



Ansible® 426 January 2023

From **David Langford**, 94 London Road, Reading, Berks, RG1 5AU, UK. Website news.ansible.uk. ISSN 0265-9816 (print); 1740-942X (e). Logo: **Dan Steffan**. Cartoon: **Brad W. Foster**. Available for SAE or any edition of Silas Haslam's *History of the Land Called Uqbar*.

The Ten Thousand Doors

Douglas Adams was remembered in the Inquisitor crossword 'Valediction' (i, 10 December), where much juggling with aquatic life led to a well-known phrase and book title. See Fifteensquared.net, 20 December.

Frederik Pohl (late news alert) had a Martian crater named after him by the International Astronomical Union in August 2022, thus leading to a slight double-take for fans who read a related scientific paper: 'Our mapping also shows that Pohl's knobby rim regionally represents a broader history of megatsunami modification....' [MC]

Adam Roberts saw the *NY Times* headline 'Scientists Made Snails Remember Something That Never Happened To Them' and could only say: 'We Can Remember It For You, Whole Snail'. (Twitter, 26 December)

John Scalzi tested a cutting-edge writing AI by instructing it to create a short story in his style: 'Once upon a time, in a far-off galaxy, there was a planet called New Earth. It was a lush, verdant world, teeming with life in all its forms. The inhabitants of New Earth were a diverse and intelligent species, known for their quick wits and even quicker reflexes. They lived in harmony with their environment, taking only what they needed to survive and thriving in the process.' And so on for six more bland paragraphs with no dialogue and thus *no swearing*. Mr Scalzi reckons that 'I may keep my gig until the next iteration at least.' (Twitter, 5 December)

Somtow Sucharitkul is creating a new opera based on the almost legendary *Plan 9 from Outer Space*. 'I intend to compose the score in the spirit of Ed Wood – with utter seriousness and high moral intent, as befits the exalted subject matter about aliens saving humanity from itself – so timely in these, ah, times.' (*Hollywood Reporter*, 19 December) [LP]

Rob Wilkins, who wrote and also narrated *Terry Pratchett: A Life with Footnotes*, mingles joy and woe: 'I'm sorry that, in The Times Audio-books of the Year today, I didn't win "Best Celebrity Reading". They gave it to someone called Bono. Absolute travesty. But we know how these things work. Still, I DID get "Best Biography"....' (Twitter, 17 December)

Conquian

Until 8 Jan • **Beatrix Potter: Drawn to Nature** (exhibition), V&A, London. £14; children free. See tinyurl.com/2p89r2vf.

3-6 Feb • **Scotiacon** (furry), Crowne Plaza Hotel, Glasgow. £100 reg. Other details at www.scotiacon.org.uk.

16-19 Feb • **UK Ghost Story Festival**, Museum of Making, Derby. Talks etc. are separately ticketed: see www.ukghoststoryfestival.co.uk.

17-19 Feb • **Sci-Fi Ball** (media), Southampton. Tickets from £145 (£35 child) plus various more expensive options at scifiball.com.

25-26 Feb • **Surrey Steampunk Convivial**, Stoneleigh, Epsom. See bumpandthumper.wixsite.com/steampunkconvivial.

11-13 Aug • **Tfnation** (*Transformers*), Birmingham NEC. Day rates only; e.g. Saturday is £45 or £80 for early access. See tfnation.com.

25-28 Aug • **Asylum-XII** (steampunk), The Lawns and other venues in Lincoln. Details awaited at www.ministryofsteampunk.com.

19-22 Oct • **Celluloid Screams** (horror films), Showroom Cinema, Sheffield. Tickets awaited at celluloidscreams.co.uk.

26-31 Oct • **Edinburgh Horror Festival**, Banshee Labyrinth and other city venues. Event tickets from edinburghhorrorfestival.co.uk.

2-3 Dec • **For the Love of Sci-Fi** (media), BEC Arena, Stretford, Manchester. £49.50; under-10s £19.25. More at fortheloveofsci-fi.com.

Rumblings. *Chengdu 2023*: the traditional Worldcon presentation at Smofcon in December (not attended by any Chinese member of the 2023 committee) did little to address fan worries about the lack of published progress reports or hotel information, continuing failure to make memberships buyable online, and whether the usual Hugo nomination and voting timetable will even be possible. Finance depends on mysterious Chinese sponsorship deals rather than membership sales. Interesting times. [F770]

Infinitely Improbable

As Others Quote Us. 'The sky over the city of Vancouver was the color of a television tuned to a Prince concert.' (Opening of news story about LED streetlights turning purple; businessinsider.com, 29 November) [CH]

Awards. *Irish Book Awards* (children's, senior): *Girls Who Slay Monsters* by Ellen Ryan, illus. Shona Shirley Macdonald. [F770] • *SFPA Grand Masters* (poetry): Akua Lezli Hope and Mary Soon Lee. [F770]

Publishers and Sinners. Hachette's merry end-of-year letter to its authors, illustrators *et al* noted that 'The principle [*sic*] challenge is supply chain cost – we have seen huge increases in the cost of paper, printing, distribution and haulage in the past year. To give a case study of this, a shipping container of books from the UK to Australia cost around Aus\$4,000 in 2021, versus Aus\$16,000 in 2022.' (Email, 5 December)

Lord Dyson's Bane. On a gadget or fashion accessory whose actual release was announced in December: 'Dyson's new Zone air-purifying headphones look like something you'd expect to see in a dystopian sci-fi movie, maybe even on the head of a Batman villain.' (CNET, 3 April) [RF]

R.I.P. *Kirstie Alley* (1951-2022), US actress in *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan* (1982) and *Village of the Damned* (1995), died on 5 December aged 71. [LP] • *Michael Ambrose* (1956-2022), US Lovecraftian author from 1972 and editor of *Macabre* (1972-1976) and *The Argonaut* (1977-1995), died on 20 July. [KG] • *Eduard Artemyev* (1937-2022), Russian composer whose many film-score credits include *Solaris* (1972), and *Stalker* (1979), died on 29 December aged 85. [AM] • *Angelo Badalamenti* (1937-2022), US composer whose credits include *Nightmare on Elm Street 3* (1987), *Twin Peaks* (1989-1991 and spinoffs) and *The City of Lost Children* (1995), died on 11 December aged 85. [TP] • *Gabrielle Beaumont* (1942-2022), UK director of episodes of *The Tomorrow People* (1978), *Star Trek: The Next Generation* (1989-1994), *Touched by an Angel* (1997) and other genre series – plus the tv film *Beastmaster III* (1996) – died on 8 October aged 80. [AIP] • *John Bird* (1936-2022), UK comic writer, satirist and actor whose rare genre credits include *Jackanory* (1970-1971) and *Jabberwocky* (1977), died on 24 December aged 86. [SF°C] • *June Blair* (1933-2022), US model and actress in *Island of Lost Women* (1959), died on 4 December aged 89. [SJ] • *Richard Bober* (1943-2022), US artist for many genre book covers since 1972 – including a number of Gene Wolfe titles – died on 7 or 8 December aged 79. [SHS] • *Stephen 'Witch' Boss* (1982-2022), US DJ and actor in *Ghostbusters* (2016), shot himself on 13 December; he was 40. [LP] • *Chris Boucher* (1943-2022), UK writer and script editor who wrote three *Doctor Who* serials (1977) and four *Who* novels, plus episodes of *Blake's 7* (1979-1981) and his own creation *Star Cops* (1987; 2013 novelization), died on 11 December. [F770] • *Albert Brenner* (1926-2022), Oscar-winning art director and production designer whose films include *Capricorn One* (1977), *2010* (1984), *The Monster Squad* (1987) and *The Witches of Eastwick* (1992), died on 8 December aged 96. [AIP] • *Bert Deling* (1942-2022), Australian writer and director of *Keiron: The First Voyager* (1985), who also wrote three 'Choose Your Own Nightmare' videogames (all 1998), died on 14 December aged 80. [GC] • *Ruggero Deodato* (1939-2022), Italian director of *Hercules, Prisoner of Evil* (1964, uncredited), *Atlantis Interceptors* (1983) and various horror films, died on 29 December aged 83. • *Sonya Eddy* (1967-2022), US actress in *Blast from the Past* (1999), *Inspector Gadget* (1999), *The Hive* (2014) and genre tv series, died on 19 December aged 55. [SHS] • *Cliff Emmich* (1936-2022), US actor in *Halloween II* (1981), *Digital Man* (1995), *Inspector Gadget* (1999) and others, died on 28 November aged 85. [LP] • *Jay Faulkner*, UK author of various short stories since 2010, committed suicide on 1 December. [PDF] • *Gary Friedkin* (1952-2022), US actor in *Return of the Jedi* (1983), *Hard Rock Zombies* (1985), *Snow White* (1987), *Cool World* (1992) and tv series, died on 2 December aged 70. [LP] • *Stephen Greif* (1944-2022), UK actor in *Blake's 7* (1978) and other genre series who also did voice work for Judge Dredd videogames and *Doctor Who: The Infinite Quest* (2007), died in December aged 78. [FM] • *Mike Hodges* (1932-2022), UK director whose credits include *The Terminal Man* (1974), *Flash Gordon* (1980) and *Morons from Outer Space* (1985), died on 17 December aged 90. [SG] • *Carl Kleinschmitt* (1937-2022), US screenwriter for *Hi Honey – I'm Dead* (1991), died on 8 December aged 85. [PDF] • *Dominique Lapierre* (1931-2022), French author who wrote *The Fifth Horseman* (1980) with Larry Collins, died on 4 December aged 91. [AM] • *Frank Lauria* (1935-2022), US author whose books include the occult 'Dr Owen Orient' series (1970-2014) and the

Riddick novelization *Pitch Black* (2000), died in December aged 85. [PDF] ● **Gabriella Licudi** (1941-2022), UK actress who starred in *Unearthly Stranger* (1963), died on 18 September aged 81. [HB] ● **Diane McBain** (1941-2022), US actress in *The Deathhead Virgin* (1974), *Puppet Master 5* (1994), *Invisible Mom II* (1999) and genre tv series, died on 21 December aged 81. [AIP] ● **Bob McGrath** (1932-2022), US actor and long-time *Sesame Street* regular – also in *Follow That Bird* (1985) and other spinoffs – died on 4 December aged 90. [LP] ● **Stuart Margolin** (1940-2022), US director and actor in *Women of the Prehistoric Planet* (1966), *The Big Bus* (1976), *Futureworld* (1976), *Mr. Smith* (1983) and genre tv series, died on 12 December aged 82. [LP] ● **Richard Miller** (1942-2022), US visual effects sculptor and model-maker whose work appeared in many genre productions from *Return of the Jedi* (1983) and further *Star Wars* films to the *Pirates of the Caribbean* sequence (2003-2007), died on 8 December aged 80. [PDF] ● **Kim Mohan** (1949-2022), US author and game designer, editor of *The Dragon* 1982-1995, *Ares* 1983-1994, and *Amazing* 1991-2000, died on 12 December aged 73. [CR] He wrote the ‘Cyborg Commando’ sf trilogy (1987-1988) with Pamela O’Neill. ● **Lou Mougín** (1954-2022), US comics fan, author and historian (especially of Marvel) whose novel is *Joe Computer: Private Detective* (2022), was reported on 1 January as having died. [PDF] ● **James J. Murakami** (1931-2022), US art director and production designer whose credits include *Battlestar Galactica* (1979), *WarGames* (1983), *Peggy Sue Got Married* (1986), *Delirious* (1991) and *Groundhog Day* (1993), died on 15 December aged 91. [AIP] ● **Paula Helm Murray** (1956-2022), US author and fan active in Kansas City fandom, who published short fantasy stories 1987-1991, died on 28 December. [SHS] ● **Yūji Nunokawa** (1947-2022), Japanese anime producer who founded Studio Pierrot in 1979 and whose credits include *Casshan* (1973-1974), *Urusei yatsura* (1981-1983), *Ninja Robots* (1985-1986) and *Bleach: Memories of Nobody* (2006), died on 25 December aged 75. [PDF] ● **Terrence O’Hara** (1945-2022), US director and actor whose credits include *Voyager from the Unknown* (1982), *Angel* (2002-2004), *Smallville* (2002-2007) and *Grimm* (2012-2017), died on 5 December aged 76. [AIP] ● **Michael Reed** (1929-2022), UK cinematographer whose Hammer credits include *The Gorgon* (1964), *Dracula: Prince of Darkness* (1966) and *Prehistoric Women* (1967), died on 15 December aged 93. [SJ] ● **Christian Roberts** (1944-2022), UK actor in *The Mind of Mr. Soames* (1970), various genre tv series, and the 1989 stage musical *Return to the Forbidden Planet*, died on 26 December aged 78. [SJ] ● **Ralph Roberts** (1945-2021), US author and small-press publisher (as Farthest Star) whose one sf novel was *The Hundred-Acre Spaceship* (2002), died on 24 June 2021 aged 75. [SHS] ● **Hank Saroyan** (1947-2022), US tv worker with script credits for *Dungeons & Dragons* (1983-1985), *Muppet Babies* (1988-1991) and *The Life & Adventures of Santa Claus* (2000), died on 23 September. [PDF] ● **Sybil Gräfin Schönfeldt** (1927-2022), Austrian/German writer who translated children’s fantasy – including Roald Dahl’s *The Witches* – and wrote a biography of Astrid Lindgren, died on 11 December aged 95. [SHS] ● **Timofey Spivak** (1947-2022), Russian actor who starred in *Zvyozdny inspektor (The Star Inspector)*, 1980, died on 30 November aged 75. [AM] ● **Al Strobel**, US actor in *Twin Peaks* (1989-1990, plus spinoff films), *Megaville* (1990) and others, died on 2 December. [PDF] ● **Robert Tayman** (1942-2022), UK actor in *Moon Zero Two* (1969), *Vampire Circus* (1972) and various genre tv series, died on 10 December aged 80. [SJ] ● **Maggie Thrett** (1946-2022), US actress in *Dimension 5* (1966) and genre tv series, died on 18 December aged 76. [LP] ● **Christopher Tucker**, UK make-up expert whose films include *The Boys from Brazil* (1978), *Quest for Fire* (1981), *Monty Python’s The Meaning of Life* (1983) and *The Company of Wolves* (1984), died in December. [PDF] ● **Ronan Vibert** (1964-2022), UK actor whose credits include *Tale of the Mummy* (1998), *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (2002), *Tomb Raider: The Cradle of Life* (2003) and *Jonathan Strange & Mr Norrell* (2015), died on 22 December aged 58. [AIP]

The Weakest Link. *Bradley Walsh*: ‘Helen Moffett’s novel *Charlotte* is inspired by which Jane Austen novel?’ *Contestant: ‘Charlotte’s Web.’* (ITV, *The Chase*) [PE] ● *Jeremy Paxman*: ‘Who wrote the Elric novels?’ *Contestant: ‘Neil Gaiman.’* (BBC2, *University Challenge*) [JL]

The Game’s Afoot. ‘At midnight on 31 December, as we usher in 2023, Sherlock Holmes enters the public domain in the USA. The last stories were published in 1927, and so the 95 year copyright will expire. In ACD’s words “You may marry him, murder him, or do anything you like to him.”’ (*Baker Street Journal*, Twitter, 28 December) *Teresa Nielsen Hayden*: ‘Finally! That estate has been a real pain in the deerstalker.’

March of the Robots. ‘Hey @torbooks why tf are you using AI art on your covers,’ expostulated Corey Brickley (Twitter, 9 December). Christopher Paolini’s *Fractal Noise* (May 2023) has a cover generated by Midjourney AI and touched up by someone at Tor who added legs to the

original’s sketchily rendered astronaut. Despite the policy ‘Shutterstock does not accept AI-generated content from our contributors’, stock images there may include AI productions based on – not to say plagiarized from – the vast masses of online artwork from which Midjourney and its peers ‘learned’. The image in question is from the Shutterstock portfolio of one ‘ufuk kaya’, seemingly all AI-produced. Artists are feeling threatened, while writers nervously watch the advances of ChatGPT and its ilk.

Prophetic Corner? I really should read John Banim’s 1845 *London and its Eccentricities in the Year 2023; Or, Revelations of the Dead Alive*.

Random Fandom. *Fancylopedia 3* and *File 770* both suffered DDoS attacks on their websites in late December, but have since recovered. ● *Curt Phillips* reports a different bot problem: ‘I just had a robot (the surgical robot I work with most days) run over my left big toe. Oh, how I wish Isaac Asimov were still alive so I could complain directly to him....’ Unfortunately Crushbot weighs 1,200 lb and Curt’s toe is broken. Ouch!

Magazine Scene. Neil Clarke passed on the doom-laden report that Amazon plans to shut down its Kindle Publishing for Periodicals operation in September 2023 – bad news in already bad times for the many magazines that depend even if only in part on KPP. Besides Neil’s own *Clarkesworld* these include *Analog*, *Apex*, *Asimov’s*, *The Dark*, *F&SF*, *Forever*, *Galaxy’s Edge*, *Lightspeed* and *Uncanny*. (Neil-clarke.com, 16 December) ● *Galaxy’s Edge*, after a decade as a bimonthly print magazine founded and for 7 years edited by Mike Resnick, will in late 2023 become a twice-yearly printed anthology, says editor Lezli Robyn. (Facebook, 1 January)

The Dead Past. *30 Years Ago*: ‘William Gibson’s fan past keeps returning to haunt him, most recently in xeroxes of a 1963 *Fanac* newszine containing real Gibson cartoons and a con masquerade report with “young Bill Gibson as a priest of the Beetle God”.’ ‘Chris Priest got an unsolicited plug when the *Observer* looked back at the Best Young British Writers promotion he featured in long ago, and famous Julian Barnes explained: “Priest always was a chippy bugger.”’ “*Me transmittē sursum, Caledoni!*” is one of the useful items in Henry Beard’s *Latin For Even More Occasions*.’ (All from *Ansible* 66, January 1993) ● *20 Years Ago*: ‘*Book Trade News Digest* reported a financial coup on 13 December: “Rare Harry Potter book sells for 000. / A woman who bought a Harry Potter book for 99 today sold it for 000 at auction.”’ Also noted was ‘... a curiously inept press release from StarCity Entertainment Centre in the Midlands, promising showings of a recent film entitled *Lord of the Rings, Twin Towns*.’ (*Ansible* 186, January 2003)

UK New Year Honours. Brian May of Queen (see *SFE* entry) was knighted. Literary awards went to Kimberley Reynolds (OBE), the academic and authority on children’s literature, and the children’s author – whose books include fantasy – Francesca Simon (MBE). Actors with genre credits are Stephen Graham (OBE) and Frank Skinner (MBE).

Fanfunding. *TAFF*. The candidates in the 2023 westbound race are Sandra Bond (UK) and Mikołaj Kowalewski (Poland). Voting opened on 9 December and will close on 11 April. See taff.org.uk for the ballot and an online voting form. ● *TAFF Books*. Don Ford’s 1960 *TAFF* trip report *TAFF Baedeker* is now a free ebook: taff.org.uk/ebooks.php?x=FordTAFF. Kevin Smith’s 1982 *TAFF* report *Nothing*, published online in August, has been added to the *TAFF* benefit paperbacks listed at ae.ansible.uk/?id=taff. (These have so far raised some £370 for the fund – my thanks to everyone who bought copies!) Further early *TAFF* report ebooks in preparation include *A Fake Fan in London* by Robert A. Madle (1957), *Epitaff* (1960 westbound) by Eric Bentcliffe and *The Squirrel’s Tale* by Ron Ellik (1962).

Chog’s Masterclass. *Cold Equations Dept.* ‘Hook felt his face writhing into a grimace he knew from old was a ghastly snarl, a barbarically savage challenge to all the god-forsaken laws of nature and the cold arbiters of the universe. He cursed the laws of astrophysics!’ (‘Tully Zetford’, *Whirlpool of Stars*, 1974) ● *Striking Similes Redux*. ‘The Customs Man recovered his balance and, with the speed of a striking sex-crazed strooka, drew his weapon.’ (*Ibid*) ● *Dept of Suspicious Movements*. ‘Judge Dee was particularly struck by Lin Fan’s eyes; they had a queer, fixed stare and seemed to move with his head.’ (Robert van Gulik, *The Chinese Bell Murders*, 1958) ● *Single Entendre Dept.* Han Solo to Leia Organa Solo: ‘A little quiet time – a little husbandly affection – and it’ll pop right out at you.’ (Timothy Zahn, *Star Wars: Specter of the Past*, 1997) [BA] ● *Centripetal Dept.* ‘Barbarossa’s great buildings were held to the ground by gravity caused by asteroid spin, as the asteroid orbited through space.’ (Ulrike O’Reilly, *Buck Rogers Arrival*, 1989) [BA]

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