



## Ansible® 462 January 2026

From **David Langford**, 94 London Road, Reading, Berks, RG1 5AU, UK. Website [news.ansible.uk](http://news.ansible.uk). ISSN 0265-9816 (print); 1740-942X (e). Logo: **Dan Steffan**. Cartoon: **Ulrika O'Brien**. Available for SAE, or the secret link between Max Carrados and Mr Fisher-King.

### Wurzel-Flummery

**Harrison Ford** is to receive the SAG-AFTRA (Screen Actors Guild – American Federation of Television and Radio Artists) Life Achievement Award for his acting and humanitarian career. (*Deadline*, 18 December)

**R.F. Kuang** withdrew from the Emirates Airline Festival of Literature (Dubai, 21-27 January) in response to a call for a UAE boycott because of the current atrocities in Sudan. (*The Bookseller*, 4 December) [SF²C]

**Terry Pratchett** anecdotes still keep turning up. The author of a memoir of High Wycombe Technical School bitterly recollects the games master's ruling that boys considered unfit for games owing to asthma etc. literally had to shovel coal instead. But our man found a younger pupil prepared to do the makework for a shilling, for which in 1960 'you could buy four Mars Bars or four packets of Smith's Crisps. [...] I think I can possibly lay claim to have given Terry Pratchett his first paid job.' (Stuart Rooksby, *The High Wycombe Society Newsletter*, Winter 2025)

**David Walliams** has been dropped by HarperCollins UK despite his status as a bestselling children's author, in the wake of 'allegations of inappropriate behaviour towards young women' which he strenuously denies. (BBC, 19 December) According to the *Telegraph*, 'Former [HC] staff also told this publication that they were told to work in "pairs" when meeting Walliams and were advised not to visit his home.' (19 December) Early repercussions include his removal from the list of speakers at the 2026 Waterstones Children's Book Festival. (BBC, 22 December)

**Sylvia Townsend Warner** of *Lolly Willowes* and *Kingdoms of Elfin* fame is now commemorated by a statue of her seated on a bench – with a cat familiar in attendance – unveiled in Dorchester, Dorset, in December. This followed a campaign asking for nominations of overlooked local women; she 'won by a landslide'. (*Guardian*, 12 December) [AIP]

### Confinity

8 Jan • **London Pub Meeting**, The Bishop's Finger, 9-10 West Smithfield, EC1A 9JR. All evening. Replaces the usual 'First Thursday' because the pub was closed on 1 January. See [news.ansible.uk/london.html](http://news.ansible.uk/london.html).

16-18 & 23-25 Jan • **Horror-on-Sea** (film festival), Park Inn Radisson Palace Hotel, Southend-on-Sea, SS1 2AL. Tickets £80 for either weekend or £130 for both at the white-bus-limited.sumupstore.com.

18 Jan 2026 • **SF, Comic & Toy Fair**, Heywood Sports Village. 11am-4pm. Tickets £3, children £1. See [www.mseevents.co.uk](http://www.mseevents.co.uk).

25 Jan 2026 • **SF, Comic & Toy Fair**, Ruskin Sports Village, St Helens. 11am-4pm. Tickets £5, children £3. See [www.mseevents.co.uk](http://www.mseevents.co.uk).

30 Jan - 1 Feb • **Contabile 36** (filk), Wensum Valley Hotel, Norwich. £45 reg; £35 concessions; £20/day. See [www.contabile.org.uk/c36/](http://www.contabile.org.uk/c36/).

6-9 Feb • **Scotiacon** (furry), Crowne Plaza Hotel, Glasgow. Western theme. £100 reg or £45/day; for membership/hotel room packages see [www.scotiacon.org.uk](http://www.scotiacon.org.uk). Registration closes on 4 January.

14 Feb • **WrexCon** (comics), Wrexham University, LL11 2AW. 10am-5pm. See [www.ljeventsentertainment.com](http://www.ljeventsentertainment.com).

7 Mar • **Picocon 42**, Imperial College, London. Membership rates and website awaited.

27-28 Mar • **TFnation** (*Transformers*), Pendulum Hotel, Manchester. Ticket sales awaited at [tfnation.com/TFN-Manchester-2026](http://tfnation.com/TFN-Manchester-2026).

11-12 Apr • **Compulsion** (games), The Pleasance, Edinburgh, EH8 9TJ. Tickets £28 or £18 for either day. See [compulsion.org](http://compulsion.org).

23 or 24 May • **Peter Cushing Celebration**, Whitstable. £75 for either day – same programme both days. See [renownfilms.co.uk](http://renownfilms.co.uk).

18-19 Jul • **Weird Worcester** (film), U of Worcester Arena. £37; £47 early entry. See [www.treasuredfilms.co.uk/weirdworcestercer](http://www.treasuredfilms.co.uk/weirdworcestercer).

7-9 Aug • **MCM Comic Con**, Birmingham NEC. Tickets awaited at [www.mcmcomiccon.com/birmingham/en-us.html](http://www.mcmcomiccon.com/birmingham/en-us.html).

15-16 Aug • **Caption** (small press/comics), Seacourt Hall, Botley, Oxford, OX2 9TH. Venue TBC. See [captionfestival.co.uk](http://captionfestival.co.uk).

15 Aug • **Stars of Time** (comics), Winter Gardens, Weston-super-Mare. £12.62; concessions/under-14s £8.30. See [www.starsofetime.co.uk](http://www.starsofetime.co.uk).

27-31 Aug • **LAcon V**, Anaheim Convention Center, California. \$230 adult reg; \$175 first Worldcon – rising to \$250 and \$200 on 4 January.

\$125 YA (18-24); \$100 teen (13-17); \$50 child (6-12); infants free. \$50 WSFS only. *Virtual membership \$85 from 4 January*. See [www.lacon.org](http://www.lacon.org). LAcon V will present a Best Poetry Hugo as its optional extra category. Virtual WSFS business meetings are on 17 July, 26 July, 1 August and 9 August, all starting at 9am Pacific time (6pm British Summer Time).

2-6 Sep 2027 • **Montréal Worldcon 2027**, Montréal, Canada. *New rates from 1 January 2026, all in Canadian dollars*: adults \$265 (inc \$70 WSFS membership, required), first Worldcon \$180 (ditto), under-31s \$210 (ditto), under-18s \$100 (inc \$50 WSFS membership, optional), under-13s \$55 (ditto), accompanied under-8s free. See [montreal2027.ca](http://montreal2027.ca).

**Rumblings**. *BristolCon* (Bristol, October) registration is expected to open on 1 February at [www.bristolcon.org](http://www.bristolcon.org).

### Infinitely Improbable

**As We See Us**. '... the influence of pulp science on real science. It is an admission both shamefaced and proud that some large proportion of scientists claim inspiration from various crude blatherings they loved when young. Satellite scientists cite Arthur Clarke, biologists are drawn to the field by the neuro- and nanotech visions of entertainers. Above all, Roddenberry's leaden space-pioneering meant a demographic bulge of young physicists attempting to replicate replicators, tricorders, phasers and transporter rooms ...' (China Miéville, *Kraken*, 2010) [BA]

**Awards**. 2026 UK New Year Honours List: 'services to drama' honorees with significant genre credits include Warwick Davis (OBE), Cynthia Erivo (MBE), Matt Lucas (OBE) and Meera Syal (Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire).

**R.I.P.** *Vera Alentova* (1942-2025), Russian actress who played the goddess Ishtar in *Empire V* (2023, based on Viktor Pelevin's novel) died on 25 December aged 83. [AM] • *Sergey Banevich* (1941-2025), Russian composer who scored the sf film *Zaveshchaniye professora Dowella* (*Professor Dowell's Testament*, 1984, based on Alexander Belyaev's novel *Professor Dowell's Head*) died on 21 December. [AM] • *Stanley Baxter* (1926-2025), BAFTA-winning UK comic actor in *Mr Majeika* (title role, 20 episodes 1988-1990) and *The Jungle Book* (1992), died on 11 December aged 99. • *Steven Bond* (1953-2025), long-time Minneapolis fan and collector, a former comics shop owner, died on Christmas Day. His character Kragar in Steven Brust's role-playing game became a regular in the long-running 'Dragaera' fantasy sequence by Brust. [BF] • *Pierre Bordage* (1955-2025), prolific French author of much sf and fantasy since 1992, died on 26 December aged 70. Literary honours include the Grand Prix de l'Imaginaire. [F770] • *Françoise Brion* (1933-2025), French actress in *Attack of the Robots* (1966), *La mort mystérieuse de Nina Chéreau* (1988) and *She Is Conann* (2023), died on 12 December aged 92. [SJ] • *Amanda Brotchie*, Australian director whose genre credits include *ZuZu & the SuperNuffs* (2013) and two 2025 episodes of *Doctor Who*, died on 19 December. • *Bob Burns III* (1935-2025), US actor, effects technician and noted collector/historian of genre film props and costumes – as described in *It Came From Bob's Basement* (2001) by John Michlig – died on 16 December aged 90. [SJ] In his many films from *Invasion of the Saucer-Men* (1957) to 2015 he often played monsters or gorillas. • *Yevgeny Drozd* (1947-2025), Belarusian sf&f author (writing in Russian) of *Vampiry tozhe lyudi* (*Vampires Are People Too*, 2009) and three collections, and translator of Aldiss's *The Malacia Tapestry*, died on 13 December aged 78. [AM] • *Juli Erickson* (1939-2025), US actress whose genre credits include *Bigfoot Wars* (2014), *The Shadow People* (2017), *Howlers* (2019) and *Soul Frackers* (2020), and who also did much voice work for anime dubs, died on 17 December aged 86. [SJ] • *Susie Figgis* (1948-2025), UK casting director for *Interview with the Vampire* (1994), *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (2001), *The Time Traveler's Wife* (2009), *Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children* (2016) and many more, died on 12 December aged 77. [AIP] • *Pat Finn* (1965-2025), US actor in *Space Buddies* (2009), *Spooky Buddies* (2011) and *Santa Paws 2* (2012), died on 22 December aged 60. [SJ] • *Anthony Geary* (1947-2025), Emmy-winning US *General Hospital* actor whose genre films include *Blood Sabbath* (1972), *The Return of Captain Nemo* (1978), *Grave Misdemeanors* (1989) and *High Desert Kill* (1989), died on 14 December aged 78. [SJ] • *Gil Gerard* (1943-2025), US

actor who starred in *Buck Rogers in the 25th Century* (1979 film, 1979-1981 tv), died on 16 December aged 82. Other credits include the monster movies *Bone Eater* (2007), *Reptisaurus* (2009) and *Dire Wolf* (2009). [PS-P] ● **Terence M. Green** (1947-2025), Canadian sf/fantasy author active since the late 1970s, whose first novel was the sf police procedural *Barking Dogs* (1988), died on 19 December aged 78. [SJ] ● **Peter Greene** (1965-2025), US actor in *The Mask* (1994), *Earthling* (2010), *The Time Travel Hills* (2024) and others, died on 12 December aged 60. [LP] ● **Tiit Härm** (1946-2025), Estonian ballet dancer and actor in the Strugatsky-based *Dead Mountaineer's Hotel* (1979) and the Alexander Grin-based *Blistayushchiy mir* (*The Shining World*, 1984), died on 7 December aged 79. [AM] ● **Arthur D. Hlavaty** (1942-2025), US fan active in many APAs, whose funny and clever personalization *The Diagonal Relationship* (1977-2002) went through various DR titles ending with *Derogatory Reference*, died on 9 December aged 83. [BB] He was a friend. ● **Rebecca Heineman** (1963-2025), transgender US video game developer whose titles include *Robin Hood* (1983), *The Bard's Tale III: Thief of Fate* (1988), *Dragon Wars* (1989) and a 1990s console version of *Doom*, died on 17 November aged 62. [AIP] ● **Anatoly Korolyov** (1946-2025), Russian author whose genre novels include *Blyustiteli neba* (*Guardians of the Skies*, 1992), *Instinkt # pyat* (*Instinct # Five*, 2004) and *Dom bliznetsov* (*The House of Twins*, 2016) died on 29 December. [AM] ● **Epy Kusnandar** (1964-2025), Indonesian actor in *The ABCs of Death* (2012), *V/H/S/2* (2013), *The Returning Dead* (2025) and others, died on 3 December aged 61. [SJ] ● **Natalia Rakhmanova** (1930-2025), Russian translator of many genre works since 1957 – including *The Hobbit* – died on 21 December aged 95. [AM] ● **James Ransone** (1979-2025), US actor in *The American Astronaut* (2001), *Sinister* (2012 plus sequel), *It: Chapter 2* (2019) and *The Black Phone* (2021 plus sequel), committed suicide on 19 December aged 46. [LP] ● **Candy Raymond** (1950-2025/6), Australian actress in *The Phantom Gunslinger* (1970) and *Shirley Thompson Versus the Aliens* (1972) was reported on 1 January as having died aged 75. ● **Rob Reiner** (1947-2025), Emmy-winning actor and film-maker who directed *The Princess Bride* (1987), was found stabbed to death at home – together with his wife Michele – on 14 December; he was 78. Their son has been arrested. [MR] ● **Helen Siff**, US actress in *I Dream of Jeannie ... Fifteen Years Later* (1985), *Earth Girls Are Easy* (1988) and others, died on 18 December aged 88. [SG] ● **Cary-Hiroyuki Tagawa** (1950-2025), Japanese-US actor who played the evil sorcerer Shang Tsung in *Mortal Kombat* (1995 plus sequels and spinoffs), died on 4 December aged 75. Other credits include *The Phantom* (1996), *Planet of the Apes* (2001), *Tekken* (2020) and *The Man in the High Castle* (2015-2018). [SJ] ● **John Varley** (1947-2025), US author whose dazzling sf of the 1970s and 1980s won him three Hugos, two Nebulas and a heap of Locus Awards, died on 10 December aged 78. His 1977 story 'Air Raid' as by Herb Boehm was the basis of his screenplay for the film *Millennium* (1989). [MS] ● **John L. Waggott** (1964-2025), popular UK fan and convention-goer, active since the late 1970s and known to all as 'Wag', died on 18 December aged 61. [AT] ● **Jim Ward** (1959-2025), US voice actor whose credits include *Jetsons: The Movie* (1990), *The Fairly OddParents* (95 episodes 2001-2017), *Ratchet & Clank* (2002 videogame with many sequels) and *Wolverine and the X-Men* (20 episodes 2008), died on 10 December aged 66. [AIP] ● **Isiah Whitlock Jr.** (1954-2025), US actor in *Enchanted* (2007), *Europa Report* (2013), *Pete's Dragon* (2016), *The Mist* (2017) and *Lightyear* (2022), died on 30 December aged 71. [LP] ● **Vince Zampella** (1970-2025), co-creator of the *Call of Duty* videogame plus such sf computer games as *Apex Legends* and *Titanfall*, died in a car crash on 21 December; he was 55.

**For the Fan Who Has Everything.** Arion Press offers an art book of two rare Asimov stories, 'Nightfall' and 'The Last Question': 'The Fine Press edition is limited to 210 copies for sale and printed by letterpress on 125 gsm Zerkall mouldmade. The book features three anthotype prints by the artist and five double-page spreads of Ebtekar's "Cloud" prints. Each copy is Smythe-sewn and square-backed, and presented in an imprinted handmade slipcase.' Only \$1,575, and – as Flann O'Brien ended his spoof of such descriptions – a gory livid bleeding bargain at the price. [JDB]

**Court Circular.** Studio Gainax of Japan, noted for many anime productions including *Shinseiki Evangelion* (*Neon Genesis Evangelion*, 1995-1996), was formally dissolved on 10 December; they had filed for bankruptcy in May 2024. All IP rights have reportedly been transferred to rightful owners and creators. (*Anime News Network*, 10 December) [LP]

**Award Shortlist.** *Prometheus Hall of Fame* (libertarian classics): *The Star Dwellers* (1961) by James Blish, *Brave New World* (1932) by Aldous Huxley, *That Hideous Strength* (1945) by C.S. Lewis, *Salt* (2000) by Adam Roberts, *Singularity Sky* (2003) by Charles Stross. Perhaps Rudyard Kipling's 'As Easy as A.B.C.', shortlisted seventeen times for this award (2006-2025) without ever winning, has at last been put to rest.

**Fanfundery.** *TransAtlantic Fan Fund*: nominations for the 2026 race from North America to the Berlin Eurocon (MetropolCon, 2-5 July) are still open and will close on 1 February. For the official announcement at [taff.org.uk](http://taff.org.uk), please see [taff.org.uk/news/2026race.pdf](http://taff.org.uk/news/2026race.pdf). ● **TAFF Books**: no new announcements for once, but many thanks to everyone who bought fan-fund benefit paperbacks from the list at [ae.ansible.uk/titles.php?taff](http://ae.ansible.uk/titles.php?taff). Such sales raised over £300 for TAFF and over £50 for GUFF in 2025.

**SFWA** announced changes to the Nebula Awards rules on 19 December, most significantly regarding use of what some call plagiarism engines: 'Works that are wholly written using generative large language model (LLM) tools are not eligible. / Works that used LLMs at any point during the writing process must disclose this upon acceptance of the nomination, and the nature of the technology's use will be made clear to voters on the final ballot.' As a crowd of outraged SFWA authors with pitchforks and flaming torches began to form, this was hastily revised: 'wholly' in the first sentence became 'either wholly or partially' and the last clause of the second became 'and those works will be disqualified'. [JS/F770] Many, many ensuing pro-AI and anti-AI posts are mercifully not summarized here.

**The Dead Past.** *20 Years Ago*, the devout website [balaams-ass.com](http://balaams-ass.com) (now defunct) exposed 'the darker and esoteric meanings of the *Chronicles of Narnia*', including the author's vile profanity: 'The word "ass" appears in 4 of the books. Being British, it probably did not mean the same to him as it does to Americans (as a swear word), but he could have left it out, especially since he only used it four times and did use "donkey" in other places. However, considering the filthy state of his mind, it is possible that he thought this cute.' (*Ansible* 222, January 2006) Why the site wasn't called [balaams-donkey.com](http://balaams-donkey.com) remains a profane mystery. ● *80 Years Ago*, some possible fake news about the official magazine of the National Fantasy Fan Federation: 'The ink in which the *National Fantasy Fans* have been duplicated will fade out completely within a year unless sprayed with goat's milk. Speer has a large number of copies so treated, for which he will charge exorbitant prices for those who wish to have complete files of *TNFF*.' (*Stefnews* 28, January 1946, ed. Jack Speer)

**The Dark Web.** Following the death of its owner Rodger Turner in June 2025, the long-running [SFsite.com](http://SFsite.com) – launched in 1997 – has at last ceased to function but is preserved at the Internet Archive. [AJ]

**Random Fandom.** *Chris Barkley*, following much legal and other hassle (see A461 with links to older *Ansible* coverage), has at last received the Hugo he won at the 2023 Chengdu Worldcon – sent by administrator Dave McCarty, who, despite being twice stripped of responsibilities by the DCFW holding company that planned to despatch the trophies itself, had begged one last chance to carry out his long-delayed duty. [F770] ● *Fancyclopedia.org* has a not very threatening rival with the corresponding .net domain, whose entries seem to have been generated by a system trained on corporate-brochure puffery. Fandom's once notorious Claude Degler gets ten chapters analysing his various forms of 'excellence'; from 'Chapter 5: Social Dynamics and Community Excellence' we learn that 'Claude Degler social established revolutionary frameworks for community advancement while creating systematic approaches to social disruption that would influence fannish society through social methodology worthy of recognition as transformative achievement in community development deserving continued study and appreciation.' [CF/JDN] Well I never. I hardly dare read this site's ten-chapter exegesis of the Astral League.

**Magazine Scene.** Copies of the delayed (under new management) *Analog*, *Asimov's* and *F&SF* have at last been seen in the wild. Some *F&SF* covers admit to 'Summer 2025'; others mysteriously say 'Volume I'. [CP]

**Thog's Masterclass.** *Windmill Weather*. 'The day was the quixotic sort, half-gloomy, half challenging.' (Roger Arcot, 'The Timeless Man', June 1956 *Other Worlds*) ● *Scientific Units*. 'According to this little instrument, we're heading for a pile of hydrogen gas!' 'Peters informed them that they were on the edge of a thick band of hydrogen, which seemingly stretched away for incalculable distances on all sides.' 'They were travelling at enormous speed towards the largest concentrated "blob" of hydrogen any of them had experienced, and they were hopelessly out of control!' 'Those terrible explosions that followed, causing us to be bumped all over the place, were due to large lumps of flaming hydrogen gas being flung from the disintegrating sun.' (Terence Haile, *Galaxies Ahead*, 1963) ● *It's All Greek To Me*. 'Doyle searched his memory; then he recognized it – a pentagram, with its circles and six-pointed star.' (Henry Kuttner, 'The Hunt', June 1939 *Strange Stories*) [LP]

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