

Brum Group News

The *Free* Monthly Newsletter of the
BIRMINGHAM
SCIENCE FICTION GROUP

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Rog Peyton (Newsletter Editor)

+ Steve Jones & William McCabe

NOVACON 32 Chairman: Martin Tudor

Friday 13th SEPTEMBER

LIZ HOLLIDAY

Editor of UK's new SF Mag 3SF

The SF magazine has primarily been an American one, from AMAZING STORIES launched in 1926 through to the present day. Titles like ASTOUNDING SF, FANTASY & SF, THRILLING WONDER, GALAXY, IF, FANTASTIC UNIVERSE, etc. But the UK also has a history in magazine SF too. From the short-lived SCOOPS in the 30s, through NEW WORLDS, SCIENCE FANTASY, AUTHENTIC, NEBULA and SCIENCE FICTION ADVENTURES to the present day where we have the award-winning INTERZONE and the fairly new paperback format SPECTRUM.

Due to be launched at NOVACON, 3SF will be edited by our speaker this month, Liz Holliday.

Liz was also the editor of ODYSSEY, the short-lived magazine that disappeared a couple of years ago due to distribution problems.

So what will make this magazine different? What are its chances of survival in the present climate? Will it be able to pay for top-quality authors and stories? Come along on Friday and find out the answers to these and many other questions. Be in at the birth!

RGP

October Meeting - local comics writer IAN EDGINGTON will be speaking about his series of sequels to the PLANET OF THE APES movies and other involvements with the SF and Comics scene.

From METRO Monday, September 2nd (extracts only...)

JOURNEY TO THE CENTRE OF THE EARTH by Ben Rankin

A team of British explorers is set to go further underground than anyone has done before in a search for the world's deepest cave.

They will spend the next seven weeks in western China's remote Yunnan province, where they hope to find and explore caves 10,000ft deep.

The deepest known cave is the Krubera, in Georgia, at 5,600ft.

"It is the caver's goal to find the deepest in the world," said team member Paul Swire, 31, from Manchester. "We are going to an area which has not been visited by cavers before, so who knows what we'll find."

China reputedly contains more caves than the rest of the world put together and 95 per cent are unexplored.

<<Wow! How do they do it? I get claustrophobic going into a small room without windows - on ANY level... but 10,000ft down? Say hello to the Morlocks for us, fellas... - RGP>>

AUGUST MEETING

What August meeting? Apparently only one member turned up - committee member William McCabe. William got there for 7.30 and left at 8.30.

For the record-keeper, does this count as an official meeting? William

asked himself many questions ("Where is everybody?", "Have I Got the right evening?", "Did they change the venue and forget to tell me?", "What am I doing here?", "Shall I go home now?", etc.) and some he even managed to answer, so it could be said that a meeting took place.

OK, be pedantic...a 'meeting' has to have a minimum of two persons. But wouldn't it be true to say that the two facets of William's mind, arguing these very important questions, formed a basis for the evening's entertainment for the attending members? Had a second member turned up, the same questions would have been asked and the same answers and conclusions would have been made. The only difference would have been that the questions and answers would have been vocalised. And for all we know, William may have vocalised these, talking to himself in the corner... *RGP*

LETTERS

And speaking of William, I received this email from him...

In your death notice for Laurence M Janifer, you say that he was never published in the UK. I don't think this is right. I remembered the name from the days when I used to read cheap paperbacks out of Woolworths. I still have some of them and one refers to a book entitled A PIECE OF MARTIN CANN by Laurence M Juniper (their spelling mistake). The publisher was Five Star of Manchester.

Yes, you are right. I'd forgotten the Five Star book, but that doesn't really count as they were, as far as I am aware, pirate editions - Janifer and the other authors Five Star published, reportedly, never received a cent. Five Star, Eclipse and several other imprints appeared around this time - all publishing without asking permission. Ken Bulmer (with my help) got one them closed down. He saw one of his pirated books (BEHOLD THE STARS) published by 'Eclipse', rang me for any info on Eclipse and after several days and dozens of phone calls, I tracked the culprits down to a company in Manchester. Ken got a solicitor's letter sent to them and they stopped publishing. They continued to market all the previously published works and after a couple of years, the Five Star books started appearing. I heard that SFWA got them stopped, but I was never involved at that stage.

YOUR TOP TEN LISTS...

My request for your top tens has flopped. Hardly anyone sent in their lists. But some of you did - three. So I'm going to use those lists and their comments as and when I can fit them in. First off, the Top Ten SF films (in alphabetical order) from Robert Day...

BLADE RUNNER - I actually thought the original Chandler-esque voiceover worked quite well, but I agree about the tacked on 'happy ending'.

BRAZIL - Top of my list.

DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL - intelligent script for a flying saucer movie. There's a real sense of Klaatu

being part of something bigger, the spaceship interior is wonderful art deco, the whole thing's filmed in luminous black and white, and it has a musical score by Bernard Herrman (of PSYCHO and other Hitchcock fame). What else could you want?

FORBIDDEN PLANET - the prototype for Trek - there's a space force, much of the ship works the same way as the *Enterprise*, the plot could be right out of classic Trek, and the captain gets the girl!

GALAXY QUEST - perfect p*ss-take. Didn't I see the 'crushy, crashy things' on STARGATE SG-1 recently?

THE NAVIGATOR - that's the New Zealand one about the medieval village who dig through to the other side of the world to avoid the Black Death and emerge in contemporary New Zealand.

RICHARD III - yes, that's right. I'm talking about Ian McKellen's version done in 1930s costume, which looks for all the world like an alternate universe where WW2 and the Wars of the Roses got mixed up.

THEY LIVE - little-known John Carpenter movie about how we are all controlled by hidden aliens. I thought the improving messages in the B5 episode "The Corps is Mother, the Corps is Father" were based on the subliminal ones in this film (even if they were in a PRISONER-esque typeface)

TIME AFTER TIME - what took anyone so long to think of this one? David Warner is the perfect villain, and I can't now walk past a MacDonalds without thinking of it as 'that Scottish establishment'.

THE TRUMAN SHOW - a PRISONER for the television age.

<<An interesting Top Ten. I've seen very few of them and have to admit I've never even heard of THE NAVIGATOR, this version of RICHARD III or THE TRUMAN SHOW, but then I'm not really into SF on screen. Despite it's great popularity, I actually walked out of BLADE RUNNER - that appalling 'music' was winding me up like a coiled spring about to snap. I felt like hitting someone - HARD. But DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL rates very high on my own top ten list. - RGP>>

HUGO AWARDS 2002

Best Novel
AMERICAN GODS
Neil Gaiman

Best Novella
"Fast Times at Fairmont High"
Vernor Vinge

Best Novelette
"Hell is the Absence of God"
Ted Chiang

Best Short Story
"The Dog Said Bow-Wow"
Michael Swanwick

Best Related Book
THE ART OF
CHESLEY BONESTELL

Other awards went to **LORD OF THE RINGS** for Dramatic Presentation, **Ellen Datlow** for Pro Editor, **Charles N Brown's LOCUS** for Semiprozine, **LOCUS ONLINE** for SF website,

Michael Whelan for Pro Artist, **David Langford's ANSIBLE** for fan magazine, **David Langford** for Fan Writer and **Teddy Harvia** for Fan Artist.

2002 LOCUS AWARDS

Best SF Novel
PASSAGE - Connie Willis

Best Fantasy Novel
AMERICAN GODS - Neil Gaiman

Best First Novel
KUSHIEL'S DART
Jacqueline Carey

Best Novella
"The Finder" Ursula K LeGuin

Best Novelette
"Hell is the Absence of God"
Ted Chiang

Best Short Story
"The Bones of the Earth"
Ursula K LeGuin

Best Collection
TALES FROM EARTHSEA
Ursula K LeGuin

Best Anthology
THE YEAR'S BEST SF: 18th
ANNUAL COLLECTION
ed Gardner Dozois

Other awards went to Michael Swanwick for Non-fiction book **BEING GARDNER DOZOIS**. Dozois won for anthology for the 18th Annual Collection, Michael Whelan for artist, and the art book award went to **SPECTRUM 8** edited by Cathy & Arnie Fenner.

WORLDCON 2005

Good news! The 2005 Worldcon will be held in Glasgow 4-8th August. It will be called 'Interaction' and the Guests of Honour will be Greg Pickersgill, Christopher Priest, Robert Sheckley, Lars-Olov Strandberg and Jane Yolen. We'll list the prices and addresses for joining as soon as we get them.

NEWS IN BRIEF

.... ANDROMEDA is now open at 1 Suffolk Street and had issued its first mail-order catalogue (#001) - a bulky 44pg item. The presentation, typeface, layout, etc., all look frighteningly familiar, being identical in every way to the old catalogues I produced. So much so that I started wondering if I'd had some kind of mental lapse and forgotten I'd produced it... But no, the catalogue number 001 bought me back to reality July saw the publication of *STORIES OF YOUR LIFE* by **Ted Chiang** (Tor US hardcover) - a new collection including this year's Hugo Award and LOCUS Award-winning novelette "Hell is the Absence of God" **Orson Scott Card** celebrates the 25th Anniversary of his character Ender Wiggin by going on a rare book-signing tour for the new novel *SHADOW PUPPETS* **L Ron Hubbard** fiction books <were there any other type?> will, in future, be published by the newly-created Galaxy Press. They will publish all 250-plus of his books. <surely a typo for 25 unless they plan to publish every short story as a separate book???.> There'll be a 20th Anniversary edition of the 1982

BATTLEFIELD EARTH published in October. Good news, huh? You can't wait can you? Forthcoming are three omnibus editions from DAW of **Marion Zimmer Bradley's** *Darkover* books. Several have been out of print for many years and these omnibuses will fill the modern need for big fat books. *THE SAGA OF THE RENUNCIATES* will collect *THE SHATTERED CHAIN*, *THENDARA HOUSE* and *CITY OF SORCERY*. *THE AGES OF CHAOS* will collect *STORMQUEEN!* and *HAWK-MISTRESS*. *HERITAGE AND EXILE* will collect *THE HERITAGE OF HASTUR* and *SHARRA'S EXILE* Also reissued in an omnibus are *HOUR OF THE HORDE* and *WOLFLING* both by **Gordon R Dickson** and *GREMLINS GO HOME!* by **Dickson & Ben Bova**. The omnibus is *HOUR OF THE GREMLINS* by **Ben Bova** and **Gordon R Dickson** <how come Bova's name is listed first???.>. It will appear in December in a \$14 trade paperback.

RGP

THE RAFFLE

Raffle tickets are available as soon as you get to the meeting. You do NOT have to wait until the break when someone twists your arm - do it voluntarily.

The Group needs your cash to pay visiting authors' expenses, the salubrious surroundings of our regular meeting room, etc. It's just a quid - not even the price of half a pint! And you could WIN this month's prize...



BOOK REVIEWS



(**REVIEWERS** please note:- in future all reviews should be emailed direct to me at rog@rogpeyton.fsnet.co.uk) Deadline for each issue is the 1st of the month.

<<Both these reviews reprinted with permission from Steve Mazey's website... <http://www.eternalnight.co.uk> - RGP >>

THE DARKEST PART OF THE WOODS

by Ramsey Campbell

PS Publishing / 350pgs / £35.00 trade hardcover (ltd to 500 copies).

Reviewed by Lesley Mazey

Rating: * * * * *

Note: there is also a 100 copy slipcased hardcover edn at £55.00

Heather and her family have lived in Goodmanswood for many years, ever since Heather, and her sister Sylvia, were children. Their father, Lennox, originally came to Goodmanswood to investigate the delusions being experienced by some of the villagers but unfortunately ended up apparently becoming a victim of the same condition.

Sylvia had left the family home to become a writer/researcher in the US but suddenly found herself drawn to return back to Goodmanswood to live with the family again. Suddenly local children start to see apparitions in the nearby woods and Heather's father is repeatedly found standing in the middle of the same woods at the edge of a mysterious brick circle.

When her father suddenly commits

suicide Heather is forced to face up to the fact that something mysterious is happening and her family is at risk.

DARKEST PART OF THE WOODS is a classic Ramsey Campbell horror story, subtle and beautifully written. It is fair to say that for a large part of the story, nothing happens. However, rather than making the book tedious, it actually increases the feelings of suspense. The whole style would have been ruined if the author had resorted to the shock tactics employed by many other proponents of the genre.

Although the reader gets a vague inkling of some of the future twists and turns of the storyline, at no point could it ever be referred to as predictable.

This tale is a must for lovers of understated, yet very eerie, horror/suspense.

The edition I was lucky enough to read was produced by PS Publishing, with an introduction by Peter Straub. It's a glorious hardback, beautifully bound with a dark green cover and gold spine lettering. The layout of the pages are well spaced making the story extremely easy to read. Often I find it difficult to handle hardback books as they are too tightly bound with the text too close to the central spine (I cannot abide damaging books by cracking the spine when reading them) but with this volume the binding lends itself to being read. Add a dust jacket with artwork by Edward Miller and you have a quality publication.

Fabulous!

LM

THE CHRONOLITHS

by Robert Charles Wilson

Tor USA / 320pg / hardcover

Reviewed by Steve Mazey

Rating: * * * * *

Scott Warden is an American software engineer. When his work contract in Thailand is cancelled he decides to stay on

and live a carefree expatriate beachlife existence with his wife and young daughter, surviving on their savings. One night the temperature drop considerably and Warden and another American ex-pat, Hitch Paley, travel into the Chumphon jungle evading the police roadblocks and discover the first Chronolith.

Standing there in the middle of the tropical forest is a two hundred foot tall stone pillar partially encased in ice. This is but the first arrival of many, all celebrating military victories of a General Kuin, this first inscribed with the date December 2041, a date a little over twenty years in Scott Warden's future.

Whilst this is happening his wife (soon to be ex-) leaves him and takes their seriously-ill daughter back to the USA.

Following the second arrival in the city of Bangkok, Scott joins a project led by an old college tutor, Sue Chopra - a theoretical physicist trying to uncover the secret of the Chronoliths.

I was a little worried when I started to read this book. Since I had first heard the premise I had wanted to read this book. The idea had gripped me, and that added to the fact that I'd read and enjoyed previous books by Robert Charles Wilson, meant I was expecting a lot from this.

It didn't disappoint, but neither did it follow the expected idea I had for the book. This is probably a good thing as it was very refreshing to read a book that surprised me. And this is why I don't want to include more here about the story itself. I do not want to spoil that aspect of it. That said, it is very well written, the characters are well rounded. The sense of time passing and the effect of the Chronoliths becoming more apparent throughout society and nations is handled extremely well and without over-elaboration. This is simply a good SF story form concept to execution. *SM*

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

The Central Library SF and Fantasy Reading Group meets on Thursdays at 6pm to 7pm monthly, at the Central Library, Chamberlain Square, B3 3HQ. It's a small friendly group meeting to discuss SF & fantasy books. Contact person is Pam Gaffney on (0121) 303 3634. Future meetings and subjects are:-

Sep 19th - NIGHT LAMP by Jack Vance

Oct 17th - I, ROBOT by Isaac Asimov

Nov 14th - THE SUMMER TREE by Guy Gavriel Kay

Dec 12th - AUTOMATED ALICE by Jeff Noon.

September 13-15 - OXONMOOT 2002 at St Anthony's College, Oxford. Tolkien Society event. Info at the website www.tolkienociety.org/oxon/index.html

September 20-22 - ELSTERCON 2002 at Haus des Buches, Leipzig, Germany. Gurests are Tim Powers, Mary Doria Russell, Paul J McAuley, etc. Info from Dirk-Berger @gmx.de website: www.fksfl.de

October 19-20 - OCTOCON at the Royal Marine Hotel, Dun Laoghaire, Co Dublin, Ireland. Guest of Honour: China Mieville. UK agent for the con is Dave Lally, 64 Richbourne Terrace, London SW8 1AX. email: info@octocon.com website: www.octocon.com/2002/index.php

November 1-3 - NOVACON 32 - the Birmingham SF Group's very own convention will be held at the Quality Hotel, Bentley, Walsall, UK. Guest of Honour - Ian McDonald, author of DESOLATION ROAD, ARES EXPRESS, CHAGA, etc., etc. Cost of registration is £35 - send to NOVACON 32, 379 Myrtle Road, Sheffield, S2 3HQ. email: xl5@zoom.co.uk

NOVACON is the one event that YOU should be attending! It is not too soon to register! Especially if you require a single room. **BOOK NOW!**

All details are correct to the best of our knowledge, we advise contacting organisers before travelling. Always enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope when writing to any of the above contact addresses.

*Any information about forthcoming SF / Fantasy / Horror events are always welcome - please send to me at rog@rogpeyton.fsnet.co.uk, ~~tell me about it~~
~~the shop phone-out of the shop on 0121 612 1999.~~*

FUTURE MEETINGS

November 8th - the annual competition versus the Birmingham University Science Fiction Group. At their request, this year will be a quiz.

December 13th - Christmas Social - Tickets will cost £10 which will include a basket or balti meal, prizes and return transport back to Birmingham City Centre. Getting there:- the #9 bus goes from Colmore Row to Halesowen town centre. There are plenty of taxis nearby and the fare from

Halesowen to the Lighthouse pub is about £3 (divided by 4 is only 75p each). Tickets will be available (from September meeting) to members and their friends, relations, whatever. Bring them along to make it a great fun-filled evening.

January 11th 2003 - the Annual General Meeting at which you will get your chance to air your views about the group and vote for next year's committee.

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Thanks to William McCabe, Martin Tudor, Mike Scott at PLOKTA and to LOCUS for news and info this month.

The BRUM GROUP Website address is www.bsfg.freesevers.com/ Contributions, ideas, etc. always welcome.

ABOUT US...

The Birmingham Science Fiction Group meets on the second Friday of each month at the Britannia Hotel, New Street. Membership is £16 per year per person (or £21 for two members living at the same address). This includes the 12 free issues of the Newsletter plus reduced entrance fee at each meeting. Cheques should be made payable to "The Birmingham Science Fiction Group" and sent to our Treasurer, Pat Brown, 106 Green Lanes, Wylde Green, Sutton Coldfield West Midlands, B73 5JH