

BRUM GROUP NEWS

THE FREE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE

BIRMINGHAM SCIENCE FICTION GROUP

JANUARY 2005

ISSUE 400

HONORARY PRESIDENTS: BRIAN W ALDISS & HARRY HARRISON

COMMITTEE: VERNON BROWN (CHAIRMAN); VICKY COOK (SECRETARY);
PAT BROWN (TREASURER); ROG PEYTON (NEWSLETTER EDITOR);
TIM STOCK (PUBLICITY); STEVE JONES & WILLIAM MCCABE;
NOVACON 35 CHAIRMAN: TONY BERRY

website: www.bsfg.freesevers.com email: bhamsfgroup@yahoo.co.uk

THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING WILL BE HELD ON **FRIDAY 14TH JANUARY** (7.45pm for 8.00pm) AS ANNOUNCED IN THE DECEMBER NEWSLETTER. THIS IS A FREE MEETING AND WILL BE FOLLOWED BY AN AUCTION. PLEASE DONATE BOOKS, MAGS, FANZINES, VIDEOS, AMUSING NOVELTIES, ETC.

ISSUE 400 !

Who'd have guessed that the 400th newsletter would coincide with the Annual General Meeting? Who'd have thought that it would also coincide with me getting a new computer? Hah! What should have been a relatively easy job (well, I have done newsletters before!) has turned into a nightmare. All submissions have come in through emails and it was going to be easy to cut and paste all the bits and pieces..... My purpose-built computer with Microsoft XP has had the entire contents of my old Windows 98 computer converted into a file on the new hard drive. Except.....XP won't read my old emails! Oh well, just email everyone and

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NEXT MEETING - FRIDAY FEBRUARY 11TH - IT'S PARTY TIME TO
CELEBRATE 400 NEWSLETTERS! AND WE'LL BE JOINED BY.....

BRIAN ALDISS

get them to resend. Ah! No email addresses....all locked into the old system. Panic!

All this was discovered on Friday December 31st and I'd promised Vernon to get the newsletter masters to him at the committee meeting on Tuesday 4th January. All the files were there - I could see them all listed with the 'BSFG' email file there near the top of the list... But could I open them? Not a chance. I contacted a few 'computer experts' I knew but without any answers. Contact the suppliers of my new computer? I managed to contact one of the people but he didn't know how to convert the files - but he knew a man who did. Adrian was the specialist in this - but he wouldn't be back until....Tuesday 4th January!!! Okay, no problem, I've been up against deadlines before. Get the info off Adrian early on Tuesday and that would give me several hours to cut and paste, edit and add in the news, etc. Tight but possible.

Then Adrian's wife gave birth on Monday 3rd January and I'm told he won't be back for a couple of weeks.

So I've had to resort to what I should have done three days ago. Disconnect my new computer, reconnect my old one and get on with it. So that's what I'm doing - and it's currently 2pm....Tuesday....I've got 3 hours...

How on earth did all this start...?

Time to talk to past editors...

RGP

THE NEWSLETTER - YEAR ONE - by Peter Weston

Back in 1971 the BSFG NEWS was my Sunday-morning job.

When Rog, Vernon and I started the new Brum Group we needed to build our local fandom from scratch, and we decided it was essential to put out a monthly newsletter to remind members about forthcoming meetings.

For the first year I was editor. In those days we lived in a little house off Masshouse Lane in Kings Norton, by the side of the canal, and one Sunday each month I would hole-up in my den and type two full-length stencils while Eileen cooked lunch.

The whole thing was composed straight onto wax stencil, using lettering guides for the headings. It usually began with a report on the previous meeting then a paragraph or two about the next event, plus book reviews, details of conventions and various other bits of news and gossip culled from various fanzines (no ANSIBLE, back then!).

I ran the stencils back-to-back to make a single foolscap sheet (remember foolscap?), which was folded twice, stapled, addressed and stamped, without an envelope. I usually finished the lot - 100 or so copies - before lunch was ready, in plenty of time for the four o'clock collection.

Ah, happy days!

PRW

<< foolscap...stencils....Sunday afternoon collections of post.... Yes, all these things existed. Sorry to our younger members who probably won't have a clue to what we're talking about... RGP>>

BE PROUD! - Steve Green

Midlands fandom has much to be proud of: one of Europe's longest-established SF groups, the UK's oldest regional SF convention - and now, the 400th edition of one of the world's longest-running fan publications.

I first got involved with BRUM GROUP NEWS back in 1978, when it was known more formally as the BIRMINGHAM SCIENCE FICTION GROUP NEWSLETTER. I assisted editor Rog Peyton, then took the reins myself for the first half of 1979, before stepping down to concentrate on more personal fanzine projects. Later editors included Eunice Pearson, Martin Tudor and, er, that chap Peyton again. Hawking was right: time is circular.

One of the more amazing things about this trusty organ is how it's evolved to reflect the individual interests of each editor, yet remained distinctive and never lost sight of its primary goal; a focal point for the membership, setting the agenda for the month ahead. True, the same handful of people seem to end up providing the news and reviews each time, but t'was ever thus.

So, please raise your glasses and join me in congratulating the Brum Group on a remarkable achievement, and in looking forward to BRUM GROUP NEWS hitting its half-millennium, sometime around May 2013...

SG

<< I was editor in 1978? Have I really being doing this job for 26 years? It seems a long time but 26 years? No, of course not. There were all those intervening years and who better than to recall them but Dave Hardy - RGP>>

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE BRUM GROUP NEWS (OR, HOW I DRAGGED THE BRUM GROUP KICKING AND SCREAMING INTO THE DIGITAL AGE..) by Dave Hardy

Although I joined the Brum Group in 1973, the earliest newsletters I can find are for 1979 - I was Chairman at the time - when it was edited by Ian Warner and Eddie Stachelski. Chris Morgan edited it during 1980 and '81, when it was taken over by Pauline Morgan. In 1983 Pauline took on Eunice Pearson as 'Assistant', and Eunice seems to have edited some issues by herself. (It's not easy to find this information, as there was no colophon in those days, or often even any names!) Graham Poole, previously Treasurer, became Editor for one year, 1984, and Martin Tudor took over in February 1985, again for a year. Then Carol and/or Tony Morton took the reins during 1986 and '87.

I took over the Newsletter from Tony and Carol in February 1988. Until then it had been put together in time-honoured fashion using typed material and scissors. I produced it using a 'desktop publishing' program on my Atari ST 520 (with 512k of RAM. Yes, 'k!'), and promptly renamed it the BRUM GROUP NEWS, with a bold, metallic graphic typeface, which was used for a while by Martin Tudor when he took over in 1991.

I introduced a cover illustration (dropped a year later in favour of details of the current month's speaker or programme), interior illos and column headers, a regular cartoon from Tim Groome, Letter columns (which at times became quite animated), a regular report of last month's meeting (usually written by myself), a New Member panel, etc., as well as the usual reviews. There was of course no email in those days, and most members didn't even have a computer, so all contributions (when there were any) had to be retyped manually.

To a very large extent, the BGN became the closest equivalent to my own fanzine, and indeed I was reprimanded on one occasion for its perhaps somewhat personal and idiosyncratic nature by one Rog Peyton! But eventually, after my fourth year as Editor, I became rather disillusioned by the lack of contributions despite all my best efforts, and my final 'newsletter' in January 1991 took the form of a rather bitter one-A4-sheet containing all of the typos, poor spelling and grammar, bad layout and errors (including coffee-cup stains!) found in some other/older types of publication (but not ours, of course. . .) I handed it over to Martin Tudor, who did a sterling job until passing the baton to Rog Peyton in February 2001. Which brings us up to date. (I hope I haven't missed anyone; apologies if I have!)

DH

<< Maybe it's my memory but parts of this read like an alternate reality! I don't remember 'reprimanding' you Dave, I certainly don't remember your 'bitter' one-A4-sheet... (Haven't got a copy lying around have you? I'd love to see it). And you were the one responsible for dragging us all into the digital age...??? So it's YOUR FAULT I've got all these problems!!! Oh, where's my typewriter? - RGP >>

WHY DO I DO IT? - Rog Peyton

I seem to have been doing this newsletter forever - or maybe I'm just getting confused with writing the editorials for the old Andromeda catalogues. So what *do* I enjoy about editing the newsletter? Go back to page 1 and re-read.

RGP

<< And now a couple of messages from our Honorary Presidents..... >>

From BRIAN ALDISS

Issue 400! Crikey! Rog says it's 'a kind of milestone'. More like a tombstone to me! But I've always had a soft spot for the wonderful Brum group. I recall when some kind person offered to buy me a glass of red wine and it was delivered in a pint beer mug. That's hospitality!

And even before that. When I had chucked up the wearisome slog of writing this SF stuff and took to the boards instead. My show was called "SF Blues". We toured it all round Britain, with Ken Campbell and the gorgeous 'Petrushka' Whitfield. Our idealistic idea was to bring SF to the masses. The masses often numbered nineteen including the caretaker. But not in Birmingham! No, in Birmingham the whole group - including spouses, hangers-on and speech therapists - turned out en masse. Thanks for your support, guys and gals. Never forgotten.

Here's to No.500!

BA

<<Great news that Brian will be joining us at the February meeting. DO NOT MISS IT! - RGP>>

From HARRY HARRISON

Things change. Fans grow old, die or gafiate. Fan groups are organized, blossom - then self destruct. But the Brum group seems to proliferate and grow forever like some hideous alien growth. Is it possible that Rog and Peter are really disguised...? No we shan't explore the possibility; that way lies madness.

I can't say I've been with the Brummies from the very beginning—it just feels like that. It seems like yesterday—it was really in the early 1960's—that I had my first ever invitation to be Guest of Honour at a con - in Birmingham. A great honour indeed. I had been to many cons—ever since attending the first Worldcon in 1938.

GoH! Gosh! I was living in Denmark at the time so I fired up the old VW van, booked ferry tickets. Brought the family of course. Joan riding herd on Todd and Moira, who were both under ten.

And no seedy Brit hotels this time! I had stayed at many hotels in this fine land. At this time the expression *en suite* was in French and unknown to British hoteliers. But the con in hotel in Britain's second city would be different. No more night time trips down the hall. I was assured that a room with a bath would indeed be reserved for me.

And there it was. A tiny room off the bedroom. With a sink. And a bath...

This was a little square thing that would hold a small child. But no toilet. Which was the whole point of the operation.

Midnight hall-shuffles aside—it was a wonderful con.

I have been back to Birmingham many times since. And always for a great convention.

Now you are reading this in issue 400 of the newsletter. Still a journal to make you laugh, make you cry, get a feeling on nausea... No! NO! That last is wrong. It has always been a quality journal. Undoubtedly read now, I am sure, by Brum Groupies who weren't even born when issue number one was published.

Carry on Brum Group! You are now in your second century and show no sign of weakening.

I look forward in joining you all in the first meeting of your third century.

HH

<<It was hoped to have Harry visit us in February as well as Brian but Harry preferred the climate in Florida. He has, however, agreed to talk to the Group in a few months time. - RGP>>

400TH EDITION QUIZ

BY STEVE GREEN

1. What sound opens George Orwell's novel NINETEEN EIGHTY-FOUR?
2. Who made a posthumous appearance in the 2004 radio continuation of HITCH-HIKER'S GUIDE TO THE GALAXY?
3. Which awards for achievement in fanzines have been presented every year since 1973?
4. To which classic sf novel did Simon Clark supply the official sequel?
5. Which project has director Peter Jackson chosen to follow *the Lord of the Rings* trilogy?
6. Whose byline regularly graced "The Jophan Report" in Brum Group News?
7. The newly-released Futures commemorates the fifty-year partnership of astronomer Sir Patrick Moore with which acclaimed artist?
8. Which 1950s movie monster was derided as "an intellectual carrot"?
9. Name the authors of THE ENCHANTED DUPLICATOR.
10. Whose new novel is an alternate history featuring a 1930s fascist America?
11. Paul Metcalf is the real identity of which space-travelling special agent?
12. Whose autobiography is entitled WITH STARS IN MY EYES: MY ADVENTURES IN BRITISH FANDOM?

And the winner will receive the top prize of... er, the committee meeting is tonight, so we haven't yet decided. But send your answers by email or letter (sorry, haven't mastered 'text' yet - I suppose getting a mobile phone might be a good start!). Answers to rog@rogpeyton.fsnet.co.uk or 19 Eves Croft, Bartley Green, Birmingham B32 3QL.

NEWS IN BRIEF

... author **Jack L Chalker** was hospitalized on December 7 **Chaz Boston Baden**, **Curt Phillips**, and **Suzanne Tompkins** (Suzle) are competing to be the Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund (TAFF) delegate for 2005. The winner will attend Interaction, the 63rd World Science Fiction Convention, in Glasgow, Scotland **John Varley's RED THUNDER** (Ace) won the 2004 Endeavour Award. The winner was announced November 5 at OryCon, Oregon's annual science fiction convention. The sixth annual Endeavour Award brought the winner a \$1,000.00 honorarium and an etched glass plaque made by Seattle artist Ashley Harper And finally, the bad news - **Covenant Heads For Movies: Revelstone Entertainment** and the **Mark Gordon Co.** are teaming up to produce a feature-film version of **Stephen Donaldson's** fantasy book series *The Chronicles of Thomas Covenant*, according to *The Hollywood Reporter*. Revelstone has optioned the rights to the first six books in the series RGP

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

The Central Library SF and Fantasy Reading Group meets on Thursdays at 5.30pm to 7pm monthly, in GP5 on the 5th Floor 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 3398:-

January 20th: subject is **ALTERED CARBON** by Richard Morgan.

Future dates are 17th Feb and 10th March.

The Grand Theatre, Wolverhampton, has secured the Broadway hit **JEKYLL & HYDE: THE MUSICAL** for the week beginning 28 March, prior to its West End run; Paul Nicholas takes the lead. The same venue will offer the stage version of Roald Dahl's *The Witches* on 1-4 June.

INTERACTION: THE 2005 WORLDCON will be held in Glasgow next year, 4th to 8th August 2005. Guests of Honour are Greg Pickersgill, Christopher Priest, Robert Sheckley, Lars-Olof Strandberg and Jane Yolen. Full details, printable forms, etc., from their website <http://www.interaction.worldcon.org.uk/>

Snail mail address: **INTERACTION**, 379 Myrtle Road, Sheffield, S2 3HQ

FANTASYCON 05 has been booked for the 30 September - 2 October 2005, at the Quality Hotel, Walsall, near Birmingham. Further details to follow.

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

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FUTURE MEETINGS OF THE BSFG

February 11th - Party Time! It's celebration time. With a visit from our Honorary President **BRIAN ALDISS**

March 12th - **David Hardy** has agreed to step in to the breach as Peter Hamilton's new book has been postponed till the Autumn. We hope to have Peter at that time.

We're also in the process of lining up several top-line authors, editors and artists for the months ahead. Our main problem is agreeing dates - as soon as we get one nearly finalised, then the dates change or someone can't make a date after provisionally agreeing it. But we can assure you that the next few months will have a few surprises!

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Newsletter 400 copyright 2005 for Birmingham SF Group. Designed by Rog Peyton. Opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect those of the committee or the general membership or, for that matter, the person giving the 'opinion'. Thanks to all the named contributors in this issue and to William McCabe who sends me reams of news items every month from which I sift through for the best/most entertaining items.

STOP PRESS - I've just heard the sad news that SF artist Frank Kelly Freas, died in the early hours of January 2nd. The report also states that the funeral was yesterday, the 3rd of January. Can this be right? More on this next month.

ABOUT US... The Birmingham Science Fiction Group meets on the second Friday of each month. 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