

The News Letter of  
**THE BIRMINGHAM SCIENCE  
 FICTION GROUP**

(Honorary Presidents: Harry Harrison and Brian W. Aldiss)

**THIS MONTHS PROGRAMME: January 18th 1991 at 8.00pm.**

The January Meeting is, as usual, the Annual General Meeting, at which a new committee will (hopefully) be elected, and you have your opportunity to raise any issues that you feel would benefit the group and its future. The AGM will be chaired in his usual professional, stand-no-nonsense manner by our Legal Officer, Mr Tim Stannard, and it is to be followed by a Grand Auction to raise funds (and try to keep down subscriptions and admission fees), conducted by Mr Roger Peyton. Be sure to bring along books, posters, unwanted Christmas gifts, and anything else to test Mr P's powers!

**The December Meeting(s)**

Just twelve members turned up on Wednesday 19th for a very convivial Last Supper of 1990 at the New Happy Gathering in Station Street. Crackers were pulled, paper hats were worn, the lazy Susan was turned and dispensed food (and cards) in all directions, and the drinks and conversation flowed. A very enjoyable evening was had by all - and New Street Station was just across the road for those who needed train's or taxi's.

What transpired at the Sack of Potato's on Friday 14th looks like remaining forever a mystery. No-one who was at the meal went to the booze-up, and no reports have been received. Could it be that no-one ever returned from that night out, or will ever be seen again? Well we can always hope. . . (only joking folks!)

**The Christmas Competition**

At the time of writing we have just two entries for last month's Christmas Puzzle, set (with the expenditure of a lot of thought and ingenuity) by Stan Eling. It deserves a lot more. We can now announce that the valuable prize is about ~~twice~~ ~~as~~ ~~much~~ ~~as~~ ~~the~~ ~~prize~~ ~~in~~ ~~the~~ ~~last~~ ~~month~~; and you have until the AGM to bring or send in your answers. If you've recovered from your bout of tinselitis, do have a go - you might find you enjoy it! In the event of a tie, we'll have a draw for the winner (or in the event of a draw, a tie?).



*Happy New Year!*

**THE (VERY) LAST WORD**

Yes, this really is my last Newsletter, and not even a dozen promises of contributions (most of which would never materialise, at least until arms are twisted or a dowser comes to talk to us) will make me continue. I've done a three-year stint - the same number as I did consecutively as Chairman, from 1979 to 1981. At the very least, I've brought the *Brum Group News* (my title) into the desktop-publishing age; and I've tried to maintain a high standard of content, layout, and artwork (and English grammar). Only you can say whether I've succeeded. I don't know whose going to take over. Perhaps the future newsletter will look something like this, which is what our retiring Chairman says is what you deserve? (See last month.) Only time and the AGM will tell. . . Meanwhile: 'Bye! and thanks to my faithful regular contributors, Tim and Martin, and to Mick and Bernie. Dave Hardy

The BSFG meets on the third Friday of every month (unless otherwise notified) at **THE IVY BUSH**, Hagley Road/Monument Road, Birmingham at 7.45pm.

Subscription Rates: £6.00 per person, or £9.00 for two members at same address.

Cheques etc. payable to the BSFG, via the Treasurer (to be elected).

Chairman (to be elected).

Book Reviews (only) to: ? (to be elected).

**All other contributions and enquiries** to the Newsletter Editor (to be elected).

## FOR YOUR DIARY:

There will be a SPECIAL MEETING on Wednesday, March 20th, when the guest speaker will be our old friend and favourite, **ANNE McCAFFREY**. Usual meeting room and time, so don't forget to make a note of the date - and tell all your fiends!

# Book Reviews

The Night Mayor by Kim Newman; New English Library; 186 pages; £3.50 paperback.

Reviewed by Wendell Wagner, Jr.

This may not be a great novel perhaps, but it's a fun little book. It's not surprising that someone as obsessed with movies as Kim Newman (author of Nightmare Movies and Channel 4 film reviewer) should produce a novel like this. It's about a criminal genius in a dream world he's created based on film noir movies and two Dreamers (producers of mass-marketed dream experiences) who enter his world to bring him out. The characters they meet in this dream world are actors from forties movies. I find them well imagined and well researched. I'm bothered though by the sketchy and not entirely consistent future society in which the criminal and the Dreamers exist. In any case, I'll be happy to see future novels from Newman.

THE STONE GIANT by James P. Blaylock, Grafton £3.99, 331 pages

Reviewed by Pauline Morgan.

There is no doubt that James P. Blaylock is a very capable writer. However, this book is overlong and tedious. The setting is a rather whimsical fantasy world. The principal character is the lackadaisical Theophile Escargot who is forced to leave home when he steals a pie his wife has baked and then goes on a midnight fishing trip. On his return he finds himself locked out and after a bit of vacillation, wanders off to seek a better life. He inadvertently finds himself in an alternate fantasy world and mixed up in the machinations of an unscrupulous dwarf. There is humour in the book but it is smothered by long wordy passages where very little happens. Only towards the end does the pace pick up and the book become interesting. It is connected with several other Blaylock books, (*The Elfin Ship*, *The Disappearing Dwarf*) but is an entity in itself---a feature in its favour---but I have no inclination to explore them further.

BOUREAU OF LOST SOULS by Christopher Fowler; Arrow; 244 pages; £3.99; paperback.

Reviewed by Mike Jones.

The dozen stories in this book purport to show how horror can strike at perfectly ordinary people in the most commonplace situations. Werewolves and vampires are conspicuously absent, although there are several ghosts, a few mental cases and one small monster. However the use of contemporary urban settings is not as new as we are expected to believe. The collection is merely competent, no better and no worse than many others, and far short of the standard set by the same author's brilliant "Roofworld".

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ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - 18 JANUARY 1991

## Agenda

*Meeting to be chaired by Tim Stannard, Group Legal Officer*

1. Adoption of last year's AGM Minutes (Proposer & Seconder required)
2. Group Chairman's Opening Remarks.
3. Treasurer's Report.
4. Publicity Officer's Report.
5. Novacon 20 Representative's Report.
6. Adoption of reports (Items 3 -5 above)  
(Proposer & Seconder required for each item).
7. The 1990 Committee will stand down.
8. Election of Group Chairman (Chris Chivers stands for election).
9. Election of Committee Members:
  - a) Secretary (Helena Bowles stands for re-election)
  - b) Treasurer (Richard Standage " " election )
  - c) Newsletter Editor (Martin Tudor " " " )
  - d) Publicity Officer (Al Johnston " " " )
  - e) Ordinary Members (1) (Mick Evans " " re-election)
10. Confirmation of Novacon 21 Chairman – Nick Mills has been appointed to this post by the 1990 Committee.
11. Appointment of Legal Officer.
12. Social Functions (motion by Vernon Brown)
13. Any Other Business.
14. Vote of Thanks to our Presidents.
15. The 1991 Annual General Meeting will be concluded.