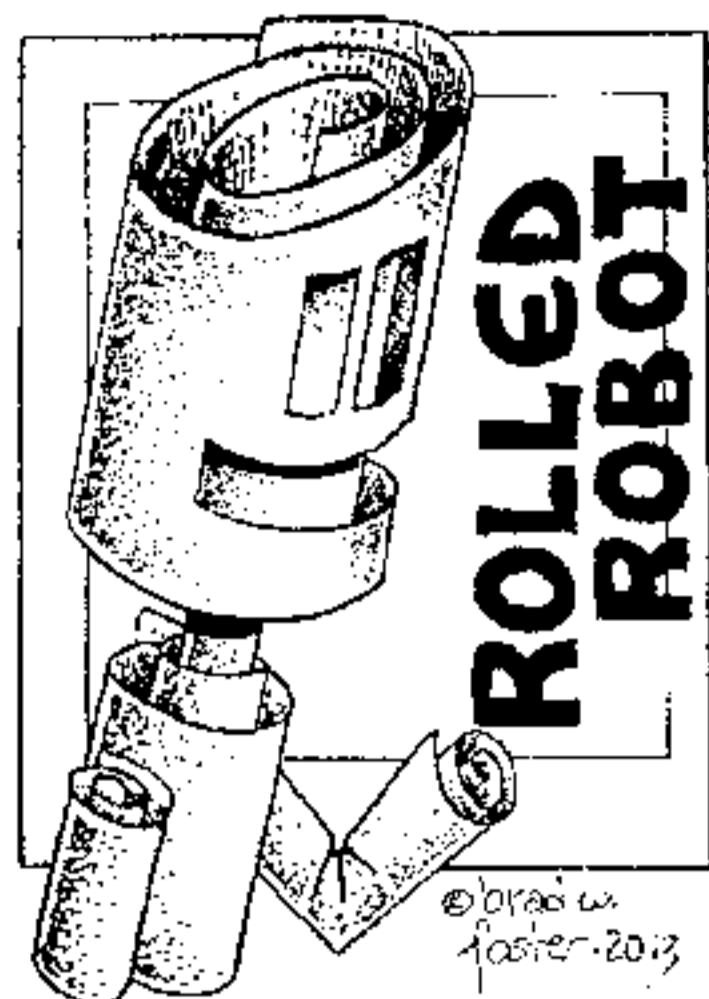


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From David Langford, 94 London Road, Reading, Berks, RG1 5AU, UK. Web news.ansible.co.uk. ISSN 0265-9816 (print); 1740-942X (e). Logo: Dan Steffan. Cartoon: Brad W. Foster. Available for SAE or red leaves, scob liver and ginkle-string.

Happy New Year, as always, to *Ansible* readers near and far.

The Fish-Frying Academy

Brian Aldiss has successfully quit the skiffy habit: 'I have to admit to you these days I don't read any science fiction—or do I? Now I only read Tolstoy.' (Interview, *The Guardian*, 13 December) [DP]

Iain Banks was Twitter's 'top UK news trending topic' for 2013, ahead of 'UK storm', 'NHS' and Seamus Heaney in second, third and fourth places. His pet hate Margaret Thatcher came eighth, beating Richard III at #9. (*Independent Review of the Year*, 28 December)

Samuel R. Delany was announced as the 2014 choice for SFWA's Damon Knight Grand Master Award. (SFWA, 4 December) [GVG] SFWA president Steven Gould observed: 'When discussing him as this year's choice with the board, past-presidents, and members, the most frequent response I received was, "He's not already?" / Well he is now.'

Peter Nicholls has good news: 'I have become, appropriately, the first cyborg editor of a science-fiction encyclopedia. It is now thirteen years since I was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease and in the past twelve months the illness had reached the advanced stage which is both uncomfortable and unseemly: I lurched rather than walked, my voice became hoarse, guttural and almost unintelligible, and I spilled food all over my clothes at meal times. / Desperate times call for desperate remedies. Around four weeks ago I undertook an operation known as Deep Brain Stimulation, in which fine wires are inserted into the subthalamic nucleus of the brain (while conscious), and run out through the skull, then subcutaneously down the neck and behind the collar bone, where they terminate in a battery. The battery can be turned off, but is generally left running. So now I am a cyborg (as defined in *SFE3*). As to how and why DBS works, nobody is completely sure, but there is interesting stuff available for googlers. / The result is immediate and spectacular. I now speak much more clearly, walk normally, no longer fear falls, look younger (and according to some women, handsomer). It is still early days, but my neurologist says that all the preliminary signs are very positive. My greatest worry, that there will be cognitive loss (there had already been some loss prior to the operation) has not yet been put to rest, but there are signs of possible improvement here also. Only four days after the operation I was invited to address fifty or so Chinese neurologists who were visiting Melbourne, and I received an ovation afterwards. I am hoping two things, the first being that soon I will be able to drive again, and the second being that I can do rather more work on the third edition of the *Science Fiction Encyclopedia*.' (email, 27 December) Excellent news indeed, and I really must avoid rereading Michael Crichton's *The Terminal Man*.

Manil Suri's *The City of Devi* won the 2013 *Literary Review* Bad Sex award for the surprisingly science-fictional imagery in this description of a hot threesome's climax: 'Surely supernovas explode that instant, somewhere, in some galaxy. The hut vanishes, and with it the sea and the sands—only Karun's body, locked with mine, remains. We streak like superheroes past suns and solar systems, we dive through shoals of quarks and atomic nuclei. In celebration of our breakthrough fourth star, statisticians the world over rejoice.' (*Guardian*, 3 December) [RJ] Who knew that statisticians have so much fun?

Concarsive

22 Jan • **BSFA Open Meeting**, Artillery Arms, 102 Bunhill Row, London, EC1Y 8ND. 5/6pm for 7pm. With Adam Roberts. Free.

7-9 Feb • **2emi6breve** (filk), Ramada Grantham Hotel. £42 reg, £29 unwaged; £45/£30 at door. under-18s £1/year; under-5s free. Cheques: UK Filk Convention, c/o 159 Winns Avenue, Walthamstow, London, E17 5HB.

7-9 Feb • **SF Ball** (media), Carrington House Hotel, Bournemouth. Tickets £104; child £52; other options. See sfbevents.com/sfball.

8-9 Feb • **Phenomecon** (was Epic-Con), NUIM Maynooth, Co. Kildare, Ireland. Cost TBA; tickets should become available online this month. Keep watching the skies at www.facebook.com/phenomecon.

14-18 Aug • **Loncon 3** (72nd Worldcon), ExCeL centre, London Docklands. £115 reg; £260 family; £65 YA; £30 child; £2 infant; £25 supp. See www.loncon3.org; also loncon3.org/publications.php#prs for PR2 on hotel booking and Hugo/Retro Hugo nominations, *now open*.

22-24 Aug • **Shamrokon** (Eurocon), Burlington Hotel, Dublin. *Now* €35 reg; concessions €25; under-22s €10. Join at www.shamrokon.ie.

5-7 Sep • **FantasyCon 2014**, Royal York Hotel, York. £40 reg, £70 for 2 adults, under-16s £20; BFS members £30, £55, £12.50; under-5s free. See www.fantasycon2014.org. *Rates were to rise on 1 January but the website still (2 January) lists only the above prices.*

20 Sep • **Andromeda Two**, Digbeth, Birmingham. 9am-10pm. *Now* £25 reg or £100 for a group of five. Online registration at terror-tree.co.uk/andromeda-tw.

19-23 Aug 2015 • **Sasquan** (Worldcon), Spokane Convention Center, Spokane, WA, USA. \$140 reg, *rising to \$170 on 31 January 2014*; \$40 supp (no increase). See <http://sasquan.org/>.

Rumblings. *Worldcon 2017*: The bid committee formerly known as 'Northeast Corridor in 2017' revealed that its bid is for Washington DC on 16-20 August 2017. Other contenders: Helsinki, Japan, Montréal. • Further newly announced bids: Fort Worth in 2021, Chicago in 2022.

Infinitely Improbable

As Others See Us. US District Judge Richard J. Leon, ruling in December 'that the National Security Agency's daily collection of virtually all Americans' phone records is almost certainly unconstitutional', rejected the Justice Department view that a 1979 Supreme Court decision makes it all OK: 'The "almost-Orwellian technology" that allows the government to collect, store and analyze phone metadata is "unlike anything that could have been conceived in 1979" and, "at best, the stuff of science fiction," he said.' (*Washington Post*, 16 December) [MMW]

Awards. *National Book Award Book of the Year* for UK publication, chosen by popular vote: Neil Gaiman's *The Ocean at the End of the Lane* won 'by a considerable margin'. (BBC, 27 December) [MPJ] • *Visual Effects Society Award*: Alfonso Cuarón, director of *Gravity*. [MPJ]

Futurology Masterclass. Herman Kahn imagines the exotic twenty-first century: 'We're locating the pleasure centers in the brain. By the end of the century maybe we'll have them wired to buttons on our chests, and be able to play sensations like a squeezebox. The major sensory chord produced by striking buttons one, three, and five simultaneously could be like "Wow!"' (*Business Week*, 11 March 1967) [MMW]

R.I.P. *Joan Fontaine* (1917-2013), Oscar-winning actress whose rare genre film credits included *Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea* (1961) and *The Witches* (1966), died on 15 December aged 96. [SG] • *John Fortune* (1939-2013), UK actor and satirist whose BBC2 series *In the Looking Glass* (1978) explored various SF themes, died on 31 December aged 74. His 1971 *A Melon for Ecstasy*, a spoof erotic novel about a literal tree-lover, was not quite genre fantasy.... [MV] • *Richard Gallen*, US publishing attorney, book packager and investor who provided financial backing and advice to various publishers including Baen Books, Bluejay, Tor and Carroll & Graf, died on 3 December aged 80. (*PW*, 13 December) [PDF/GVG] • *Barry Jackson* (1938-2013), UK actor seen in *Adam Adamant Lives!* (1966, where he was also fight arranger), *Doomwatch* (1972), *Doctor Who* (1965, 1979), *Blake's 7* (1978) and other genre tv, died on 5 December; he was 75. [MPJ] • *Nancy Kemp* (1923-2013), US fan who was once married to Earl Kemp and with him co-edited the Hugo-winning symposium *Who Killed Science Fiction?* (1960), died on 22 December. • *Édouard Molinaro* (1928-2013), French film writer and director whose genre films include the horror comedy *Dracula père et fils* (1976) and the fantasy *Tombé du nid* (1999 tv), died on 7 December aged 85. [AW] • *Hugh Nissenson* (1933-2013), US author who published sf in *Playboy* as early as 1964 and whose sf novel was *The Song of the Earth* (2001), died on 13 December aged 80. [JC] • *Peter O'Toole* (1932-2013), Irish-born UK stage and film actor famed worldwide for mainstream roles such as *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962), died on 14 December aged 81. Genre credits include *Supergirl* (1984), *The Ray*

Bradbury Theater (1986 tv), *High Spirits* (1988), *Phantoms* (1998), *Ratatouille* (2007), *Stardust* (2007), *My Talks with Dean Spanley* (2008) and *Highway to Hell* (2012). [AW/SG] ● *Joseph Ruskin* (1924-2013), US character actor, died on 28 December aged 89. Among his many tv genre credits are *The Twilight Zone*, *The Outer Limits*, *Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea*, *The Time Tunnel*, *Star Trek* (plus spinoff series and films), *Land of the Giants*, *Planet of the Apes*, *The Six Million Dollar Man*, *The Bionic Woman*, *Project U.F.O.*, *Airwolf*, *Max Headroom* and *Spider-Man*. [F770] ● *Ned Vizzini* (1981-2013), US author whose four YA novels include sf and fantasy, committed suicide on 19 December; he was 32. [SFS] ● *Colin Wilson* (1931-2013), UK author who achieved instant success with his study of literary and real-world 'outsiders' in *The Outsider* (1956), and later became better known for very many non-fiction works on crime and the paranormal, died on 5 December aged 82. His ideas about the unexplored potential of the human mind took sf form in his Cthulhu Mythos novels *The Mind Parasites* (1967) and *The Philosopher's Stone* (1969), and in more conventional sf terms in the late-1980s 'Spider World' sequence. *The Space Vampires* (1976), a homage to A E van Vogt's 'Asylum', was filmed as *Lifeforce* (1985). [JC] He was my last surviving collaborator on *The Necronomicon* (1978) edited by George Hay. ● *Rosemary Wolfe* (1931-2013), Gene Wolfe's wife of many years and a cheering presence at numerous conventions, died on 14 December after long illness; she was 82.

Ghost Story. 'Nelson Mandela revisited his cell several times after his death.' (BBC website caption, 5 December) [PE]

Court Circular. *Asterix* artist Albert Uderzo is in dispute with his daughter and son-in-law over the mighty cartoon franchise. He plans to sue them for 'psychological violence' while they (having in 2007 been 'dismissed by Asterix publisher Editions Albert Rene as managers of the Uderzo estate') say he's mentally ill, being cruelly exploited, etc, and filed a lawsuit about this in 2011. (BBC, 2 December) [MPJ] ● *Bob and Harvey Weinstein* of Miramax, which sold the *Hobbit* film rights to New Line/Warner in 1998, are suing the studio for \$75 million or more on the basis that the film was split into three 'solely to deprive plaintiffs' of money. In what Warner has tactfully called 'one of the great blunders in movie history', Miramax settled for 5% of the gross on the first film only, assuming there could be only one. (BBC, 12 December) [MPJ] ● *Frank Darabont*, creator of the high-rated zombie tv series *The Walking Dead*, is suing the US AMC tv network for 'tens of millions of dollars' for (a) sacking him before the second series to avoid paying an increased profit share; (b) eliminating any paper profit through a 'self-dealing' fiddle whereby the AMC affiliate that makes the show licenses it to AMC at less than the cost of production. (BBC, 18 December) [MPJ]

Magazine Scene. *Electric Velocipede* is ceasing publication with issue 27, and *Icarus: The Magazine of Gay Speculative Fiction* with issue 18, according to editorials in those issues by the respective editors John Klima and Steve Berman. [PDF] ● *Foundation* 115 ('Summer 2012/13', just published) is Graham Sleight's last issue: Paul March-Russell is the incoming editor. ● *SF Signal* was hacked shortly before Christmas; the problem was quickly fixed, but Google malware alerts continued for a while. [L] ● *SF Site* has abandoned its gruelling schedule of twice-monthly updates, owing to a falling-off in advertising. New stuff will henceforth appear at unexpected intervals, 'as it comes our way'. [L]

Outraged Letters. *Gordon Van Gelder* has news of possible interest to the WSFS Mark Protection Committee: 'I just did an online search for Worldcon 2014 and the World Congress on Coloproctology turned up. <http://worldcon2014.com/> ... I wonder if they'll have filking?'

New Year Honours. Angela Lansbury, whose film credits include *Bedknobs and Broomsticks*, *The Court Jester*, *Beauty and the Beast* and *The Last Unicorn*, is now a Dame. [SFS] ● OBEs went to special effects supervisor Chris Corbold, who worked on several Bond films and won an Oscar for his contribution to *Inception*; and to Lynda Bellingham, who played the Inquisitor in the 14-part Colin Baker-era *Doctor Who* storyline *The Trial of a Timelord*, and was also in *Blake's 7*. [MPJ] ● MBE: Kathleen Wendy Herald Peyton, Carnegie Medal-winning author of much children's fiction as by K.M. Peyton. Her supernatural novels include *A Pattern of Roses* (1972) and *Unquiet Spirits* (1997).

Random Fandom. *Jim Barker* won the 2013 Rotsler Award for life achievement in artwork for sf fanzines, receiving eternal glory and \$300 as his reward. His most recent *Ansible* cartoon was in issue 315. ● *Benchmarks Disqualified*: those 2013 Algis Budrys critical collections (see ae.ansible.co.uk) have been ruled ineligible for the BSFA Award. I hadn't noticed the clause saying 'Whole collections comprised entirely of unrevised work that has been published elsewhere prior to 2013 are ineligible.'; nor did I know that obsessive correction, annotation and

indexing of the texts doesn't count as revision. Fingers remain crossed for the less picky *Locus* Award and Hugo shortlists.... ● *Roger Robinson* has booked the Melton Mowbray cellar bar for First Thursday fan meetings (see news.ansible.co.uk/london.html) throughout 2014. But the 18 December Xmas meeting is tentative only: the management would much prefer a lucrative party booking if only they can get one.

The Dead Past. *20 Years Ago: 'Be Prepared.* The New England SF Association notoriously plans for every contingency: "The rules for other organizations suing the clubhouse were re-stated ..." [*Instant Message* 538]. (*Ansible* 78, January 1994) ● *40 Years Ago*, a note on the fan production which became the world-bestridding *Fortean Times*: 'THE NEWS IS GOOD. That's my opinion, anyway. I have actually subscribed to Bob Rickard's new Fortean magazine, *The News*, so I've put my money where my mouth is too. For the totally ignorant, Charles Fort [...] was, for various reasons, fascinated by unexplained phenomena, particularly those scorned or glibly set aside by the dogmatic priests of science. *The News*, therefore, presents brief reports of oddities and strange events ...' (Peter Roberts, *Checkpoint* 45, January 1974) ● *50 Years Ago*: 'Such is fame Dept. T.H. White died at the age of 57 on Friday 17th Jan. The author of *The Once & Future King*, on which the musical *Camelot* is based, and of *The Sword In The Stone* recently filmed by Disney rated a six line notice in the *Daily Mail* and suffered a spelling mistake in his name into the bargain' (*Skyrack* 62, January 1964.)

C.o.A. *Andi Shechter & Stu Shiffman*, 13716 Lake City Way NE Apt. 321, Seattle, WA 98125-2601, USA (phone numbers unchanged).

Fanfundery. *TAFF 2014.* The final line-up for the eastbound race from North America to Loncon 3 in London (as above): Brad and Cindy Foster standing jointly, Curt Phillips and Randy Smith. All worthy fans; *Ansible* naturally supports its regular masthead cartoonist. *TAFF* voting continues to 22 April. See taff.org.uk for the ballot form, candidates' platforms and a link to the online PayPal donation/voting page. ● *GUFF 2014*: a PDF ballot form is now available via taff.org.uk/guff.html. The voting deadline is 9 June. ● *DUFF 2014*: nominations for the southbound race from North America to Australasia close on 6 January. For full details, see the *File 770* post at file770.com/?p=15084.

Thog's Masterclass. *Dept of Canine Ejaculation.* 'The minister's wife [*Madam Ho*] let out a Pekinese whelp.' (Colin Cotterill, *The Woman Who Wouldn't Die*, 2013) [MH] ● *Physio Dept.* 'Connie's brows swept down over her pale eyes.' 'She swayed, unsteady, as her stagnant blood moved down into her legs.' 'She moved the heels of her hands until they rested over her closed eyes, exhaling in the darkness behind her eyelids.' (Katherine Howe, *The Physick Book of Deliverance Dane*, 2009) [PB] ● *Dept of Feminist Awareness.* 'Her breasts were a smaller version of the woman herself—massive, firm and overpoweringly impressive.' (Isaac Asimov, *Foundation and Earth*, 1986) [SM] 'For a zoologist, a profession which tends to recruit the plainer girls, Shirley was outstandingly attractive.' (Chapman Pincher, *Not with a Bang*, 1965) [AR] 'Like many scientists, only about a quarter of his wakened time could have been spent in the presence of any wife.' (*Ibid*) 'He watched her drift out of earshot, her bottom, which had a life of its own, giving her dress a delightful motion.' (*Ibid*) ● *Necropody Dept.* 'The dead men's shoes remained filled by agile feet.' (*Ibid*) ● *Reacting to Mass Suicide at the Seaside.* 'On the shore, some of the young watchers screamed out hysterically, pressing their clenched fists to their faces, as they had done so often under happier circumstances.' (*Ibid*) ● *Anatomy Dept.* 'She owned a pair of well-filled legs ...' 'His tie hung limply like a lost erection.' 'His pale, watery eyes seemed to penetrate beyond the skin.' "Coffee," he said, his voice as cool as his neck was hot.' 'The gaudy decor bounced off his eyeballs ...' (all from Kitty Sewell, *Ice Trap*, 2005) [PB] ● *Dept of Modest Understatement.* 'The main asteroid belt is over six million miles long ...' (David V. Reed, *Murder In Space*, May 1944 *Amazing Stories*) [BA] ● *True Romance (Hard-Boiled Dept).* 'Butler pumped hard now and felt himself getting crazy. Somebody had stuffed eight pigeons up his ass and he felt like he was going to explode. The pigeons flew through his penis and he bit his lip as they flew out the tip. He hung onto her shoulders for support and she fell back against the mirror on the wall, her eyes rolling in her head, because the pigeons had flown into her egg roll and were flapping their wings around in there.' (Philip Kirk, *Chinese Roulette*, 1984) [AR]

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