Press is buying Tor Books....

Fan Funds: **GUFF** was won by Irwin Hirsh (address as colophon), who therefore represents Aussie fandom here at Conspiracy and is doing his best to find a hat with corks round the brim. **DUFF** went to Lucy Huntzinger (2215-R Market St, San Francisco, CA 94114, USA), who will be travelling to Australia and is widely not rumoured to be devising a punk hairstyle with corks round the brim. **TAFF** ballots enclosed (where deadlines allow), containing all ye know on earth and all ye need to know. **COFF**, the Concrete Overcoat Fan Fund, was overwhelmingly won by COFF (runners-up Mal Ashworth and Graham Poole), amid titanic applause at the announcement that COFF would henceforth cease.

Curse Of Worldcon: A particularly dismal bit of fannish folklore is that Worldcon committee membership breaks up marriages. Note the sort-of-COA for Malcolm Edwards, who is not currently living at the 28 Duckett Rd, N4 1BN, address where Chris Atkinson is still to be found. OK?

The Garnett Alternative: “Having read the report in *Matrix*, which seems to be about different people at a different place, and re-read the one in *Ansible 47* which excludes two of the essential participants, I think you need *An Alternative Milford Report*:

“It was observed that at Milford 1986, Scott Baker and 14 others wore glasses. The one exception was –

“David Garnett.”

1986 Hugo Fuss: Johan-Martijn Flaton contributes a last word. “What most of the audience didn’t know was the little scene afterwards with the winners and press. As Kees van Toorn and I (disguised as ‘Press’) entered the press-room with Harlan Ellison, the latter saw among a pile of Hugos one with a piece of paper taped to the bottom. It was Judy-Lynn’s Hugo and the paper stated: ‘*Dead Editor*’. I’ll spare you Harlan’s profanities....”

Nova Award Runners-Up Leak Horror: Writer 2 D. West; 3 L. Pickersgill & H. Ashworth. *Fanzine* 2 *Pulp*; 3 *Prevert*; 4 *Nutz*; 5 *TNH/Stomach Pump/Xyster*. **ARTISTS** 2 Atom; 3 D. West; 3 P. Lyon; 4 M. Molloy; 5 R. Calverley. (See also Novacon report.)

Secrets Of The Professionals Revealed. Terry Pratchett: “Signing books is better than sex.” *Ansible*: “Really?” TP: “So long as the pages don’t stick together....” **Tom Shippey** had a harrowing 1986 (confides D. West): having hurt his famously non-hirsute cranium on holiday by diving into water which proved to contain rocks, he was then belted with a bottle on the same spot, by Kate Solomon, for the social gaffe of dragging her round the room by her hair.... **MALCOLM EDWARDS** protests R.I. Barycz’s scepticism about the *Empire Of The Sun* film: “Spielberg’s already been over to London, has cast ‘Jim’ and starts shooting in February....”

RIP: Cesar Ignacio Ramos (apparently – Alexis Gilliland’s cartoon this issue was sent to CIR’s *Aeon*, to be found and returned by another Puerto Rican denizen “while going through the effects of Cesar Ramos”).... *Cheap Truth* exploded in November and ran its own obituary: “Node Zero, the global infonexus of the *Cheap Truth* publishing empire, has been reduced to smouldering wreckage in a poorly-realized action-sequence right out of the worst tradition of macho adventure fiction. A dead Hollywood stunt dummy, with several burst squibs of chicken-blood attached to its head and torso, was discovered by hard-boiled investigators [and] identified as that of *Cheap Truth* editor Vincent Omniaveritas....”

ELECTRONIC SKIFFY: Michael Bernardi is one of those carrying on the torch cast down by an effete earlier generation (me) on the Prestel net. Enquire about “Earthlight SF&F” from him on mailbox 919994136. Contains fanish criticism [sic]!

Barycz Strikes Some Happy Media: “*King Kong Lives!* Alas. American SF glossy mags pullulate with pics of a great hairy beast, usually horizontal.

Dino de Laurentiis has a hand in it, alas. Well, if they can bring back Spock why not Kong? That is not dead which can eternal lie ... and talking of Lovecraft the U of Chicago offers a translation of Greek magical papyri (330BC-690AD) wherein you may make the acquaintance of the Demiurge of the Seven Laughs and the Headless Demon Who Sees With His Feet. Besides infallible methods of nobbling the chariot races and making your shadow invisible. Order your copy today!Something to drive Mike Moorcock into the arms of Mary Whitehouse: *Gor* is being/has been filmed. Our very own Oliver Reed in the cast and Klaus Kinski as well. *Outlaw Gor* being made back to back with it if I interpret the news items correctly.... This year our TV screens will be blessed by a new Yankee series, *ALF*, subtle acronym for Alien Life Form who crashes into the attic of your everyday American suburban family and the rest is a muppet looking like the result of mating an anteater with a shar-pei who wears his hair in a duck's-arse over his sloping forehead. Might be fun.... OBIT Roger C. Carmel (aet.54) found dead at home in Hollywood from an apparent overdose of exotic chemicals, Columbian nose powder for one: general character actor, best known to skiffy as Harcourt Fenton (Harry) Mudd in *Star Trek*.... Mr Cyborg himself, Arnold Schwarzenegger, is busy making Stephen King's *The Running Man*. Arnold recently married into one of America's first families. Wits say this is an experiment in breeding a bullet-proof Kennedy." [RIB]

Serious & Constructive: Unwin's "Orion SF" imprint seems to have been mysteriously short-lived, which is why the Evans/Holdstock anthology will appear as a plain Unwin pb (cf Chris's speech).... **George Hay** confides that a shortlist of novels for the fabulous Clarke Award has been drawn up, but neglects to name any of them.... **Games Workshop** is fomenting a *Thieves' World* kind of fiction series set in the world of their *Warhammer* game, whose ethereal flavour is best conveyed by such an extract as "Your blow smashes your opponent's spine and abdomen, tearing muscle and shattering bone so that your opponent falls to the ground in two separate pieces." British authors of pacifistic bent have already fled vomiting when invited to contribute.... **Colin Greenland**, while gloating over having arranged a Roger Dean cover for his ripping fantasy blockbuster *The Hour Of The Thin Ox*, is bitter about *White Dwarf*'s subtle easing-out of his film column: "They cut my fee *and* mixed me up with Alex Stewart!" (it is not certain which is the greater insult).... **Your Editor**, momentarily delighted to see surprisingly non-awful cover art on the Baen *Space Eater* reissue, was swiftly crushed by

Patrick Nielsen Hayden's discovery that the cover had actually been recycled from *Asimov's SF Mag...* Douglas Hofstadter's *Metamagical Themas* has a lot on self-referential sentences, to which Damon Knight contributes: "Terry Carr ... sent us the riddle, 'How do you keep a turkey in suspense?', and never sent the answer. After about two weeks, we realized that *was* the answer." *Ansible's* new title will be "How do you..."

**Hazel's Language Lessons:
The Marathi Word For Fandom, Revealed**

avlyāchī mōt

... A term for a gang of fellows united by some present and common but evanescent interest. A very loose and patched-up union based on no consolidation of interests and with an ever-present tendency to separation.

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“As a newszine, it is the Emperor’s New Clothes,” enthuses *File 770*, noticing this only 46 issues later than the rest of you.... more transparency from DAVE LANGFORD, 94 LONDON ROAD, READING, BERKSHIRE, RG1 5AU, UK. Take heed: no further subscriptions will be accepted, har har, which isn’t to say that *Ansible* will necessarily vanish after issue 50. Distribution will, however, be a hell of a lot more whimsical. US agents: Mary & Bill Burns, 23 Kensington Court, Hempstead, NY 11550. Oz agent: Irwin Hirsh, 2/416 Dandenong Rd, North Caulfield, Vic 3161. Language Lesson courtesy of Colin Fine. Art: ATom. Print run 600, but not for much longer. News swiped from all the usual uncredited sources: *SF Chronic*, *Shards Of The Hague* and *Journal Of The Daventry Institute Of Caprine Studies*.

FAIRY GOLD DEPARTMENT

Somewhere in dusty cupboards, forgotten filing cabinets and the Great Upstairs Cardboard Box Mountain, I must have spare copies and carbons of everything I’ve ever published. This hoard probably doesn’t represent vast wealth ... but sometimes I wonder. Every few months I get a flyer about some US West Coast SF auction at which staggering prices will be raised by such memorabilia – plus, invariably, an edition of *Fahrenheit 451* with asbestos binding. There are either an awful lot of these, or one copy which keeps changing hands because people get cancer after incautiously breathing in while reading it. Similar delights ought to include the works of H.P. Lovecraft bound in gorgonzola, or John Norman bound in luxurious half-inch manila rope with many a piquant granny-knot.

And now, fresh from Los Angeles, here’s the Barry R. Levin SF catalogue. Short rude story by Brian Aldiss (“Not for sale to minors.”), dating all the

way back to antiquarian 1986: \$600. Carbon and proofs of *Stand On Zanzibar*, \$2500. Unsigned Gollancz hardback of *Neuromancer*: \$150. 13 limericks by Damon Knight (“Two ... [circa 1944] concern gentlemen named ‘Tucker’ and ‘Bloch’ ... Not for sale to minors.”): \$150. Ellison book in “antiqued Grimoire Box” with a lock to keep it under control: \$1200. All Keith Laumer’s “Retief” manuscripts can be yours for little more than \$6000. The daftest item comprises four Silverberg “mock story openings”, brief doodles written to test his word processor: to you, \$350.

Interestingly, most of these come with signed letters of provenance from the authors. One wonders whether said authors are deeply altruistic, and out of sheer love for Barry R. Levin provide the guarantees of authenticity (*you* know how many forged carbons and proofs of *Stand On Zanzibar* are going the rounds) which enable him to boost the price to sense-of-wonder levels. Or do the authors ... get a cut? If the terms are good, dealers should note that I stand poised to write up to 800 fulsome letters of provenance, one for each copy of that rarity *War In 2080* still stockpiled here.

EASTERCON REPORT BY DAV GARNETT

[*Ansible*, notes Mr Garnett, is displaying a tendency to longer articles and older news. Thus he reports on his very first emergence from the closet: The BSFA Easter Convention held in Bristol on 24-26 March 1967.... *DRL*]

Arrive at the Hawthorns Hotel just after six o'clock Friday, book in and go up to my room. What am I doing here? Don't know anyone. But can't hide forever. Go down and register. Pay another scrotum-tightening 10/- in addition to earlier 7/6 registration fee. For which get a name tag, programme booklet and two pens. Wander around, then back to room 261 to hide again. Finally, down to the con hall and bar. It's like a huge pub. Buy a drink and pretend to look for someone I know. Choose an empty table, also empty chair, and wait for programme to begin. Supposed to be eight o'clock, the Brian Aldiss show. Room begins to fill. Committee hope to break the 200 barrier over the weekend! People come and sit next to me: suddenly am no longer alone and begin talking.

Aldiss turns up late, hurrying in still wearing overcoat and claiming he's been

waiting for us all in a hotel down the road. Introduces various authors and fans. Famous names suddenly become recognizable faces. Brunner and Bulmer, Disch and Merril, Moorcock and Platt, Tubb and White. Aldiss runs a quiz, asking them to name a book or story which starts/ends with a certain line. They win paperbacks for being right. As a consolation prize, they win paperbacks for being wrong.

After this, head to the bar. Suddenly find myself standing next to an author. Never met one before. Thomas M. Disch – the famous Thomas M. Disch. Got to say something. What? Enquire whether he is a fan of E.C. Tubb, as he knew the line Aldiss quoted him was from a Tubb story.

“No, Brian told me the answer first,” he says.

More alcohol is consumed: the evening dissolves, blurs, fades. Wake up next a.m. in time to miss breakfast. First on today’s programme is the professional panel: should have been titled the pessimism panel. After this, meet a guy called Duncan Lunan who will soon be joining the ranks of the pros – reveals how his first sf novel *No Ships From Earth* would have appeared in *Analog* if they weren’t overstocked on novels.

Lunch, and two short films: the first, *Relativity*, almost makes lunch come up again. Then John Brunner’s Guest of Honour speech. First he gives out the British Fantasy Award for Philip K. Dick’s *Three Stigmata Of Palmer Eldritch*. He isn’t there, of course. Then a special award to Mike Moorcock, for being Mike Moorcock. He isn’t there either.

Brunner starts off talking about his new novel *The Productions Of Time* and how Signet made 55 editorial changes in the first chapter. Surely editors don’t really do this?

A few drinks later, it’s evening. During the Brian Aldiss show, Charles Platt told how he’d sold *Garbage World* to Berkley (who also did Disch’s first novel, *The Genocides*). Thinking of Brunner’s speech, ask Platt whether he cares if the copy editor changes his book. He replies to the effect that they can do what they like. Confess I have writing ambitions and have had several *New Worlds* rejections. Maybe out of sympathy, he buys me a drink. At once Graham M. Hall and Christopher Priest join us. Two more famous *New Worlds* authors. I hope something will rub off.

Time to find a room party, they say. Rumour that there’s one in 261. When

we get there I realize it's my room. Doesn't seem to be a party, but Judith Merrill is having one. Go there instead. Moorcock is playing guitar and singing. Merrill locks the door "to keep the noise out", which at the time seems a perfectly valid reason. Whenever anyone else tries to get in, she tells them to go to room 261. Look around the room and remember my first thought on arriving: What am I doing here, I'm the only person I've never heard of. Sit on floor next to famous Tom Disch. He offers me a cigarette. Wonder if should take up smoking so can accept. Instead get him to autograph the packet: "Thomas M. Disch (The Famous)" it says.

Merrill complains that no one has asked her for *her* autograph, unlike at American cons. Ask Disch about this: he says he doesn't know, this is his first convention. Mine too. "I knew we must have something in common," he tells me. The drink flows like alcohol.

Somehow get back to room, because wake up there Sunday a.m. in time for breakfast. To save money, check out of hotel and take room in nearby bed and breakfast, which costs 12/6.

Afternoon brings the programme highlight: Moorcock's talk. Most important news is that *New Worlds* will continue, as of issue 173, in new large format. Disch's *Camp Concentration* will be serialized – "The best sf novel I have ever read," says Moorcock. He gives a marvellous performance during which he consumes most of a bottle of whisky, argues with the audience, announces that he's lost a page of his talk but no one has noticed. "I don't know what it means. You don't know what it means. But who the hell cares?"

After this, he runs an auction – selling off artwork and MSS, mostly from *New Worlds*. Without any other bids, someone offers and pays *a pound* for the script of Ballard's "Day of Forever"! Unable to raise 10/- for a rare 1940 American fanzine, Moorcock buys it himself. Then rips it up. Also sells autographed paperbacks – autographed by himself, e.g. *Android Avenger* by "Ted G. White". In my inebriated enthusiasm, end up paying 10/6 for some old *Galaxy* artwork. Thought it was by Emsch (who under the stretched version of his name, Ed Emswiller, made *Relativity*), but turns out to be by Martinez. Whoever he was.

The hours pass; so do the drinks. St Fantony party held in evening, its centre a bowl of lethal punch. Place is packed: with a couple of others, make mistake of stepping into corridor for a breath of air. There the manager

pounces. Accuses us of being non-residents. True, although I stake my claim to room 261. He demands to see my key, which naturally enough can't produce. He threatens to call police. Is he serious?

Before we can find out, committee arrives to pacify him. Manager probably annoyed at not being invited to party. Politely we take our leave. One a.m. as we wander through the Bristol rain, wondering where our B&B has moved to.

Monday morning, only a few shillings left from ten quid. As expensive weekend, but more than worth it, never enjoyed myself so much before. But it's 360 days to the Manchester con. How can I survive that long? What will I do till then?

Maybe should write a novel and send it to Berkley.... [DG]

C.O.A.

HENRY BALEN, Flat 4, 8 West Ave, Walthamstow, London • IAN BAMBRO, Ivy Cottage, Ivy Road, Gosforth, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE3 1DB • PAUL & JUDY BEGG, 37 Vesper Gate Drive, Kirkstall, Leeds 5 • TERRY BROOME* (back home before his hospital COA appeared): 230 Hykeham Rd, Lincoln, LN6 8AR • JOHN BROSNAN*, Flat 2 ("You twit. You left my flat number off – I've been getting letters addressed to 'Chris Evans's old flat'"), 6 Lower Road, Harrow, Middlesex, HA2 0DA • AVEDON CAROL & ROB HANSEN, 144 Plashet Grove, East Ham, London E.6 • DAVID ELWORTHY, 19 Cavendish Road, Cambridge, CB1 3AE • STEVE & ANN GREEN, 33 Scott Rd, Olton, Solihull, W. Midlands, B92 7LQ • MARK GREENER, 38 Dunmow Rd, Bishops Stortford, Herts • ALUN HARRIES, 399 Kingston Road, Raynes Park, London, SW20 8JS • LEIGH KENNEDY*, 78 High St, Pewsey, Wilts, SN9 5AQ • PAUL MASON, Top Flat, 19 Rusholme Rd, Putney, London, SW15 3JX • CAROLINE NEEDHAM, 68a Buxton Road, Disley, nr Stockport, Cheshire SK1 2HE • MOIRA SHEARMAN, 5 Tipperlinn Road, Edinburgh, EH10 5ET • PETER SMITH*, 16 Tresta Walk, Woking, Surrey, GU21 4XF • HELEN STARKEY, 35 Binstead House, Vermont Road, London, SW18 2AD • *Late entry: sorry.

EGGCON

Gosh, it was a fecund event: Conception, held in Leeds on 13-15 Feb to celebrate fifty fertile years of seminal SF cons. Little tadpole-like things writhed all over the convention badges (to Hazel's vast embarrassment), and even escaped to work their evil way with the inexplicable bubbles of the Contrivance '89 bid posters. The Queens Hotel threw itself into the yeasty spirit of the occasion, with a Saturday notice-board offering successive delights in various suites: ENGAGEMENT PARTY. WEDDING RECEPTION. CONCEPTION.

(By a grim coincidence this also stuck in my mind as the convention at which British fandom and fanzines discovered AIDS. I'd assumed all these keen-eyed peerers into the future would have been clued-up long ago from years of *New Scientist* articles, but the Government campaign seemed to make a sudden splash in fannish awareness. Just an impression....)

Programme? I'm sure there was one somewhere, consisting almost entirely of panels starring Dave Wood, whose vocal chords had been insured by the committee for a sum so minute as to stagger comprehension. The only panel I remember began with an awesomely well-prepared Mal Ashworth introducing the panellists and covering the subject at master's-thesis level for half an hour before allowing the others to say a couple of words; after which, for the remaining 20 minutes, he triumphantly summed up the panel's conclusions.

But Conception wasn't very programme-oriented. Instead there was a vast bar in which Rog Peyton furiously denied evil and unspecified rumours allegedly put about by the dirty tricks department of Another SF Distributor; George Airey and Sid Barnes, palaeolithic fans who attended the 1937 Leeds con but lost touch in the War, studied the decadence to which 50 years had brought a once noble conception; Tom Shippey indignantly refused my demeaning offer of a free *Ansible*; Pam Wells stared shattered into space owing to the fact that all her fanzines in progress (including *Pulp*) had been nicked while still on disk, another first for Britain's electronic criminals; I looked for a toilet down a likely corridor and instead discovered to my terror a door marked STATE REGISTERED CHIROPODIST, which may have inspired Simon Ounsley when at a room party he fondled Lilian Edwards's sensuously green-stockinged foot and said with a misty light in his eyes,

“Gosh, it’s just like a green Durex.”

The programme came into its own with two concluding items: Geoff Ryman’s “Performance” performance, in which D. West’s 36-page fanzine article became a word-perfect monologue delivered in a very strange accent (suggesting neither Geoff Ryman nor D. West), with intermittently type-cast supporting players – such as Linda Pickersgill heavily disguised in a borrowed nightie, as Linda Pickersgill. Vast applause and cries of “Author!” ensued, whereupon it was revealed that D. had hidden in a pub while Geoff performed. Greg Pickersgill got quite excited, jumping up and down with cries of “Every few years there’s some event which really makes coming to all these bloody conventions worthwhile!” Judge for yourself when “Performance” opens for its revival season at Conspiracy ’87.

At a final ceremony, the sense-shattering “Ova Awards” were presented: D. had returned in time for these and with some confidence brought a large carrier-bag marked (in very large letters) AWARDS. The Ovas all had egg names whose significance appeared in the programme book but not the voting form, causing vast confusion as fans tried in the absence of the former to complete the latter. Simon Ounsley especially got votes in unlikely categories, such as “Best Eastercon”:

Bad Egg Award (worst fannish thing): Simon Ounsley. **Good Egg** (best fannish thing): Linda James, chief Conception organizer. **Poached Egg** (most imitated fan): D. West. **Pickled Egg** (most drunk): D. West. **Hard-Boiled Egg** (longest-lasting): Ken Slater. **Free Range Egg** (most health conscious): Graham James. **Egg Flip**: (most sarcastic): Greg Pickersgill. **Green Egg** (best up-and-coming fan): Mike Christie. **Egghead** (brightest): D. Langford, h’m. **Egg & Cress** (best fannish couple): Stan and Helen Eling. **Scrambled Egg** (fan you most think should have a sex change): D. West. **Easter Egg** (best Eastercon): Yorcon III, held in Leeds, what a coincidence. **Golden Egg** (all-time best fanzine): *Hyphen*. **All Over The Ceiling Award** (most over-the-top fan): Greg Pickersgill. **Full English Breakfast** (best all-round fan): Linda Pickersgill. **Sunny-Side Up** (best American): Rochelle Dorey. **Platypus Egg** (best Australian): Justin Ackroyd. **Golden Lay** (fan you’d most like to wake up by): Sherry Francis. **Kedgereee** (most indigestible fanzine): *Crystal Ship*, tch-tch. **Phoenix** (best fan to rise from the ashes): Mal Ashworth, who I thought was busy sinking into them.

Fan Guest of Honour was also an elective post. The finger of democracy pointed at Vince Clarke: instead of the plastic egg received by other winners, he got a diabolically sticky confection (manufactured at seconds' notice by Hazel Ashworth) whose sugary malignity could tweak your fillings at 100 yards' range. He loved it. Other fans seemed happy too.

Hey, everyone, let's do it again in 2037?

MORE BORING OLD AWARDS

1986 BSFA Awards will probably have been dished out by the time many of you see this, i.e. at Easter; the shortlist is or was: **Novel** *Schismatrix* (Sterling), *The Ragged Astronauts* (Shaw), *Queen Of The States* (Saxton), *Count Zero* (Gollancz), *Blood Music* (Bear). **Short** "Jingling Geordie's Hole" (Watson), "And He Not Busy Being Born" (Stableford), "Kaeti and the Hangman" (Roberts), "The Winter Market" (Gibson). **Media Reanimator**, *Overdrawn At The Memory Bank*, *Mr Pye*, *Dr Who: Trial Of A Timelord*, *Aliens*. **Art** "Screaming of the Beetle" (SMS), "The Clocktower Girl" (Roberts), and three *Interzone* covers: 15 (Lyon), 16 (Burns), 17 (Avon).

Clarke Novel Award: Chris Priest relates harrowing tales of trying to fix John Clute's word processor while downstairs came the crash of breaking glass and furniture as the award committee made its amicable decision between *The Handmaid's Tale* (Atwood), *Eon* (Bear), *Stars In My Pocket Like etc.* (Delany), *Escape Plans* (Jones – "I'm still waiting for a critic to have the courage to admit it's unreadable," said a jaded editor and Worldcon chair), *The Memory Of Whiteness* (Robinson), *The Ragged Astronauts* (Shaw) and *Green Eyes* (Shepherd).

Hugos: "God how I hate the Hugos," writes impartial ballot counter Paul Kincaid. "Day after day ploughing through mountains of nominations for books I wouldn't give house room. Oh and how the crap floats to the top. I can already predict the way the final ballot will go, in all but a couple of the categories, and the thought is not inspiring." The world postal service duly cocked up ballot distribution, and heroic Conspirators have mailed several thousand extra nomination forms to be returned by an extended 1 May deadline. Will the new flood of response cheer Mr Kincaid and thwart the subversive Wellington-meeting activities of David "Write down the name of

my story *here* and give this form to Kincaid” Garnett?

Nebula novel finalists include unexpectedly good stuff: *Count Zero* (Gibson), *Free Live Free* (Wolfe), *The Handmaid’s Tale* (Atwood), *The Journal Of Nicholas The American* (Kennedy) *Speaker For The Dead* (Card), *This Is The Way The World Ends* (Morrow). Nice to see fame coming to Leigh Kennedy, who for some reason does *not* appreciate the remark “I suppose you’ll be withdrawing it, of course?”

Sturgeon Award: another memorial award, this time for short stories; to be selected by committee and presented at the U of Kansas. Masterminds: Jayne Sturgeon, James Gunn.

A, B, C AND OTHER LETTERS

Avedon Carol: “Here’s a piece of strange news: Since Judy-Lynn died, Lester Del Rey apparently has a new plan, called ‘integrity’. He had the first option on Marion Bradley’s new book, bound to be a big seller since it’s the next book in the series of which the first book was a best seller, but he didn’t like it so he didn’t buy it. Naturally, the other publishers went nuts bidding for it and so Bradley picked up some serious money on it, but hey, Lester isn’t interested in any more books he doesn’t like.”

Mike Cobley, Britain’s Mr Cyberpunk, was incensed by Chris Evans’s A48 speech: “Having insidiously isolated ‘cyberpunk’ from generally accepted literary values, he then tries hacking it to pieces ... What Sterling, Gibson, Shirley etc. have in common is not an ideology. Rather it is a philosophical hands-on approach to exploring/explaining effects of technology on society and vice-versa, and the consequences of both. With its notable lack of technophobia (which is a long way from technolatr) cyberpunk is a radical mode of expression the potential of which we have not even begun to realize.”

There’s more, e.g. a charge that by not forming a Group to be a rallying-point, Messrs Evans, Priest *et al* caused the lack of new UK authors (tell that to Gwyneth Jones or Iain Banks); but the quoted bit is the core of Mike’s letter. It sounds exactly like one of John W. Campbell’s early puffs for Dianetics. Some critical reasoning meatier than this or Rudy Rucker’s weird

ideas of objective literary standards based on information density (“I read a great phone directory last week”) is needed to refute Chris’s mild suggestion that like “New Wave”, “cyberpunk” is just a label slapped on a lot of independent – though in many cases triffic – authors. Plug: try Mike’s *Shark Tactics*, a polemical SF broadsheet resembling a UK *Cheap Truth* (18 Athole Gdns, Hillhead, Glasgow, G12 9BA).

CONDOM: Some Updates Only

Koancon ’87 (31 July - 2 Aug, Coventry Polytechnic): fannish games con. £22 residential, £7 non-res to Top Flat, 19 Rusholme Rd, London, SW15 3JX. GoH Paul “Warhammer” Cockburn.

Conspiracy ’87 (45th Worldcon, 27 Aug - 2 Sept, Brighton) now costs £38/\$65 att, to 31 July (no postal bookings after then); day membership £10/\$15 per day in advance, £15+ at the door. Which famous skiffy editors complained bitterly about not receiving booking forms, only for a grovelling committee to find they hadn’t bought memberships? I name no names, not even B*va or W*llheim.

Eurocon ’87 has been hopping about wildly, to the dismay of French fans: after skipping from July in Perpignan to May in Montpellier, it’s bounced back to 29 Oct - 1 Nov, same town. Details: 112 de Toulouse, F-34000 Montpellier, France.

Novacon 17 (30 Oct - 1 Nov, Royal Anguish Hotel, Brum): GoH Iain Banks, mundane alias of new space-opera author Iain M. Banks. £8 to end of Eastercon, £10 to 29 Oct, to 7 Grove Ave, Acocks Green, Birmingham, B27 7UY. This special offer of a con is open to the first 350 applicants only.

1989 Eastercon: Contrivance (63 Duke Road, Chessington, Surrey) whose venue is the Hotel de France, Jersey, seems to be the only bid despite the fleeting appearance of flyers for Yorcon 4 at the Queens Hotel, Leeds.

OBIT.

Terry Carr died on 7 April, with shocking unexpectedness: his fiftieth birthday was only this February. (Diabetes seems to have been a major part

of the problem.) I'd just been reading his fine fanwriting collection *Fandom Harvest* ... but the pro scene too suddenly looks a lot bleaker without the man who wrote *Cirque* plus those few exemplary short stories, waded fearlessly through garbage to collect the most reliable of Year's Best SF anthologies, and redirected modern SF with his two series of Ace Specials. Even through long-range contact via occasional fanzines and rejection slips, Terry was unmistakably one of the Good Guys. There are so few.

Also: **Theodore Cogswell** of "Wall Around The World" fame (3 Feb, aged 68). **John D. Macdonald**, who died at 70 on 28 Dec, may not have written a lot of SF (though the Thorne Smithish novel *The Girl, The Gold Watch And Everything* is deservedly popular) ... but hordes of fans confessed addiction to his colourful "Travis McGee" thrillers: top-class adventure fiction needs no genre labels. Steve Green writes "Just heard that **Patrick Troughton** died over the weekend (28/29 March) whilst at a Dr Who con in the States. It wasn't so much the loss to the thespian community which struck me, but the sudden mental image of all those Who fans standing around the corpse, wondering whether he'd manage to metamorphose into his new body in time for the GoH speech." Outraged letters may be directed to Steve's new address: see COA.

STAR TREK IV: The Film Review • Andrew Stephenson

The fourth Trek film, ingeniously titled *Star Trek IV* for hyper-numerate US cine-goers but renamed *The Voyage Home* for us word-bound Limeys, opened in London on 10 April. So the average *Ansible* reader will already have decided the virtues of its 1 hour 59 minutes, if Uncle Dave keeps to his usual publishing schedule: I'll minimize the consumer advice in favour of philosophical generalities.

When reviewing *The Wrath Of Khan* for A28, I speculated on Paramount's plans for the Trek universe. Though not too far off on the whole, I did go badly adrift in suggesting that *TWOK* would be "the last of the old-style stories" and that cast changes were imminent. Ignoring me entirely, the old-style storyline forged ahead in *The Search For Spock* and now continues where that left off – even to the extent of a "story so far" sequence. Moreover, the main characters persist, long after some ought to have hung up

their uniforms, while minor characters once suspected of being groomed for prominence play little real part.

Interestingly, the gradual dilution of the format, painfully evident in later TV episodes (e.g. Spock's greater emotionalism), has been corrected quite savagely here and there. Have Paramount decided to revert to the older format? If so, how will they reconcile the style of later films with the new TV series, of which one hears grim tales, such as that it will hearken back to the very earliest concept of *ST* as *Wagon Train* in space? Gossip suggests a fifth film coming, with perhaps more to follow. The *USS Enterprise* is with us again, Kirk's in his commander's chair, the Klingons are seething and all's right with the world.

The implications for screened SF could be good or bad, depending on what Paramount's moguls decide to do with their product. If they choose quality storytelling, one hopes the consequent success will encourage other producers to revive TV SF. If they go for the soft option of the lowest common denominator, it won't be long before yet another production company has dismissed screened SF as unprofitable. Frankly, I'm not hopeful, recalling the past witless behaviour of so many media decision makers.

What of this particular story? Fresh from rescuing the renewed Spock from the Genesis planet, Kirk and friends head for Earth in their captured Klingon ship to face a court martial. Happily – and no reason other than plot convenience is ever really offered – an alien probe of immense power (a common hazard in the *ST* universe) has chosen this moment to arrive in Earth orbit and stir up the atmosphere in a manner liable to cause serious unhappiness at Lloyd's. Before long it transpires that it wants a chat with Earth's hump-backed whales and is unaware of these side-effects produced by its means of communication....

The snag is, the last hump-backed whale was exterminated by humans some considerable time ago, so it seems the visitor will continue its fruitless attempts at gossip, wiping out Earth's human life in turn. Well, do you need me to tell you that Kirk & Co are equal to the job? Heck, no. They pile in with a will, travel back in time to San Francisco of the late 20th century, and manage to work something out.

Most of this is great fun and consistent with the tone of the TV series, even

down to the embarrassing moral lectures. If you can cope with lapses into bathos and a few weirdly obtrusive cultural references, there's much to enjoy: Spock masquerading as an ageing hippie; Scottie getting to grips with a manually driven computer; McCoy driven to distraction by the medical barbarities of our time; Chekov innocently asking a suspicious traffic cop for directions to the nearest nuclear warship, his "Russian" accent thick enough to spread on bread; and so on. The fans will love it.

A strong comedy element pervades *TVH*; the scripting holds several delights. Nimoy's direction is businesslike, extracting competent performances from a good cast, though a slight dullness of visual imagination is evident. Certain scenes and characters are included just for series continuity. And the old crew continues to age, some more gracefully than others, while the producers show few signs of recruiting a new shift to take over the command deck.... Not a bad film. I may even go to see it again, paying honest coin this time. [AMS]

INFINITELY IMPROBABLE

Dept. Of I Never Thought They Really Said It: "It [Aldiss's *Enemies Of The System*] contrives to be rich, allusive, full of real people, and unfailingly interesting. It is not, then, real SF." (Anthony Burgess, *Homage To Qwert Yuiop*)

Fan Funds: Jeanne Gomoll, to whom congratulations, won **TAFF** after savage hand-to-hand struggle by administrators G. Pickersgill (UK) and P&T Nielsen Hayden (US). The first count went Gomoll 132, Glicksohn 77, Lichtman 46, Bowers 31, Brown 28 and Hold Over Funds 3. After the weird intricacies of the modified Australian ballot, this settled down to Gomoll 202, Glicksohn 112, No Further Preference 5. Jeanne thus attends Conspiracy as revered TAFF delegate, but (every silver lining has its cloud) also takes over the US administration for an exciting two years of fund-raising and letters from Puerto Rico. Her address: Box 1443, Madison, WI 53701-1443, USA. The Nielsen Haydens leave us with this awesome question: "What cosmically-attuned mental processes enabled dozens of fans to take scissors in hand and detach the bottom third of the TAFF ballot before sending it to us, carefully following the dotted line just above the words SEND THE ENTIRE BALLOT – DO NOT DETACH?" Meanwhile, **GUFF:** Irwin and

Wendy Hirsh are trying to make new contacts with UK and (especially) Continental fans for their coming visit here. See masthead for address.

Group Gropes: (1) *Kimota*, a newsletter, nervously prints nothing about who edits it, where he lives, or which local group is involved. Try 1 Northgate, Goosnargh, nr. Preston. (2) **Waltham Forest & District** fan meetings: consult Henry Balen, 01 509 2331 or as COA. (3) **Staffen**, St Albans group, meets at Shires Pub, St Pancreas Station, 2nd Monday each month (8pm or so).

Serious & Constructive.... Samuel Delany says *The Splendour And Misery Of Bodies, Of Cities* (sequel to *Stars In My Pocket Like Bodily Fluids*) is “in the publication process”, i.e. he’s delivered it, a couple of years overdue. But Avedon Carol warns: “The two biggest booksellers in the US (60% of the market, together) are not carrying any new books by Delany. Why? ‘He’s writing *gay content* now.’ I understand one of those chains is also refusing any work from Tanith Lee and Barbara Hambly.” Same alleged reason, but in Hambly you have to search bloody hard.... **David Pringle** is now SF consultant to Simon & Schuster UK, whose next 100 SF novel choices are thus assured.... **Fantasy Review** tempts potential customers (me) with glowing promises of its wonderfulness and offers of a no-strings-attached free copy which (I am assured) will so blow my little scientific mind as to make me a devoted subscriber. “Goshwow,” I wrote, “rush me my free ticket to lifelong addiction at once!” Quick as a flash they responded with ... an invoice for \$27.95 worth of subscription. **Jonathan Wylie**, the author of yet another “compelling fantasy trilogy” from Corgi, turns out to be a husband-and-wife team of professional SF/fantasy editors at (guess where?) Corgi.... The most interesting aspect of **Clive Barker**’s £500,000 deal (in which Collins poached him from Sphere) was listening to Malcolm Edwards morbidly calculating the likelihood of such an advance being recouped, his probability estimate being a breakthrough in the mathematics of the infinitesimal....

Vile Misrepresentation! A coweringly anonymous source near the One Tun bar demands eye-witness correction of the shock horror item reported last issue: “It wasn’t so much the arm round the shoulder as his tongue down his boyfriend’s throat that clinched it. I mean, bloody hell, they were French kissing at the bar for half a subjective hour....” Updates on the Wellington move: Hitcher fans will be following when the date outstrips their pre-

advertised Tun meetings, but erstwhile tutelary spirit Frank Arnold is staying put (with a select few pals), being annoyed that the decision to move was unilaterally taken by everyone else in his absence (he'd gone home). Mould-breaking Bernie Peek has started a new visitors' book for the Welly. Advice for the easily confused: when trying to find the Wellington on the first Thursday evening of each month, do not head north, south, east, or west from the main British Rail concourse at Waterloo. The true path leads downward, into a hole in the middle of the station....

“Why Is *Ansible 49* So Thin?” lisps the puling reader. My energies were drained by preparing a collection of Langford fanwriting for the Worldcon, running to 38,000 words ... argh!

Hazel's Language Lessons: Klamath

(for the Masquerade)

sawyasga, puts a long object in front of one's genitals

...a common response to

ANSIBLE 49, FROM 94 LONDON ROAD, READING, UK, RG1 5AU

***Ansible* 50**

August/September 1987

ISSN 0265-9816. “Not nearly as controversial as its reputation belies,” says the hard-hitting *British Fantasy Newsletter* of the blandness you hold in your hand ... from DAVE LANGFORD, 94 LONDON ROAD, READING, BERKSHIRE, RG1 5AU, UK. (Electronic mail to Telecom Gold 81:TWH152, telex 265451 MONREF G quoting 81:TWH152 in the first line; none of this is of the slightest use, I’m just showing off.) What of the future? As Alfred Bester once wrote, “The Future is Tekon”, and little more can be added. Chuck Harris suggests that besides the promised irregular and whimsical distribution, rich idiots should be allowed to subscribe at £1.50 or \$3 a copy. OK if that’s what you want: the point of the change is that with my current workload I can’t pretend to run a regular, frequent or comprehensive SF newsletter, and not even rich idiots are likely to get one. US agents: Mary & Bill Burns, 23 Kensington Court, Hempstead, NY 11550. Aussie agent: Irwin Hirsh, 2/416 Dandenong Rd, North Caulfield, Vic 3161. Language Lesson from Sue Thomason. Print run 600 and falling. Thanks to *Matrix*, *Q* and *SF Chronicle* for news oddments, and to the latter’s readers for two awards....

Running Down: The Me Column

I remember less than I should about the burning issues of British fandom *circa* 1987. The low-key Rubicon has shrunk to a single stark memory of David Brin and Avedon Carol in the hotel lounge, furiously debating the fitness to live of the Governor of California, while behind them an opportunistic committee moved up chairs and indicated by furtive gestures that this was the day’s programme item.

At Easter, Becon produced violently polarized opinions: it was unutterably boring, dull and bad (and certainly I seem to have spent a much higher than average percentage of my time wandering around looking for something

happening), it was wondrous and brilliant beyond compare (and certainly there were several nifty items). There hadn't been enough allowance for the depletion of Eastercon in a British Worldcon year, and the convention rattled around in a fairly vast venue, while much lightweight padding was needed to fill the innumerable programme tracks. Imagine the spleen of Alan Dorey on finding that his Alan Dorey Quiz was merely the latest of six full hours of quiz programming.

Good bits that I noticed: the bizarre Oriental kung-fu fantasy horror flicks, the fireworks, about three speeches, the fan room parties (at the Holland/LA bidding party I found myself explaining at mendacious length to Mike Glycer that *Ansible's* vastly greater coverage of the Dutch bid was a mere statistical anomaly; such was the bonhomie of the occasion that he almost tried to believe me), the real beer, the cheap and acceptable hotel snack food, and a few offbeat programme items (like the Ian Sorensen/Malcolm Hodkin comedy duo which momentarily brought a thin smile to even my withered lips).

Not-so-good bits: the truncation of the fireworks (first toned down at the request of resident Saudi Arabian royalty, then halted altogether merely because blazing embers were cascading on the breakfast marquee – “The committee just got cold feet,” said angry fuse-wielder Martin Hoare, “and the marquee was going to be taken down in a few weeks anyway.” Chris Atkinson, newly recruited to the ranks of pyromania, complained of *detonatus interruptus*), the early drought of real beer, the near-inaccessibility of restaurants from the remote National Exhibition Centre fastnesses, and a ghastly moment at the awards ceremony.

There was Bob Shaw, who'd incautiously been telling everyone all weekend how he'd appreciate votes for the BSFA award (which he won). There was Paul Kincaid presenting the new Arthur C. Clarke award, all £1000 of it, and saying approximately: “The judging committee really did find it incredibly hard to decide, but in the end we realized we were unanimous. Bob Shaw's *The Ragged Astronauts* impressed us hugely as a tremendous book –” [Bob begins to rise from his seat] “and we're commending it ever so highly, while giving the loot to Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale!*” [Applause. Collapse of Irish party. Ouch.]

The NEC's principal bar had its moments (when the main approach wasn't

closed off to become the fan room), but the decor caused pain to sensitive drinkers and gave insight into the horrid hearts of hotel folk. This was the “Library” bar, you see, containing shelves of actual printed books, all with half-inch holes bored through their middles so they could be threaded on dowel rods and protected from being read.

(Overheard there.... John Brunner, reading in *A49* that *Stand On Zanzibar* proofs were offered at \$2500, said: “Oh goody, I sold it to him and was promised half his profit, so that’s another \$750 if it sells.” Gamma asserted: “I’m now SF consultant for Sphere.” Dave Hodson insinuated: “Gamma says Richard Lewis’s underpants are too tight.” Greg Pickersgill, qualifying a remark on his good wife’s youthfulness, barked: “Well, she’s young compared to Arthur Cruttenden.” Helen McCarthy explained: “There are no interesting media conventions this year, since we cancelled ours.” Hazel gasped: “It was an incredible film, they showed the reels in the wrong order because they were labelled in Chinese, but it didn’t matter, there were all these hysterical kung-fu hopping zombies....” Ian Sorensen confided: “Jim Barker doesn’t draw any cartoons these days. He’s just an ideas man now, he pays a YTS trainee to do the drawing.”)

The bidding for the 1988 and 1989 conventions (see below) established that one phrase is now the kiss of death for an Eastercon bid. Prospective committees can drone on about soft toys or tourism opportunities, but should steer well clear of committing themselves to “science fiction.” *Verb. sap.*

The things that fill my working days and blot out convention memories are for the most part deeply boring: three monthly magazine columns, for example. One, the “Critical Mass” SF review spot in *White Dwarf*, brings much feedback from mingy fans who read this bit and then put the magazine back on the newsagent’s rack, not wishing to buy anything so uncool as a games rag. Now you can all read the first 50 columns in a A4 softcover volume, with an index: well over 60,000 words of thrillingly ephemeral reports on the soiled masses of prose which passed through my protesting forebrain between 1983 and 1987. *Critical Assembly* was a mite expensive to produce and will cost you £10 or \$20 (post free). No – to forestall you – it isn’t worth it, but buy it anyway.

Which brings me to other Langford volumes about which some of you have asked, you fools. In hardback, the non-fiction *War In 2080* (futurological

weaponry, etc), *An Account Of A Meeting With Denizens Of Another World, 1871* (Victorian UFOs) and *Facts & Fallacies: A Book Of Definitive Mistakes And Misguided Predictions* can be yours for £4 each, post free. In paperback, choose between *The Space Eater* (hardish SF) and *The Leaky Establishment* (undisguised autobiography) at £2.75 each. Don't forget *The Transatlantic Hearing Aid*, the TAFF report of which major *Ansible* editors have said "Pardon?" – a snip at £2.25, proceeds to TAFF. Review copies also on sale!

I seem to have some more small-press notes here. Chris Priest emerges from long silence with *The Last Deadloss Visions*, an essay about the 16-year history of a famous though still unpublished Harlan Ellison anthology. "Trade" edition £2, bound "collector's" edition £5, from 78 High St, Pewsey, Wilts, SN9 5AQ: as a feeble defence against possible litigation, this is "Not for sale in the USA." There are a million scurrilous stories about *The Last Dangerous Visions* – you know, so-and-so "was actually in Ellison's office, listening to him phoning the publishers to say the complete package was in the mail, while the cardboard box of manuscripts still sat on his floor..." Chris avoids these hearsay distractions, traces the damning record of actual documented facts, and offers a solid piece of journalism (26 A4 pages, small print) which – without invective – is also a devastating hatchet-job. Is it necessary? Fans may regard **TLDV** as a joke, but many of the 100+ contributors feel sour about having thrown their best efforts into this black hole. Others (20%) are dead. *Deadloss* asks "how it will end", and gives constructive answers....

My Heart Leaps Up is the autobiography of R.A. Lafferty, which reads as dottily as his novels. Chris Drumm is issuing the book as lots of his nifty Drumm Booklets, two chapters at a time. Two chunks out so far, ch 1-2 and ch 3-4: each \$2.75 from PO Box 445, Polk City, Iowa 50226. Good stuff.

Swede Ishes collects 10 chunks of Swedish fanwriting, determinedly lightweight articles which I suspect have lost in the translation: there are funny lines, but often the humour doesn't quite get off the ground. John-Henri Holmberg steals the show with a "Carl Brandon" memoir, originally written in English. £1 (or \$1 plus IRC) to Ahrvid Engholm, Renstiernas Gata 29, S-116 31 Stockholm, Sweden; proceeds to "a new SEFF", of which – I regret – more below.

Concatenation, ed. Jon Cowie (see COA) and Tony Chester, was distributed free around Easter and represents another attempt at a “yearbook” for British SF/fandom. Much effort has gone into financing this via ads and sponsorship, with a print run of 2000. Its contents are rather eccentric, with random SF coverage embedded in an unstylish imitation of *New Scientist* (a low point being the tongue-in-cheek formality of NS’s “Ariadne” column: the *Concatenation* version is dismally pompous). Having launched their pilot issue in what looks like a bit too much haste, the dynamic duo can – I hope – take more time over the next, and remember that (a) even exciting news items fall flat when flatly written; (b) when doing a review of the SF year which covers only six books, it is not convincing when one of this highly select few is a “Retief” squib from Keith Laumer; (c) fans interested in tiny snippets of science news probably read them weekly in *New Scientist*: a yearbook should be made of weightier stuff....

Where does one go for regular, frequent British SF news? The boring old BSFA is worth a look, now that Maureen Porter has vastly expanded the news pages of *Matrix*: for a year’s worth, rush your £10 to the BSFA, 33 Thornville Rd, Hartlepool, Cleveland, TS26 8EW. Meanwhile, Novacon should see the launch of *Critical Wave* from Steve Green and Martin Tudor. “Imagine an SF supplement to the *Guardian* and you might be part of the way there,” says Steve, indicating that *CW* will contain typos if nothing else. “No way would we get away with some of the stuff you print,” he flatteringly adds, leaving me wondering. A 500-copy print run; 10pp per bimonthly issue; no price yet, but as October looms you might ask Steve at 33 Scott Rd, Olton, Solihull, B92 7LQ.

Izzard is merely the best “conventional” (i.e. duplicated) fanzine I’ve had this year – fat and unsummarizable. P&T Nielsen Hayden, 75 Fairview (2D), New York, NY 10040, USA.

The Usual Letters Of Complaint

Bruce Sterling: “I send you this missive in the probably vain but earnest hope that it will spare me from the *Ansible* address-list purge. How else am I to receive such vital on-line input as the Chris Evans A48 Speech, since xeroxed and distributed as a kind of Object Lesson within Yankee ‘post-

modernist' circles. Morbid as it must have been for his audience, this speech is an intensely cheering document! 'Say – I always thought cyberpunk sucked, but consider the alternative – we could have ended up like Chris Evans!'

"While critics might quail at the thought of pronouncing G. Jones's *Escape Plans* 'unreadable', the following conversation took place in New York during Nebula weekend:

"(Scene: Tiny office in gigantic Manhattan megalith.)

"*Sterling*: Hmm, see you have *Divine Endurance* here ... ever read *Escape Plans*?

"*Prominent 'Progressive' Editor (eyes lighting up)*: What a great fucking book!

"*Sterling (pleased)*: That's the True Quill, isn't it? Talk about 'crammed prose' – wow!

"*PPE*: Yeah! Sure wish I could publish it....

"*Sterling*:

"*PPE*: Of course, the five hundred people here hip enough to appreciate it can buy it from Mark Ziesing."

[The tasteful "suck" idiom reminds me that US visitors to Conspiracy will enjoy our current vacuum cleaner posters:
"NOTHING SUCKS LIKE AN ELECTROLUX!" DRL]

Dennis Virzi: "Bruce Sterling continues to compliment your efforts each time he tears up your latest issue on the SMOF BBS bulletin board under his guise as 'Jules Verne' – he says you have 'a BAD attitude'. I don't know what that means."

Harry Harrison: "What's this Langford! Putting STATUS DODGY on my *Ansible* label. I give you cheques, pound notes, tips, dirty items. Dodgy my arse! Just to prove it – here is a goody. Perhaps the end of the biggest bumsucking act of all time. Hark!

"In the Observer book page [April], there are some SF books sneered at by one John Clute. He appears to like a collection of short stories by – guess who? Someone named Watson. Whom he refers to as '... fecund Ian Watson.'

"Well! Eric Partridge in *Origins: A Short Etymological Dictionary Of Modern English* lists 'fecund' under 'female'. Already Clute is in trouble.

The word is defined as ‘essential physical femineity’ giving us the Latin ‘fecundus ... of land, crops, females, fertile.’ And the *fe* root of the word also appears in felicitate and fetus and rests upon the old Indo-European root **dhe*- which means – wait for it – ‘to give suck to’. Is Clute trying to tell us that Watson is a pregnant cow? Or perhaps he means he is a fetal sucker or ... the mind boggles at all the possibilities.

“Legal proceedings in the offing.”

[US visitors to Conspiracy will enjoy ... hang on, we seem to have covered this territory. DRL]

Brian Aldiss: “I think you made up that bit about the Journal of the Daventry Institute of Caprine Studies, since JDICS doesn’t sound at all memorable. However, I assume you didn’t make up the bit about the death of Theodore Cogswell.

“It’s a shame to let a good man go without a good word. Ted would have liked you, or maybe vice versa. He was famous in fanac as in more legitimate pursuits. As you delicately hint in *Ansible*, he did write ‘Wall Around the World’. He also edited a notorious fanzine, *PITFCS*. pronounced ‘Pitfucks’, reputedly the Proceedings of the Institute for Twenty-First Century Studies. In the early 60s, anyone who was anyone wrote to *PITFCS*, as did some who weren’t.

“When he died, Ted was working on a collected edition of *PITFCS* for hardcover publication. I hope someone can see this project through; it will form a valuable social document for our times.

“I hope I’m not giving you ideas. How’s your health?”

Arthur Hlavaty: “I’m not sure if Avedon’s been misinformed about the big book chains banning Delany, Hambly *et al* for alleged gay content, or if news of such things reaches England before it reaches North Carolina, but the local [North Carolina] B. Dalton’s and Waldenbooks not only haven’t kicked those miscreants out, but they’ve got big display bins of the latest Rita Mae Brown right up front.”

[Rita Mae who? Oh god, another cultural gap. DRL]

Patrick Nielsen Hayden: “It’s the new Neveryon book, not *The Splendour And Misery Of Bodies, Of Cities*, which is ‘in the publication process’:

entitled *The Bridge Of Lost Desire*, it should be out as a hardcover from Arbor House late this fall. Contents: a new novella, other new Neveryon fiction, a revised version of 'The Tale of Gorgik' from *Tales Of Neveryon* (1979), and a lengthy critical essay by Chip's critical alter ego 'K. Leslie Steiner'. *The Splendour And Misery*, on the other hand, has been 'stalled on page 161 for several months', according to Chip in a phone call ten minutes ago."

[That particular item came from a bundle of computer-net gossip forwarded by Peter Mabey: the writer was a fan who claimed to have "personally spoken" to Chip Delany and heard this. Never trust a hacker. DRL]

Malcolm Edwards: "I can't believe Avedon's theory about Del Rey. Corporate publishers don't give editors that much autonomy with best-selling authors; cf del Rey's well publicized falling-out with Stephen Donaldson, where Ballantine went to great lengths to find him a more sympathetic editor (their Subsidiary Rights Director, as it turned out)."

Martin Morse Wooster confirms: "*Secrets from the Del Rey Files*. It turns out that, in Judy-Lynn's last years, the house of Del Rey had *three* major editors. Judy-Lynn handled SF; Lester handled fantasy; and an anonymous junior editor was detailed to spend her time exclusively editing the mighty Stephen R. Donaldson. My mole reports that Donaldson's copy was so vile that Lester refused to touch it, delegating all responsibility to sub-editors. (Donaldson is on a special shortlist of writers whose work Lester can't stand, but whom he bought Because They Sold. Other writers on this select list are Terry Brooks and Piers Anthony.)

"*Special Interests Department*. David Brin has reaped mighty rewards from *The Postman*. US postal unions are selling the book through union mail-order catalogues, and one union even presented Brian with a huge crystal goblet at their annual convention. 'I've got to find another special interest to pander to,' Brin says....

"*Moorcock Censorship Horror!* US fans waiting for Michael Moorcock's *Fantasy: The 100 Best Novels* will have to wait a while longer. The book has been delayed until the spring of 1988 because of US publisher Carroll and Graf's insistence that Moorcock remove three novels – including *The Story Of O* – from his 'best' list on the ground that they're pornographic. 'Libraries

will never buy a book advocating filth,' this publisher reportedly said. No word as to Moorcock's reaction; maybe the British edition of the book could be traded to US fans for copies of *Spycatcher*...."

[*Ansible*'s roving drinker Martin Hoare visited Philadelphia recently and picked up some copies of the book Maggie Thatcher doesn't want us to read. "You must be English," they said at the bookshop. "Nobody buys this thing except tourists and political science students." I was able to confirm my suspicion that MI5 activities consist wholly of elderly chaps forever asking each other whether in 1935 they'd been blackmailed into becoming homosexuals.... DRL]

Chris Priest: "You shouldn't feel obliged to include all this tedious stuff in *Ansible*. You're not the Congressional Record. Why print boring letters from Martin Morse Wooster?"

Neil Gaiman: "The August *Knave* book review column is the all-integrity issue in which a number of authors get to review their own books. These include Brosnan reviewing *Worm*, and JohnPaul GrantBarnett reviewing both his *Advanced Trivia Quiz Book* and something called *Earthdoom!* (which he wrote with some other bloke)....

"I had a phone call from my editor at *Today*. She said she expected I knew all about Dungeons & Dragons. I hastily claimed more knowledge than I actually possess, scenting the possibility of writing a huge article on D&D. Then she told me what the article would be: an expose in which my task would be to find people whose lives had been destroyed, who had gone bankrupt or become obsessed by Black Magic, who had committed acts of appalling violence, or died, as a result of their connection with D&D, or reading *White Dwarf*, or whatever. This is apparently in response to US Moral Majority complaints about D&D being a Satanist tool or something. I declined to help."

[Footnote: when Ian Pemble was editor, *Knave* published much SF/humour by writers known in fandom. Neil's book column is now the last remnant of this era, the current editor having decided that too much literacy and wit might alienate the readership.... I asked *White Dwarf* coven leader Mike Brunton if he'd been exposed lately, and he tearfully confessed to "a phone call from a

journalist (I use the word in its loosest possible sense) from the *Sunday Sport*, looking for an I THREW MYSELF OUT OF A WINDOW WHILE WEARING REMARKABLY FEW CLOTHES AT A GAY NUNS IN BONDAGE D&D PARTY story. Never having been invited to such a do, I couldn't help. Why do other people have interesting lives?"]

David S. Garnett: "Comrade Hugo Nominee.... When I saw you on the Thursday before the trivial General Election voting, you mentioned that you might be issuing another *Ansible* before the really important voting: the Hugos. If so, and if you're unwilling to reprint 'Still Life' as I requested, maybe you could run an unpaid advert (with your inimitable witty and astute editorial comments, of course) as follows: 'If, before giving "Still Life" their first place Hugo vote, anyone would like to read the story, a copy can be had in exchange for a 9" x 6" envelope, stamped to the value of 26p, from David Garnett....' Not that I expect anyone to bother. I probably stand more chance if no one does.

"Nelson at Waterloo, Wellington at Trafalgar (or was it Trafalgar at the Wellington?), Montgomery at El Alamein, Sandie Shaw at the Eurovision Song Contest – next on this honourable roll of glittering British victories is Brighton '87!

"Asimov, Bear, Kelly, Springer – I wonder if any of them are Scientologists?"

[Most of the above seems to have something to do with the short story Hugo. I think. DRL]

Mal Ashworth sent a change of address for "history's very latest neo-capitalist, idle nouveau riche D. (for Denarii) West, who nowadays talks more of Unit Trusts than of Hugo Nominations.... And then, of course, there's a COA for the Leeds Group As A Hole. Country cousins or not, we couldn't let the London lot get away with exojetsetting from the One Tun without doing something about it, so we moved too – no, not to the One Tun but to the Griffin. This is on Boar Lane, even nearer to the railway station than is the West Riding, but in the other direction (turn RIGHT when you come out of the station). The beer is 6p a pint dearer but you get a better class of hangover, as well as armchairs. So unprecedentedly popular has this move proved that even Michael Ashley has reappeared from under the van which

removed a certain portion of his dental portfolio. (Consequently, when we have exhausted the subject of Unit Trusts we talk quite a lot about teeth. It is an experience not to be missed, watching someone who still has L plates on his new false set trying to snarl and still keep the unaccustomed autonomous Hampstead Heath in their allotted places. Oh, we are a zany crowd.)

“Who is this ‘palaeolithic fan’ ‘Sid Barnes’ you report as turning up at Conception? I was unofficially in charge of Old Fart Liaison at the affair and I didn’t meet ‘Sid Barnes’. The only ‘Sid Barnes’ I have subsequently encountered is in a Vince Clarke write-up of Conception in the Daventry-published Proceedings of the Innermost Temple of the Most Secret Order of the Amazingly Elite Corps of the Purest of the Distilled Trufans of All Ages. Now Vince, if you haven’t sussed, is a darling man but lives in a parallel universe to the rest of us, inhabited by shadowy creatures with names like ‘Rachel Dorey’ and ‘Sid Barnes’ etc. For accredited primary sources, that is to say, Vincent is definitely not your man. But, for the historical record of *this* universe, there *was* at Conception a palaeolithic fan, long-time friend of George Airey, by the name of BERT WARNES. And I know he’s real – at 77, he’s probably considerably more real than I am – because he has just, at my request, produced a short article in appreciation of early 30s fan Douglas Mayer....”

[I eagerly await the 2000-word sequel to Mal’s letter, which will remind us of *when* the Leeds Group meets.]

George Hay: “Copy attached of Virago handout re Arthur C. Clarke Award. This handout was supposed to be available and promoted at the time of Fred Clarke’s official presentation to Margaret Atwood at the Shaw Theatre. In fact there was no sign of it; outside Fred’s actual presentation, there was no mention at the event of the roles of the SF Foundation, the BSFA or the International Science Policy Foundation. The Award judges were all given balcony seats so far from the platform that we would have needed a Moon Launcher to address to Atwood. And none of us were invited to the reception which I believe was held later. Boo-hoo! While we didn’t break our hearts over this, we all found the situation rather sour. Being of a persistent nature I did later get Virago’s new publicity lady – not responsible for the foul-up – to issue the handout as attached, mentioning the BSFA etc....”

[One drunken pundit hinted that Margaret Atwood was distinctly

underwhelmed by the £1000 award: after all, *The Handmaid's Tale* had just sold for a US paperback advance of \$605,000. DRL]

David R. Smith: “Now that you are going to chop down the mailing list, am I going to enter into a long spiel, pleading with you to carry on, or at least not to drop me from the list? As it happens, no. I enjoy *Ansible*, but I’m just not fannish enough to be able to put up a convincing case....”

[This continues with lashings of uncritical praise, enough to keep anyone on the list (though offbeat news or scandal would be even better). *Ansible* has never demanded signed certificates of fannishness – whatever that may be – and promises not to run the E-meter over prospective recipients. DRL]

W.E. Cooper: “I’m sorry you feel as you do regarding Ussher and his 4004 creation date. I do most sincerely believe that were you to read Genesis with an unbiased mind you would see that Ussher’s 4004 was the creation of man and not of the earth. As further proof of his data see the enclosed re Daniel’s visions ... they are right up to date. Regarding the other enclosures I trust you will find them interesting ... one must realize that the world is in an awful mess and Christ must come soon to restore law and order and so end all this sin and wickedness.”

[Letters like this arrive every so often, via the publishers of *Facts & Fallacies* and/or my UFO spoof. Mr Cooper’s proof is indeed earth-shattering: it seems Halley was born the year Archbishop Ussher died, and “We know it takes Halley’s Comet 76 years to complete one orbit but are you aware that if you add 2000 AD to Ussher’s 4004 BC and divide the total by 76 it goes exactly 79 times.” Since “1986 is actually the year 2000” this shows via devious intermediate steps that Jesus Christ will return on or before 26 June 1987. I rarely answer these letters, but some are entertaining: another correspondent has discovered after 25 years’ “archaeo-biology” that the brain works exactly like a cheap computer – it even has a keyboard, I’m not sure where – and can be reprogrammed in BASIC to improve your personality no end. Heigh-ho. DRL]

C.O.A.

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Sandwich Rd (21), Bourne, MA 02532, USA :: *Late entry – sorry.

Becon '87 Ghost of Honour Speech Patrick Parrinder

Ladies and gentlemen....

I want to make it quite plain that I am here under false pretences, and against my will. I have been given a few minutes to explain my presence here this morning, though I must tell you that it is as much of a surprise to me as it undoubtedly is to you. First of all, I am not the person that you may mistakenly think I am. I am not Mr Ian Watson, even though just at present I seem to be the inhabitant of his body. Mr Ian Watson is, I am told, a science-

fiction writer, with a certain admiration for some rather trifling books I once wrote. Whether his admiration will survive this experiment in which he and I have become so curiously entangled, I cannot say. As I am the present inhabitant of Mr Watson's body, he, I can only suppose, is currently making free with mine. Mr Watson, I am told, bears a certain physical resemblance to me in my sprightlier and younger days. But I must assure you that the brain that is speaking to you from inside his body is not his. It is mine.

I am trying to outline these confusing matters to you as clearly as possible. When I left home this morning, I distinctly remember the date. It was April 19th, 1932. I was being driven in a hired limousine, and with me in my briefcase was the speech I intended to give at a weekend conference run by the younger members of the Fabian Society. These conferences are rather jolly affairs, as they tend to attract a number of intelligent young men and pretty and intelligent young women. On the whole I find that the young women make more attentive listeners than the young men. The subject of my paper was to be "The World of our Grandchildren" – though from my point of view, as I am 65, it would have been "The World of our Great-Grandchildren". I wonder what has happened to that paper. Perhaps at this very moment Mr Ian Watson is reading it to an audience somewhere – though if he should find himself at that Fabian conference, he would do better to tear it up and speak from his own experience. Mr Watson, I understand, is almost young enough to be one of my great-grand-children.

Now when I am in my own body I am a notoriously incompetent speaker. I fiddle with my tie, lose my place, drop my notes, and my voice either dwindles into inaudibility or is mercilessly distorted by the public-address system. If I do not have a speech all written down beforehand I am left wordless, tongue-tied, squeaking and gibbering. Happily on this occasion I do not seem to be in so much of a funk as usual. Perhaps Mr Watson, like my friend Bernard Shaw, is a more gifted mountebank than I am. Certainly his body, unlike mine, feels relatively calm and collected on a public platform.

The fact is that I am a little nervous, but for a rather different reason. I understand that not only are you an audience of my great-grandchildren, so to speak, but you are an audience of "science-fiction fans". "Science fiction" did not exist in my day unless you count some horribly cheap magazines published by a swindling American called Hugo Gernsback. I know about Mr Gernsback and his little ways, since he is in the habit of reprinting my stories

without my permission and without paying any fees. But even Mr Gernsback in his wildest dreams could not have imagined this extraordinary Convention in which I find myself. I have learned to my horror that this gathering includes people who count themselves, in this year of 1987, among my most loyal and enthusiastic readers. I can only hope that what I have to say will bring them to their senses. I have to tell you that the fantastic tales of scientific inventions which I wrote in my youth were the merest apprentice-work, on which I cut my teeth as a writer before turning to more serious tasks. I have asked to be allowed to speak to you so that I can urge you to give up reading scientific romance and turn to the serious business facing the world. I want to ask you to turn from reading Science Fiction to building an Utopian World State.

Before I explain my ideas about the World State and the Open Conspiracy, let me try to say in a little more detail how I came to be here. I think I heard the person who introduced me suggesting that I might have travelled to this Convention in a time machine. I am afraid that he was guilty of a ridiculous error. The time machine of which I wrote in my youth was only a speculative device. Incidentally, I am told that Mr Ian Watson once published a story called "The Very Slow Time Machine". If this was meant as a flattering allusion to my work it has sadly misfired. The whole point about time machines is that, if they existed, they would move very fast. In any case, I did not travel here on a time machine. I came here by car.

When I arrived, another member of your Committee suggested that I might have come by the method described in a little story I once wrote, "The Stolen Body". It is true that I seem to have stolen Mr Watson's body. However, my story was written so long ago that I have not the slightest idea whether it is relevant or not. As I have said, I came here by limousine. I used to enjoy driving myself, in a jerky and approximate fashion, but nowadays when I have somewhere to get to I employ a chauffeur. The young man who turned up to drive me this morning seemed perfectly normal. As we drove along I was too busy making some last-minute amendments to my speech to notice the landscape. I may have nodded off for a minute or two. When I woke up I was puzzled to find that the chauffeur addressed me as "Mr Watson".

Whether I have stolen Mr Watson's body, or whether he has stolen mine, is I confess something of a mystery to me. His is a fairly agreeable sort of body, though when I caught sight of it in the driving mirror I did suffer a most

unpleasant shock. Also, I begin to feel some anxiety as to what Mr Watson is up to in my body – assuming that is where he is, and that we are not caught up in some intricate game of physical musical chairs. I hope he takes good care of my body, while he is inside it. He will need to give it regular exercise, fresh air, and a carefully controlled diet – since I am, or was, a diabetic. He will find my body’s sexual urges a little troublesome, I dare say. He will need to seek out attractive and intelligent members of the opposite sex in order to give these urges some relief. I hope this necessity does not put Mr Watson under too much strain. He is probably accustomed to a very different and much duller sort of life.

Now let me come to the real reasons why I wanted to be allowed to speak to you. When my chauffeur addressed me as “Mr Watson”, I asked him what the date was and where we were. He said it was 1987 and that we were driving through the outskirts of Birmingham. I confess that I was not as elated by this as I might have hoped. In fact I was conscious of considerable dismay. Looking around me, I soon realized that the world of my grandchildren was a world in which people could not possibly have read any of my serious books. If they had read my serious books they would have planned and organized and cleared away the dirt and ugliness I glimpsed around me. You see, to me your world of 1987 is rather like my world of 1932. All my life I have dreamed of an ordered and spacious society, an educated and disciplined world of the future. The alternative, I believed, was stark catastrophe. But I arrive in 1987 and I find that you are content to muddle along in the same wasteful and outdated fashion as my contemporaries did.

It is true that before I came on this platform I asked your Committee what mankind had achieved in the past 55 years. Their answers at first were difficult to understand, but finally I made out that they were speaking of space-rockets, atom bombs, and electronic brains. Perhaps they were disappointed by my response. I had expected that you would have built the new world order, and brought about world peace. All you have done is to develop various inventions which are anticipated either in my books, or in those of one or two of my forward-looking contemporaries. Moreover, your scientists have been content to leave control of the world in the hands of the politicians and military men. Scientific research as a result is largely misdirected. It is plain to me that your age is in as much need of my ideas of

the World State and the Open Conspiracy as were my contemporaries.

I feel that I am coming to the end of my allotted time on this platform, but I have not even begun to address you on these urgent matters. I would like to speak of the World State, of World education, World history, the World encyclopaedia and the Open Conspiracy. I would like to discuss how we are to stop *homo sapiens* from pursuing his present blind and suicidal path. I will not develop these matters further this morning. But this afternoon I intend to ask your chairman to suspend your regular proceedings so that we can debate them fully. If I am not here to do so, you will know that I have got my own body back and that I am busy expounding the same themes to the 1932 conference of the Young Fabians. You will, no doubt, wish to carry on this crucial debate in my absence.

Let me end, however, on a more personal note. Of all the many science-fiction writers who have claimed to be prophets, I am the first one to have actually visited the future. It is, I admit, a rather unnerving experience. But once I have got my own body back from Mr Watson it is plain what I shall do. I shall set to work on a novel describing this queer world of 1987, how it came into existence and where it is leading. Then I will travel round the world and unfold the results of my researches to Mr Roosevelt and Mr Stalin. No doubt they will see the necessity of amending their policies instantly. Now I realize that if I tell my readers *exactly* what I have seen in the year 1987 they will not believe me. I shall have to make some of it up. I shall certainly not mention anything so undignified as my appearance at this Convention.

I think I shall call this new novel of mine *The Shape Of Things To Come*. Rather a good title, don't you think? I expect it to be published in 1933, and I shall then talk to Mr Alexander Korda about the film rights. Before I go I must confess that, after all, I am beginning to enjoy this world of 1987. There is something pleasantly informal about it. Some of your young ladies would, I suspect, make extremely congenial company. But I think I had better go back and write *The Shape Of Things To Come* before Mr Ian Watson steals my idea. I am sure he is an expert on 1987 but he would be bound to make a frightful mess of writing about it. Besides, I am beginning to find his body rather a tight and uncomfortable fit. In my mature years I have needed a good deal more room to bulge and sag and flop about in than Mr Watson's body seems to provide.

By the way, I see that I must be a little more modest than you may have thought, since I have still to tell you who I am. My name probably means as little to most of you as does Mr Watson's to whatever audience he is currently addressing himself. But, ladies and gentlemen, my name is – or was – H.G. Wells.

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[Patrick Parrinder scripted the above speech for Becon Ghost of Honour H.G. Wells, who as indicated in the text was indeed played by Ian Watson ... whose aspect, manner and squeaks of indignation were held to be highly authentic. Dave Langford]

Continental Calamities

Gosh, there's been some stormy weather in Eurofandom. Two press releases follow....

Why John Brunner Will Not Be At The French National SF Con (by JB):
“I have attended and enjoyed many SF cons in France. After a period of some years during which they were not very well organized, the one at Lille in September 1986 made a most favourable impression on me, and when I received a verbal invitation to the 1987 con I promptly accepted.

“Much water subsequently flowed under the bridge, including a change of venue, but I let six months or so elapse before trying to find out what in the world was going on. I still don't know.

“My friend and colleague Ian Watson informs me that he, and other people in Britain, have received progress reports – which state, apparently, that I am going to be present. I'd have been interested to see copies of these PRs. In fact, all I have ever received from the organizers is a one-page flyer and a sheet of letterhead blank save for the address.

“I had gone to some slight trouble. The possibility arose of my combining a trip to the Montpellier con with Beneluxcon the following weekend, which would greatly have reduced the financial burden on both committees. Unfortunately the Dutch organizers had to withdraw their invitation, owing to lack of funds. On 1 June, having received a letter to say so, I wrote as a

matter of urgency to M. Gilles Murat asking for written confirmation that during the con I would be teaching at a writers' workshop; supported by it, I planned to ask for a British Council subvention.

“Although I wrote in French, he didn't bother to answer.

“I wrote again on 25 June. He still didn't answer.

“In the meantime I learned from Ian Watson that other people invited from Britain had been rung up to discuss details of travel arrangements. Two weeks ago he further told me that a M. Pierre-Paul Durastanti, who had spoken to him on the phone, had promised to contact me within a few days.

“That didn't happen, either.

“I consider the committee to have behaved with extreme discourtesy, and I wish it to be known that anyone who goes to Montpellier in the expectation of meeting me there will feel let down, as I do at this moment. VERB. SAP.”
[JKHB]

[Old-time *Ansible* readers will know that this is the cue for Harry Harrison to write in and controvert... Your editor would also like to hear from M. Durastanti, who begged innumerable manuscripts for wondrous SF projects in 1983, and has yet to return any, pay for any, or answer my “What the hell's happening?” query dated September 1984. DRL]

Cheating In SEFF (by Ahrvid Engholm): “The 1987 race in the Scandinavian-European Fan Fund (SEFF) has caused one of the greatest scandals ever in Swedish fandom. SEFF works like TAFF and other fan funds, and sends fans between Scandinavian countries and the rest of Europe. The 1987 race aimed for Conspiracy, the worldcon in Brighton, and the ‘winner’ was decided by substantial cheating.

“Official Swedish administrator figures claim that out of a total of 229 votes cast, the Swede Anders Bellis defeated the Norwegian candidate Johan Schimanski with 112 votes to 107. (In the final round of counting the Australian system is used. There was actually a third candidate, Jan Risheden.)

“However, a few hours before the deadline Schimanski had a majority of about 20 votes!. It appears that the Bellis campaign phoned around for new

votes the day of the deadline, scraping up a majority for themselves by ‘proxies’. The SEFF ballot is very clear on this point: votes must be signed by the voter – no proxies. Even more of a scandal was the fact that the Swedish SEFF administrator Maths Claesson personally helped the Bellis campaign. Just before the deadline he informed them that they were losing, and forwarded [AE’s word. Promoted? Suggested? DRL] the idea of using last-minute proxies to change the result.

“Here are a few lines from an interview with Maths Claesson made by the Swedish SF newsletter FANYTT:

“*Claesson*: Yes, I informed them about the votes just before the deadline. A number of votes were delivered by proxies, and I accepted them. *Fanytt [i.e. Engholm]*: Can you say how many votes were delivered by proxies the day of and the day before the deadline? *Claesson*: No, I don’t want to. *Fanytt*: Why? *Claesson*: I tell the final results of the voting, nothing more. *Fanytt*: We estimate that 15-20 votes were phoned for just before the deadline. Can you confirm or deny this? *Claesson*: (silence).

“The affair has aroused a cry of shame [sic] in Swedish fandom. There’s pressure building up to ‘overrule’ the administrator’s acts and decisions, and declare the Norwegian Johan Schimanski as winner. The British SEFF administrator Jim Barker, who had nothing to do with the alleged cheating, has expressed his deep concern, suggesting that the whole race should be declared void.

“Meanwhile, a great Scandinavian fuss is expected at Conspiracy, and even legal actions for fraud.” [AE]

... Oh dear, here we go again. Always something new out of Sweden. “Further details reach me every day,” Ahrvid adds bloodthirstily, “like the Bellis campaign stating themselves on the afternoon of the deadline day that they then had 94-95 votes.” Nothing so far received here reflects badly on Anders Bellis himself, which is worth bearing in mind should he make the trip. I also note that *Ansible*’s desultory coverage of Swedish upsets can seem one-sided because usually only AE sends reports: there’s supposed to be a rival press release from AB, but I haven’t seen it.

For the opposition, Kaj Harju tells me that “there is some facts quite wrong (and most people are sure that Engholm is mad) ... very few fans in Sweden

want anything to do with him and it is hard for him to know things as they actually are”. Most of KH’s assertions are not quite to the point: AE has been voted Swedish Fugghead of 1986 in a poll run by *Kolon* (AB’s fanzine); there is a mysterious counter-allegation about Norwegian block voting; “AE states that he is working with LFP/Nova [John-Henri Holmberg’s publishing outfit, where MC and AB work] – that’s wrong, he has been refusing to give back the keys since they kicked him out early this year”; AE is guilty of vandalism and assault at Swedish cons; etc. KH successfully challenges a couple of AE’s more strained interpretations of “evidence”, but doesn’t address himself to the central issue.

What evidence? Reading the “scandal” issue of *Fanytt* in this light, I boggled: “It so happens that [AE] is a freelance employee of the same firm that the SEFF administrator Maths Claesson works for, LFP publishers in Stockholm, and we have our own keys to their office. One day when we paid it a visit, there were all the SEFF ballots in a corner!” Some are reproduced, clearly “proxies” or votes received by phone. I can’t – despite AE’s claim – find an explicit prohibition of telephone voting on the ballot form, and suspect it’s harmless for administrators to accept (personally) phoned votes from fans known to them. But besides such worrying items as ballots apparently signed by John-Henri Holmberg on behalf of his relatives, MC does seem to have admitted that AB’s clinching votes were drummed up at the last minute as the result of a self-confessed leak. Which is definitely Not On.

(Fandom’s amateur lawyers will be glad to learn that even more than TAFF’s, the minimalist SEFF rules rely heavily on good will and contain loopholes you could drive a Chris Foss spaceship through: no mention of confidentiality or administrative impartiality, and only an implication – the word “Signature” against a blank space on the form – that votes should be signed. Similarly, the rules don’t prohibit administrators from setting fire to any ballots they don’t agree with. You can’t cover everything.)

The general level of abuse suggests that all this is linked with the long-term, pan-Swedish fan feud. KH sends pages of smears about AE but fails to dispute the accuracy of the Claesson/Engholm exchange above. Neither does AE confine himself to facts: *Fanytt* offers disgraceful statements like “Bellis despite cheating didn’t have a majority according to the Australian system (111 is less than half of 227)”. The hint that AB personally cheated may be an accident of syntax, but the Australian ballot is slyly misrepresented (by

quoting the total votes cast – now amended to 227 – rather than the 219 remaining after the third candidate’s elimination. 111 is not less than half of 219) in order to make it seem that MC also fiddled the counting.

At least we managed to get through the TAFF controversies without anyone sneaking into administrators’ offices to conduct searches....

Alien Christmas Terry Pratchett

Becon '87 After-Dinner Speech

This is a great idea, isn't it? So much nicer to have Christmas at this time of the year instead of at the end of December, when the shops are always so crowded. Reminds me of those clips you used to get in The Queen's Christmas broadcast to the Commonwealth back in the 50s, with the traditional shot of Australians eating chilled prawns, roast turkey and Christmas pudding on Bondi beach. There was always a Christmas tree planted in the sand. It was decorated with what I now realize was probably vomit.

Last week I got this fortune cookie sort of printout which said *Your Role Is Eater*. I thought fantastic, I like role-playing games, I've never been an Eater before, I wonder how many hit points it has?

And then I saw another printout underneath it which said that at 2200 my role was After Dinner Speaker, which is something you'd expect to find only in the very worst dungeon, a monster lurching around in a white frilly shirt looking for an audience. Three hours later the explorers are found bored rigid, their coffee stone cold, the brick-thick after dinner mint melted in their hands.

That reminds me why I gave up Dungeons and Dragons. There were too many monsters. Back in the old days you could go around a dungeon without meeting much more than a few orcs and lizard men, but then everyone started inventing monsters and pretty soon it was a case of, bugger the magic sword, what you really needed to be the complete adventurer was the Marcus L. Rowland fifteen-volume guide to Monsters and the ability to read very, very

fast, because if you couldn't recognize them from the outside you pretty soon got the chance to try looking at them from the wrong side of their tonsils.

Anyway, this bit of paper said I was to talk about Alien Christmases, which was handy, because I always like to know what subject it is I'm straying away from. I'll give it a try, I've been a lot of bad things in my time although, praise the Lord, I've never been a *Blake's 7* fan.

Not that Christmases aren't pretty alien in any case. It's a funny old thing, but whenever you see pictures of Santa Claus he's always got the same toys in his sack. A teddy, a dolly, a trumpet and a wooden engine. Always. Sometimes he also has a few red and white striped candy canes. Heaven knows why, you never see them in the shops, and if any kid asks for a wooden engine these days it means he lives at the bottom of a hole on a desert island and has never heard of television, because last Christmas my daughter got a lot of toys, a few cars, a plane, stuff like that, and the thing about them was this. Every single one of them was a robot.

Not just a simple robot. I know what robots are supposed to look like, I had a robot when I was a kid. You could tell it was a robot, it had two cogwheels going round in its chest and its eyes lit up when you turned its key, and why not, so would yours. And I had a Magic Robot ... well, we all had one, didn't we? And when we got fed up with the smug way he spun around on his mirror getting all the right answers we cut them out and stuck them down differently for the sheer hell of it, gosh, weren't we devils.

But these new robots are subversive. They are robots in disguise.

There's this sort of robot war going on around us. I haven't quite figured it out yet, although the kids seem incredibly well-informed on the subject. It appears that you can tell the good robots from the bad robots because the good robots have got human heads, a bit like that scene in *Saturn Five*, you remember, where the robot gets the idea that the best way to look human is hack someone's head off and stick it on your antenna. They all look like an American footballer who's been smashed through a Volkswagen.

They go around saving the universe from another bunch of robots, saving the universe in this case consisting of great laser battles. The universe doesn't look that good by the time they've saved it, but by golly, it's saved.

Anyway, none of her presents looked like it was supposed to. A collection of

plastic rocks turned out to be Rock Lords, with exciting rocky names like Boulder and Nugget. Yes, another bunch of bloody robots.

In fact the only Christmassy thing in our house was the crib, and I'm not certain that at a touch of a button it wouldn't transform and the Mary and Josephoids would battle it out with the Three Kingons.

Weirdest of the lot, though, is Kraak, Prince of Darkness. At £14.95 he must be a bargain for a prince of darkness. He's a Zoid, probably from the planet Zoid in the galaxy of Zoid, because while the models are pretty good the storyline behind them is junk, the science fiction equivalent of a McDonalds hamburger. I like old Kraak, though, because it only took the whole of Christmas morning to put him together. He's made of red and grey plastic, an absolute miracle of polystyrene technology, and he looks like a chicken that's been dead for maybe three months. Stuff two batteries up his robot bum and he starts to terrorize the universe as advertised, and he does it like this, what he does is, he walks about nine inches ver – ry slowly and painfully, while dozens of little plastic pistons thrash about, and then he falls over.

Kraak has got the kind of instinct for survival that makes a kamikaze pilot look like the Green Cross Code man. I don't know what the terrain is like up there on Zoid, but he finds it pretty difficult to travel over the average living room carpet. No wonder he terrorizes the universe, it must be pretty frightening, having a thousand tons of war robot collapse on top of you and lie there with its little feet pathetically going round and round. You want to commit suicide in sympathy. Oh, and he's got this other fiendish weapon, his head comes off and rolls under the sofa. Pretty scary, that. We've tested him out with other Zoids, and I'm here to tell you that the technology of robot fighting machines, basically, is trying to fall over in front of your opponent and trip him up. It's a hard job, because the natural instinct of all Zoids is to fall over as soon as you take your hand away.

But even Kraak has problems compared with a robot that was proudly demonstrated to us by the lad next door. A Transformer, I think it was. It isn't just made of one car or plane, it's a whole fleet of vehicles which, when disaster threatens, assemble themselves into one great big fighting machine. That's the theory, anyway. My bet is that at the moment of truth the bloody thing will have to go into battle half finished because its torso is grounded at Gatwick and its left leg is stuck in a traffic jam outside Luton.

We recently saw *Santa Claus: the Movie*. Anyone else seen it? Pretty dreadful, the only laugh is where they apparently let the reindeer snort coke in order to get them to fly. No wonder Rudolf had a red nose, he spends half the time with a straw stuck up it.

Anyway, you get to see Santa's workshop. Just as I thought. Every damn toy is made of wood, painted in garish primary colours. It might have been possible, in fact I suppose it's probably inevitable, that if you pressed the right switch on the rocking horses and jolly wooden dolls they turned into robots, but I doubt it. I looked very carefully over the whole place and there wasn't a single plastic extrusion machine. Not a single elf looked as though he knew which end to hold a soldering iron. None of the really traditional kids' toys were there – no Rambos, no plastic models of the Karate kid, none of those weird little spelling and writing machines designed to help your child talk like a NASA launch controller with sinus trouble and a mental age of five.

Now, I've got a theory to account for this. Basically, it is that Father Christmases are planet-specific and we've got the wrong one.

I suspect it was the atom bomb tests in the early 50s that warped the, you know, the fabric of time and space and that. Secret tests at the North Pole opened up this, you know, sort of hole between the dimensions, and all the stuff made by our Father Christmas is somehow diverted to Zoid or wherever and we get all the stuff he makes, and since he's a robot made out of plastic he only makes the things he's good at.

The people it's really tough on are the kids on Zoid. They wake up on Christmas morning, unplug themselves from their recharger units, clank to the end of the bed (pausing only to fall over once or twice) playfully zapping one another with their megadeath lasers, look into their portable pedal extremity enclosures and what do they find? Not the playful, cuddly death-dealing instruments of mayhem that they have been led to expect, but wooden trains, trumpets, rag dolls and those curly red and white sugar walking sticks that you never see in real life. Toys that don't need batteries. Toys that you don't have put together. Toys with varnish on instead of plastic. Alien toys.

And, because of this amazing two-way time warp thingy, our kids get the rest. Weird plastic masters of the universe which are to the imagination what sandpaper is to a tomato. Alien toys. Maybe it's being done on purpose, to

turn them all into Zoids. Like the song says – you’d better watch out.

I don’t think it will work, though. I took a look into my daughter’s dolls’-house. Old Kraak has been hanging out there since his batteries ran out and his mega cannons fell off. Mr T has been there for a couple of years, ever since she found out he could wear Barbie’s clothes, and I see that some plastic cat woman is living in the bathroom.

I don’t know why, but what I saw in there gave me hope. Kraak was having a tea party with a mechanical dog, two Playpeople and three dolls. He wasn’t trying to zap *anyone*. No matter what Santa Claws throws at us, we can beat him....

And now your mummies and daddies are turning up to take you home; be sure to pick up your balloons and Party Loot bags, and remember that Father Christmas will soon be along to give presents to all the good boys and girls who’ve won awards. *(Terry Pratchett)*

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This postprandial speech from Beccon’s “Christmas Dinner” helped delay the present Ansible: for several weeks I gave up in a fit of pique at Terry’s vile act of sending a spare copy to Matrix. But then I thought of all my non-BSFA readers, and couldn’t resist using the only item ever (in those early days) to reach Ansible on disk.... Dave Langford

Infinitely Improbable

Secrets Of The Universe Nearly Revealed: Bill Gibson, briefly reduced to speechlessness, passes on a letter inviting him to contribute to a new SFWA book on how to write skiffy. “We hope that you might write something for us on the topic of **writing cyberpunk sf.**” (Their boldface.) I have a fond vision of the simultaneous letter to Brian Aldiss, asking him to bash out a brief guide to **writing Helliconia trilogies.**

Condom: Eastercon 1988 is **Follycon** at the Adelphi Hotel, Liverpool, with GoH Gordon Dickson and Gwyneth Jones, FGoH Greg Pickersgill. £6 supp/£12 att to 104 Pretoria Rd, Patchway, Bristol. Easter 1989 will be

Contrivance at the Hotel de France, St Helier, Jersey: GoH Anne McCaffrey and M. John Harrison. £6 supp/£12 att to 63 Drake Rd, Chessington, Surrey. **Nolacon 88** (New Orleans worldcon) now has Linda Pickersgill as reluctant UK agent (7a Lawrence Rd, S. Ealing, W5 4XJ): “I was drunk at the time,” she explains.

“It’s Ufos By Royal Appointment!” says a clipping sent by bibliophile David Garnett. “Head-in-the-Stars Prince Charles has joined a galaxy of celebrity space-watchers who believe in little green men. He’s at the centre of a new cosmic controversy after graciously accepting weirdo sci-fi novels by the founder of the evil Scientology cult L. Ron Hubbard. The mystical Hubbard trilogy *Mission Earth* – stories of futuristic heroes zapping across the universe in flying saucers – is now sitting on the Prince’s personal bookshelves,” etc. “Sick and dangerous ... corrupting works ... the wacky Prince ...” *Ansible* just can’t match the professional journalistic standards of this *Sunday Sport* coverage. [14-6-87]

False Pseudonym Horror: This is complicated, so pay attention. “Sue Denim” is a deeply obvious pseudonym, used by US author Lew Shiner to be rude about people anonymously in *Cheap Truth*. Unfortunately the “Sue Denim” who contributed to Charles Platt’s *REM:8* proved to be the pseudonym of somebody else altogether, provoking massive wrath from L. Shiner since, although nobody is supposed to know Sue Denim is *his* pseudonym, he feels his literary reputation has been shattered by this impostor’s publication of work under his name ... I mean, not under his name. (Info: Charles Platt.)

Obit: this sad news is old, but I can’t omit the 19 May death of Alice Sheldon, alias James Tiptree Jr. She was 71; her husband was 84, blind and bedridden; it was seemingly by mutual agreement that she shot him and then herself. Old-time fan and *Other Worlds* editor Bea Mahaffey died of emphysema on 28 March, aged 60: she was fondly remembered by many older fans here in Britain. Richard Wilson (perhaps best known for *The Girls From Planet 5* and the Nebula winner “Mother to the World”) died of cancer at 66 on 29 March.

Guts! is the Langford/“Grant” successor to *Earthdoom!* and sends up the naff aspects of horror novels. Good old Nick Austin at Grafton will publish it within decades. My collaborator sometimes strayed away from the genre:

“Don’t you remember how you were built only to help humanity, how you are bound by the famous Laws of Robotics?” “Yes: I mustn’t enjoy myself too much while harming human beings, I mustn’t fall around laughing when human beings harm themselves, and above all I mustn’t let myself come to any harm.” “I told you not to buy that cheap Ansible software,” muttered Whitlow....

Togetherness Dept: Jerry Kaufman & Suzanne Tompkins at last got married on 16 May, in Seattle; ditto Paul Heskett and Angie on 12 March, in Reading; Maureen Porter was miffed by my failure to report her engagement to Paul Kincaid; Jan Huxley will shortly marry Paul Didntquitecatchhisname.

Trivia Corner: “By April 1984,” says a quiz-card issued to promote Wm Younger’s curiously unpleasing beer, “how many different beer mats had Tim Stannard of Birmingham collected?” Could this be fandom’s Tim Stannard, who, being a solicitor, likes to dress up in Nazi uniform at conventions? Indeed it is he. (Answer: a puny 28,400.)

Nebulas, for those who want to know these things, went to Orson Scott Card’s *Squeaker For The Dead*, Lucius Shepard’s “R&R”, Kate Wilhelm’s “The Girl Who Fell Into The Sky”, Greg Bear’s “Tangents” ... and Isaac Asimov is at last able to stop dropping hints about the SFWA “Grand Master” award.

Closet Strippers: Our local bookshop is doing a comics promotion and promises the attendance of two authors who I hadn’t realized were comics megastars, Ben “American Flagg” Bova and Harry “Swamp Thing” Harrison....

Club Stuff: “I suppose you know all about the York SF Group?” asks Sue Thomason, correctly expecting the answer No. “We meet on Wednesdays in The Golden Ball, Bishophill, York. But not *every* Wednesday – phone Liz Sourbut (York 646827) or me (425873) for details. Recent activities included a video evening, a group visit to Star Trek IV, and a beertalk with Michael Scott Rohan (nice man; he told me I’d got charisma; he can come back again *anytime* ...).” Leeds: see the Ashworth Testament (letters, above). Reading: erstwhile pub meetings have quietly died, but there’s a massive flexible response capability whereby visiting fans can usually precipitate an instant gathering at the ICL Club close to the station, by phoning the Hoares (0734 588570) or me (665804).

Serious & Constructive: William Wheeler's *SF International* (see A48) has been discontinued as a magazine, but WW plans "to use stories already bought for SFI 3, 4, 5 & 6 in a trade pb anthology", and if it succeeds will do more. Last issue I noted that asking for the offered freebie copy of *Fantasy Review* resulted only in demands for money: later I was also inundated with *FRs*, plus further and increasingly reproachful invoices (I think this is called inertia selling). Despite such shrewd marketing, *FR* is now collapsing into an annual hardback volume at \$57.50, more than twice the old price of a year's subscription (10 copies). I wish them luck. *Sex In Space* was the triffic working title of the anthology *Demon Lovers*, now contracted to NEL and looking out for tasteful stories which can credibly be assimilated under either title: Alex Stewart, 47 St Johns Green, Colchester, Essex, CO2 7EZ. The amateur *Cassandra Anthology* folds with issue 13/14 in late September (overwork, lack of publishable submissions).

Bob Shaw Menaced By Nightmarish, Glistening Insect! This scene was the subject of a large drawing in *The Independent* [26 May], the insect being a metaphor for depressive side-effects of a slimming pill called Ponderax, which left Bob badly blocked on a novel – until he worked out what was wrong, swore off the pills, and as a happier side-effect sold the whole tale of woe to a national newspaper.

At Last, The 1954 Show! The Spring *Skeptical Inquirer* has a newish theory of the deeply implausible UFO book *Flying Saucers From Mars* by "Cedric Allingham" (1954). Several independent items of evidence point to an amateur astronomer who's been suspected of several naughty hoaxes, and who is also the only person ever to claim he's met the elusive "Allingham". Step forward, Patrick Moore....

Fans Across The World raised £300 at Easter, to assist poverty-stricken travellers from far climes to Conspiracy.

Chuch Harris Reports: "[Bryan Barrett] tells me that Lucy Huntzinger now has a small tattoo of Orca, the Killer Whale in a very intimate place indeed. It is inadvisable to holler 'Thar she blows' unless one is wearing a tarpaulin jacket. This was jolly interesting ... Bryan, you must understand, has not actually *seen* the tattoo so far, but like the tenth planet between Uranus and Pluto, he *knows* it is there."

Aussiecon 85: accounts (30 June) show \$A8886.59 profit.

Was This The Greatest Man Who Ever Lived? A photo of Maxim Jakubowski (provenance unknown) adorned this spoof *Private Eye* story about Le Corbusier, showing that (at least to the *Eye*) Maxim looks like the epitome of a French architect....

Adelphi Horror: looks as though Follycon will have to take care, since there was lots of theft at the Sol III Trekcon on 1-4 May. Rog Peyton reportedly lost £360 and Gytha North £130 when the dealers' room was busted on the Saturday night; £450 of Chris Chivers's sound gear also vanished, and another £140 in tools and costumes. *Ansible's* mole says, "we suspect h*t*l st*ff...." Surprisingly, Beccon lost some fairly expensive sound mixing gear despite determined security organization.

Mother Of God, Is This The End For Ansible? Wait and see.



Hazel's Language Lessons: Breton

anal breath

koan evening meal

stank numerous

halo spittle

gall (1) French; (2) stammering

ANSIBLE 50, 94 LONDON ROAD, READING, UK, RG1 5AU

Coda: Cloud Chamber 37

October 1987

Despite plans for a post-Worldcon Ansible in 1987 as mentioned below, this issue of my long-running APAzine Cloud Chamber was the only other fanzine I published before lapsing into a silence that continued until mid-1989. Below, therefore, is all the 1987 Worldcon coverage that I could muster for my own publications. But see also Chris Evans's symposium Conspiracy Theories – another free ebook download at taff.org.uk – for “Strange Vibrations”, my extended jeremiad on the utter Hubbardness of the event.

Remember Conspiracy '87? It took me several cough-ridden weeks to recover: I finally consulted the doctor and was told that my unfortunate bronchi had picked up a dose of some convention-borne bacillus, possibly scientology. A quick course of antibiotics has now left the offending tubes (if you'll pardon the expression ...) clear. Meanwhile, without having done much remunerative work since the Worldcon, I've been revising my “serious SF” and fannish speeches for publication (in *Xyster* and *Pulp* respectively), drafting an article for Chris Evans (of which more below), lovingly revising a blistering letter to the Managing Director of Metropole Hotels (again, more below), and thinking about the future of *Ansible*.

Ansible 51? I'd like to issue this, with many “snapshot” convention reports from many viewpoints: perhaps only a few hundred words each, describing some high or low point, or any suitably bizarre incident. If you are reading this and were there, the subtle meaning is that I'd be interested in a bit from you. The deadline is, as ever, Real Soon Now.

Some of you have intelligently rushed in reports without being prompted. Thanks.

The Metropole Hotel: No one who was at Conspiracy can have failed to notice the disastrous hostility of what was euphemistically called “upper management” and in fact consisted solely of the General Manager, the Mr Fred Hutchings who by Monday night was famous in story and song. (The

rest of the staff tried to be nice, difficult when enforcing such daft policies as that resident con members couldn't charge snacks or drinks to their rooms even when said room bills had been guaranteed with charge or credit cards. By thus banning editors' friendly habit of buying huge rounds on their expense accounts, this cost the hotel some thousands of pounds....)

Usually one expects time and staff turnover to bring a better regime, but the appalling twerp Hutchings seems determined to make the Metropole unusable for the foreseeable future. Although he's entrenched in the system (as former owner, and now a shareholder with a buy-back option), it seems worth complaining: to Mr M K Bolland, Managing Director, Metropole Hotels, PO Box 335, National Exhibition Centre, Birmingham, B40 1PT, telex 336129. Copy complaints to Katie Hoare, 45 Tilehurst Road, Reading, Berks, RG1 7TT – she's compiling a dossier at the request of Brighton authorities who are scared stiff by the thought of future business being driven away. I had a nice letter of apology from the aforementioned Mr Bolland, promising that the issues would be “discussed” with the loathsome Hutchings. Don't hold your breath.

One point of complaint was too hot for inclusion in official Worldcon committee protests (and I couldn't go into it since for me it was just hearsay): the fact that Hutchings was pissed out of his skull while giving some of his more controversial performances. Eye-witness Bernie Peek has happily risen to the occasion and sent in a letter about the elderly drunk in a suit who harassed him for no apparent reason, and was later identified to him as a General Manager, ho ho. Cool, impartial Katie Hoare was heard to remark, “Bernie is a *real star*.”

L. R*n H*bb*rd: I needn't describe the depressingly high level of Hubbard promotion at Conspiracy. It must have preyed on me more than I'd supposed (the “official Hugo photo call” ruse was the last straw, luring the winners into a Hubbard/New Era party which several would have preferred to avoid): there was an unfortunate scene at Monday's SFWA binge, which generated many conflicting accounts. The actuality went something like this:

LANGFORD (very tired and emotional, and hearing someone drone on about L. Ron Hubbard's Writers of the Future for the millionth time): Oh, fuck L. Ron Hubbard!

FRED HARRIS (famous Author Services Inc publicist of L. Ron

Hubbard, rushing suddenly forward): YOU'RE ALL WASHED UP, LANGFORD! YOU'LL NEVER WORK IN THIS FIELD AGAIN! (Hurls dregs of drink at swaying blasphemer.)

LANGFORD: (Hurls contents of full glass at Harris.)

After which, I fear, it all passes into alcoholic oblivion. I was horrified by the notion that, even in a spirit of irony, I could have kissed Fred Harris on the cheek as reported.... The tale duly grew in the telling, acquiring details which even my own dim recollection can tell are wrong. Charles Platt has published a somewhat slanted account in his *REM*: this ascribes a specific grudge to me (saying that I felt my two fan Hugos had been "contaminated" by Algis Budrys's commercial for Hubbard projects at the start of the ceremony – come off it, Charles), omits the fact that the hurling of drinks was initiated by Fred Harris, and adds insult to injury by stating that I missed ... do I really have to call in eye-witnesses who afterwards tried to persuade FH to remove his soggy jacket and calm down?

Actually I'm not proud of this incident, and attempts to clarify it begin (in view of later fannish reactions) to look like personal trumpet-blowing. Oh, it was sort of nice to be applauded as a "hero" by embarrassing numbers of both fans and professionals ... but such jollity tends to obscure the issue of whether the Hubbard crew's "takeover" of the Conspiracy image is supportable, and whether it should have been allowed to go half as far as it did. (The committee did at least resist the merry idea of a special additional pre-convention mailing to all members, to be paid for by New Era Publications of course, urging everyone to vote a Hugo to Hubbard's *Black Genesis*.)

Chris Evans, initially billed as on the strength of L. Ron Hubbard's Writers of the Future, is much more of a hero than I: he soberly decided that this was a bad thing and, although he could certainly have used their money, refused to take it. (I hear Lisa Tuttle made a similar decision.) Chris plans a fanzine exploring the general disquiet ... tentatively titled *Conspiracy Theories*. Contributors are said to include Malcolm Edwards, Chris Priest, myself and the Mexican committee (who, for reasons connected with Budrys's tactless Hubbard flag-waving before the Hugos, are withdrawing the invitation for him to be their Guest of Honour [*That must have been the heat of the moment, with second thoughts prevailing. Anyway, Algis Budrys attended*

and was a popular GoH – DRL, 1997.]). All enquiries to Flat 2, 191 Anerley Road, Penge, London, SE20 8EL.

Peter Nicholls writes: “Your amnesia re Fred Harris is deeply disappointing to everyone. Had he threatened to put a rattlesnake in your letter box? Did you insult the ghost of Elron? We need to know these things in order to fill the pages of Chris Evans’s notorious anti-scientology fanzine, in which I tell all about the enormous personal bribes paid to the entire Committee, and how Steve Jones managed to be press officer to New Era and Conspiracy ’87 at the same time. Half the above was a joke.”

In fact, “anti-scientology” is very definitely *not* Chris’s theme. The Scientology angle may be a bit of a red herring, although Hubbard’s name is so inextricably connected with it, and the tabloids so implacably convinced that the cult is “sick” and “evil”, that even if one preserves an open mind about Scientology it can still appear unwise for SF fandom to be seen publicly embracing Hubbard. I find myself more annoyed by the incessant hype for the terrible, mediocre products of Hubbard’s science-fictional senility. Fred Harris’s outfit can buy slots on best-seller lists (it’s easy, you just invest ludicrously uneconomical sums in publicity: vanity publishing writ large); it can buy saturation advertising at conventions; it can’t buy our respect.

As for “Writers of the Future”, so nobly devoted to encouraging new authors ... h’mm. This will doubtless be considered at length in the Evans fanzine. Anyone who’s frowned at tobacco-sponsored sporting events, or who cares to imagine an SF contest funded by the present government of South Africa (substitute bugaboo of your choice here), may think the ploy fairly transparent.

Literary Bit: At the con I chatted with Ross Pavlac, who was combining his Worldcon visit with a “pilgrimage” to the haunts and graves of Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, Charles Williams, G.K. Chesterton and others. He was frighteningly erudite about original manuscripts now preserved in vast US collections, etc....

I’ve never really felt the lure of literary relics and pilgrimages, because in a sense it’s irrelevant when creators die. Open a book of Chesterton’s and there he is in the mind’s eye, still beaming and scribbling furiously between swigs of red wine in some Fleet Street pub. So I found myself fatally tempted to

pull Ross Pavlac's leg: "Lewis is buried under his favourite seat in the public bar of the Eagle & Child in Oxford, you know. There's a plaque on the floor if you look under the bench."

There was a distinct pause before Ross said very seriously, "No, in fact he isn't buried there...."

Hoare Horror: It is 1 a.m. Martin Hoare is watching a video, the Ride of the Valkyries playing at full blast. The music climaxes in a terrific crash and a heavy shower of bricks through the windows. Shards of glass slash the curtains, though happily not Martin, to ribbons.... It turns out that six police cars have just chased a suspected stolen vehicle through the Hoares' garden wall. This car then catches fire. (No fatalities, remarkably.)

"It was great," Mr Hoare later told *Ansible*: "I got my picture on the front page of the local paper!"

Articles of Note

The list below gives links to a selection of longer external contributions that have at least slightly more substance than the usual rapid-fire *Ansible* news snippets and letter excerpts.

1979

[GUFF – A Message From Our Founder: Chris Priest](#)

[Got dem ole single element blues: Kevin Smith](#)

[Seacon '79](#)

[Polycon: Phil James](#)

[As Much Fun as a Wet Weekend in Birmingham: Paul Kincaid](#)

[10,000 Fanzines from Home: Alan Dorey](#)

1980

[Little-Known Hazards of Fanzine Publishing: Part 2: Steev Higgins](#)

[Bizarre Practices in High Wycombe: Chris Evans](#)

[Rockcon – The Factoids: Sandy Brown](#)

[Albacon: 31st British Eastercon, Easter 1980](#)

[Unicon 80: Peter Holdsworth](#)

[Milford 1980: Chris Evans](#)

[Novacon 10: 31 Oct - 2 Nov 1980](#)

[Susan Wood, 1948-1980](#)

1981

[Amazing Occurrence at the Royal Festival Hall](#)

[The *Ansible* Literary Supplement: by the Dynamic *Focus* \(Dec'd\)](#)

[Duo](#)

[Yorcon II: 32nd British Eastercon](#)

[At the Nebula Ceremony: Martin Worse Wooster](#)

[Return of the *Ansible* Literary Supplement](#)

[The Dreamtime: Joseph Nicholas in Australia](#)
[The One Tun • 2 July 1981: Abi Frost](#)
[The Leaning News Column • D. West](#)
[The One Tun \(July\) by One of Them: Jonathan Waite](#)
[Milford \(UK\) Writers' Conference 1981: Geoff Ryman](#)
[Hillcon \(Beneluxcon 1981\): Joseph Nicholas](#)
[Silicon 5: 28-31 Aug: Rob Hansen](#)
[Cymrucon 1981: Cardiff, 14-15 Nov: Brian Stableford](#)
[Novacon 11, 30 Oct - 2 Nov 1981: Malcolm Edwards](#)
[Garnett's Dictionary of Science Fiction](#)

1982

[The *Ansible* Literary Supplement: Abigail Frost on British Fanzines of 1981](#)
[Scousecon 1: Liverpool 12-14 Feb: Rog Peyton](#)
[Channelcon: 33rd British Eastercon: Judith Hanna](#)
[Making the Best of It: January-April Fanzines: Abi Frost](#)
[The Pieria Mob Goes West Again: Kevin Smith](#)
[Mythcon 1982 • 2-4 July, Birmingham: Chris Morgan](#)
[Joseph Nicholas at "The Strange Pilgrimage": A Commemoration For Philip K. Dick \(1928-1982\)](#)
[Faircon '82: Nice Words from Colin Fine](#)
[*Ansible* Goes to the Movies: Andrew Stephenson](#)
[Let Us Now Praise Famous Men: The *Ansible* Controversy](#)
[Novacon 12 • Birmingham 5-8 Nov: Joseph Nicholas](#)
[Fencon • Cambridge 16 October: Judith Hanna](#)

1983

[The *Ansible* Higher Education Supplement \[Cymrucon\]](#)
[Several Words on Albacon II: Yet Another Boring *Ansible* Convention Supplement](#)
[The SF Lunch Club Shock Horror Supplement: or, Fear and](#)

Loathing on June 1st
Constellation: Malcolm Edwards
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Novacon 13

1984

This Is Cactus Country: Abi Frost at Mexicon
Come to Sunny Milford: Paul Kincaid
Novacon 14: Birmingham 9-12 Nov 1984
Frankie Comes from Hollywood: Neil Gaiman
Cymrucon: 2-4 November 1984

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Schizophrenia at Yorcon III
Paul Barnett Has Fun at the Fair
The Becon Scenario: Marcus Rowland

1986

Sue Thomason's Milford Report
The Well-Tempered Plot Device: Nick Lowe
Brad Berry (1920-1986): David S. Garnett

1987

Me and H.G. Wells and the Continuum: Chris Evans
The Insanity Offence: Charles Platt
Becon '87 Ghost of Honour Speech: Patrick Parrinder
Alien Christmas: Terry Pratchett

Acknowledgments

Special thanks to Don West's son Graham West and later-life partner Hazel Ashworth for approving the use of his cartoon from *Ansible* 19 (July 1981) on the front cover of his ebook.

All issues carry individual credits for news providers and other contributors. Most anonymous sources were eventually exposed; "A. Witness", author of [Amazing Occurrence at the Royal Festival Hall](#), was of course Robert P. Holdstock. Above all, Hazel Langford was endlessly supportive throughout this run of *Ansible* – and still is, with special appreciation of the policy decision whereby each issue of the second-series *Ansible* (October 1991-current) consists of a single A4 sheet that *does not need to be collated and stapled*.

Versions of the following disclaimer and credit appear throughout the online archive of *Ansible*'s first series at news.ansible.uk:

PLEASE NOTE that this old *Ansible* is a bit of history. Addresses have changed (in particular, the editor's postal address has), prices and agents' credits are invalid, etc. • This issue was produced in my BWP or Before-Word-Processors era and lovingly rekeyed for the archives by *[Insert Name Here]* ... to whom many thanks! • Dave Langford, 1993 *[or later year]*.

Members of the rekeying team (omitting "the poor bloody editor") were:

Simon Bradshaw, Richard Brandt, John Bray, Mark Charsley, Doug Faunt, Andrew Hedges, Marcus Hill, Dan Hoey, David Kennedy, Philip Johnson, John V. Keogh, Alex McLintock, Pat McMurray, Richard Newsome, Mike Scott, Tony Smith, Jan Van't Ent, Bill Welch, Elizabeth Willey and Adrian Wontroba.

Ansible finally switched to word-processor production with issue 42. I still remember the raucous buzz of the daisywheel printer. Website disclaimers from that point onward look more like this:

PLEASE NOTE that this old *Ansible* is a bit of history. Addresses may have changed (the editor's postal address hasn't, but ignore

old e-mail addresses), prices and agents' credits are invalid, etc. •
Dave Langford, 1993.

Just to make things less clear, Ansible was published from 22 Northumberland Avenue in Reading from August 1979 to June 1982 and from 94 London Road in Reading thereafter. London Road is still the current address in 2016. Neither of the Reading phone numbers given for the editor remains valid even in mutated form (the area code having since changed twice); I switched to an unlisted number. But you can email me via the contact form at ansible.uk and news ansible.uk.

David Langford, June 2016

The End

This free ebook version of *Ansible First Series 1979-1987* is exclusive to the unofficial TAFF website at taff.org.uk. If you enjoy reading it, a donation to TAFF is a fine way to express your appreciation.

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