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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: Brad W. Foster. Available for SAE, wassail, or Tlon Rtlo Long Ongr Ngrt.

Novacon 40 saw many past guests of honour emerge from the woodwork, lured by the magical round number plus free membership. Iain M. Banks guested, Brian Aldiss special-guested and Harry Harrison, too frail to travel to Nottingham, made a co-special-guest appearance by video. Your editor deafly lurked in the bar while *Ansible* correspondent Nelson Cunnington jotted down these quotes.... • **Aldiss**: 'If you don't like your book, no-one else will.' To a producer of a possible *Helliconia* film, long ago: 'I've just hired the Yugoslavian Army. Can you get them costumed as Phagors?' On a trip to Japan, in the midst of a con party, Arthur C. Clarke stood up and announced that he had a golden rule: 'I always retire at 10 pm.' To which *someone* said, 'Piss off, then!' And: 'Life is extraordinarily marvellous. Much better than when I was a kid. You get all sorts of pills to keep you alive.' • **Banks**: 'I don't do hill-walking, I do glen-walking. It's much easier.' 'It never occurred to me to be a great poet. Maybe under a different name. [At a suggestion from the audience:] Iain P. Banks? I.P. Banks? No, I don't think so.' Four rules for a better society: '1. Never vote for right-wing bastards. 2. Never [note illegible, but the last word might be "wanker"]. 3. Get rid of public limited companies. 4. Stop being so bloody selfish.' • **Geoff Ryman** (in the bar): 'How come I can remember the phrase "nominative aphasia" but I can't remember anybody's name?' • **Kari Sperring**, 40 Best SF Books Since 1971 panel: 'We all have our own SFs.' [...] 'I am a China Miéville-denier.' [...] 'Disguising an author's gender is pointless, there's only two to choose from.' • **Ian Stewart** at his and Jack Cohen's panel on extrasolar planets as habitats for life: 'I'll represent the orthodox scientific view, and Jack ... will be Jack.' • **Hard SF panel**. **Charlie Stross**: 'Humans are badly designed for this space travel thing.' [...] **Ryman**: 'Poor Larry Niven. In *A World Out of Time*, one of his hardest SF books, nearly every single trope has been disintegrated by later research. Bussard ramscoops, senescence through cells clogging up with chemical garbage ...' **Audience member**: 'Galactic black holes?' **Ryman**: 'Well, he had to get lucky eventually.' **Banks**: 'I could write hard SF, but I wouldn't be writing on all cylinders. I'd have to shut off my stupidity cylinders.' A hardcore digression on spunging nipples led to Mr Culture promising a new initial if he ever moved into porn: 'Iain X. Banks.'

December's Snow May Blow ...

Greg & Astrid Bear challenged Project Gutenberg on copyright law, arguing that US case law contradicts the PG assumption that so many stories published in pulp sf magazines are public domain: '... Project Gutenberg is doing a tremendous service by making available texts that have truly long since fallen out of copyright, but they are clearly overstepping their original mandate. They are not merely exploiting orphan works, but practicing a wholesale kidnapping of works that are under copyright protection. Authors and estates need to aggressively take back what belongs to them.' (*Ereads.com*, 28 November) [PDF]

Jo Fletcher is moving from Gollancz to Quercus in January 2011, to launch a new sf/fantasy/horror imprint called Jo Fletcher Books.

Diana Wynne Jones 'was Descended On by Archivists from Seven Stories in Newcastle. They came in an official van and carried off as many old typescripts and handwritten first drafts of mine that my agent and I could find. Turns out to be an awful lot. There were clouds of dust. In addition there is our Mysterious Drawer which no one can open. Goodness knows what is in there, but there are certainly more writings. Archivists and agent both looked at it greedily, but it really wouldn't open so they went regretfully away with 8 large cardboard boxes and 6 bulging carrier bags, plus some extras.' (4 November) A Seven Stories archivist gloated that besides drafts of published work, 'The collection also contains some unpublished material, including several early unpublished novels, correspondence and juvenilia.'

Terry Pratchett has ways of keeping his rare form of Alzheimer's at bay: '... brandy is in the British Pharmacopoeia. So are stout and sherry, I believe. I drink enormously. It makes you feel better and feeling better is part of it.' (*Telegraph*, 12 November) [MPJ] Cheers!

Joss Whedon had 'strong, mixed emotions' on hearing that Warner

Bros plans a *Buffy* film 'reboot' not involving him: 'I always hoped that *Buffy* would live on even after my death. But, you know, AFTER. I don't love the idea of my creation in other hands, but I'm also well aware that many more hands than mine went into making that show what it was. And there is no legal grounds for doing anything other than sighing audibly. I can't wish people who are passionate about my little myth ill. I can, however, take this time to announce that I'm making a Batman movie. Because there's a franchise that truly needs updating. So look for *The Dark Knight Rises Way Earlier Than That Other One And Also More Cheaply And In Toronto*, rebooting into a theater near you. / Leave me to my pain!' (*E!online*, 22 November) [DKMK]

Conamen

Until mid-Jan • **Alien Invasion** (exhibition), City Museum and Records Office, Portsmouth. Related free lectures from 2pm on 4 Dec and 11 Dec: see www.portsmouthmuseums.co.uk/AlienInvasion.htm.

3 Dec • **British Fantasy Society Open Night**, Truckles, off Bury Place, Bloomsbury, London. 6pm onward. Free.

4 Dec • **Weird Winter Tales** (H.P. Lovecraft event), Reading Central Library, noon-6pm. £3 (members £2). With *Call of Cthulhu* showing. Contact info at readinglibraries.org.uk.

5 Dec • **British Fantasy Society Open Night**, Lass O'Gowrie, pub, 36 Charles Street, Manchester, M1 7DB. 6pm onward. Free.

16 Dec • **London Xmas Meeting**, Melton Mowbray, 18 Holborn, London. Additional to First Thursdays. All evening; all welcome; free.

26 Jan 2011 • **BSFA Open Meeting**, Antelope, 22 Eaton Terrace, London, SW1W 8EZ. 5pm for 6pm. Free. With Frances Hardinge. *Please note* that, as usual, there's no BSFA London meeting in December.

26 Feb 2011 • **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/.

12 Mar 2011 • **ConJour**, Leeds Park Plaza Hotel, Boar Lane City Square, LS1 5NS. £30 reg via PayPal at www.conjureevents.co.uk.

23 Apr - 2 May 2011 • **Sci-Fi London** (film), Apollo, Piccadilly Circus, London. Enquiries www.sci-fi-london.com or 020 3239 9277.

9-11 Sep 2011 • **The Asylum** (steampunk), Lincoln. Online booking only: see steampunk.synthasite.com for insanely many options.

16-18 Oct 2011 • **Festival of Fantastic Films**, Days Hotel, Sackville St, Manchester. Rates TBA. Contact 95 Meadowgate Rd, Salford, Manchester, M6 8EN; Gil at manchesterfantasticfilms.co.uk.

11-13 Nov 2011 • **Novacon 41**, Park Inn, Mansfield Road, Nottingham. GoH John Meaney. £40 reg—rates to be reviewed at Easter 2011. Contact 379 Myrtle Road, Sheffield, S2 3HQ.

6-9 Apr 2012 • **Olympus 2012** (Eastercon), Radisson Edwardian Hotel, Heathrow, London. £45 reg, £35 unwaged, *rising on 4 January 2011* to £55 and £45. Contact 4 Evesham Green, Aylesbury, Bucks, HP19 9RX, or (email) enquiries at olympus2012.org. Quoted hotel prices include VAT at 20%: £64/room single, £84 double or twin.

30 Aug - 3 Sep 2012 • **Chicon 7** (70th Worldcon), Hyatt Regency, Chicago. \$155 reg, \$100 YA (17-21), \$50 child (5-16), accompanied under-5s free. *These rates apply until 31 December 2010 and may then rise: announcement awaited.* Contact PO Box 13, Skokie, IL 60076, USA.

Infinitely Improbable

As Others See Us. Sarah Baskerville, the UK civil servant in trouble for uninhibited political comments on Twitter, became the subject of a typical *Daily Mail* witch-hunt that was surprisingly picked up by *The Independent*—where political hack Matt Chorley drove the knife home by calling her 'The self-confessed Doctor Who fan ...' (14 November)

Awards. *Galaxy National Book Awards* for 'unrivalled contribution to the [UK] publishing industry', i.e. selling shedloads of books: Martin Amis, Terry Pratchett. • **Novas** (fanzine activity): *FANZINE Journey Planet* ed. James Bacon, Claire Brialey, Chris Garcia; guest ed. Pete Young. **FANWRITER** Mark Plummer. **ARTIST** Arthur Thomson ('Atom')—the first posthumous Nova. • **Rotsler Award** for life achievement in fanzine art:

Stu Shiffman. [AIP] • *Royal TV Society Craft and Design Awards* winners included *Misfits* for sound in drama and special effects, and *Doctor Who* for digital effects [MPJ] • *Ultimate TV Actress* (so presumably there can never be another one) at the *Cosmopolitan Woman of the Year Awards*: Karen Gillan, for playing Amy Pond in *Doctor Who*. [MPJ]

Science Fact Masterclass. 'As a reporter—not an environmentalist—I came to this subject from a very peculiar angle. It began with a collaboration with Dr Paul Epstein, of Harvard Medical School, on a 1995 article on climate change and the spread of infectious disease in the *Washington Post*.' (Ross Gelbspan, *Boiling Point*, 2004) [PB] • 'The space elevator is a very simple idea first [sic] suggested by one of the world's great futurists, science-fiction writer Arthur C. Clarke. In his 1953 [sic] novel *The Fountains of Paradise*, Clarke's hero wants to build a space elevator.' (Ira Flatow, *Present at the Future*, 2007) [AL]

R.I.P. Bernard Davies (1923-2010), noted UK Sherlockologist and founding president in 1973 of the Dracula Society, died on 21 September aged 86. [MPJ] • **Dino De Laurentiis** (1919-2010), famed Italian producer of more than 500 films, died on 10 November aged 91. His genre work included *Barbarella* (1968), the dire *King Kong* remake (1976), *Flash Gordon* (1980), *Halloween II* (1981), *Conan the Barbarian* (1982) and *Dune* (1984) with David Lynch. [GW] • **Paul 'Gamma' Gamble** (1949-2010), UK book dealer (for some years with Forbidden Planet), barfly, sf promoter (especially of Dick and Barrington J. Bayley), inhabitant of the late Troy Club and other weird spaces, high priest of Dave Fandom, sometime literary agent, and general fan-about-London, died on 15 November at the age of 61. [SN] • **Glen GoodKnight** (1941-2010), US founder of the Mythopoeic Society and long-time editor of its journal *Mythlore* (78 issues 1970-1998), died on 3 November; he was 69. [F770] • **Mervyn Haisman** (1928-2010), UK tv/film scriptwriter who with Henry Lincoln wrote the 1960s *Doctor Who* storylines 'The Abominable Snowmen', 'The Web of Fear' (introducing that highly popular character the Brigadier) and 'The Dominators', died on 29 October. He also wrote for *The Sarah Jane Adventures* in 2008. [BB] • **Umanosuke Iida** (1961-2010), Japanese animator, anime writer and director—here best known for *Hellsing* (2001)—died on 26 November; he was 49. [JonC] • **Irvin Kershner** (1923-2010), US director of *The Empire Strikes Back* (1980), *Never Say Never Again* (1983) and *Robocop 2* (1990), died on 29 November aged 87. [PDF] • **Len Moffatt** (1923-2010), US fan and author who was among the founders of Bouchercon and (with his wife June) a 1973 TAFF winner, died on 30 November aged 87. [DL] • **Maurice Murphy** (1935-2010), principal trumpeter of the London Symphony Orchestra 1977-2007, whose playing can be heard in all six *Star Wars* films, died on 28 October. [GS] • **Leslie Nielsen** (1926-2010), Canadian-born actor who played Commander J.J. Adams in *Forbidden Planet* (1956) but became better known for comedy with *Airplane!* and *The Naked Gun*, died on 28 November aged 84. Genre spoof credits include *Dracula: Dead and Loving It* (1995), *2001: A Space Travesty* (2000), *Scary Movie 3 & 4* (2003, 2006), *Superhero Movie* (2008) and *Stan Helsing* (2009). [SG/DKMK] • **Yoshinobu Nishizaki** (1934-2010), a controversial figure of Japanese anime who was best known for co-creating the *Space Cruiser Yamato* series (broadcast abroad as *Star Blazers*), died on 7 November aged 75. [JonC] • **Ingrid Pitt** (1937-2010), Polish-born actress fondly remembered for Hammer's sexy-vampire productions *The Vampire Lovers* (1970) and *Countess Dracula* (1971), died on 23 November; she was 73. Other films included *The House That Dripped Blood* (1971), *Doctor Who* (1972, 1984) and *The Wicker Man* (1973). [SG] • **William Self** (1921-2010), US tv producer who was executive i/c production for several 1960s genre series—*The Green Hornet*, *The Time Tunnel*, *Lost in Space*, *Batman*, *Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea*, *The Ghost and Mrs Muir* and *Land of the Giants*—died on 15 November aged 89. [SG] • **John Steakley** (1951-2010), US sf/horror author of *Armor* (1984) and *Vampire\$* (1990, filmed by John Carpenter as *Vampires*), died on 27 November aged 59. [LP] • **Brian Williams** (?1956-2010), UK illustrator of many *Lone Wolf* and other gamebooks by Joe Dever, and of *LW* spinoff novels by John Grant, died unexpectedly on 4 October; he was 54. [PB]

As Others See Us II. Sam Parker (who?) of Celebrity Channel/Eleven (what?) has views on fandom: 'Eleven have never attended a sci-fi convention (honest), but if we ever did, we'd imagine it to be a rather tame affair. / You know—lots of geeks dressed as Wookies and Dr. Who, mingling around quietly with one hand on their inhaler and the other in their Mum or Dad's palm. / So imagine our surprise when we read that *Twilight* star Bronson Pelletier was attacked at just such a convention in Birmingham! Honestly, talk about Broken Britain—even the nerds are getting rowdy!' (20 November) It emerges rather later in

the story that the villains were drunken gatecrashers from a wedding party in the same hotel. Perhaps it was a geeky nerd wedding. [JL]

Magazine Scene. *Realms of Fantasy* had a last-minute reprieve from the death sentence reported in *A280*: it's been bought by Damnation Books and is again open for submissions (see C.o.A.). Some misgivings were expressed owing to Damnation's allegedly less than spotless record of author satisfaction; better news is that editors Shawna McCarthy and Douglas Cohen remain in charge as before.

C.o.A. *Realms of Fantasy*, PO Box 1208, Santa Rosa, CA 95402, USA.

Outraged Letters. *David Redd* on *A280*: 'Thog's discovery of "a rectangular-sized hole" reminds me of Henry J. Kostkos's "Black Death" in *Astounding*, March 1934 ... Kostkos describes a pre-*Fantastic-Voyage* kind of Bloodstream Microbiology: "thousands of wriggling, red-shaped creatures." Let's ignore Thog's suggestion that they were Redd-shaped.

Clinching Argument. Jonathan Myerson, best known for denouncing adult readers of the Harry Potter saga, discussed his hard-line position with children's novelist and Hollywood screenwriter Charlie Fletcher. *JM*: 'There's a truth which fiction can portray which non-fiction can't reach. It's a different form of truth.' *CF*: 'That doesn't argue against Harry Potter. That, in fact, reinforces the reason why people should read Harry Potter.' *JM*: 'No it doesn't, because there aren't wizards!' (Richard Bacon show, BBC Radio 5Live, 15 November) [MPJ]

Random Fandom. *Martyn P. Jackson* mixes his genres: 'I was at a murder-mystery fundraising event in Newcastle last night [17 November]—*Who Murdered Lucinda Parr?* The story was written by crime novelist Ann Cleeves and two of the suspects were fantasy author Chaz Brenchley and Dracula Society stalwart, Gail-Nina Anderson, the latter wearing a silver bat wing brooch and a skull choker for the occasion. Turned out neither did the dirty deed, and my guess, that an alien replicant had replaced the librarian, Caroline, in order to kill Lucinda, who was about to reveal that alien replicants had taken control of Newcastle City Council, staggeringly proved wide of the mark too!

As Others See Us III. Fears that the upcoming HBO tv series *A Game of Thrones* (based on George R.R. Martin's *Song of Ice and Fire* novels) might be a bit genre-ish have been dispelled: 'Michelle Fairley, who plays Catelyn Stark, says of the epic series, "It's not so much fantasy. It's really gutsy and glorious. We just happen to be wearing costumes and armor."' (*Entertainment Weekly*, 18 November) [AS]

The Dead Past. *30 Years Ago*, an eligible British fan was in the news: '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."' (*Ansible 14*, December 1980)

The Brown Lands. More uproar from NZ *Hobbit* filming after a small woman of Pakistani ancestry was rejected as a bit-part player: 'We are looking for light-skinned people. I'm not trying to be ... whatever. It's just the brief. You've got to look like a hobbit.' Canonically, some hobbits are browner than others, but the above-quoted casting agent—who's been fired—had his own ideas. (*Independent*, 30 November) [MPJ]

Fanfundery. *Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund* nominations for the 2011 race (Europe to N. America) close 18 December. Voting deadline 12 March; the winner attends the Reno Worldcon in August. Contact stevegreen at livejournal dot com. One known candidate: John Coxon.

Thog's Masterclass. *Untimely Dept.* 'By Set, the enemy knew not the hour when he might awake at midnight to feel the taloned fingers ...' (Robert E. Howard, 'The Phoenix on the Sword', *Weird Tales*, December 1932) [PC] • *Dept of Impossible Feats.* "'Mmmmmm," said Maginty. It was an unwriteable, unpronounceable burble.' ('John E. Muller', *Dark Continuum*, 1964) • *Back-Story Dept.* Chronicler to action hero, on the latter's previous adventures: 'People believe I wrote them cynically for one reason or another—but we know that I did not, that you are real, that your exploits actually happened. One day they will realize this, when governments are prepared to release the information that confirms what you have told me. They will realize that you are no liar and that I am no crackpot—or worse, a commercial writer trying to write a science fiction novel.' ('Edward P. Bradbury', *Barbarians of Mars*, 1965)

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