



## ANSIBLE 285 APRIL 2011

From **David Langford**, 94 London Road, Reading, Berks, RG1 5AU, UK. Web [news.ansible.co.uk](http://news.ansible.co.uk). ISSN 0265-9816 (print); 1740-942X (e). Logo: **Dan Steffan**. Cartoon: **Brad W. Foster**. Available for SAE, or a hair from the beard of Prester John.

### Seldom End

**James Cameron** was interviewed by sf enthusiast James Murdoch at the Abu Dhabi Media Summit, and couldn't resist quoting what he insisted was the first response of Murdoch senior's Fox film studio executives to his proposal for *Avatar*: 'Is there any way to reduce this tree-hugging hippy crap?' (*Independent*, 16 March) [MPJ]

**Paul Cornell** made an awful threat: 'I'm not shaving for Lent. That is, I'm growing a wild, untamed beard, which I won't interfere with in any way until Easter Sunday, 24th April, at which point, at Eastercon, I'll get rid. The aim of the exercise is to get you good people to sponsor me, to the tune of £1000, going towards Shelter ...' (9 March)

**Jasper Fforde**, speaking at Waterstone's in Newcastle, said he never knows how he'll be introduced at US bookshops: 'crime author Jasper Fforde' here, 'science fiction author Jasper Fforde' there, and once in a while 'fantasy author Jasper Fforde'. (2 March) [MPJ]

**Stephen Hunt** was enraged by the BBC's World Book Night *Culture Show* special on 'The Books We Really Read', covering actual popular fiction but nevertheless managing not to mention a single work from the large section of the popular market that's tainted by the labels sf, fantasy and horror. An irate petition followed. (*Guardian*, 11 March)

**Diana Wynne Jones** (1934-2011) died in a hospice in the early hours of 26 March; she was 76. Her death was no surprise—every extra week had been a bonus since she ceased chemotherapy last summer (see A275)—but nevertheless grim news for the great many people who loved her work and Diana herself. As a children's and YA author, she was quite simply the best; additionally, no writer of equivalent stature was so much fun to be with. After three plays and the comic adult novel *Changeover* (1970), her long run of fantasies began with *Wilkins' Tooth* (1973) and continued to *Enchanted Glass* (2010), with a further novel and a nonfiction collection yet to come; highlights en route included the Dalemark quartet, the Chrestomanci sequence beginning with *Charmed Life* (1977), *Fire and Hemlock* (1985), *Howl's Moving Castle* (1986, filmed by Miyazaki) and *Deep Secret* (1997). Her mock travel book *The Tough Guide to Fantasyland* (1996) ruthlessly spoofed fantasy clichés; and then *The Dark Lord of Derkholm* (1998) imagined what it might be like to live and work in such a theme-park Fantasyland. Her many honours include the World Fantasy Award for life achievement. We were all hugely lucky to have Diana, and to have her work still. • There are good UK newspaper obituaries by Chris Priest (*Guardian*, 28 March) and Charlie Butler (*Independent*, 31 March).

**R.A. Lafferty's** entire literary estate is up for sale, according to a small ad in *Locus* offering 'Exclusive Rights to Publish His 29 Novels and 229 Short Stories ... Current bid is \$70,000.' [SFS/SHS]

**Laura J. Mixon** is now writing sf as M.J. Locke. (blog, 30 March)

**Terry Pratchett's** omnipresence extends to the *Independent* cryptic crossword: 'Senior Teacher introducing a branch of knowledge, one invented by Terry Pratchett (9)'. Answer in closing credits box.

**Peter Watts** had a horrific encounter with necrotizing fasciitis resulting from a routine biopsy, lost a great deal of flesh from one leg, and gleefully placed the quease-inducing photographic evidence on his website. If you follow the link, beware the post titled 'Moving Pictures'. ([www.rifters.com/crawl](http://www.rifters.com/crawl), February-March) [GW] Much sympathy....

### Constantan

Ongoing • **Mervyn Peake** centenary events: [www.mervynpeake.org](http://www.mervynpeake.org).

9-10 Apr • **Kapow!** (comics), Business Design Centre, Islington, London. Tickets £25.50 or £15.30/day from [www.kapowcomiccon.com](http://www.kapowcomiccon.com).

20 Apr • **BSFA Open Meeting**, The Antelope, 22 Eaton Terrace, London, SW1W 8EZ. 5pm for 6pm. Free; with David Weber. Avast!

22-25 Apr • **Illustrious** (Eastercon), Hilton Metropole, NEC, Birmingham. Advance booking closes 1 April. At the door: £15 Fri or Mon, £30 Sat or Sun. Contact 4 Burnside Ave, Sheffield, S8 9FR.

23 Apr - 2 May • **Sci-Fi London** (film), Apollo, Piccadilly Circus, London. Enquiries via [www.sci-fi-london.com](http://www.sci-fi-london.com) or 020 3239 9277. For

eager royalists, the eve of the royal wedding (28 April) has a thematic all-nighter including *Bride of the Monster*, *Bride of Frankenstein*, *Bride of the Gorilla* and *I Married a Witch*. Allegedly 'cheaper than a hotel'.

27 Apr • **Clarke Award** presentation, London. By invitation.

4 May • **Alan Moore's Dodgem Logic**, Round Chapel, London. 7pm. £10. With AM, Steve Aylett. See [www.londonwordfestival.com](http://www.londonwordfestival.com).

14-15 May • **Bristol International Comic Expo**, Ramada City & Mercure hotels, Bristol. £16 reg; £9 per day; child £6/£4. Tickets from [www.fantasyevents.org/bristolcomicexpo](http://www.fantasyevents.org/bristolcomicexpo) (PayPal only).

20-22 May • **Alt.Fiction Writing Weekend**, Legacy Chesterfield Hotel, Malkin St, Chesterfield, S41 7UA. With Tony Ballantyne, Simon Clark. £180 inc food, 2 nights' residence. Enquiries: alt dot fiction at writingeastmidlands dot co dot uk. Bookings: Aimee, 01159 597932.

25-26 Jul • **Creative Science**—'Science Fiction Prototyping for Technology Innovation' (workshop), Nottingham. £144 reg (students £120), rising to £180 on 1 May. See [www.creative-science.org](http://www.creative-science.org).

24 Sep • **TitanCon**, Europa Exhibition Centre, Belfast. GoH Ian McDonald. £10 reg, £5 supp. Join at [www.titancon.com](http://www.titancon.com) (PayPal only).

30 Sep - 2 Oct • **Fantasycon 2011**, Royal Albion Hotel, Brighton. Now £55 reg (BFS members £50). Cheques (to Fantasycon 2011) to 10 Haycroft Gardens, Mastin Moor, Chesterfield, Derbyshire, S43 3FE.

25-27 Feb 2013 • **Redemption '13** (multimedia sf), Britannia Hotel, Fairfax St, Coventry, CV1 5RP. Guests TBA. £50 reg, rising to £60 on 1 May 2011; unwaged etc £20 less. £15 supp and under-18s; under-3s free. Contact 61 Chaucer Road, Farnborough, Hampshire, GU14 8SP.

**Rumblings.** *Worldcon 2013* site selection voting has begun. Texas is unopposed: no other bid met the February paperwork deadline.

### Infinitely Improbable

**As Others See ET.** Reviewing the 'Aliens' theme issue of *Granta*: 'When I saw the silvery, star-speckled cover of *Granta's* new issue, for one dizzying minute I thought the magazine's theme was old-fashioned aliens—the extraterrestrial kind with ray guns and spaceships. I couldn't wait to read the non-fiction and memoir pieces. Luckily, editor John Freeman has more sense than I do. [...] I didn't get little green men from *Granta*, but the stories and histories collected here were just as weird and fantastic as anything dreamed up by sci-fi writers.' (Alice Fisher, *Guardian*, 6 March) [SI] That must have been a relief.

**Awards.** *Arthur C. Clarke* shortlist announced 4 March: Lauren Beukes, *Zoo City*; Ian McDonald, *The Dervish House*; Patrick Ness, *Monsters of Men*; Richard Powers, *Generosity*; Tim Powers, *Declare* (2000, but first UK publication 2010); Tricia Sullivan, *Lightborn*. • *Astrid Lindgren* (children's): Shaun Tan. • *Horror Writers Association*, Lifetime Achievement: Ellen Datlow, Al Feldstein. • *James Tiptree Jr* (gender exploration): Dubravka Ugresic, *Baba Yaga Laid an Egg*. • *Lambda* (LGBT), sf/fantasy/horror category: Sandra McDonald, *Diana Comet and Other Improbable Stories*; Tanith Lee, *Disturbed by Her Song*; Nene Adams, *Flowers of Edo*; Steve Berman, ed., *Wilde Stories 2010: The Year's Best Gay Speculative Fiction*; Jane Fletcher, *Wolfsbane Winter*.

**Soft Sell.** Robert J. Sawyer, echoing the 1998 tv ad with Harlan Ellison ('Noted Futurist') plugging Geo Metro cars, has a Microsoft deal for free ebook download of his Webmind novels with IE9. He writes: 'As it happens, the World Wide Web turns 21 this year: its childhood has ended. But the best is doubtless yet to come: as you probe all the Web's marvels with Internet Explorer 9, you'll be part of the next phase of the Web's development, and I hope my books give you a little foretaste of what that wondrous future may hold for all of us.' (Microsoft.com) [CH]

**Ancient History.** *Anne Robinson*: 'In the TV series *Thunderbirds*, which pilot shared his name with a classical Roman poet?' *Male contestant*: 'Troy.' (*The Weakest Link*, BBC1, 10 March) [MPJ]

**R.I.P.** *April Derleth* (1954-2011), August Derleth's daughter and President/CEO of genre publisher Arkham House, died on 21 March aged 56. [GVG] • *Marjorie Edwards*, UK fan who attended Eastercons from the mid-1960s to early 1970s and was involved since the 1990s with the Festival of Fantastic Films, died on 30 March aged 63. [BB] •



Mike Glicksohn (1946-2011), Canadian fan whose *Energumen* (1970-1981, coedited with his first wife Susan Wood) won the 1973 fanzine Hugo, died on 18 March from a stroke following lengthy treatment for cancer; he was 64. Mike was joint Fan GoH with Susan Wood at the 1975 Australian Worldcon. His other major fanzine was *Xenium* (1973-1990). At the peak of his activity in the 1970s he seemed to appear in the letter column of every fanzine everywhere. (Like so many others, I'm grateful for his encouragement in the early days of my own publications.) He is survived by his wife Susan Manchester, to whom all sympathy. Another friend lost. ● *Michael Gough* (1915/16-2011), UK character actor whose many genre appearances included *The Man in the White Suit* (1951), the 1966 *Doctor Who* sequence 'The Celestial Toy-maker' (title role), several Hammer horror films, and Alfred Pennyworth in *Batman* (1989) and three sequels, died on 17 March aged 94 or 95 (he was unsure of his birth year). [PDF] ● *H.R.F. Keating* (1926-2011), prolific UK detective novelist and critic whose sf comprises *The Strong Man* (1971) and *A Long Walk to Wimbledon* (1978), died on 27 March; he was 84. [DG] ● *John Nettleship*, who as J.K. Rowling's former chemistry teacher was the original inspiration for Severus Snape, died on 12 March aged 71. [CMJ] ● *Edward (Ted) Russell* (1927-2011), early Australian fan, younger brother of Eric, whom he assisted in editing and publishing *Ultra*, one of the best known Aussie zines of the 1940s, died on 9 January 9 aged 83. [CN] ● *Joanne Siegel* (née Kovacs, 1917-2011), US artist's model who posed for Lois Lane in the original *Superman* comic and married its co-creator Jerry Siegel, died on 12 February aged 93. [JY] ● *Wim Stolk* (1950-2011), award-winning Dutch fantasy novelist who wrote under the pseudonym W.J. Maryson, died on 9 March. [NV] ● *Kan Tokumaru* (1941-2011), Japanese voice actor heard in many cartoons and games since 1975, died on 6 March. In the Japanese dub of *Live and Let Die* he was the voice of M. [JC] ● *Edward Wellen* (1919-2011), prolific US mystery author who published many sf stories and the sf/crime novel *Hijack* (1971), died on 15 January aged 91. [TM] His sf magazine debut was the non-fact 'Origins of Galactic Slang' (July 1952 *Galaxy*). ● *Gary Winick* (1961-2011), US film producer/director whose fantasy ventures were *13 Going on 30* (2004) and *Charlotte's Web* (live-action version, 2006), died on 27 February; he was 49. [MMW]

**Science Terminology Masterclass.** TMZ helpfully glossed Charlie Sheen's comment on Brooke Mueller's court order requiring him to keep 100 yards away from her: 'Charlie tells TMZ, "Great. I was already planning on staying 100 parsecs away from her." BTW, a parsec is a "Star Wars" term for 3.26 light years.' (TMZ.com, 1 March) [AL] ● 'The orbit of a comet was not a parabola, but an ellipsis.' (Marie Brennan, *A Star Shall Fall*, 2010) Evelyn C. Leeper adds: 'I have visions of the comet winking out of existence, then re-appearing a few feet further on briefly, then winking out again, like a series of dots across the sky...'

**Court Circular.** Already thrown out by a US judge, the *Willy the Wizard* plagiarism suit against J.K. Rowling and Bloomsbury met further UK difficulties when Mr Justice Kitchin followed his October decision ('I have reached the conclusion that this claim may succeed but that it is improbable it will do so.') with a Chancery ruling that the case will be struck out unless plaintiff Paul Allen pays £1.5+ million into court as security to cover the defendants' projected costs. (*Daily Mail*, 21 March) [PDF] ● *Doctor Who* fan Steven Clark is suing the BBC for allegedly stealing the name and appearance of Davros, the Daleks' cyborg mastermind, from his entry in a 1972 *TV Action* magazine competition to create a comic-strip villain. Judges included Jon Pertwee and Terrance Dicks but not Terry Nation, who introduced Davros in the 1975 story-line *Genesis of the Daleks*—a title which Clark says he also invented. His competition submission didn't win and wasn't published, so the only hard evidence is a copy he supposedly mislaid for 20 years in a family encyclopedia. Produced in 1972 for the competition, or sketched from the telly in 1975? A tricky question. (*Daily Mail*, 19 March) [DKMK] ● Lucasfilm is again fighting British engineer Andrew Ainsworth, who designed the *Star Wars* stormtrooper armour, in the UK Supreme Court. The High Court and Court of Appeal ruled that these creations are mere props—copyright-protected for 15 years, making it OK for Ainsworth to produce and sell copies—while Lucasfilm wants them to be artistic 'sculptures' protected for life (George Lucas's?) plus 70 years. [MPJ]

**As Others See Us.** 'As shown by *Battle: Los Angeles*, and hordes of films before it, science fiction is nothing if not mockable. [...] Science fiction is so inherently close to the absurd that the toughest challenge is not to lampoon it.' (Anthony Lane, *New Yorker*, 21 March) [MMW]

**Random Fandom.** *Lilian Edwards* was in the news, talking about the legal status of robots and proposing three new Laws of Robotics: '1. Robots are multiuse tools. Robots should not be designed solely or

primarily to kill, except in the interests of national security.' (Scotsman.com, 21 February) ● *John Francis William Richards* 'formerly of Portsmouth now of Doncaster wishes to announce his marriage to Ms Maeryn Jill Smith to take place at Doncaster Registry Office on 8 July 2011.' All friends welcome. Details: jfwrichards at bigfoot dot com.

**We Are Everywhere.** *Private Eye's* 'Pseudo Names' feature—silly letters with daft signatures—plugged a legendary sf hack with the sage advice 'read L. Ron Hubbard', signed Diane Etticks. (1 April) ● Yet more genre imagery in UK politics! '... Steve Hilton, the Prime Minister's characterful director of strategy, a man who is to formality what Silvio Berlusconi is to chastity. / Known as "Gollum" because of his shaven head and attractive manners ...' (*Independent*, 28 March) [MPJ]

**Corporate Pirates.** Dorchester Publishing, hugely in debt, has a new business plan: selling digital books to which it no longer has rights, not paying the writers, and blaming all this on vendors like Amazon. Unpaid author Brian Keene, who called for a boycott of Dorchester and its Leisure Fiction imprint, is far from alone. A literary agent who's struggled with Dorchester said wearily, 'We tell them to suppress [the ebook], and they do for a few weeks, and then it's back up again.' [JS]

**Outraged Letters.** *Simon R. Green* on A283: 'Turns out the BBC was right about *Outcasts* after all. It wasn't sf. It was crap. Why do television people insist on hiring people to write sf shows who've clearly never even read the stuff in their life before? Answer: Jobs for the boys.'

● *Claire M Jordan* remembers Diana Wynne Jones: 'The last time I saw her was at an SF con in Edinburgh in I think 1994. She had only just recovered from pneumonia when she allowed herself to be sold for charity in a slave auction while wearing nearly nothing at all with bells on, and gave herself a relapse.' ● *Priscilla Olson* corrects my A284 phrasing: 'The Skylark Award (just won by Lois McMaster Bujold) isn't really for "general contributions to sf"—it's for nice people who are sf professionals. And Lois is, indubitably, a nice person.'

**Pop Culture.** Explaining 'this is a world I confess I don't regularly inhabit', the presenter of Australian Classic FM radio's *Star Trek/Doctor Who* music evening went on to identify Leonard Nimoy as 'He of the saturnine looks, predictably playing the villain Spock ...' (20 March) [P]

● Writing about the Moon in his *Oldie* sort-of-science column, James Le Fanu interestingly termed it the largest satellite in the solar system and referred to the sad plight of 'moonless Mars'. (*The Oldie*, March)

**The Dead Past.** *75 Years Ago*: '... one of the prominent features of scientific fiction is the lack of rudimentary scientific knowledge displayed by many of its authors. [...] the Theory of Relativity comes in for some appalling treatment ...' (D.R. Smith, *Novae Terrae* 2, April 1936)

**Fanfundery.** *Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund*: don't forget that TAFF voting closes on 26 April. For race details and ballots, see taff.org.uk.

**Thog's Masterclass.** *Dept of Emotion Recollected in Tranquillity.* 'Memories unearthed themselves like zombies clawing themselves out of a freshly dug grave.' (Erin Brockovich with C.J. Lyons, *Rock Bottom*, 2011) [MMW] ● *Health & Safety Dept.* 'But he shrugged it aside, since no danger from any outside source could possibly exist in Space.' (Murray Roberts, *The Flying Globes* [a Captain Justice story], 1939) [DL] ● *Dept of Cerebral Activity.* 'His brain wouldn't look. It twisted in a mad desperation, like a body buried alive, and briefly, horrendously aware of its fate.' (A.E. van Vogt, *Supermind*, 1977) [EM] ● *True Romance Dept.* 'He ran his eyes into her like a serpent down a hole, made her feel his slither in her heart and guts, made her tremble.' (Daniel Woodrell, *Winter's Bone*, 2006). [PB] 'Her scent wafted into his nostrils and charged up his libido.' (Chris Redding, *Corpse Whisperer*, 2007) [Anon] ● *Detached View Dept.* 'His gaze studied her.' (*Ibid*) ● *Dept of Scientific Romance.* 'Her heavy breasts, each of whose moles and freckles he can project like constellations against the planetarium dome of his imagination, strain against the placket and pockets of her shirt.' (Michael Chabon, *The Yiddish Policemen's Union*, 2008) [MMW] ● *Sound of One Boot Clapping Dept.* 'They walked in silence, the soles of their boots clapping the marble flooring, the sound echoing against stone walls.' (Brandon Sanderson, *The Way of Kings*, 2010) [MK] ● *Dept of Alfresco Dessert.* 'He turned suddenly to attend to some trifle on his horse.' (Mary Robinette Kowal, *Shades of Milk and Honey*, 2010) [PC]

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