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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: **Julia Morgan-Scott**. Available for SAE or first editions of *Hire and Salary* or *The Spider Bites Back*.

The Spongy Helicon

Catherine Butler, author of *Four British Fantasists: Place and Culture in the Children's Fantasies of Penelope Lively, Alan Garner, Diana Wynne Jones, and Susan Cooper* (2006), 'can't recommend ChatGPT for literary research'. Its eight answers to 'Who wrote *Four British Fantasists*?' were: R.A. Gilbert in 1979, Roger Lancelyn Green in 1962, R.B. Outhwaite in 1991, Farah Mendlesohn in 2009, R.J. (Roger) Reilly in 2009, David R. Haase in 1997, R.L. Firth with no date, and Michael Moorcock in 1969. As for the four authors in the subtitle, Dunsany, Eddison, C.S. Lewis and Tolkien were frequently cited; the best reply got two right; others named M. John Harrison and Dorothy L. Sayers. (Facebook, 9 December)

Sir Kazuo Ishiguro became a Companion of Honour in the UK New Year honours; Dame Jacqueline Wilson, who has written children's fantasy, was upgraded from DBE to Grand Cross. Honorees with media genre credits include Stephen Fry, now a Knight Bachelor; OBEs Anne Reid, Anne-Marie Duff, Eddie Marsan; Tom Baker (the Fourth Doctor) MBE.

Richard Morgan of *Altered Carbon* and Clarke Award fame was on a winning team – Queens' College, Cambridge – in the Christmas University Challenge quarter-finals, displaying *inter alia* his profound knowledge of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*. (BBC2, 30 December) [SF²C]

Ebenezer Scrooge's gravestone – a prop left behind in a Shrewsbury church graveyard after the filming of *A Christmas Carol* in 1984 – was inexplicably smashed to fragments in November. (BBC, 25 November)

Conalbumin

POSTPONED to 9 Jan • **London Pub Meeting**, The Bishop's Finger, West Smithfield. All welcome. The pub won't be open for the traditional 'First Thursday' on 2 January. See news.ansible.uk/london.html.

28 Jan • **Vampires: from Monster to Mister** (Fortean Society), The Bell, London, 7:30 for 8pm. £5. See forteanlondon.blogspot.com.

7-9 Feb • **Contabile 35** (filk), Wensum Valley Hotel, Norwich. £43 reg; £33 concessions. More details at c35.contabile.org.uk.

7-10 Feb • **Scotiacon** (furry), Crowne Plaza Hotel, Glasgow. 'Magical Mayhem' theme. £100 reg; day £45. See www.scotiacon.org.uk.

21-23 Feb • **UK Ghost Story Festival**, Museum of Making, Derby. In-person tickets £75 plus fee. Also online 14-16 February, £50 plus fee. See www.ukghoststoryfestival.co.uk.

22-23 Feb • **Surrey Steampunk Convivial**, Stoneleigh, Epsom. See bumpandthumper.wixsite.com/steampunkconvivial.

1 Mar • **Picocon 42**, Imperial College, London. Further details and web presence awaited.

20-23 Mar • **Camp SFW**, Vauxhall Holiday Park, Great Yarmouth. Weekend pass currently £95 at www.scifiweekender.com.

8 Apr - 30 Sep • **Cats!** (exhibition), Cartoon Museum, London. More at www.cartoonmuseum.org/whats-on-exhibitions/cats.

18-21 Apr • **Reconnect** (Eastercon), Hilton Lanyon Place Hotel and ICC, Belfast. £100 reg, rising to £120 at the door; Eastercon first-timers and fans living in Ireland £70; under-18s and concessions £40; £25 supporting. See easterconbelfast.org.

19-20 Apr • **Horrorfied** (horror), Farnborough International Exhibition Centre. Tickets £49; day rate £29. See horrorfied.co.uk.

23-26 May • **Jodiworld** (Jodi Taylor), Doubletree by Hilton, Coventry. £100 reg; £30 supporting; under-13s free. Online registration is now open at the new website jodiworld.co.uk (no longer .org).

24-25 May • **Lawless** (UK comics), Hilton Doubletree, Bristol. Weekend ticket £70 plus fees; trader £80; day ticket £35. Under-14s free. Ticket sales from 27 January at lawlesscomiccon.co.uk.

24 or 25 May • **Peter Cushing Celebration**, Whitstable. £65 for either day – same programme both days. See renownfilms.co.uk.

19-22 Jun • **Sci-Fi London** (film), Picturehouse Cinema, Finsbury Park, London. Ticket sales awaited at sci-fi-london.com.

25-26 Oct • **BristolCon**, Hilton DoubleTree Hotel, Bristol. Rates and online registration awaited at www.bristolcon.org.

Rumblings. *Worldcon Bids Update* from Smofcon: the 2027 Israel bid is moving to a later year, leaving Montreal in 2027 unopposed. Bids are

planned for Texas in 2031 and Maastricht, Netherlands, in 2032. [F770] • *Middle-earth Festival* is returning this year with a new UK field venue ('rough camping' available). The official website is well out of date; news appears at www.facebook.com/MiddleEarthFestival/ (login required).

Infinitely Improbable

Yet Another Portent of Doom. 'Britain has seen an alarming rise in poetry sales ...' (*The Economist*, 2024) [SB]

Awards. *Prometheus Hall of Fame* (libertarian) shortlist: *Orion Shall Rise* (1983) by Poul Anderson, 'As Easy as A.B.C.' (1912) by Rudyard Kipling, 'The Trees' (1978 song) by Rush and *Singularity Sky* (2003) by Charles Stross. This is the Kipling story's seventeenth nomination.

Astrogation Masterclass. From the W.J. Stuart (Philip MacDonald) novelization of *Forbidden Planet* (1956): 'ALTAIR 4 was in sight! They had traveled billions of light years through dark, treacherous space ...' to a star a mere 16.7 light years from Earth.

R.I.P. *Christel Bodenstein* (1938-2024), German actress in *The Singing Ringing Tree* (1957) and *The Little Prince* (1966), died on 5 December aged 86. [SJ] • *Marshall Brickman* (1939-2024), Oscar-winning US filmmaker who co-scripted Woody Allen's *Sleeper* (1973) and wrote and directed *Simon* (1980), *Lovesick* (1983) and *The Manhattan Project* (1986), died on 29 November aged 85. [SJ] • *Maurizio Centini*, Italian cinematographer for *Naked Exorcism* (1975), *SS Experiment Love Camp* (1976) and other exploitation films, died on 27 December aged 84. [SJ] • *Mikhail Chekalin* (1959-2024), Russian experimental musician and composer who scored the Strugatsky-based teleplay *Malysk* (1987) and episodes of the children's sf tv show *Etot Fantasticheskiy Mir* (*This Fantastic World*, 1987-1990), died on 28 December aged 65. [AM] • *Thom Christopher* (1940-2024), US actor in *Buck Rogers in the 25th Century* (1981), *Space Raiders* (1983), *Deathstalker and the Warriors from Hell* (1988) and others, died on 6 December aged 84. [LP] • *Es (Esther) Cole* (1924-2024), long-time US fan who with her husband Les (1926-2019) was in the legendary sf club 'The Elves', 'Gnomes' and 'Little Men's Science Fiction, Chowder, and Marching Society' (founded 1949) and worked on the 1954 Worldcon – he as co-chair, she as treasurer – died in December 2024 aged 100. [RL/F770] She entered the First Fandom Hall of Fame in 2017. • *Michael Cole* (1940-2024), US *Mod Squad* actor in *The Bubble* (1966), *The Last Child* (1971) and genre tv series, died on 10 December aged 84. [SJ] • *Diane Delano* (1957-2024), US actress in *Miracle Mile* (1988) and *The Wicker Man* (2006), plus many voice roles in genre tv series and videogames, died on 13 December aged 67. [LP] • *Geoffrey Deuel* (1943-2024), US actor in *Terminal Island* (1973) and genre tv series, died on 22 December aged 81. [LP] • *Mircea Diaconu* (1949-2024), Romanian actor who starred in *Secretul armei... secrete!* (*The Secret of the Secret Weapon*, 1988), died on 14 December aged 74. [AM] • *Barrie Ellis-Jones*, an important figure in the European film industry who also wrote the ghost story *The Walker After Death* (1980), died in November aged 84. [AIP] • *Art Evans* (1942-2024), US actor in *Fright Night* (1985), *Alien Rising* (2013) and genre tv series, died on 21 December aged 82. • *Katinka Faragó* (1936-2024), Austrian-born script supervisor for many Ingmar Bergman films including *The Seventh Seal* (1957), died on 26 November aged 87. [SJ] • *George Folsey Jr.* (1939-2024), US producer of *An American Werewolf in London* (1981), *Michael Jackson: Thriller* (1983) and others, died on 29 December aged 85. [SJ] • *Dayle Haddon* (1948-2024), Canadian actress in *Spermula* (1976), *Cyborg* (1989) and genre tv series, died on 27 December aged 76. [SJ] • *Hannelore Hoger* (1942-2024), German actress in *Der große Verhauf* (*The Big Mess*, 1971), *Super* (1984) and *Hamlet_X* (2003), died on 21 December aged 82. [SHS] • *Olivia Hussey* (1951-2024), UK actress whose genre work includes *Quest of the Delta Knights* (1993), *The Lord Protector* (1996), tv series episodes and *Star Wars* videogames, died on 27 September aged 73. [LP] • *Leonid Ionin* (1945-2024), Russian sociologist who wrote the near-future political thriller *Russky apokalipsis* (*Russian Apocalypse*, 1999) died on 12 December. [AM] • *Jill Jacobson*, US actress in *Nurse Sherri* (title role, 1977), *Restless Souls* (1998), *House of Usher* (2008) and genre tv series, died on 8 December aged 70. [SJ] • *T. Jackson King* (1948-2024), prolific US author whose debut novel was the sf

Retread Shop (1988) and who also wrote fantasies and nonfantastic adventures, died on 3 December aged 76. [JC] ● *The Amazing' Kreskin* (1935-2024), well-known US mentalist whose genre credits include *The New Misadventures of Ichabod Crane* (1979), *Horror* (2003) and *Wake-Up Callz* (2008), died on 10 December aged 89. [GVG] ● *Ney Latorraca* (1944-2024), Brazilian actor who co-starred in the vampire-themed 'tele-novela' *Vamp* (178 episodes 1991-1992), died on 26 December aged 80. ● *Linda Lavin* (1937-2024), Tony-winning US actress in *Damn Yankees!* (1967), *The Muppets Take Manhattan* (1984) and genre tv including *Courage the Cowardly Dog* (13 episodes 2002), died on 29 December aged 87. [SJ] ● *Hal Lindsey* (1929-2024), US evangelical prophet of doom whose bestselling 'nonfiction' *The Late, Great Planet Earth* (1970) predicted imminent Biblical apocalypse and was followed by many more in similar vein, died on 25 November aged 95. [AIP] ● *Angus MacInnes* (1947-2024), Canadian actor in *Star Wars* (1977), *Judge Dredd* (1995), *Space Island One* (1998 as co-star), *Hellboy* (2004), *Rogue One* (2016) and many more, died on 23 December aged 77. [SJ] ● *David A. McIntee* (1968-2024), UK fan, convention worker and author of many *Doctor Who* spinoff novels beginning with *White Darkness* (1993, based on his own unproduced script), died on 15 December aged 55. ● *Barry N. Malzberg* (1939-2024), noted US author and critic whose bitter and controversial black-comedy sf novels appeared 1968-1975 – with *Beyond Apollo* (1973) winning the inaugural John W. Campbell Award – died on 19 December aged 85. Other work included many short stories, many anthologies beginning with the ambitious *Final Stage* (1974 with Edward L. Ferman), and the critical collection *The Engines of the Night* (1982; much expanded as *Breakfast in the Ruins* 2007), both of whose editions won *Locus* awards. In later life he contributed his wisdom to the Fictionmags email list. He is much missed. [EM] ● *John Marsden* (1950-2024), Australian author of children's/YA sf and fantasy, best known for the seven-book sf sequence opening with *Tomorrow, When the War Began* (1993), died on 18 December aged 74. ● *Vanessa May*, UK fan and convention-runner who worked on multiple Worldcons and Eastercons, co-chairing Eastercon 2020 (cancelled owing to Covid) and chairing Eastercon 2021, died on 5 December. [FD] ● *Tony Meadows* (1948-2024), UK fan and celluloid-film collector who until the late 2000s was a stalwart of the Festival of Fantastic Films and also showed his sf films at Eastercons, died on 21 October. [SF°C] ● *Marisa Paredes* (1946-2024), Spanish actress in *The Awful Dr. Orloff* (1962), the anthology horror film *Pastel de sangre* (1971), *The Devil's Backbone* (2001) and *The Skin I Live In* (2011), died on 17 December aged 78. ● *Nadezhda Podyapolskaya* (1941-2024), Russian voice actress heard in dubs of *Rosemary's Baby* (1968), *Hook* (1991), *Black Panther* (2018), *Dune* (2021) and many more, died on 28 December aged 83. [AM] ● *Shafolat Rahmatullayeva* (1941-2024), Uzbek actress who starred in the sf comedy film *Sevginator* (2007 plus sequel) and the children's fantasy *Sehrli qalpoqcha 2 (Magic Cap 2)*, (2014), died on 24 December aged 83. [AM] ● *Gene (Eugene P.) Rizzardi* (1952-2024), Emmy-winning US special effects artist and model-maker whose films include *Demolition Man* (1993), *Alien Resurrection* (1997), *Godzilla* (1998) and *Star Trek* (2009), died on 25 December aged 72. [BE] ● *Anatoly Romov* (1935-2024), US-naturalized Russian detective-fiction author whose sf novel is *Goluboyksill (Blue Xill)*, (1984), died on 10 December. [AM] ● *Hans-Erik Saks*, Danish producer, director and screenwriter best known for the tv fantasy series *The Julekalender (Christmas Calendar)*, (1991), died on 10 December aged 68. [OC] ● *María Socas* (1959-2024), Argentine actress who co-starred in the Roger Corman films *The Warrior and the Sorceress* (1984), *Wizards of the Lost Kingdom* (1995) and *Deathstalker II* (1987), died on 10 December aged 65. [SJ] ● *Craig Smith*, US fan artist active since the 1980s and member of the 2000 Corflu committee, died in October. [ES] ● *Julie Stevens* (1936-2024), UK actress who was the first regular female lead in *The Avengers* (1962-1963) and sang in the multi-genre children's anthology series *Look and Read* (1981), died on 5 December aged 87. [SJ] ● *Anand Vaidya* (1976-2024), US philosopher who in 2022 co-founded the Science Fiction and Philosophy Society, died on 11 October aged 48. [L] ● *David Weatherley* (1939-2024), UK-born NZ actor in *My Grandpa Is a Vampire* (1991), *The Fellowship of the Ring* (2001) and two *Power Rangers* franchise series (both 2007), died on 12 December aged 85. [SJ] ● *Arnold Yarrow* (1920-2024), UK actor in *Doomsday for Dyson* (1958), *The Andromeda Breakthrough* (1962) and *Doctor Who* ('Death to the Daleks', 1974), died on 9 December aged 104. ● *George Zebrowski* (1945-2024), Austrian-born US author and anthologist active since 1970, whose best known works include the trilogy whose first published novel was *The Omega Point* (1972), the ambitious standalone *Macrolife* (1979) and the John W. Campbell Award-winning *Brute Orbits* (1998), died on 20 December aged 78. He is survived by his long-time partner and collaborator Pamela Sargent. [DP] ● *Trent Zelazny* (1976-2024), US author – Roger Zelazny's

son – active since 1999, whose first collection was *The Day the Leash Gave Way* (2009), died in late November aged 48. [PDF]

The Weakest Link. *Alex Scott*: 'In the films *Frankenstein* and *Bride of Frankenstein*, which Boris played Frankenstein's monster?' *Contestant: 'Boris Johnson.'* (BBC1, *The Tournament*) [PE]

Publishers and Sinners. The US Science Fiction Book Club, now owned by Bookspan, is apparently shutting down. A December notice on the SFBC website warned that orders will no longer be processed after 2 January 2025, with the strong implication that subscribers' accumulated 'Member Credits' would vanish if not used by then. [F770]

The Dead Past. *80 Years Ago*, a UK wartime convention was reported by J. Michael Rosenblum: '1944-45 NORCON held in Leeds England. Delegates [there were fourteen] stayed at Golden Lion Hotel. Informal sessions held at Rosenblum's.' (*Fanewscard Weekly* #101, 14 January 1945) ● *60 Years Ago*, crowdfunding was so different: 'The Birmingham SF Group is looking for a clubroom and would like interested parties to take out a 5/- per year subscription, which will be used to finance the clubroom.' (*Skyrack* 74, January 1965) ● *50 Years Ago*, the British SF Association had gone astray: 'LOST: ONE BSFA. LAST SEEN IN NEWCASTLE, EASTER 1974. It hasn't turned up again yet, but Keith Walker has sent some information on his proposed "Operation SF". It appears that this is not so much a rival organization to the BSFA as a ginger group to stir up some action in the BSFA itself.' (*Checkpoint* 58, January 1975) ● *10 Years Ago*, a blurb for *Dickens' Secret Lover*: 'In 1857, Charles Dickens was probably the most famous and beloved Englishman alive – a cross between J.K. Rowling and Princess Diana.' (*Ansible* 330, January 2015)

Corrigendum. *Ken MacLeod* is mortified that his typo of 2004 for 2024 shifted the Lucy Lawless quote in *A449* from its rightful place in 'As Others See Us' to the dusty recesses of 'The Dead Past / 20 Years Ago'.

Fanfunder. *TransAtlantic Fan Fund*. Nominations for the TAFF race to the 2025 Seattle Worldcon closed on 20 December, and three candidates have stepped forward: Zi Graves (UK), Mikołaj Kowalewski (Polish, living in Denmark) and Jan Vaněk jr. (Czech). Voting opened on 1 January and continues until shortly after the Belfast Eastercon, where European administrator Sandra Bond will have a dealers'-room table. See taff.org.uk for the official newsletter *Taffluorescence* 7 announcing this race, the ballot with candidates' platforms, and the online voting form.

Random Fandom. *Corflu 42* (Newbury, April) members will pick the event's Fanzine of Honour from this list: *Apparatchik*, *Attitude*, *Australian SF Review*, *Empties*, *Energumen*, *Fouler*, *Khatru*, *Mota*, *Plokta*, *Pulp*, *SF Commentary*, *Shipyard Blues* and *Trap Door*. See PR3 at corflu.org. ● *Rotsler Award (2024)* for achievement in fanzine art: *España Sheriff*.

Editorial. AWE Aldermaston, the former Atomic Weapons Research Establishment that John Brunner famously used to march against, has a 75th anniversary exhibition at the West Berkshire Museum in Newbury, now open Wednesday-Sunday, 10am-4pm, until 7 December 2025. 'Free – Drop in only', i.e. no advance booking. See tinyurl.com/awe-show. The sf connection? I confess to being thoroughly boggled when the organizers asked to include a copy of *The Leaky Establishment* and quote Terry Pratchett's introduction as well as my own tongue-in-cheek author's note.

Loadsamoney. In that Christie's auction of sf memorabilia, one surprise came from John Harris's cover painting for *Ender's Game* (Tor 1985), which was expected to bring £30-£50,000 and sold for £504,000.

Thog's Masterclass. *Precision Gesticulation*. 'Cesar responded with a gesture that was half-sollicitous, half-impotent, a small sign of magnanimous and futile solidarity, of a love conscious of its limitations, the kind of elegant, excessive gesture an eighteenth-century courtier might make to a lady whom he worships at the precise moment that he sees, at the end of the street along which both are being carried in a funeral cart, the shadow of the guillotine.' (Arturo Perez-Reverte, *The Flanders Panel*, 1990; trans 1995) [BA] ● *A Way With Words*. 'The man was so handsome that he seemed faintly phosphorescent.' 'The idyll of the past week was the rennet that had congealed a resolve that had been curdling since her betrayal ...' 'She turned her head but Matias's tongue drilled into her ear like a corkscrew.' '... her thighs were a forge, they were shears; her thighs were sandstone, they were the sandstone buttresses of a cathedral, they were silk or cobwebs.' '... she had the sex of rain forests, the ibis and the scarab; she had the sex of mirrors and candles ...' 'The bristly mound of her pubes buzzed and hummed like a shaken hornet's nest.' (Ron Miller, *Silk and Steel*, 1992) [BA]

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