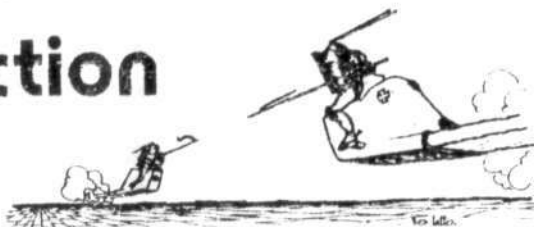


# Birmingham Science Fiction Group

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



## NEWSLETTER 113

JANUARY 1981

The Birmingham Science Fiction Group meets on the third Friday of each month in the upstairs room of THE IVY BUSH pub on the corner of Hagley Road and Monument Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham 16. New members are always welcome. Our treasurer is Margaret Thorpe, 36 Twyford Road, Ward End, Birmingham 8. The annual subscription is £3.50 per person.

## JANUARY MEETING - Friday 16th January 1981 at 7.45 pm

This is our ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, plus an AUCTION. The A.G.M. Agenda is enclosed with this newsletter. Please note that the wording of proposed amendments to the constitution is at present being checked by our Legal Officer, and will be distributed separately at the A.G.M. Also, note that the voting form at the bottom of the enclosed Agenda is for the benefit of BSFG members who will NOT be attending the A.G.M. The second half of the evening will be devoted to a

## **GRAND AUCTION**

---but only if you all donate something saleable. Sort out the unwanted SF and fantasy items from your collection NOW and bring them along to the meeting. We want paperbacks, hardcovers, magazines, fanzines, Star Trek annuals, comics, H.G.Wells manuscripts, etc...

## DECEMBER MEETING

Our beer and skittles party at the White Swan went with a swing. Tim Stannard and various members of the Holmes clan showed how easy it was to knock down the skittles, while your newsletter editor showed how easy it was to finish up the sausage rolls. Helen Thorpe (aged 11 days) made a special guest appearance.

## FORTHCOMING

- \* February - Ken Slater, well known SF fan and bookseller.
- \* March - Dr Jack Cohen, Birmingham University's expert on alien biology.
- \* Other confirmed speakers are authors Garry Kilworth, Andrew Stephenson and Hugh Walters, and we have plans to celebrate the Brum Group's 10th anniversary in July with a very spectacular event.

## INFORMAL MEETINGS

Starting in February there'll be an informal meeting (positively no programme items or entrance fees) on the first Tuesday of each month in Willie's Wine Bar, next to the Andromeda Bookshop in Summer Row, from about 6.00 pm. See you there on February 3rd?

\*\*\*\*\*  
PLEASE NOTE THAT SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE NOW DUE. Rates are £3.50 per person  
or £5.50 for two people at the same address.  
\*\*\*\*\*

## ...news...

TAFF, the TransAtlantic Fan Fund, has been won, for 1981, by US fan Stu Shiffman, who will get a free trip to this year's British Eastercon at Leeds. I would tell you something about Stu Shiffman, but the only information was on the TAFF voting form itself, which had to be returned. Nice one.

TIM WHITE, the SF artist, will be at Andromeda Bookshop on Saturday 7th February, at about lunchtime, signing copies of his new book of artwork, The Science Fiction and Fantasy Worlds of Tim White, published by New English Library. There'll be a review and possibly an article on Tim White next month---assuming we get a review copy.

VERNON BROWN (a founder member of the Brum Group, and newsletter editor for several years) got married to PAT BAXTER (who's also been a Brum Group member for a few years) on Saturday 3rd January. The best man was Peter Weston. It was a very small affair, due to being organised in a great rush between them finding a house (at the beginning of December) and moving in (this week). (Their address is 106 Green Lanes, Wyldes Green, Sutton Coldfield.) They hope to invite all their friends round for a proper reception once they've settled in. Congratulations!

THE HITCH HIKER'S GUIDE TO THE GALAXY has just begun a new incarnation as a 6-part serial on BBC TV on Monday evenings. Part 1 was better than might have been expected, with good use of diagrams and special effects.

BBC TV are repeating, not for the first time, their Time Out of Mind series of four programmes on SF authors (Clarke, Moorcock, Brunner and McCaffrey) and one on Seanon, this time on Tuesday mornings, beginning on 20th January. Come on, own up: which one of you failed to watch it last time?

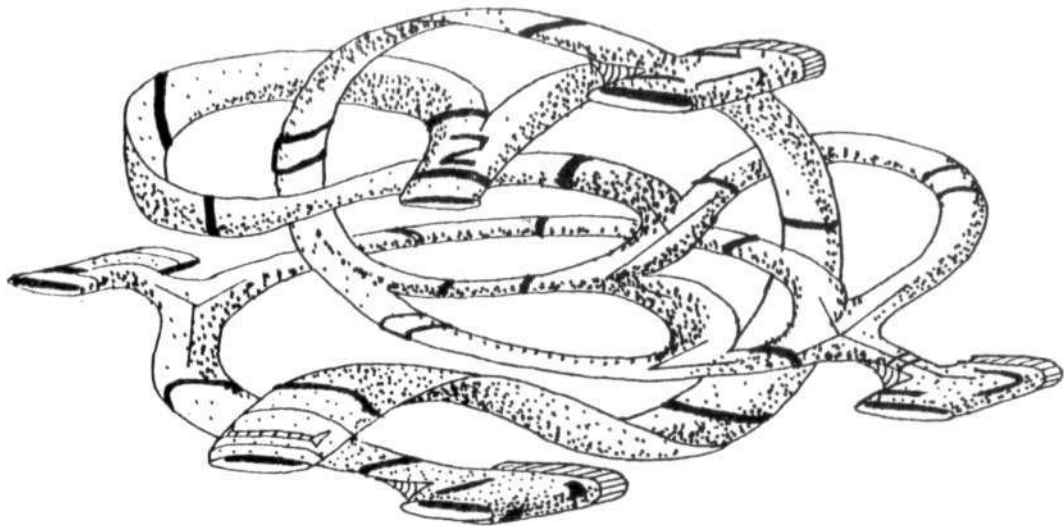
BBC RADIO 4 has a 10-part SF serial on Tuesday nights: Earthsearch by James Follett. Part 1 was as scientifically convincing as Space 1999 and almost as subtle as Dr Who.

ANDROMEDA BOOKSHOP's top ten best selling paperbacks for December were: 1. The Restaurant at the End of the Universe - Douglas Adams (it sold six times as well as the number 2, and it broke all records for the number of copies of any title sold by Andromeda in a single month), 2. The Galactic Whirlpool - David Gerrold, 3. The Hitch Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy - Douglas Adams, 4. Dr Who and the Monsters of Peladon - Terrance Dicks, 5. Dr Who and the House of Nisan - Terrance Dicks, 6. Ambulance Ship - James White, 7. The Q.E.11 is Missing - Harry Harrison, 8. Lord Tedric 4: Alien Realms - E.E. Doc Smith & Gordon Eklund, 9. Profundis - Richard Cowper, 10. A Storm of Wings - M. John Harrison.



"Alright, you guys. Hand over your cash.  
It's subscription time again."





TEST YOUR SF KNOWLEDGE.....a quiz set by Chris Morgan

Last autumn Hog Peyton, in his capacity as chairman of Novacon 10, asked me to think up a series of really difficult questions to be used as a postal eliminator for Novacon's "University Challenge" quiz. I thought you'd all like to try and answer them, so here they are: 20 questions requiring 26 answers. There's no prize, and the answers are on page 8 of this issue, but if you can get 10 answers right you're doing pretty well, and if you get more than twenty you should certainly be going in for SF quizzes.

1. What is the outstanding error on p.499 of Peter Nicholls' Encyclopaedia of Science Fiction?
2. In which 1980 novel does Police Inspector Geia Jerusha PalaThion appear?
3. Keith Roberts' novel Molly Zero was published in 1980 by Victor Gollancz. Where did his novelette of the same name appear?
4. Which Hugo-winning novel begins: "Just ahead, on Third Street, the massive facade of San Francisco's Southern Pacific Depot loomed, half hidden in the swirling fog and January twilight."?
5. Complete the title: - - - and Other Stories of the Super Mind.
6. Two husbands and their wives have, separately, written Star Trek novels. What are the four names?
7. In which Amber novel does Zelazny himself appear as a minor character named Roger, "a lean, cadaverous figure... writing a philosophical romance shot through with elements of horror"?
8. Who has written several novels about Jake Conger of the Wild Talents Division?
9. Who published the UK hardcover of Wilson Tucker's The Year of the Quiet Sun?
10. In which novel are Ghyll Tarvoke and his father carvers of wooden screens on the planet Halma?
11. In which H.G.Wells novel does a green gas make the world a better place?
12. Why was James Mowry (who spoke the language and could walk bow-legged) disguised as a Sirian and sent to the planet Jaimec?
13. Name Gerald Kersh's first collection (it includes one SF story and several fantasies).
14. On board which spaceship does Gully Foyle drift, "halfway between Mars and Jupiter"?
15. The work of Shevek leads to the development of what communication device?
16. How many limbs has (a) a thoat and (b) its usual green-skinned rider?

17. Which British SF writer, now working on a Bournemouth newspaper, has had 6 novels and a collection published in the US by Doubleday, but only 2 novels published in Britain?
18. Name 3 pseudonyms used by Michael Moorcock when writing novels for the publishers Roberts & Vinter.
19. Which well known British SF artist, who has done several covers for The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction was omitted from the Peter Nicholls Encyclopaedia of Science Fiction?
20. Name a short story which features Louis Wu.

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From Margaret and Malcolm Thorpe, dated 5th January:

"Dear Brum Group members,

"The beer and skittles party was very enjoyable, and for us the highlight was the surprise we had when David Hardy presented us with the gifts for Helen on behalf of the Brum Group. This is to say, to those involved, thank you all very much. The gifts were all practical and pretty, and very welcome.

"Helen shouldn't be attending any more meetings, babysitters permitting, but eventually we hope she will enjoy being a member of the BSFG as much as Malcolm and I do.

"Happy New Year, and thanks."

## BOOK REVIEWS

RING OF FEAR by Anne McCaffrey, Futura Troubadour £1.25, 252 pages

Reviewed by Pauline E. Morgan.

Dragon-writer Anne McCaffrey has written three romances (the others are The Kiltarnan Legacy and The Mark of Merlin) which are at last all available as UK paperbacks. This one is a thriller-romance set against a background of US equestrian society. The pace is fast, with the heroine nearly killed in a barn fire, then seduced and married, all over one weekend. Fans of Anne McCaffrey will be delighted with it.

THE TECHNICOLOR TIME MACHINE by Harry Harrison, Orbit £1.25, 174 pages

Reviewed by Chris Smith.

Most if not all of Harry Harrison's books are compulsory reading for Brum Group members. This---about the making of an historical film using real 11th-century Vikings---especially so as it's one of his best.



SOMEWHERE IN TIME by Richard Matheson, Sphere £1.25, 255 pages

Reviewed by Rog Peyton.

This is Bid Time Return reissued under the title of the film version just released in the UK---an SF/fantasy love story through time. At first glance it may seem too much like Barbara Cartland, but don't be fooled: if you like time travel stories this must rate as one of the best. It's an excellently written novel, possibly the most enjoyable book I've read in the last 10 years.

THE EDGE OF RUNNING WATER by William Sloane, Ballantine distributed by Futura 95 pence, 247 pages

Reviewed by Chris Morgan.

This is a gripping horror novel which builds up slowly, with a lot of convincing description. The setting is an old house close to a small, isolated community in Maine. It was first published in 1939 and has been subtly updated since. What the author did was take several SF and horror cliches and give them a new twist. I enjoyed it.

GREYBEARD by Brian Aldiss, Panther 75 pence, 219pp; ENEMIES OF THE SYSTEM by Brian Aldiss, Panther 95 pence, 124pp Reviewed by Chris Morgan.

These two novels have been re-released. Enemies of the System is a sparse political satire on communism which was fully reviewed in the March 1980 newsletter. Greybeard is an earlier work and one of my personal favourites; it is a moving portrait of a sterile humanity, ageing and childless. There has been some reversion to a pre-technological civilisation, and the setting is in and along the Thames from Oxford. Recommended.

SUPERFOLKS by Robert Mayer, Magnum £1.30, 230 pages

Reviewed by Chris Morgan.

Do comic book heroes grow older? Do they ever lose their powers or get tired of performing great deeds? This extremely amusing novel pokes fun at all comic book heroes, while examining the way one of them (Superman, though he can't be referred to by this name for copyright reasons) is lured out of retirement for political ends. The whole thing is played for laughs rather than for the purpose of satirising the original.

THE GALACTIC WHIRLPOOL by David Gerrold, Bantam distributed by Corgi £1.25, 223 pages

Reviewed by Pauline E.Morgan.

Unfortunately, many people will not buy this on the grounds that it is a Star Trek novel. David Gerrold is a competent writer who has taken trouble with characterisation, and there are no obvious flaws in his science. The problem is an ex-orbital colony turned generation ship travelling at sub-light speeds, which is being deflected towards a lethal black hole binary system. The converted will read this anyway; others will find it worth trying.

LOST: FIFTY SUNS by A.E.Van Vogt, N.E.L. £1.25, 189 pages

Reviewed by Chris Smith.

This is yet another collection of old stories that most of Van Vogt's fans will have read. If you haven't yet read anything by him, don't start with this.

GRINGOL WEED by Judith Buffery, Dobson £5.25, 240 pages

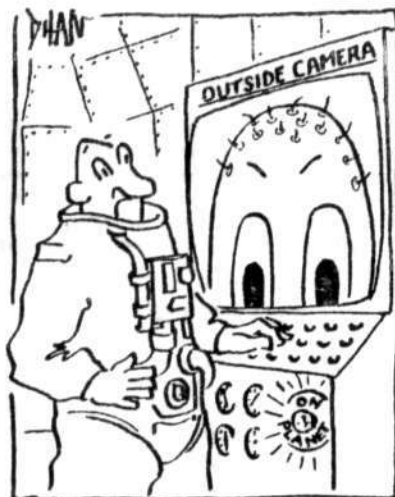
Reviewed by Chris Morgan.

I'd like to be able to say something nice about this, the 4th (and hopefully final) volume in the Star Lord Saga, because Mrs Buffery is a Birmingham housewife. But I can't, because it's such a load of rubbish. With her familiar disregard for both scientific plausibility and the finer points of the English language, the author shows an ill-assorted bunch of aliens and humans saving the galaxy---again. Avoid it.

**DARK IS THE SUN** by Philip Jose Farmer, Granada £6.95, 400 pages

Reviewed by Margaret Thorpe.

A fantasy novel set in Earth's far future, where the dying planet is peopled by Man's degenerate descendants and by strange, deadly mutants. The hero, Deyv, embarks on a bride hunt, accompanied by his dog and cat. His sacred amulet is stolen, and the tale continues with the adventures of Deyv, Vana and the plant centaur, Sloosh, all of whom are victims of the thief. Eventually they have to confront the alien who holds the secret which would enable Man to escape the fate of the dying Earth. There is an extremely varied and interesting cast of humans and aliens, well thought-out and reacting to each other and to the plot situations in a plausible fashion. The novel is fast-paced and holds the attention from start to finish. Definitely one of Farmer's best works.



**STORMQUEEN!** by Marion Zimmer Bradley, Arrow £1.50, 364 pages

Reviewed by Dave Hardy.

Not having read any previous Darkover novels, I wondered if I would be able to 'pick this up'. But this story is quite self-contained, and contains hints that the characters are as human as they appear, that they came to Darkover long ago and have somehow acquired laran---esp or psi powers---which can prove as much a curse as a blessing. Indeed, this seems to be the main basis of the novel, which follows the progress of a handful of characters through the birth of a female child with unusual and frightening laran, to her maturity, in basically mediaeval settings. It builds to a satisfying climax.

**THE FIRES OF LAN-KERN** by Peter Tremayne, Magnum £1.40, 272pp; **DRACULA, MY LOVE** by Peter Tremayne, Magnum £1.25, 154 pp

Reviewed by Pauline E. Morgan.

The Fires of Lan-Kern is set in a far-future Cornwall, whose people have reverted to customs of the distant past. From our present, as a result of a submarine accident (more plausible than it sounds) comes Frank Dryden. The book follows his attempts to understand and adjust to his new circumstances. Despite occasional providential coincidences this is an enjoyable first volume of a trilogy.

Dracula, My Love is slickly written but captures the same atmosphere as Bram Stoker's original. A Scots girl is stranded in Transylvania and is given sanctuary by the count in Castle Dracula. The novel is sympathetic towards vampires, and is far better than its title suggests.

**CONAN: THE ROAD OF KINGS** by Karl Edward Wagner, Sphere £1.00, 209 pages

Reviewed by Malcolm A. Thorpe.

Yet again Conan's heroic career has its ups and downs: condemned mercenary to people's hero, army general to hunted traitor, and rebel to a kingship he refuses. Wagner is the sixth author to take on Robert E. Howard's mantle, and he makes a creditable attempt with this interesting and fast-moving story.

**HOLLOW NIGHT** by Cynthia Harrod-Eagles, Magnum £1.25, 176 pages

Reviewed by Mike Meara.

Overlong drivel about the Atlanteans using mazes to somehow harness the power of Earth's magnetic field, and the ghastly goings-on that ensue when a young couple find a mosaic maze in their old house. Von Daniken would be proud.

AFTER THE FALL edited by Robert Sheckley, Sphere £1.30, 178 pages

Reviewed by Chris Morgan.

The end of the world needn't be a gloomy event, as these fifteen original stories demonstrate. Each portrays a different end---some more final than others---in an amusing and generally zany fashion. Philip Jose Farmer's is the most memorable story: God wants to make a film of the end of the world and hires Cecil B. De Mille to direct it. Other stories are by Harry Harrison, Bob Shaw, Roger Zelazny and Sheckley himself.

BLACKPOOL VANISHES by Richard H. Francis, Granada £1.25, 191 pages

Reviewed by Chris Morgan.

Richard Francis has written an SF novel for people who don't like SF: it is firmly British in outlook and setting, is somewhat old-fashioned and orientated towards characterisation (in the manner of John Wyndham's novels), and deals (at least partly) with flying saucers. (Don't let that put you off, though.) This is a strange and highly original novel, sharing many of the concerns of works by Ballard or Watson but presenting them within a less involved or allegorical framework.

## Editorial Notes

Following up my hopeful mention of Philip Jose Farmer's visit to Britain this month (see page 1 of the December newsletter) I'm sorry to have to announce that we can't entice him to Birmingham. A young lady from Granada Publishing rang me up this morning (Thursday 8th January) to let me know that he won't be travelling outside London. He hopes to do some sightseeing, and what little time he has for publicity purposes will be used up in media interviews: watch out for a piece in the Guardian and a possible appearance on BBC Radio's John Dunn Show. He won't be talking to fans at all (except at a signing session at Forbidden Planet bookshop) which seems rather a shame.

I see that for this month's news items I have to thank not Locus or Ansbile but the Radio Times and the mighty intellects of Andromeda bookshop. Art credits this issue are: Ivor Latt p.1, Euan Smith p.2, Phil Probert pp4 & 5, David Hardy & Anthony Naylor p.7. In fact, my stock of artwork is running low, so if any of you fancy yourselves at producing cartoons or suitable filler pictures I'll be very glad to receive submissions. The same applies to articles: I can do with lots of pieces between 200 and 500 words long on any SF, fantasy or horror topic except book reviews. Thanks to all contributors. This issue has been produced and edited for the BSFG by Chris Morgan, 39 Hollybrow, Selly Oak, Birmingham B29 4LX. Tel: (021) 476-0458.

Answers to TEST YOUR SF KNOWLEDGE (the questions are on pages 4-5)

1. The illustration is by Chris Foss, not Anthony Roberts. 2. The Snow Queen by Joan Vinge. 3. Triax edited by Robert Silverberg. 4. The Forever Machine (They'd Rather Be Right) by Clifton & Riley. 5. The Last Leap... by Daniel F. Galouye. 6. James Blish, J.A. Lawrence, Stephen Goldin, Kathleen Sky. 7. The Hand of Oberon (in the Avon paperback edition the reference is on p.60). 8. Ron Goulart. 9. Robert Hale. 10. Emphyrio by Jack Vance. 11. In the Days of the Comet. 12. To cause an enormous disruption (in Wasp by Eric Frank Russell). 13. Selected Stories (1943). 14. Nomad (in Alfred Bester's The Stars My Destination / Tiger! Tiger!). 15. The Ansbile (in Ursula Le Guin's The Dispossessed). 16. (a) 8, (b) 6 (in Edgar Rice Burroughs' Martian series). 17. Peter Tate. 18. James Colvin, Edward P. Bradbury, Bill Barclay. 19. David Hardy. 20. "There is a Tide" (by Larry Niven). HOW MANY DID YOU GET RIGHT?