



Birmingham Science Fiction Group

The Birmingham Science Fiction Group meets at THE IVY BUSH on the corner of Monument Rd. and Hagley Rd. on the third Friday of every month. This meeting on Friday 21st DECEMBER at 8.00 pm. New members always welcome.

Treasurer :- Dave Holmes,
75, Willows Crescent,
Cannon Hill,
Birmingham B12 9NE.

NEWSLETTER 100

DECEMBER 1979

DECEMBER MEETING. December 21st.

CHRISTMAS PARTY SOLD OUT

The Christmas party will consist of the usual Xmas items - booze and fun. The evening will start off with a battle of Charades. There will be two teams fighting it out for the honour of beating the other, then the game will be thrown open to the responsive audience who no doubt will be even more responsive due to the fact that there will be a prize for the best Charade and the worst.

There will be the usual raffle, this time the prizes being a bottle of Whisky (Glenfiddich) and a Space Art Calendar for 1980, followed by the Buffet at approx 10.00 p.m.

P.S. There will be a bar extension till 12.30 a.m.,, , , , , thought you might be intrested.

MEMBERSHIP INCREASE.

As from January 1980 the Annual membership is being increased to £2-00 with a newsletter and £1-50 to any subsequent name to the same address.

JANUARY MEETING January 18th 8.00 pm.

This is the time of our A.G.M. during which we vote for the new committee and any changes to the constitution. The posts to be voted for are as follows:-

Chairman Treasurer Secretary Newsletter Editor Publicity Officer
and Novacon Chairman.

Of these posts the only post which is not voted on is that of Novacon Chairman, so please NO nominations.

Nominations for the other posts are to be handed in IN WRITING to anyone on the committee or handed into Andromeda, preferably before the AGM.

Any amendments to the Constitution must be before the committee IN WRITING AT LEAST 21 DAYS BEFORE the AGM.

Don't forget to nominate somebody because it is your committee for next Year.

After the AGM there will be an auction for which we will need articles to auction. If you have any, please bring them along on the night or hand them into Andromeda, but please do not bring them to the Christmas meeting, we might lose them. Ta.

November Meeting

An eye-opener: our fearless Chairman, Dave Hardy, has indeed shown us yet another facet of his work. This time as a Producer of Motion Pictures. A well done trio of films fit to grace any meeting. It indeed made a change to turn the old brain off and enjoy the pictures, especially his Fantasy which was well thought out and very well filmed. A most pleasing night, as well as being humorous at times.

October Meeting.

Sorry about the lateness of this review, but owing to Novacon we could not have filled a full newsletter so had to make do with a shortie. Do you sass that hoopy Douglas Adams?????

I think this was one of the best meetings that I have ever been to (ranking with Anne McCaffrey's for enjoyment). Douglas Adams is a very entertaining speaker and the insites into TV and Radio were most interesting. I'm pretty sure that the attendance showed that it was looked forward to and the promise was kept. A great night. Douglas Adams really knows where his towel is.

Bits'n'Pieces.

At the ABC, Bristol the Star Trek is being shown as from 20th December. On the same date the first Disney 'A' film is being shown at the Futurist, it is, of course, Black Hole.

At the international Fantasy Awards the best Novel of The Year went to M. Moorcock for Gloriana.

The Lifetime Achievement Award went to Jorge Luis Borges.

Isaac Asimov's S.F. Magazine. After the subscription copies were sent out a fire destroyed the entire run. These are being reprinted, so don't worry about the delay. Not so F&SF, the last 5,000 copies were destroyed by fire so it will be rather scarce.

Art on page 1 by David Hardy, page 2 and by Chris Holmes



BOOK REVIEWS

ENERGY AND THE FUTURE by David A. Hardy, World's Work 1979,
£6.50, 112 pages. Reviewed by Chris & Pauline Morgan.

Chairman Dave is better known as an artist than as a writer but here he has done both, to produce a handsome and useful book. Sources of energy are probably the most important facet of the future---of everybody's future. Fossil fuels, atomic power and solar energy, wind and wave and geothermal systems, they are all here, explained from first principles, for the layman. (Especially for the layman who reads science fiction and has an interest in the future.) Because David is not a scientist he writes simply and makes his points clear by means of many pictures and diagrams. Except for a few minor quibbles the book is scientifically accurate, and some passages could easily be used as valuable teaching aids. Although he is being primarily descriptive rather than prescriptive, David's conclusions are that while there is a great deal of fossil fuel still available it is currently being wasted by inefficient use, and that man's long-term energy solution lies in developing the alternatives to fossil fuels as quickly as possible. C.&P.M.

THE BLACK LION by Patricia and Lionel Fanthorpe, Greystoke Kobray 1979, 95 pence, 159 pages.

Reviewed by Pauline & Chris Morgan.

Written by one of the most entertaining speakers the Group has had in recent years (and his wife), The Black Lion is the first part of a trilogy. The Black Lion himself is one of two kings of the land of Derl Wothor, reincarnated on Earth and, 30 years later, returned to his troubled kingdom. His king-brother, the Golden Tiger, is missing, and the Sphere of Power has vanished. The pace of this book never falters from the first page, where the newly arrived Lion is precipitated into a fight, to the last, where he and his queen, Amana, escape from one. Both of them have faced impossible odds and survived. The plot contains abundant coincidence and elements of prophecy; it combines heroic fantasy with a touch of science fiction, seasoned with romance. I would have preferred to know more about the first thirty years of the Black Lion's life, to have paused to survey the country of Derl Wothor and to have learned something about the other characters' backgrounds, but the Fanthorpes never pause for breath in a book which, one feels, is their own personal wish fulfilment fantasy. P.&C.M.

For reviews, hints, news, illustrations anything to make our job easier and this thing more readable. Please send them to either of the addresses below or hand them to a Committee member.

Ian Warner,
65 Bewdley Road,
Kidderminster,
Worcs.

Eddie Stachelski,
54 Woodfield Street,
Kidderminster,
Worcs.

WIN YOURSELF A FREE DRINK QUIZ

The editors, in their wisdom - who says two 'eds aren't better than one - have decided to let me loose in the newsletter to set a monthly competition - Eds. we may just have made an awful mistake! The idea is that I wrap up the names of three or four novels, short stories, films, etc., in a series of clues. All you have to do (sic) is to untangle them and, then, identify the common theme - so all three or four novels are by the same author, about the same hero or whatever. A prize will be offered - a free drink to the first person to hand the Editor(s) the 3 sets of answers - and the whole thing is for your own amusement. Health warning - I love puns and have an appalling sense of humour so those of a weak or nervous disposition should stop reading now.

1. To start you off :- This question has three answers and the next two each have 4.

"I say, isn't it dangerous with that candle between your knees?"

"Quiet, I'm just about to sing."

"But your machismo is at risk."

"My what? Oh, for a moment I thought you meant that thing I used to bolt as a child."

"Nothing that earth-shaking."

"So you don't like my geological epic then?"

I was about to answer, but he then burst into flames and had to leave.

(On a difficulty scale of 1 to 10 where 1 is "This is too easy." and 10 is

"You....., you!" I rate this 1/2.)

2. When I finally found Daneel, he was outside. I looked closely at him,

"Are you wearing makeup?" He looked embarrassed and admitted to a little face

cream. "Is that in the Karma Sutra?" but he mildly referred to a warlike posture.

"But the night sky is dim tonight," I observed only to be reminded of their revelling in powdery detritus. There are some people you just can't talk with.

(Difficulty rating - 3(1))

3. "Where did you say it came from?" There was no answer. "Was it from

that dark and shallow lake?" Silence. "Was it from a web." and then he told me

and I felt that high, no smaller, no smaller!

(Difficulty rating - 5).

So that starts us off - not too difficult really was it. Anyway, I'll be back with the answers next month.

David Marshall.

The following article is composed of extracts from 'The Rarest Complaint' by Stan Eling. which is now in the last stage of preparation.

Most people have stopped thinking about Father Christmas by the age of six or seven years, while thought concerning relativity, if it should begin at all rarely concerns anyone before puberty, it is as a result of this time imposed cogitative segregation of subject-matters that some amazing facts related to the basic nature of F. C. have gone unnoticed until the original work in this field, of the present author.

It will be immediately obvious to all observers, that in order to visit all of the inhabited planets in the galaxy, (an estimated 3.5×10 to the fifth) F. C. would have to travel at some large fraction of light speed; even allowing that the Yuletide festivities occur at a variety of times in different stellar systems. That he does indeed attain such velocity is evident from his traditional appearance, i.e. shorter and heavier than average, with a predominance of the colour red about him. As we know from relativity, a body shortens in the axis of its flight direction and gains mass with very high velocities, it also appears red because of the doppler effect; lastly it will age less rapidly, a fact which we instantly see in F. C's case as accounting for his false beard, which he wears to cover his youthful looks.....

....consider again little reflection one of F. C's main Chimney many a

....also we of Ernst Mach, theory of imagine sitting swinging about the (the traditional F.C.) and thus constant direction with relation to the fixed stars.

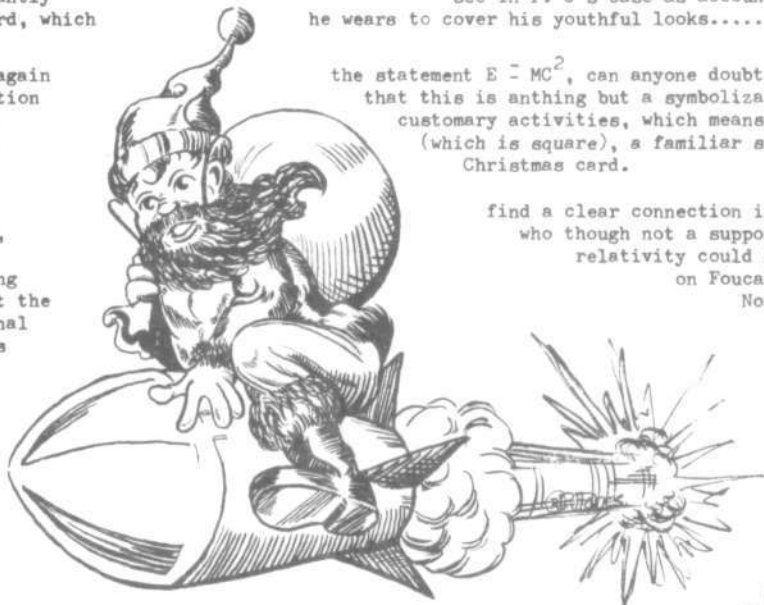
I could go on to Relativity, evolution culminates in relationship between but I think I have already said enough to carry the argument. There will, of course, be the usual band of sceptics and detractors who await the emergence of every new theory, with razor sharp wit, logic choppers and extra thick blinkers firmly in position, but I am not daunted, remember, they laughed at Laurel and Hardy. What is more, anyone can ridicule a statement after it has been made, but how many will you find doing so before hand? I have read widely, and nowhere in the works of Asimov, Karl Jung or St. Thomas Aquinas have I seen any refutation of my suggestions. My friends, I am sure you will agree that this discovery gives F. C. a firm scientific footing once and for all, while reinstating our childhood fantasies.

May I take this opportunity of wishing everyone A Happy Christmas and Prosperous New Year

Stan Eling

the statement $E = MC^2$, can anyone doubt, after a that this is anthing but a symbolization of customary activities, which means; Enter by (which is square), a familiar scene on Christmas card.

find a clear connection in the works who though not a supporter of the relativity could nevertheless on Foucault pendulum, North Pole home of keeping



General star which

dwarfs, and the Black Holes and the Grotto,

WHERE ARE WE GOING...?

What is the 'golden age of science fiction'? The 1930's? 1950's? Or the standard answer: "When the reader was 12"? (According to a recent American survey, the average SF fan is 27 years old, white, middle-class and has a Bachelor's degree. After Season I can believe this of the States - but here?)

Actually, of course, the barriers have broken down as never before, and the SF audience is spread widely, from really young children to whom the universe seems full of wonders and possibilities, to ancients of 40 or even older who have solved or evaded the problems of making a life or raising a family and returned to earlier enthusiasms.

I am told that in my early days with the Brum Group, which I joined as recently as 1973 on my return from furrin parts (Norfolk), I used to ask every speaker for his or her definition of science fiction (an accusation I refute totally!). But the question "What is science fiction?" seems more valid today than ever before - if one cares. There is no doubt that SF is today riding on the crest of a wave (and it's not New Wave either, thank ghod), or that this is mainly due to two factors: the success of the current generation of 'sci-fi' films, and the new glossy magazines containing a mixture of fact and fiction, such as STARLOG, FUTURE LIFE and, perhaps most important, OMNI. The latter has helped to make SF 'respectable', thanks to Bob Guccione, who also publishes PENTHOUSE.

Yet Ben Bova, SF editor of OMNI - previously of ANALOG, which first appeared in 1930 as ASTOUNDING - says that "STAR WARS bears as much relationship to SF as Popeye bears to naval history", while "ALIEN is nothing but an old Bela Lugosi movie". He adds, "There are many, many people ... who are very interested in the future, and they don't think about it in terms of galactic empires and robots that twitter. They're thinking of the future as it affects them and perhaps their children ... the foreseeable future, the 21st century, where real people have to solve real problems."

Of course, Ben is plugging the type of story he picks for OMNI. He admits that he tells his writers that if they begin a story with a line like: "The warship popped out of subspace seven parsecs from Aldebaran Nine", the majority of his readers won't know what they're talking about. That sort of literature, he says, is for a very vocal, very bright, very small audience.

So where does that leave us in the Brum Group? Well, you all understand that hypothetical opening above, don't you? Yet, from my experience in talking to members, most of you will have seen STAR WARS and ALIEN, and (whether you admit it in public or not) enjoyed them on some level, whether as pure enjoyment or to analyse the special effects. And certainly we're interested in the foreseeable, real future too. (Are we surprised to hear from the media that computers and robots are going to have an enormous effect on our lives in the next 20 years - ?) This is why the Committee tries to arrange such a varied programme each year.

The 'SF boom' is still on an upward curve which has been going up for about ten years - and is still going up when history says it should have 'bust' after six or seven. Yet the Brum Group is not growing. (A publicity campaign at the time of STAR WARS brought in a few curious visitors, but gained few if any permanent members.) Our move to the Ivy Bush was prompted not only by various problems with our old venue but by a wish by many members to have a meeting place which would be more informal and 'fannish'. You might be surprised by the heart-searching that goes on at Committee meetings on whether this is the right direction for the Group or not.

Well, what do you think? Come on, you 'very vocal, very bright, very small audience' - let's hear you! You know who the Committee are (or will, after the AGM in January); talk to us, write to us, 'phone us with your views, and help to make it truly your Group. Please?

DAVID HARDY

Not, perhaps, the most original of titles but can you think of a more apposite one, especially when you're not quite sure what you're going to write about ?

When Dave Hardy asked me at the last Brum Group meeting to write a few words about the early days of the BSFG I agreed unhesitatingly, probably because it was almost Time and my glass was empty. However, in the cold light of day, or rather, the chill of a grey autumn evening, things don't appear quite as easy as they did then. Should I relate how the founding committee worked deep into the night threshing out a constitution, and how I slaved over a hot duplicator churning out Newsletters by the ton. Should I reveal the dark secrets of decision taking and of disagreements solved with pistols for two and breakfast for one ? Perhaps such things should not even be hinted at !

The original Birmingham Group was a small gathering of fans who met informally at one another's houses - or so I am informed. Once, having found a reference to it in the local rag, I wrote for details but received such a strange letter in reply that I took things no further, thus delaying my entry into fandom by several years. An intriguing thought here - did I, in some alternative world, actually join that early group and, if so, what changes have been wrought in that particular history?

As it was, I helped found the Aston Group in '67 and eventually wound up on the committee of Eastercon 71 with Peter Weston, Rog Peyton Bob Rickard. Both Peter and Rog had been members of the long defunct Brum Group and the three of us, heady with the wine of a successful con decided to form a new Birmingham Science Fiction Group on a more formal, organised basis. After contacting just about every fan, old and new, in the Midlands the first meeting took place in the Imperial Centre Hotel in 1971 with Peter as chairman, Rog as Secretary and me as Treasurer.

The meeting passed off very successfully and we never looked back. We had a few ups and downs in the early days - an informal evening held on the first Friday of each month a la Globe/Tun never really got off the ground - it's strange that most fans prefer an organised evening yet fans as a whole profess to dislike being organised - perhaps we have struck the right balance with the current BSFG. And the trouble I had with the Bank. At that time the Aston Group was organising NOVACON (the first NOVACON) and had a NOVACON account at the same branch of Lloyds as the BSFG. Presumably the bank could not envisage two separate bunches of "little green men" types and for many months, if not years, the wierdest combined statements of the two accounts and titles (Birmingham Novacon Account, Novacon Group, etc) would arrive through my letter box. I think we finally cancelled the whole lot and went elsewhere.

Originally Peter produced a monthly Newsletter but after about a year, full of enthusiasm, I took on the job, continuing until 1978. The first dozen or so were A5 fanzine format with full covers by Ray Bradbury, meeting reports by Stan Eling, puzzles, reviews and lord knows what else! 'Red Flame' appeared at this time with prizes of drinks for correct answers. But as this production generally took between seven and ten days to produce it eventually went to the wall, reverting to a one or two page of A4 size and corner stapled, a format it retained until I gave up production.

The Group itself seems to have stabilised at around one hundred members and has become known far and near. NOVACON was accounted by all present to be sufficiently successful as to warrant an annual series. For reasons of continuity (being University based Aston Group has a constant turnover of members) the BSFG took on the responsibility of organising this and has done such a good job that the convention is now suffering a surfeit of attendees. And the acceptance by Harry Harrison and Brian Aldiss of the positions of Honorary Presidents put the final accolade on the Groups standing in the land.

Here for the curious mind
See the display
Of Brum meets past
Drawn up in neat array

The first meeting of the present BSPG was held on Friday 25th June 1971, and all meetings have been on the third Friday of each month since then, plus special meetings from time to time.

1971

June - Introducing the Committee
July - Possibility of Life on other planets Jack Cohen
August - Slides of Eastercon 22, Worcester
September - Hugo Discussion Rog. Peyton
September - History of Rockets and Apollo 14 films (S.M.)
October - Science in Science Fiction James Bligh
November - Novacon One CoH. James White
November - Post Novacon Post Mortem
December - Philip Strick

1972

January - A.G.M. (S.M.)
January - Limits of Population Prof. Premlin
February - Tourist Class Utopias Brian Aldiss
March - Fifty years of SF (Slides) Pete Weston
April - Colour slides of three Cons. Jeff Hacker
May - Diane Lloyd editor Corgi books
June - Star Trek debate
July - End of the World in SF. Tom Shippey
August - Isaac Asimov on film
September - Myths, Dreams and Nightmares Geoff Deherty
October - Quiz
November - Novacon Two CoH. Doreen Parker
November - Con. Post Mortem
December - The Campbell Film



1973

January - A.G.M.
February - Science in Science Fiction
March - Doom or Deliverance, a debate
April - Oddball Stuff Bob Rickard
May - Destination Moon - Film
June - Brains Trust
July - Make up in SF Chris Brown
August - No meeting
September - Architecture in the Future Jim Turner
October - Concept of the Alien Ian Watson
November - Novacon Three CoH Ken Bulmer
November - The Day the Earth Stood Still - Film
December - Jack Cohen



1974

January - A.G.M. and Auction
February - 2002 a Space Oddity - film by David Hardy
March - Angus Wells editor Sphere
April - Talk by Scientologist, Don Pyburn
May - Brian Aldiss
June 13th - Extra special meeting arranged with MESA ISAAC ASIMOV at the Holiday Inn.
June - Chip Delany Logic etc.
July - Quiz and Auction
August - Jack Cohen
September - Quiz

1974 Cont..

October - Early Mars, Pete Weston
November - Novacon Four GoH Ken Slater
November - Apollo 14 - film by Dave Hardy and Capt. Celluloid
December - Forbidden Planet and Xmas Party

1975

January - A.G.M. - Raffle and Auction
February - Anthony Cheetham of Futura Books
March - Harry Harrison
April - Russian and American Space Training Film
May - Getting and Developing ideas for stories - Bob Shaw
June - Tom Shippey on Tolkien
July Quiz and Auction
August - Two films on complex systems and spaceship Earth idea
September - Dave Kyle talking about History of SF
October - Mat. Irvine on Special Effects in Visual SF
November - Novacon Five GoH Dan Morgan
November - Duncan Lunan an Alien Probes in the Trojan Position
December - Silent Running and Xmas Party

1976

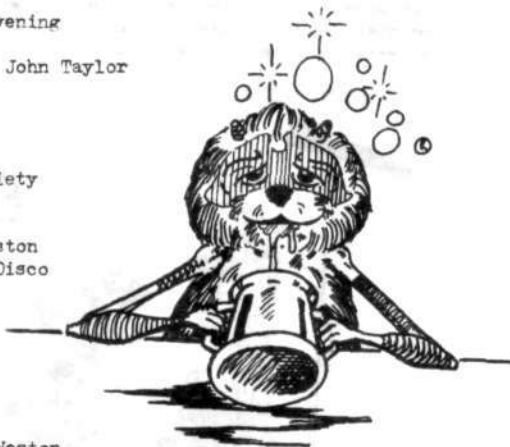
January - A.G.M. and Auction
February - Dave Hardy's Audio-Visual evening
March - Robotics J.F.Young
April - From Black Holes to ESP. Prof. John Taylor
May - Quiz
June - Chris Priest
July - Edmund Cooper
August - Bits and Pieces - Dave Hardy
September - Philip J Barker on L-5 Society
October - Toby Roxburgh on Publishing
November - Novacon Six GoH Dave Kyle
November - History of Fandom - Pete Weston
December - The Sleeper Xmas party and Disco

1977

January - A.G.M. - Raffle and Auction
February - Brian Aldiss
March - Chris Priest
April - Quiz
May - The last ten years in SF - Pete Weston
June - Ian Ridpath. Life in the Universe
July - Barge Trip
August - Brian Lewis SF Artist
September - Pete and Vernon on the Miami World Con.
October - Robert Temple. The Sirius Mystery
November - Novacon Seven GoH John Brunner
November - Auction and SF Charades
December - The Day of the Triffids, Xmas party

1978

January - A.G.M. and Quiz
February - Bob Shaw talking on 'Who Goes Here'
March - Anne McCaffrey (S.M.)
March - Jack Cohen Likely and Unlikely Aliens
April - Star Wars debate



1978 Cont..

May - SF Call-my-Pluff
June - Fred Pohl (S.M)
June - Philip Strick - SF films
June - Joe Haldeman (S.M)
July - Barge Trip
August - Brian Stableford
September - Colin Kapp
October - SF Charades
November - Novacon Eight GoH Anne McCaffrey
November - Vick Austio - editor
December - Logan's Run, Xmas party

1979

January - A.G.W. Grand Auction
February - Ken and Pam Bulmer
March - Peter Nicholls talking about the SF Encyclopedia
March - Anne McCaffrey talking about White Dragon
April - 100th meeting - Brian Aldiss
May - Brian Ball
June - Robert Lionel Fanthorpe
June - Beer and Skittles (S.M)
July - Films to celebrate the 10th Anniversary of Moon Landing
August - Jerry Pournelle
August - Larry Niven and Theodore Sturgeon (S.M)
September - John Hammond of the H.G. Wells Society
October - Douglas Adams - sans towel
November - Films by David Hardy

STAN ELING. B.S.F.G. ARCHIVIST

