

Ansible



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From David Langford, 94 London Road, Reading, Berks, RG1 5AU, UK. Web news.ansible.co.uk. ISSN 0265-9816 (print); 1740-942X (e). Logo: Dan Steffan. Cartoon: Harry Bell. Available for SAE, good resolutions, Black Tom or Leper Gin.

Traditional Sentiments. A happy 2011 to all of you, plus apologies once again to those who sent Christmas cards and didn't hear from us.

The Monster from Nowhere

Keith Brooke has relaunched InfinityPlus.co.uk (his sf website, dormant since 2007) as an ebook imprint, publishing for the Kindle; other formats may follow. Five of the six initial titles consist of the collected short fiction of none other than Keith Brooke.

Roald Dahl's unfinished and long-forgotten children's story *The Eyes of Mr. Croaker* (two pages, 400 words), written in 1982 for a DIY storybook whose young readers were expected to complete the included tales, was sold on eBay for \$1,900. (*Guardian*, 15 December) [AIP]

Michael Dirda is not afraid to admit it: 'For most of my adult life I've instinctively gravitated to works that were new, difficult, scholarly, innovative [...] As I've grown older, however, my reading has grown distinctly more childish. Not only have I gone back to Sherlock Holmes stories, I've also become a member of the Baker Street Irregulars. And the Ghost Story Society. I attend meetings of Capital! Capital!, the Washington DC chapter of the P.G. Wodehouse Society, and find myself travelling to fantasy and science fiction conventions.' (Michael Dirda, *Times Literary Supplement*, 10 December) [MV]

Harlan Ellison's first typewriter—vintage 1936-1940, used by him 1949-1954—is being offered for a mere \$40,000 o.n.o. The great man will even include half a page of something typed on it. Serious enquiries only, to broker David Silver: silver at photographyhistory dot com. Mr Ellison also revealed his inspiration: 'A friend said "oh gee, you should sell it, they sold Cormac McCarthy's typewriter." And I said, "yeah, Cormac McCarthy who ripped off my story 'A Boy and His Dog' to do 'The Road.'" That one fetched \$220,000. (*WSJ*, 29 December) [AIP]

Frank Frazetta's family is squabbling over the inheritance again, the former settlement having somehow become unsettled. One son, Frank Frazetta Jr (he of the backhoe attack on the paternal art museum: see A270), is suing his three siblings for alleged failure to provide accounts or his claimed 25% share of the estate. (*Boston.com*)

H.G. Wells, as revealed in a 1934 letter recently found in a copy of his autobiography, scorned an offer of the freedom of his home town Bromley: 'Bromley has not been particularly gracious to me nor I to Bromley and I don't think I want to add the freedom of Bromley to the freedom of the City of London and the freedom of the City of Brussels—both of which I have.' This letter is now proudly displayed as a civic treasure in Bromley Museum. (*Independent*, 29 December)

Constantia

Until 23 Jan • **Alien Invasion** (exhibition), Museum & Records Office, Portsmouth: www.portsmouthmuseums.co.uk/AlienInvasion.htm.

Until 27 Mar • **Shelley's Ghost** (exhibition), Bodleian Library, Oxford. With *Frankenstein* MS; more. 9am-5pm; 11am-5pm Sun. Free.

26 Jan • **BSFA Open Meeting**, Antelope, 22 Eaton Terrace, London, SW1W 8EZ. 5pm for 6pm. Free. With Frances Hardinge.

3-5 Feb • **SFX Weekender 2**, Pontin's Holiday Park, Camber Sands, E Sussex. Charged by accommodation; shared chalets only; no single rooms. See www.sfxweekender.com. Contact 08700 110034.

4-6 Feb • **Cre2c3ndo** (filk), Ramada Hotel, Grantham. Now £38/\$60/€45 reg; £25/\$47/€30 unwaged; 5-18s £1/\$1.50 per year; under-5s £1. Cheques to UK Filk Con, 16 Ann's Rd, Cambridge, CB5 8TN.

5-6 Feb • **QED** (science/skeptics), Piccadilly Hotel, Portland St, Manchester, M1 4PH. £99 (students £75) via www.qedcon.org only.

11-13 Feb • **SF Ball 17** (media), Carrington House Hotel, Bournemouth. Tickets from £84, £20/day Sat/Sun. See www.sfball.com.

19 Feb • **Picocon 28**, Imperial College Union, London. 10am-7/8pm. GoH Paul McAuley, Juliet McKenna, Kari Sperring. £10 reg, £8 concessions, £5 ICSF members, past GoHs free. Contact ICSF, Beit Quad, Prince Consort Road, London, SW7 2BB.

25-27 Feb • **Alt.Fiction** writing weekend, Diamond House, South Leverton, DN22 0BX. With George Mann, another TBA. £180 including

food and two nights' accommodation. Contact 07896 228367.

25-27 Feb • **Redemption '11** (multimedia sf), Britannia Hotel, Fairfax St, Coventry, CV1 5RP. £60 reg. *Advance booking closes 11 February*; £65 at door, £40/day. Under-18s £15, £10/day; under 3 free. Contact 61 Chaucer Road, Farnborough, Hampshire, GU14 8SP.

26 Feb • **Cardiff International Comic Expo**, Mercure Cardiff Holland House Hotel, 24-26 Newport Road, CF24 0DD. Day ticket £5 via PayPal only at www.fantasyevents.org/cice/.

10-24 Mar • **Oxfam Bookshop**, Market Place, Reading: sf events/displays linked with sale of Brian Stableford's huge donation of books.

12 Mar • **ConJour**, Leeds Park Plaza Hotel, Leeds. CANCELLED mere weeks after being announced, and two days after its first *Ansible* listing on 1 December. See website: www.conjureevents.co.uk.

19 Mar • **Fred Hoyle Project Grand Finale** (exhibit/talks), St John's, Cambridge; part of the Cambridge Science Festival. 10am-4pm.

21-22 May • **Middle-earth Weekend**, Sarehole Mill, Cole Bank Rd, Hall Green, Birmingham. Free. See middleearthweekend.org.uk.

17-21 Aug • **Renovation** (69th Worldcon), Reno, NV, USA. \$180 reg *until 28 February*; \$50 supp; \$100 under-21s; \$75 under-17s; under-7s free. Contact PO Box 13278, Portland, OR 97213-0278, USA. Hugo nominations are now open, closing 26 March; hotel booking from 17 January; see PR3 at renovationsf.org/progress-reports.php.

30 Sep - 2 Oct • **Fantasycon 2011**, Royal Albion Hotel, Brighton. Now £50 reg (*BFS members £45*) or £40 day membership on Saturday only. Cheques (to Fantasycon 2011) to 10 Haycroft Gardens, Mastin Moor, Chesterfield, Derbyshire, S43 3FE.

4-7 Nov • **Irish Discworld Convention**, Falls Hotel, Ennistymon, Co. Clare, Ireland. €40 reg, students/under-19s €30, under-16s €15, under-8s free. See idwcon.org; [irishdiscworldcon at gmail dot com](mailto:irishdiscworldcon@gmail.com).

6-9 Apr 2012 • **Olympus 2012** (Eastercon), Radisson Edwardian Hotel, Heathrow, London. Now £55 reg, £45 unwaged. £20 supp/under-17s, £5 under-12s, £1 under-5s. Contact 4 Evesham Green, Aylesbury, Bucks, HP19 9RX, or (email) enquiries at [olympus2012 dot org](mailto:olympus2012.org).

Rumblings • *Chicon 7* (Worldcon 2012, Chicago) rates did not rise as threatened on 1 January but are being held until Spring 2011.

Infinitely Improbable

As Others See Us. Nicholas Barber reviews *Tron: Legacy*: 'Just as often, though, it overshoots into the psychedelic campness of *Barbarella*. Not that there's anything wrong with that. After all, isn't science fiction supposed to be barmy? [...] *Tron: Legacy* is a Walt Disney sequel targeted at hippies whose shelves are piled with Isaac Asimov paperbacks.' (*Independent On Sunday*, 19 December) [MPJ] Oh, *those* hippies.

Awards. *The Arthur C. Clarke Award*, whose 25th presentation will be in 2011, has issued an open letter asking for thoughts on its future now that funding from the Clarke estate has ceased. Should it retain the focus on UK publication? (Most people seem to think so.) Would it be just as prestigious if the cash prize were £20.11 rather than £2011? (Er um.) More at <http://tinyurl.com/3xt9kq4>. • *British Independent Film Awards*: Gareth Edwards won as director for *Monsters*, which also won for Achievement in Production and Visual Effects. [MPJ] • *BSFA Awards* nominations are now open, closing on 14 January: members can email their choices to awards at bsfa dot co dot uk. • *Women in Film and TV Awards*: writer's category won by Jane Goldman, author of film screenplays for *Kick Ass* and the coming *X-Men: First Class*. [MPJ]

The Weakest Link. *Anne Robinson*: 'In libraries, which hyphenated term includes all books, except novels or works inspired by the imagination?' *Male Contestant*: 'Science fiction.' AR: 'According to folklore, the plant wolfsbane is worn to ward off what—drunkenness or werewolves?' *Female contestant*: 'Drunkenness.' AR: 'In which 1968 science fiction film did Charlton Heston utter the line, "Take your stinking paws off me"?' *Young male contestant*: '2001: A Space Odyssey.' (1 December) AR: The artist who's illustrated most of the books written by Roald Dahl is Quentin who? *Elderly female contestant*: Crisp. (2 December) [MPJ]

R.I.P. *Elisabeth Beresford* (1926-2010), UK children's author whose

The Wombles (1968) led to many further books and short BBC films about these cuddly and precociously eco-aware creatures, died on 24 December aged 84. Another series, the 'Magic' fantasies in the vein of E. Nesbit, began with *Awkward Magic* (1964). Beresford received the MBE in 1998. ● **Blake Edwards** (1922-2010), US screenwriter and director best known for the Pink Panther films, died on 15 December aged 88. His screenplays include the sf comedy *The Atomic Kid* (1954); he also directed and co-wrote the supernatural tv movie *Justin Case* (1988). [SG] ● **Anne Francis** (1930-2010), US actress who played Altaira in *Forbidden Planet* (1956) and made several later genre appearances, died on 2 January aged 80. [SG] ● **Lamont Johnson** (1922-2010), US film/tv director whose genre credits included eight 1960s *Twilight Zone* episodes and *Spacehunter: Adventures in the Forbidden Zone* (1983), died on 24 October aged 88. [MPJ] ● **Rebecca Neason** (1954-2010), US author who debuted with the *Star Trek: TNG* tie *Guises of the Mind* (1993), also publishing two *Highlander* spinoffs and three original fantasy novels, died on 31 August; she was 55. [JF via MG] ● **Ruth Park** (1917-2010), New Zealand-born Australian mainstream novelist whose children's books include the fine time-travel fantasy *Playing Beatie Bow* (1980), died on 16 December aged 93. [PDF] ● **Pete Postlethwaite** (1946-2011), UK actor whose many genre credits include *Alien 3* (1993), *The Lost World: Jurassic Park* (1997), *Aeon Flux* (2005) and *Inception* (2010), died on 2 January; he was 64. [AW] ● **Adrienne Roy** (1953-2010), DC comics colorist who worked on hundreds of issues of *Batman*, *Detective Comics* and *New Teen Titans*, died on 14 December. [SFS] ● **Takeshi Watabe** (1936-2010), Japanese actor who had voice roles in many anime series, including *Doraemon* and *Mobile Suit Gundam 0083*, died on 13 December aged 74. [SFS]

As Others See Us II. The *Bay Area Reporter* recommends San Francisco's Borderlands sf bookshop: 'The store's a treasure-trove for nerds of all shapes and sizes, and friendly guides like Jude Feldman will be happy to show you their favorite picks. Keep an eye out for *Surface Detail*, an operatic novel set in space ...' [JL] Thog is trying to construct a quip about Samuel Butler's *Erewhon* and its Musical Banks.

The Rank Is But The Genre Stamp. Sf/fantasy stamps from the Royal Mail this year include an 11 January homage to Gerry Anderson's tv productions: *Supercar* (50th anniversary in 2011), *Fireball XL5*, *Stingray*, *Thunderbirds*, *Captain Scarlet* and *Joe 90*, with innovative moving-image stamps of *Thunderbirds 1 to 4* launching. On 8 March the theme is 'Magical Realms', not only Arthurian fantasy but modern works by Terry Pratchett and J.K. Rowling (not apparently moving). [DVB]

Outraged Letters. M.K. Digre on Google's cautious handling of Philip K. Dick (A279): 'On a similar note, one photo-sharing site displays pictures of small offset presses without complaint, but the captions sanitize the name of the manufacturer as "A. B. XXXX". R.I.P. Albert Blake etc.' ● **Steve Green** writes: 'I note that the executive producers on Channel Four's BAFTA-nominated superhero show *Misfits* include one Petra Fried. Perhaps she was an exceptionally scary baby.' ● **Steve Sneyd** heard Sarah Hall talking about her *The Carhullan Army* on Radio 4 Book Club and approved: 'Though book wasn't marketed as sf, was very upfront about it being sf, value of sf to her as a writer, and "cross-generational conversation" with earlier sf; she specifically cited Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, saying her own tale [was] in part a reaction against passivity under oppression of female characters in *THT*.' ● **Gary Wilkinson** also remembered the idylls of Novacon (see A281): 'The experiment by a certain I. Banks to see if nipples do go spung was certainly memorable. One extra highlight, for me, was the lecture/panel on the science of sound in astronomy. This was really interesting but unfortunately time-tabled rather early and in a room with very subdued lighting ... at one point I looked around and just about everyone around me (naming no names ... well OK Ken MacLeod I remember) had nodded off. (I'm a natural insomniac and even I felt a bit sleepy myself.) The lecture would be interrupted by the occasional loud, demonstrational bang or other sound effect, which would have everyone blinking awake before heads would start nodding again....'

As Others See Us III. Tolkien—who he? 'When JK Rowling's Harry Potter books became a literary sensation in the late 1990s, the fantasy genre—hitherto a characteristically nerdy corner of publishing—went mainstream.' (Alice-Azania Jarvis, *Independent*, 2 December) [MPJ]

Random Fandom. *Jim Caughran* has abandoned his project to construct an updated *Fancylopedia* (see fancylopedia.editme.com), and hopes that someone else, or some committee, will take it over. [AIP] Fans who'd tried it said the editor interface was horrible. ● **Richard Lynch** proposes a Fanzine/Semiprozine Hugo reform which would exclude all paying publications from Fanzine, and audio/video from both

categories, with a new 'Best Fan Audio or Video Production' category.

We Are Everywhere. More sf imagery in politics, as *Independent* columnist 'High Street Ken' distances himself from mockery of a squat and corpulent Tory: 'Just this week, I've repeatedly declined suggestions I mention the Communities Secretary Eric Pickles is a "dead ringer" for Doctor Who's dastardly alien foes the Sontarans.' (16 December) [MPJ] Also, former David Cameron adviser Danny Kruger looks back at the coalition of 2010: 'British politics represented a dystopian sci-fi vision in which a strange, beautiful creature arrived from another world, first to be worshipped, then reviled: carried aloft in April, poked to death with sharpened sticks in December.' (ft.com, 22 December) [MMW]

The Dead Past. *Sherry Gottlieb* was moved to reminiscences of a long-past decade by the A281 item about aged sf professionals with wandering hands: 'Back in the '70s, I entered the lobby of a Worldcon hotel, wearing hip-hugger jeans and a midriff top (as I was then young and had the body for it); I had not yet checked in and wasn't wearing a name tag. My progress was stopped by Isaac Asimov, whom I'd never met, so he couldn't have known for sure that I was there for the Con. / Asimov put his finger in my navel and said, "Nice tits. May I cop a feel?" / I said no and walked on, noticing his surprise that he'd been turned down. / The next evening was the con's Meet the Authors signing event, and I'd brought a few of my favorite first editions to get signatures, among them my first eds of Asimov's Foundation Trilogy. I went up to Asimov and said, "Mr. Asimov, would you please sign these for me?" He said, "Aren't you the girl who wouldn't let me cop a feel yesterday?" "Yes," I said. "Then I'm not signing your books," he replied. / I was aghast that the great author was an offensive old lech. Someone nearby—I believe it was John Douglas—overheard; he told me to give him my Asimov books to him, and he got them signed for me.'

Toy Story. One of Hasbro's *Transformers* models in the 'Power Core Combiners' range has been deemed unsuitable for UK release owing to its evocative name: 'Spastic with Stunticons'. (*Register*, 18 November)

Magazine Scene. *Locus* began e-publishing its full content with issue 600, January 2011: subscriptions are available in various formats. ● **Wendy Bradley** conducts the last rites: '... I must finally lay *Farthing* to rest by disposing of the unsold copies. I'll be sending them off for recycling but before I do that, does anyone have a use for them? [...] Collect from Sheffield or pay for shipping: magazines free. Several hundred available, issues 1-4 only, mostly issue 1. Contact me by leaving a comment at my website, wendybradley.net.'

Fanfundery. *Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund* candidates for the 2011 race (from Europe to North America and Renovation) emerged in a sudden rush as the deadline neared, until there were four: Graham Charnock, John Coxon, Liam Proven and Paul Treadaway. The ballot is available at taff.org.uk in HTML, PDF and Word. Voting deadline: 12 March.

Thog's Masterclass. *New Year Similes Special*. '... a very unpleasant smile had crept across his face like a melanoma in time-lapse.' 'Then he halted abruptly and the smile fell off his face like a badger off a billiard cue.' (both Jonathan L. Howard, *Johannes Cabal the Necromancer*, 2009) ● 'Diversity bounced around like marbles on concrete.' (Steve Martin, *An Object of Beauty*, 2010) [MMW] ● '... the traced stains on her jeans looked as black as accusations' 'Infelice shed distress like damaged jewels.' 'Wreathed around her limbs, her bedizened garment resembled weeping woven of gemstones and recrimination.' '... as profound as orogeny' 'At once, Infelice fled like a wail from the hollow.' '... as sure of himself as a plinth of marble.' 'But it evaded him, illusive as a swarm of gnats.' 'The branching of the [*malachite*] veins through the obsidian gave them an eerie resemblance to the grass stains on Linden's jeans.' 'Like the barking of ghouls, Jeremiah began to laugh.' 'He was merely a spectator, as oneiric as a figment ...' 'Stave and Pahnri gained substance until they were definite as promises.' 'Around Linden, the wan glitter of starlight lay like immanence on the friable crust.' 'And Covenant's absence was as plain as a seizure.' '... flames as poignant as lamentation' '... as empty of consciousness as an abandoned farmhouse' '... as salubrious as a feast.' 'In hollows like denuded swales ...' 'Cold and scalding as congealed fire, the flat wilderland ached towards its illimitable horizons.' (all Stephen R. Donaldson, *Against All Things Ending*, 2010) ● *Apocalyptic Proctalgia Dept*. 'Ere long, its hunger will become a convulsion in the fundament of the Earth.' (*Ibid*) ● *Invective Dept*, *Possibly Commenting On Much Of The Above*: 'Puerile wight!' (*Ibid*)

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