



Coventry and Warwickshire Humanists Newsletter January 2026

Dear Fellow Humanists

A belated Happy New Year to you all. I hope that you all enjoyed a very pleasant Festive Season? The good news for the new year is that we now have a new President of Humanists UK – actress and novelist Janet Ellis. More about our new President later in the Newsletter.

Let us hope that there is plenty to look forward to in 2026. On the political scene, things do look very grim. The war in Ukraine continues despite supposed “peace talks”. It is similar too with the continued carnage in Gaza. Now we also have the continued threats over the proposed ownership of Greenland as well as the occupancy of Venezuela. There is no doubt that we are living in hard times, and while all of this looks decidedly grim, as Humanists we must continue to think for ourselves and act for everyone. In this new year, we must continue to look towards what is best in our humanity, with compassion for others, reason and an unwavering belief in the dignity of every human being. If there is division in the world, we must commit ourselves even harder towards our shared humanity.

Thank you and very best wishes to you all,

Brian Goredema-Braid

Chair of Coventry & Warwickshire Humanists

Meetings:

Thursday 16th January: Our first meeting of 2026 was held online through Zoom. Only a few of us attended for a brief informal meeting. It was an opportunity to meet friends and colleagues and to share experiences of the festive season and our hopes for 2026.

Thursday 19th February: This will also be an online meeting. I have invited Dominic Cawdell from the Welcome Directory to talk to us about their charity that works to empower communities to offer safe and lasting welcome to prison leavers. I have written more about the Welcome Directory later in this Newsletter. I hope that you can attend this meeting and interesting discussion. We will send out the Zoom link and log-in details before 19th February.

Thursday 19th March: This will be our first ‘in-person’ meeting of 2026. As yet, we do not have a main speaker or a discussion topic. Please let us know if you have any ideas or suggestions for future meetings.

Subscriptions:

Thanks to those who have paid their subscription. If you haven’t yet, we are asking for an annual subscription of £20 per person – but if you feel this is more than you can afford please pay what you can. If you feel able to contribute more, then, any additional amount would of course be welcome. This income allows us to make donations to good causes like the Uganda Humanist Schools as well as our affiliations to Humanists UK, Humanists International and the National Secular Society. We also need around £115 a year to maintain our website.

If you can arrange a standing order to our bank account that would be great, otherwise a cheque made out to Coventry and Warwickshire Humanists can be sent to our Treasurer Adrian Davis. Or if you are going to be at the next meeting, you can give Adrian a cheque or cash.

The bank details are:

Account: Coventry and Warwickshire Humanists

Account Number: 00982911

Sort Code: 20-23-55

Welcome to the new President of Humanists UK – Janet Ellis

As from January 1st, Janet Ellis succeeded Adam Rutherford as President of Humanists UK. I have included the letter that Janet sent out in December:



It's a huge honour to be writing to you to share the news that I will become President of Humanists UK on 1 January 2026. Like many of you, I have spent the last few years cheering on our outgoing President Adam Rutherford from the side-lines. He has been exactly the champion we needed and I know I speak for us all when I say he will be a very hard act to follow.

I am just relieved he isn't going far and will remain with us as a Vice President.

For those of you who don't know me, I started my career as an actress and now novelist, but I'm probably best known for my time presenting Blue Peter. Back then, I used to describe the show as offering 'a view of a world worth growing up in.' Decades later, I've realised that is exactly how I feel about humanism.

Finding Humanists UK felt like coming home. For a long time, I knew what I felt – that this life is the only one we have, and that we must make it matter – but I didn't know there was a name for it.

Realising I wasn't alone in thinking this and that I was actually part of a community of like-minded people who value kindness, curiosity, and reason was a wonderful comfort.

That is why spreading the word is right at the top of my list as President. I want to help others find that same sense of belonging, and to share the humanist values that, for me, and many others, act as a vital antidote to the rising fear, distrust, and alienation we increasingly now see across society. I will also throw my full support behind the vital campaigns Humanists UK spearheads, from our work for a compassionate assisted dying law to our opposition to discriminatory faith schools.

My late husband used to say that because we have just this one life, we have a duty to 'drink the best wine and light all the good candles.' I hope to bring that spirit to my presidency. We are living in tumultuous times, but I believe that by coming together we can navigate them with hope and humanity.

I can't wait to get started. My first official event will be chairing the Darwin Day Lecture with Professor Matthew Cobb on 12 February, and I hope to meet many of you there or in the months to come. In the meantime, I wish you a relaxing holiday and a Happy New Year.

Warmly,

Janet Ellis – President, Humanists UK

The Welcome Directory:

As I mentioned above, Dominic Cawdell of The Welcome Directory will lead a discussion at our online meeting on Thursday 19th February. Here is further information about the mission and commitment of The Welcome Directory. Dominic is currently in discussion with Humanists UK.



At the Welcome Directory we believe that everybody deserves to belong. Our mission is to build a network of faith or belief communities across England and Wales with the capacity to offer appropriate and safe welcome for supporting people leaving prison. We promote inclusivity and challenge the stigma and discrimination faced by the prison leaver community, working to ensure that nobody steps beyond the prison gates isolated and alone.

The Welcome Directory is a charity working to empower communities to offer a safe and lasting welcome to prison leavers. Stepping beyond the prison gates is an incredibly challenging experience and too many people feel isolated and alone, nervous to contact a community for themselves. However, we believe that every person deserves to belong.

The Welcome Directory aims to represent all faith/belief groups in England and Wales, but we currently have no Humanist communities represented in our Directory. We are really keen to change this in 2026, so that, a person leaving prison who wishes to connect with a Humanist community can find a community where they can belong, and find the happiness and belonging that leads to a fulfilled life free from crime.

Our national directory is a list of faith/belief communities who are committed to welcoming prison leavers – the directory is used in every prison in England and Wales. The directory is a lifeline, helping people to find connection and support beyond the prison gates. As we all know, community connection is vital for our wellbeing and can make all the difference to a person trying to turn their life around.

Humanists International – Global Society Unites to Defend Multilateralism Against US Withdrawal:

As Jane Sault reminded me, everyone, at our last Zoom meeting, we decided that we should support Human Rights and speak out against wrong-doings. We wholeheartedly endorsed this letter from Humanists International and co-signed it on behalf of Coventry & Warwickshire Humanists:

Global Civil Society Unites to Defend Multilateralism Against US Withdrawal

<https://humanistsinternational.org/2026/01/global-civil-society-unites-to-defend-multilateralism-against-us-withdrawal>

If you represent a group, you may also like to invite them to co-sign the open letter.
(I'll be asking my Amnesty group.)

Jane Sault

An open letter coordinated by Humanists International has been endorsed by more than 60 organisations worldwide

Humanists International has led a global civil society initiative bringing together more than 60 organisations to respond to a recent US Executive Order withdrawing the United States from dozens of international organisations, conventions, and treaties.

The **open letter**, coordinated by Humanists International, united a broad coalition of civil society actors. While many of the endorsing organizations were members of Humanists International, numerous were not, with many themselves being umbrella bodies, alliances, or national and regional networks, collectively representing hundreds of groups and constituencies working on human rights, democracy, freedom of thought, equality, and humanitarian issues.

The signatories warned that disengagement from multilateral institutions undermined the international human rights system and weakened global cooperation at a time of heightened geopolitical tension. The letter highlighted that withdrawing from shared international mechanisms did not eliminate global challenges, but instead reduced opportunities for cooperation, accountability, and collective problem-solving.

The letter also raised serious concern about rhetoric attacking civil society and international NGOs, noting that such language endangered human rights defenders and risked legitimising repression worldwide. It cautioned that retreating from multilateral fora would create a vacuum likely to be filled by authoritarian and malign actors.



Gary McLelland, Chief Executive Officer of Humanists International,

commented:

“Humanists International’s engagement with multilateral institutions goes back to our founding in 1952. Coordinating this letter reflects that long-standing commitment and demonstrates that civil society is united in defending multilateralism, human rights, and international cooperation. Turning away from multilateral institutions makes the world less safe, less fair, and less accountable.”

Humanists International is still welcoming additional signatory organizations here and calling on individuals to sign up to support this letter. Please log-in to the link below.

<https://humanistsinternational.org/2026/01/global-civil-society-unites-to-defend-multilateralism-against-us-withdrawal/>

Assisted Dying:



This year is set to be a decisive one for assisted dying. On 20 January, two important debates will take place. In Wales, the Senedd will vote on whether assisted dying should be available through the NHS, whether Welsh residents would have to travel to England to access it, and whether services would be available in Welsh. If the vote fails, decisions will continue to be made at Westminster, with no guarantee of Welsh-language access or Wales-specific oversight. That’s why we’re urging all our supporters in Wales to write to their MSs and call for a compassionate system that truly works for Wales.

On the same day, Jersey will begin debating its own Assisted Dying Draft Law, with the process likely to continue into February and March before a final vote. This is a historic moment for Jersey, and we will continue to support the Bill by providing clear evidence and working with our members and partners on the island to build support. Scotland is also expected to hold a decisive vote in March, and we are supporting [Humanist Society Scotland](#) as they make the case for a compassionate, well-designed law that gives terminally ill people choice, dignity, and peace of mind at the end of life.

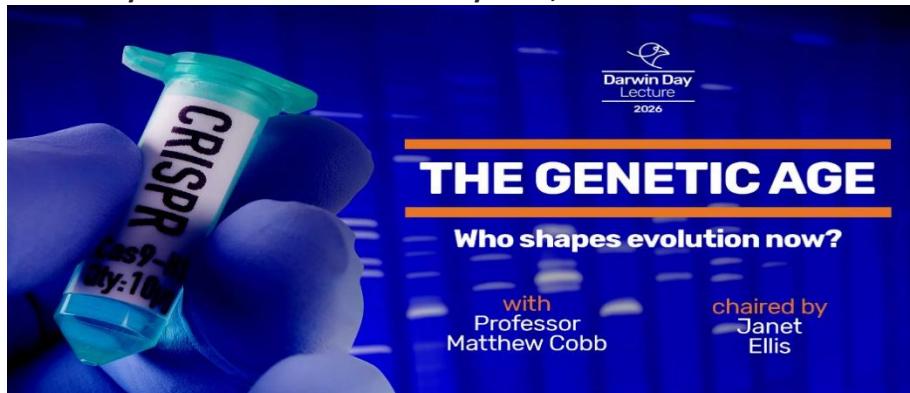
At Westminster, progress on the Assisted Dying Bill is being stalled in the House of Lords. A small number of peers have proposed hundreds of amendments – many of which are cruel, unrealistic, or extreme. Crucially the Bill cannot progress to the next stage until every single one of these

amendments has been debated. By flooding the system with over 1,100 proposed changes, opponents are creating a procedural bottleneck. Rest assured, our messaging on this is catching on, and we are working around the clock to urge peers to do their job properly: to provide serious, proportionate scrutiny that focuses on the needs of the dying rather than procedural gamesmanship.

With your support, we'll continue to argue for compassionate laws that respect freedom, choice, and dignity for all terminally ill people. Thank you.

The genetic age: who shapes evolution now? | The Darwin Day Lecture 2026, with Professor Matthew Cobb, chaired by Janet Ellis MBE

At Conway Hall and Online 12 February 2026, 19:30 -- 21:00



Like all species, humans have been inadvertently shaping the genomes of other species – predators and prey – throughout our history. And with the development of agriculture, we began to specifically, deliberately alter plants and animals through selective breeding. But in the second half of the 20th century, that ability has taken on a new form. Not only do we have a far more precise understanding of how selection and heredity interact in agriculture, but the invention of genetic engineering in the 1970s has changed things completely.

We can now change species at will. Not only has this transformed the pharmaceutical industry – allowing the cheap manufacture of drugs like insulin – it has also altered agriculture and now, in the 21st century, threatens to change ecosystems and even humanity itself.

Evolution appears to be under our control, but – as the molecular biologist Leslie Orgel warned us – evolution is smarter than we are. Looking at the past, present, and future of genetics, we can glimpse both the promises and perils that await us.

In this 2026 Darwin Day Lecture, Matthew Cobb will confront the shadow cast by our own ingenuity. Tracing the path from simple selective breeding to the ignition of a biological revolution, he will explore a modern Promethean moment where the power to reshape life is no longer theoretical – but operational.

As the pace of discovery accelerates into a competitive sprint, we're challenged to consider whether we have merely stolen the fire of evolution, or if we have sparked a chain reaction that we can no longer extinguish.

About Professor Matthew Cobb



Matthew Cobb is Professor Emeritus at the University of Manchester. His recent books include *Crick: A Mind in Motion*, *from DNA to the Brain* and *The Genetic Age: Our Perilous Quest to Edit Life*. He was the presenter of the BBC Radio series *Genetic Dreams, Genetic Nightmares*. In 2024 he won the Royal Society's Wilkins-Bernal-Medawar Medal, and in 2021 was awarded the J. B. S. Haldane Lecture by the Genetics Society.

The Science of Fate Rosalind Franklin Lecture 2026 with Dr Hannah Critchlow, chaired by Samira Ahmed - Thursday 5 March, 19:30–21:00 at Conway Hall, London and Online



The Science of Fate

For millennia, humanity has wrestled with the concept of destiny. To the ancients, it was the whim of the gods; to Enlightenment thinkers, it was a superstition to be swept away by the autonomous self. But as we venture further into the 21st century, a new kind of determinism is emerging – not written in the stars, but said to be inscribed in our DNA and our neural wiring.

In this riveting lecture on the science of fate, Dr Hannah Critchlow will invite us to reconsider the 'free will' we cherish, investigating whether, to any degree, it could be an illusion generated by the brain's need for a coherent narrative – and the possible risks of such 'forbidden knowledge'.

Hannah will take us on a journey through the developing, hungry, and caring brain, examining how our lives are shaped by forces set in motion long before our conscious minds take the stage. She will explore how the microscopic methylation of our DNA in the womb and the structural sensitivity of our amygdalae influence and drive our political affiliations, our mental health, and even our romantic choices.

Yet, this is not a counsel of despair. Hannah will demonstrate that by accepting the reality of our biological constraints, we may finally acquire the tools to alter them.

Dr Hannah Critchlow is an internationally acclaimed neuroscientist, broadcaster, and author with a background in neuropsychiatry. She is a Fellow at Magdalene College, University of Cambridge, and has been named a Top 100 UK Scientist by the Science Council for her work in science communication. Hannah is widely known for demystifying the human brain for public audiences, having presented and contributed to numerous television and radio programmes, including BBC Radio 4's *The Life Scientific* and *Tomorrow's World Live*.

Hannah's research and writing focus on the brain's potential and the extent to which our biology dictates our future. In 2019, she published *The Science of Fate*, which received critical acclaim for its accessible approach to complex neuroscience, went on to become a Sunday Times Bestseller, and was translated into eight different languages. In 2022, *Joined-Up Thinking: The Science of Collective Intelligence and its Power to Change Our Lives* was published to critical acclaim, and her next book, *The 21st Century Brain*, will be published later this year.

About Samira Ahmed

Journalist and broadcaster Samira Ahmed presents *Front Row* on Radio 4, *Newswatch* on BBC1 and co-hosts the vintage TV podcast *Through The Square Window*. She writes a column in *New Humanist* and is President of the Twentieth Century Society, which campaigns to protect modern architectural heritage. Samira is a trustee of the Centre for Women's Justice. Her BFI Film Classics book on the Beatles' first film *A Hard Day's Night* is published in April 2026 by Bloomsbury.

Early Bird tickets to attend the **Rosalind Franklin Lecture 2026** are available now – and are running low.

Cinema Film Preview:

(Some are shown on the main cinema circuit, but most are available at the small art cinemas, Warwick Arts Centre, Midland Arts Centre and Leamington Spa Theatre)

Saipan: Steve Coogan stars in this recreation of the 2002 pre-World Cup showdown between Republic of Ireland coach Mick McCarthy and volatile captain Roy Keane. Lacklustre preparations for

the Republic of Ireland's 2002 World Cup campaign, plus the presence of stolid English-born coach McCarthy, send captain Keane ballistic, and a subsequent media frenzy.

Nauvelle Vague: Maybe this film is only intended for film connoisseur's? But it looks interesting? Experience the chaos behind one of the most influential films of the 20th century. A black-and-white dramatisation of the making of Jean-Luc Godard's 'Breathless' (1960). Filmed and edited in the style of the French New Wave. It follows a sunglasses-clad Godard (Guillaume Marbeck) as he fights to realise his vision and frustrates everyone around him in the process.

H is for Hawk: Claire Foy stars alongside Brendan Gleeson in this emotionally charged adaptation of Helen MacDonald's award-winning memoir. When Cambridge academic Helen's father dies, the grief sends her spiralling into an abyss. In an effort to process her loss, she retreats from the human world to train a fearsome Northern goshawk.

Arrival: A mind-bending sci-fi. A linguistics professor leads an elite team investigating the landing of giant spaceships across the world. They must find a way to communicate with the alien visitors.

Starring Amy Adams

Wuthering Heights: Yet another version of the Bronte classic. Described as an epic tale of lust, love and madness. Starring Margot Robbie and Jacob Elordi

Twinless: After the death of his twin brother, a man joins a support group for bereaved twins, where he meets another bereaved twin and form a relationship. Starring Dylan O'Brien

The Shepherd and the Bear: Set high in the Pyrenees, a conflict set off by re-introducing bears into traditional shepherding community. An ageing shepherd struggles to find a successor as bears play on his flock. A teenage boy becomes obsessed with tracking the bears.

100 Nights of Hero: Based upon a classic folk tale from Isabel Greenberg's novel, this 'fairytale' follows a wife whose neglectful husband departs after placing a secret bet to test her fidelity. The wife and her sharp-witted maid fend off dangerous and seductive visitors

My Fathers Shadow: A vivid child's eye view of a mysterious father during the unrest in Nigeria in the 1960's. The 2 twin brothers get to spend the day with their estranged father and visit Lagos for the first time. But their father is on a different mission during the political turmoil

If I had Legs I Would Kick You: Described as a white-knuckle comedy. The life of a woman whose life is crashing down. With her husband away, the house floods and her child has a mysterious illness. Very little relief from her long-suffering therapist. Starring Rose Byrne.

All That's Left of You: In the occupied West Bank, a Palestinian teenager is swept into a moment of violence that rocks his family. Spanning 7 decades from 1948, tracing the experiences of one uprooted family and the pain of dispossession and survival.

EPIC: Elvis Presley in Concert: A definite one for Elvis fans! Elvis sings and tells his story like never before. Described as 'one of the most exciting concert films you've ever seen'. Including unseen performance footage covering the latter years of Elvis's greatness.

The Testament of Ann Lee: Maybe not one for atheists? In 18th Century England and America, visionary leader Ann Lee rises from obscurity to forge the Shaker movement. Driven by beliefs in social equality, she gathers followers who come to see her as the female embodiment of Jesus (yes, I know – I did warn you!!). Starring Amanda Seyfried

Send Help: Linda and Bradley are the only survivors of a plane crash and find themselves stranded on a deserted island. Overcoming grievances and working together to survive, but finding themselves in a humorous battle of wills. Starring Rachel McAdams

The President's Cake: A young girl is faced with the challenge of baking a cake for her school's celebration of Saddam Hussein's birthday. Considered by some to be a great honour, but she feels it is an impossible task. She and her grandmother struggle to get by. The girl is determined to find the ingredients. A comic and tragic film through a child's eye view of living in a dictatorship

Peter Hujar's Day: How do people spend their days? This question drove Linda Rosenkrantz to interview some of New York's most prominent artists of the 1970s. An adapted transcript from a December 1974 conversation between celebrated photographer Peter Hujar (Ben Whishaw) and Rosenkrantz (Rebecca Hall). The film unfolds as an intimate dialogue between two friends.

Othello: Filmed live from Theatre Royal in Haymarket – with David Harewood in the title role and Toby Jones and Caitlan Fitzgerald

Exhibitions on Screen:

Caravaggio

Turner and Constable

Still on the Main Circuit:

Avatar: Fire and Ash: A return to the stunning world of Pandora in James Cameron's new visually thrilling adventure. Starring Sam Worthington, Zoe Saldana, Oona Chaplin and Stephen Lang

Song Song Blue: Based on a true story, a Vietnam veteran meets a hairdresser with similar show-biz ambitions. They both revel in entertaining audiences, and form Lightning and Thunder, a Neil Diamond tribute experience. They marry and their popularity grows, but personal trials arise and test them both on and off the stage. Starring Hugh Jackman and Kate Hudson

Sentimental Value: An aging and estranged film director comes back into his daughter's lives shortly after their mother's death. He asks the actress daughter to play the lead role of his mother in the new autobiographical film he's convinced will revive his career.

Hamnet: The long-awaited film adaptation of Maggie O'Farrell's bestselling novel features mesmerising performances by Jessie Buckley and Paul Mescal. William Shakespeare and his wife struggle to come to terms with the loss of their only son, Hamnet – the grief driving a wedge between the couple.

Becoming Victoria Wood: One of Britain's most cherished entertainers. Behind her joyous persona lies a young woman navigating insecurity, anger and self-doubt. Told in her own words and through the voices of those who knew her best.

The History of Sound: A gifted singer from rural Kentucky, raised on country songs, he leaves the family farm to attend a Music Conservatory, where he meets a charming composition student who is drafted into the final stages of World War 1. By 1920, they reunite and spend a winter collecting folk songs to preserve them for future generations. Starring Paul Mescal and Josh O'Connor

The Voice of Hind Rajab: The last recorded words of a 6-year-old girl in Gaza into a vital act of remembrance. The film captures both the unbearable suspense of the complex rescue attempt and the impossible choices faced by first responders, creating a devastating and unforgettable portrait of innocence in the face of unspeakable violence. A definite 'must-see' film

Marty Supreme: It's 1952, and Marty Mauser is stuck selling shoes. Table tennis has become his escape hatch. In post-war USA, table tennis is barely more respected than tiddlywinks. A bold, kinetic portrait of a fast-talking dreamer, hellbent on turning an overlooked sport into his personal springboard to glory. Starring Timothée Chalamet in the title role

No Other Choice: When a paper expert is abruptly laid off, he loses the perfect life he's worked hard for. So, when a new job comes along, he realises a perfect plan – by getting rid of his competition via any available means.

28 Years Later: The Bone Temple: Expanding upon the world created by Danny Boyle and Alex Garland in 28 Years Later - but turning that world on its head. Dr. Kelson (Ralph Fiennes) finds himself in a shocking new relationship, with consequences that could change the world as they know it, whilst Spike's (Alfie Williams) encounter with Jimmy Crystal (Jack O'Connell) becomes a nightmare he can't escape.

Rental Family: A sweet-natured comedy of an American adrift in Japan. An out-of-work actor lands an unusual gig with a Japanese agency by playing stand-in family members for strangers. Unfortunately, he immerses himself in the clients' worlds that blur the lines between performance and reality. Starring Brendan Fraser

How to Have Sex: A shy teenager and her more confident friends are seeking drinks, sun and sex at a Cretan resort. As a night of hedonism turns sour, she starts to question her experiences, friendship and future. Even as the partying continues around her. Starring Mia McKenna-Bruce

Little Miss Sunshine: A riotously funny portrait of a dysfunctional family on a mission. A husband and wife, an emotionally crisis uncle, an incommunicative teen and a foul-mouthed grandfather accompany their beauty queen hopeful daughter on a trip that stretches their sanity to the limit. Starring Greg Kinnear, Toni Collette, Abigail Breslin and Alan Arkin

Is This Thing On? Based on British comedian John Bishop's early stand-up career. A bitter-sweet comedy based on his potential divorce. As his marriage begins to unravel, he aims to grow up in the New York comedy scene while his wife confronts the sacrifices she has made for her family. Starring Will Arnett and Laura Dunn.

TV Programmes and Films:

Friday 30th January:

20.30 – BBC1: Would I Lie to You – This week, Rob Brydon, David Mitchell and Lee Mack are joined by Gyles Brandreth, Will Kirk from the Repair Shop, Tasha Ghouri and comedian Jessica Knappett

21.00 – BBC1: Death in Paradise – A welcome return for this popular detective series set in the Caribbean – a nice escape during the dark and dismal days of January

21.00 – ITV1: Devil in Disguise: John Wayne Gracy - A teenager disappears on his mother's birthday, police in Illinois, investigate, tracking, interrogating the contractor the teen was last seen with.

Drama examining the life of the serial killer, starring Michael Chernus

22.40 – BBC1: Graham Norton Show - The guests are Halle Berry, Chris Hemsworth, Rachel McAdams and comedian John Bishop. The music is from Jessie Ware

22.50 – ITV1: Red - Tongue in cheek action comedy espionage affair stars Bruce Willis as a former CIA operative whose status is RED (Retired and Extremely Dangerous). Also starring Morgan Freeman and Helen Mirren

23.00 – BBC2: Bird - A moving coming of age film. A lonely 12-year old girl becomes unhappy and alienated when her father remarries. She seeks solace in her love of birds. She meets a mysterious man named Bird and helps him to find his own mother. Starring Nykika Adams and Barry Keoghan

23.05 – Channel 4: The Inbetweeners 2 - Comedy sequel based on the TV series set in Australia with Simon Bird, Joe Thomas, James Buckley and Blake Harrison. A chill-out comedy for insomniacs

00.50 – BBC1: Get Out - Oscar-winning horror mystery starring Daniel Kaluuya and Allison Williams. A young African-American, is anxious when he's invited to stay with his wealthy white girlfriend's parents at their family estate. As the weekend unfolds, he begins to suspect all is not as it seems.

00.55 – Channel 4: The Day Shall Come - Satirical comedy starring Marchant Davis and Anna Kendrick. A would-be radical with mental health problems is manipulated by the FBI into plotting a terror attack in this black comedy.

Saturday 31st January:

21.20 – BBC1: Waiting for the Out – The penultimate episode of this excellent provocative and moving drama series about a young intellectual teaching philosophy in a prison. The teacher obsesses over his choices and his turbulent past. Starring Josh Finan.

21.30 – Channel 4: Cocaine Bear – Comedy horror starring Keri Russell. A black bear stumbles across an abandoned stash of cocaine in a Tennessee forest. When it eats the drug, the bear goes on a violent rampage endangering hikers, rangers and drug dealers. A chill-out fantasy

21.45 – ITV1: Taken 2 - Action sequel starring Liam Neeson. A former CIA agent on holiday with his family in Istanbul is being trailed by the father of a kidnapper he killed in the first Taken film

23.00 – BBC4: Afire - Emotional drama starring Thomas Schubert and Pauline Beer. A struggling writer accompanies his artist girlfriend on a creative retreat. They find a young woman is already living in their holiday home. Tensions rise during an ecological disaster

23.50 – BBC1: Just Mercy - Courtroom drama based on a true story, starring Michael B Jordan and Brie Larson. In 1989 Alabama, a young lawyer becomes involved in the case of a man on death row. The original trial evidence is flimsy – but no-one wants to listen

Sunday 1st February:

20.00 – BBC1: Call the Midwife – Another episode of this popular drama series

21.00 – BBC1: The Night Manager - The final episode of this thrilling spy serial starring Tom Hiddleston and Hugh Laurie

21.00 – ITV1: Confessions of a Killer - Conclusion of the documentary about the 1991 murders

22.00 – BBC2: Saltburn - Black comedy thriller starring Barry Keoghan and Jacob Elordi. A shy Oxford student becomes friends with a rich classmate. He is invited to the rich family mansion of Saltburn for the summer. But, the awkward outsider is not as harmless as first perceived.

00.00 – BBC2: Cyrano – I was hoping that this would be the 1990 version starring Gerrard Depardieu? Instead it is a musical version starring diminutive actor Peter Dinklage. Judge it for yourselves.

Monday 2nd February:

20.00 – BBC1: Our Man in Moscow - Following a year in the life of the BBC's Russia Editor, Steve Rosenberg, as he navigates the country's geopolitical upheaval. Reflecting on how the Russia has changed over the previous in the 25 years

21.00 – BBC1: Silent Witness – A new series of the forensics team in the crime drama. Working from a new base in Birmingham. Starring Emilia Fox, David Caves and Maggie Steed

21.00 – ITV1: After the Flood – Another episode of the tense police crime thriller serial

21.00 – BBC2: Lover, Liar, Predator - Documentary following 4 women who discovered they had each been coercively controlled by the same man. Joining forces to bring him to justice

22.40 – BBC1: Industry – The second episode of the tense drama series set in the banking and investment world

23.40 – BBC1: Traitors Ireland – You may enjoy this version from Irish TV with Siobhan McSweeney (Sister Michael from Derry Girls) as host. Next episode is at **00.30**

Tuesday 3rd February:

22.40 – BBC1: Trying - A welcome repeat of the comedy drama about a couple in the process of adopting. Starring Rafe Spall and Esther Smith – Next episode is at **23.05**

23.40 – BBC1: The Notebook - A shameless tear-jerker and as corny as they come, this nevertheless pushes all the right emotional buttons. Starring Ryan Gosling, Rachel McAdams, James Garner and Gena Rowlands

Wednesday 4th February:

21.00 – BBC1: Can You Keep a Secret? Comedy sit-com about an oddball family who have committed a massive fraud. Starring Dawn French and Mark Heap

21.00 – BBC2 Reform: ready to Rule? Oh dear – must we? Laura Kuenssberg 'investigates' Reform's ambitions and organisation. It is worth knowing what we are up against?

21.30 – BBC1: Black Ops – Another episode of the award-winning comedy thriller about incompetent spooks at MI5 starring Gbemisola Ikumelo and Hammed Animashaun

23.30 – BBC2: Till – Factual historical drama about the murder in 1950's Mississippi of Emmet Till a black young man and his mother's campaign for justice. Starring Jalyn Hall and Danielle Deadwyler

A Few Cartoons:



A Few Funnies to Finish With:

I went to the doctors and he said, 'You've got an iron deficiency'

I said, 'How can you tell?'

He replied. 'Your shirt is all creased!'

Yesterday I played football against the team from the Lemonade factory

They were 7up by half time

A woman went to the doctors. She said, 'My child will not eat fish, what can I replace it with?'

The doctor said, 'A cat – cats love fish'

My friend has been promoted Senior Director and Chief Executive of Old Macdonald's Farm

He is now the CIEIO

I have adopted a pet termite and I am calling him Clint – Clint Eatswood

My wife left a note on the fridge "It's not working – gone to stay at my mother's"

When I checked, the beer and the milk was still cold – I don't know what she is going on about?

I have started dating a girl who identifies as a wheelie-bin

But I am not sure if I am taking her out on Thursday or Friday?

A police car pulled me over – the Police Officer said, 'Your licence says you should be wearing glasses?' I said, 'I have contacts'

The cop says, 'I don't care who you know!'

I told my friend that my aunt was in hospital and passing the time playing draughts

'Any chess?' he asked

I said, 'No, she's gone private'

Recent studies have shown that birthdays are actually beneficial for us. The more of them that we have, the longer we live.

My daughter just phoned me:

'You know the Gladiator DVD I got you for your birthday?'

Me: 'Yeah'

Daughter: 'Well, wind it forward 1 hour, 16 minutes and 28 seconds'

Me: 'Right, I have done that'

Daughter: 'Well, you see the gladiator at the front who is fighting with the lion?'

Me: 'Yeah, I see that'

Daughter: 'Just behind him there are two other gladiators having a sword fight with each other'

Me: 'OK, I see them'

Daughter: 'Well, behind those two, on the left-hand side of the screen, there's a woman gladiator holding a spear'

Me: 'Yes, I can see her now'

Daughter: 'Right – now those are the sandals I want for my birthday'