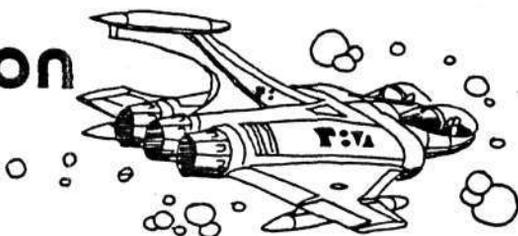


Birmingham Science Fiction Group

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



Number 161

JAN 1985

The Birmingham Science Fiction Group meets on the third Friday of each month in the New Imperial Hotel, Temple Street, Birmingham City Centre. Details of forthcoming meetings are shown below.

FRIDAY JANUARY 18TH AT 7.45PM PROMPT

AGM: Time once again for our Annual General Meeting. At present nominations have been received for Chairman, Treasurer, and Publicity Officer. We are still looking for volunteers for Newsletter Editor, Secretary and two Ordinary Committee Membership posts. The Newsletter Editors job is fairly obvious. The Secretary's job is to take minutes at the regular Committee Meetings, to type these up, to write official letters to hotels, etc confirming booking arrangements, etc. The Ordinary Members can be called upon to do all sorts of tasks which are not necessarily of a recurrent nature. The Group needs your support - VOLUNTEER NOW, OR AT THE AGM.

AUCTION: After the AGM there will be an auction. Please bring along auctionable items, books, magazines, posters, even silly items to boost club funds.

FRIDAY JANUARY 25TH AT 8.00PM

ANNE McCAFFREY: In a special additional meeting, in order to start off the new programme with a bang, we have Anne McCaffrey, celebrated author of the Dragon books. Her sequel to DINOSAUR PLANET, DINOSAUR PLANET 2: THE SURVIVORS came out in December and, no doubt, autographed copies of this, and her other books, will be on sale after the meeting.

LATER IN THE YEAR

Definite bookings for later in the year are Brian Aldiss (April) Ramsey Campbell (May) and in June we hope to have Ken Bulmer

MEMBERSHIP DETAILS OF THE BIRMINGHAM SCIENCE FICTION GROUP:

The annual membership fee is currently £5 (7.50 for two people at the same address) and entitles members to a copy of this Newsletter each month, reduced entrance fees to the monthly meetings, subsidised events and the chance of meeting and corresponding with like-minded science fiction fans.

Full Committee details will be published next month after our Annual General Meeting

EDITORIAL

Welcome to 1985. I hope you all had a good festive crumble and I wish you all a happy new year.

As this is my last issue as editor of the Newsletter I would like to thank all of the contributors over the past year, especially Martin Tudor for his Jophan Reports and convention listings, John Dell for the cartoon strip and illustrations and Pauline and Chris Morgan for their constant supply of reviews. I hope they continue to support the Newsletter under a new editor (who-ever he or she may be) in the months to come.

Although I was originally elected as treasurer I have enjoyed my year as editor but now realise what a lot I let myself in for when I volunteered to take over the vacancy. I wish my successor good luck and hope that he, or she, has more spare time than I had!

Graham Poole

DON'T PANIC

But there are very few tickets left to see THE HITCH-HIKERS GUIDE TO THE GALAXY on March 1st at the special discount price of £1.75. This is the stage play version being performed at the Crescent Theatre (see opposite).

Tickets are available from Roger Peyton at Andromeda Bookshop, 84 Suffolk Street, Birmingham, B1 1TA. ALL MONEY FOR RESERVED TICKETS MUST BE RECEIVED BY NO LATER THAN FEBRUARY 10TH. Tickets ordered but not paid for by this date will be resold. Tickets can be collected from the shop or sent to you if you enclose an s.a.e.

And finally, TERRY PRATCHETT will be in Andromeda Bookshop on Saturday 26th January at Midday to sign copies of his book THE COLOUR OF MAGIC





The Jophan Report

Having been dragged from my sick bed to produce the final Jophan Report under the beneficent editorship of Herr Poole, I'm afraid this is going to be pretty short. Which is a shame as quite a bit has happened since the last JR appeared back in November.

First there was the American Mid West's declaration of war on the rest of fandom after the exclusion of a lady by the name of Martha Beck from the voting form of The Transatlantic Fan Fund (TAFF). On receiving her British nomination after the closing date, the British administrator, Rob Hansen, in consultation with US administrator Avedon Carol, decided to stick to the letter of the law (as opposed to the spirit of TAFF) and exclude her from the ballot form. This decision resulted in a messy and potentially damaging Write-In Campaign conducted on behalf of Martha Beck and aimed at the previously untapped resources of the American con-attending masses. Such a campaign threatened to effectively disenfranchise British Fandom, who could never hope to match the sheer numbers of American voters. And so a counter-campaign was launched by both British and American fansine fans to ensure that either the Nielsen-Haydens or Rich Coad (the other 2 TAFF candidates) gathered enough votes to nullify the Beck Masses. Unfortunately part of the British campaign included a petition circulated by Linda & Greg Pickersgill which is worded in such a way that it could have repercussions for TAFF long after the present furor has died down. The counter campaign, however, has won the day... Nielsen-Haydens - 261 (144 US & 117 UK) Martha Beck - 191 (185 US & 6 UK)
Rich Coad 51 (42 US & 9 UK) Holdover Funds - 12 (10 US & 2 UK)

In the DEC/JAN issue of SPACE VOYAGER there appeared an appeal on behalf of the Foundation for the Study of Infant Cot Deaths. Apparently a Mr. Alan Pryer is willing to sort and sell used postage stamps to raise money for the foundation. So if you want to dispose of all those foreign stamps that you've been collecting for no apparent reason send them to Mr. Pryer at 51 Manor Drive, Hinchley Wood, Esher, Surrey, KT10 OAZ.

Any Phil Dick fans reading this might be interested to know that the rights to THE MAN WHOSE TEETH WERE ALL EXACTLY ALIKE have been bought by Granada, that Gollanz have bought the rights of IN MILTON LUMKY TERRITORY, another mainstream novel - so if you, like myself, couldn't afford the attractive but expensive small press editions we might get our chance soon. Also there is news of THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE. Apparently, it along with A SCANNER DARKLY, A MAZE OF DEATH, and THE COSMIC PUPPETS has been optioned for the screen. There is also word that VALIS will be turned into an opera by Tod Machover and premiered at the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris as part of the Centre's 10th anniversary celebrations. Academy Chicago has acquired rights of yet another Dick mainstream novel, PUTTERING ABOUT IN A SMALL LAND and Scream Press will publish the complete Dick short stories in several volumes over the next 4 years, also a new collection, I HOPE I SHALL ARRIVE SOON will be published by Gollanz and the uncut version of Berkley's THE UNTELEPORTED MAN has been bought by a British publisher.

Movie news includes rumours of a Hitch-Hikers film with the same production team as GHOSTBUSTERS which should start shooting in May. It will include material from the first three HHGTG books, but none from the fourth - that is no doubt being reserved for a sequel. Charles Band's Empire Pictures is producing a \$2 million version of RE-ANIMATOR, based on the HP Lovecraft short story. BATTLEFIELD EARTH a \$25 million production of Hubbard's book is scheduled to go into production on Colorado locations this month. In March filming should begin in Rome on TOTAL RECALL, adapted from the Phil Dick story.

That's your lot for this month, so I'll just wish you all a belated Happy New Year and say goodbye.....

MARTIN TUDOR.

THE LIE DETECTOR TEST HAS CLEARED YOU ERNEST SMITH.... BUT THE TEST WILL NOT WORK ON ZYLAN - SO YOUR FRIENDS WILL BE STAYING HERE...

DONT WORRY OLD CHUMS! I'LL GET YOU OUT OF THIS!

BRUM 2184

© JOHN DELL 1984

SPACEMAN SMITH MUST CLEAR THE NAMES OF HIS TWO ZYLAN PALS ACCUSED OF BEERMAT SMUGGLING

ERNEST TAKES OFF FOR THE ZYLAN QUARTER OF BIRMINGHAM - EDGBASTON

ARCHIE'S
CREMATORIUM
TRADITIONAL ZYLAN ALTES

HERE WE ARE - WHERE THE BOYS GOT GIVEN THOSE BEERMATS!





ER, HELLO - IS THIS WHERE I CAN ORGANIZE A FUNERAL?



ER, PROBABLY NOT SIR. WE ONLY CATER FOR THE LOCAL ZYLAN COMMUNITY. WE DO THE WHOLE TRADITIONAL CEREMONY, INCLUDING ARRANGING THE TRANSPORT BACK TO ZYLAN OF THE ASHES TO BE SCATTERED NEAR THE PLACE OF BIRTH....

SO UNLESS YOU WANT TO ARRANGE A ZYLAN SERVICE THE BEST PLACE FOR YOU TO ARRANGE A FUNERAL WOULD BE JIMMYS ON LIVERY STREET...

THERE'S SOMETHING FUNNY ABOUT THAT PLACE - I'LL HAVE TO DO A LITTLE SNOOPING AFTER DARK!



OH WELL THANKS ANYWAY... CHEERIO!



WHAT HAS ERNEST LET HIMSELF IN FOR? FIND OUT NEXT ISSUE.



REVIEWS



ISAAC ASIMOV'S SPACE OF HER OWN edited by Shawna McCarthy, Robert Hale, £8.50, 286 pages
Reviewed by Pauline Morgan.

In the 1950s, we are told in the introduction, very few women wrote science fiction but since then the number has rapidly increased. This volume contains twenty excellent stories and two poems, all written by women between 1981 and 1983 and originally published in Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine. There is a considerable range in their talents from the humorous in THE SORCERESS IN SPITE OF HERSELF by Pat Cadigan about a woman who has the knack of making things disappear, to the seriousness of a father trying to come to terms with the death of his daughter, as in SHADOWS FROM A SMALL TEMPLATE by Sharon Webb. Two stories, NIGHT OF THE FIFTH JUN by Mildred Downey Broxon and LA REINE BLANCHE by Tanith Lee, could more accurately be called fantasy but because they are both well written their inclusion is justified. As a collector of short stories this book is good reading.

SPACE TRAP by Monica Hughes, Magnet Books, £1.50, 153 pages
Reviewed by Margaret Thorpe

Monica Hughes's writing improves with each book; it must be difficult to set the right tone and not "write down" to juvenile readers, or to fall into the idea of having the child protagonist save the world single-handedly.

Her characters are well thought out; the plot is fast moving and novel. Valerie, together with her older brother and younger sister are on a field trip with their parents. The children are caught in a space warp trap and transported to another planet. Frank is sent to the local zoo, Susan is sold as a pet, and Valerie? She becomes an animal subject in the university research labs.

The story produces some thought provoking situations and ideas which are well handled without being forced upon the reader. It should prove popular with young teenagers.

THE CASTLE OF DARK by Tanith Lee, Unicorn £2.95, 180 pages
Reviewed by Chris Morgan

Why should an attractive girl with floor-length black hair be unable to stand daylight? Why do two old witches keep her locked away in a stone tower? Why is a young harper with a magic harp (at times it controls him) the only one who can set the girl free? This intriguing bunch of questions is woven into an unusual story. Some of the elements are familiar but Tanith Lee always succeeds in creating an original result: none of the answers are what

you might expect. The story is simpler and on a much smaller scale than Tanith Lee's best work, and it was originally published in hardcover as a juvenile, yet it is always believable, always interesting.

THE HISTORY OF THE RUNESTAFF by Michael Moorcock, Granada, £2.95,
573 pages Reviewed by Steve Green

Firstly, historical perspective: THE JEWEL IN THE SKULL, opening volume in the four-novel sequence bound together here, was the first of Moorcock's fantasies I encountered (a lifetime ago, summer of '73) and it launched me into a frantic digestion of the chap's work which lasted the entire year. No surprise, then, my initial reluctance to return to this work afresh after more than a decade; would my rosy-coloured vision of the early Moorcock shatter in the cold light of critical maturity?

Secondly, the novels themselves: JEWEL IN THE SKULL, THE MAD GOD'S AMULET, SWORD OF THE DAWN and THE RUNESTAFF, written between 1967 and 1969. Set more than a millenium in the future yet almost medieval in their social backdrop, they offer a curious contradiction between the futuristic sorcery of the evil Dark Empire of sinister Granbretan and the primitive swordplay of the sequence's hero, Dorian Hawkmoon.

But more importantly, the author himself: in many ways the Barbara Cartland of science fantasy, Moorcock rarely approaches true literary merit (in the sense, say, of Priest's AFFIRMATION or Holdstock's MYTHAGO WOOD, to name just two recent works). But then neither does he claim this distinction. In essence, he is a master storyteller, weaving webs of intrigue and high adventure. The publisher's hyperbole comparing Moorcock to the likes of Joyce and Shaw (are blurb writers insane or do they suspect us to be?) is redundant - he needs no recommendation other than to say this is yet another of his highly enjoyable if intellectually inexhausting romps.

THE SILVER SUN by Nancy Springer, Corgi, £1.75, 292 pages
Reviewed by Pauline Morgan

The second in the BOOK OF ISLE trilogy is difficult to call a sequel to THE WHITE HART as such a great time has elapsed and the events of the first book are now buried in legend. The magic, too, has dimmed and we are left with a "Fulfilment of prophecy" type fantasy novel. Put badly, two youths, Hal and Alan, plan to take over the kingdom on the death of the hated tyrant Iscovar, King of Isle, who is incidentally Hal's father. The book does have greater depth than this but I found Hal and Alan much too trusting and naive at the beginning, and the lesser kings they make their allies not suspicious enough. There is development of character but it does not come soon enough. Definitely for the more juvenile reader.

THE DEAD KINGDOM by Geraldine Harris, Unicorn £2.50, 182 pages
Reviewed by Pauline Morgan

It is a pity that this and the other three books in this juvenile series were not published in one volume. Read seperately, it is less easy to trace the development of Kerish-lo-Taan, the young prince of Galkis and his half brother Forollkin. Kerish's task is to obtain the seven keys which will free the saviour of Galkis from his prison. To do so he must persuade the sorcerers that hold the keys to relinquish them. In doing so they also lose their immort-

ality. In THE DEAD KINGDOM, volume three, he wins three more and ends with Kerish and his companions setting out in pursuit of the last key. It is nevertheless competently written.

THE PROCESS by Norman Spinrad, Arrow, £1.75, 342 pages
Reviewed by Pauline Morgan

Transformationalism is like the Moonies. It gets its claws into you, takes your money, brainwashes you and sucks you in. Jack Weller's wife, Annie, is one of the victims. Jack wants her back, and he is prepared to give up everything in order to worm his way into the movement and get her out. The charismatic leader of the movement is John B. Steinhardt, who used to be a hack sf writer (does this remind you of anyone?) and discovers he has created an octopus, reaching into all corners of the American way of life. Spinrad is trying to do a number of things in this novel. He tells a story of frustration and anger. He explores the way in which such organisations can insinuate themselves into people's lives, and he shows up the vulnerability of ordinary people to the pressures and promises such groups hand out. It is skilfully woven. The characters, though often larger than life, are very believable. A book worth reading.

FIRE IN THE ABYSS by Stuart Gordon, Arrow, 320 pages *
Reviewed by Pauline Morgan

It is difficult to portray our world as seen through alien eyes. Sir Humphrey Gilbert is one, and this is his tale. The 16th century explorer is one of several hundred snatched from various times by a US Navy experiment that goes wrong. Confused and frightened by his treatment and surroundings, he is kept isolated from others; even his captors wear decontamination suits in his presence. Drawn into mental communication by an ancient Egyptian priestess some of the Displaced Temporal Immigrants plan to escape. We are shown only one side of the story, the reasons for absolute secrecy are never fully explained, but for a man totally out of his depth Humf adapts quickly. The near future world has a realistic aura to it. At the beginning the prose seems clumsy in an attempt to write in Elizabethan idiom but becomes smoother as the story unfolds.

THE ZEN GUN by Barrington J Bayley, Methuen £1.95
Reviewed by W A McCabe

At the Christmas party Langford rated this as one of his "books of the year" - I wouldn't. In these days when the science in science fiction is generally social or non-existent this combination of physics and philosophy is, at least, a change. It is not much more. As the author admits in his epilogue the science is shaky. It doesn't mix with the plot very well either. The book tends to have characters explain various things in the "you know, of course, that..." style which breaks little holes in the plot. Most of the characters are little more than functionaries either within the plot or to explain the plot.

The story concerns an ape-man who has possession of an "ultimate weapon" (that can destroy whole stars at any range at all), an admiral who has been informed that such a weapon exists (by an oracle no less), a (samurai?) warrior (who is probably only there to tell the admiral how the gun works), and several other minor characters. If you want something to think about then this might be the book for you but otherwise it's probably better that you forget it.

CONVENTION LISTINGS

1985

- JAN 27 - DRAGONCON 3. The convention will run from 10am to 10pm at The Bull, East Sheen, with guests Anne Mc Caffrey, Jack Cohen & Peter Morwood. Registration is £7.00 to Richard or Marion van der Voort, AT THE SIGN OF THE DRAGON, 131 Sheen Lane, London, SW14 9AE. All profits to the Church of England Children's Society.
- FEB 15-18 SILICLONE. Scotland's first primarily fannish convention. Venue the Doric Hotel, Edinburgh. Three days of silly games, panels, quizzes, pool, competitions, discos, ceilidhs and the odd serious spot. Registration £4.00 payable to SILICLONE and sent to Jeremy Johnson, '91 Easter Road, Edinburgh, EH6 3LF.
- FEB 1-4 CORFLU 2. Guest of Honour attending member chosen at random. Venue Napa Valley Holiday Inn, Napa CA., USA. \$55 single/double. Memb. supporting \$9.92, attending \$32.12 (incl. banquet). Details from CORFLU, Box 590712, San Francisco CA 94159-0712.
- MAR 22-24 THE DENTON CONVENTION. Rocky Horror con at the Royal Angus, Birmingham. All profits going to the Save the Children Fund. Membership £15.00 to Tony Chester, 28 Balcaskie Rd., Eltham, London.
- MAR 23-24 RISING SUNS. In Manchester. Details from Eric Letherman, 196 Woodlands Road, Cheetham Hill, Manchester, M8 7QH.
- APR 5-8 YORCON III. 36th Annual British Easter SF Convention in Leeds. Attending membership £10.00 (or £12.00 on the door). Hotels the Queens and the Dragonara - rooms £18.00 sng, £15.50 per person twin/double. Fan Guest of Honour Linda Pickersgill, Guest of Honour Greg Benford. Further details from Mike Ford, 45 Harold Mount, Leeds, LS6 1PW.
- APR 17-23 4TH SEMAINE DE LA SF ET L'IMAGINAIRE. In Roanne, France. Details from - Rhone-Alpes SF., Centre Pierre Mendes-France, 12 Avenue de Paris, 42 300 Roanne, France.
- MAY 23-26 ITALCON XI. In Fanano, Italy. Details from Bruno Valle, Via San Pietro 5, 1-16035, Rapallo, Italy.
- MAY 25-27 LAZLAR LYRICON 85. Hitch Hiker's con now apparently to be held in Brum at the Strathallan Hotel. Membership £16.50 cheques made payable to zz9 Plural z Alpha and sent to Robert Cogger, 10 Bourne Parade, Bourne Road, Bexley Kent, DA5 1LQ.
- MAY 3-6 SOL 3 85. Star Trek convention in Liverpool. Information from 39 Dersingham Avenue, Manor Park, London, E12 5QP.
- JULY 6-7 NASACON VI. Fannish convention in Stockholm, Sweden, with the theme - Bad Movies. Full details from Lottie Eriksson, Maskinistgatan 9 ob, S-117 47 Stockholm, Sweden.
- JUL 19-22 ALBACON 85. Glasgow's 10th SF convention. Guest of Honours (or even Guests of Honour) Harlan Ellison and Anne McCaffrey. Attending membership £8.00 to Albacoon 85, c/o Vincent J. Docherty, 20 Hillington Gdns., Cardonald, Glasgow, G52 2TP.
- JUL 26-28 BECCON 85. GoH Richard Cowper. Membership £8.00 but hotel now fully booked. Details from 191 The Heights, Northolt, Midx.
- AUG 3-4 LEISURE LIVE 2. DR. WHO convention in Swindon. Full details from Tony Cherrington, 2 Domestic Quarters, Eryanston School, Blandford, Dorset, DT11 OPX. (Do not phone.)
- AUG 15-18 SWECON 85. In Stockholm, Sweden. GoH's Chris Priest & Lisa Tuttle. Membership £1.00 supporting, £13.00 attending. Details from Ahrvid Engholm, Maskinistgatan 9 ob, S-117 47 Stockholm Sweden.



MARTIN TUDOR AND HIS YARD OF ALE



HELEN THORPE
WHITE RABBIT



SUPERBABY



FATHER DAVID LANGFORD SIGNS UP FOR NAVY ON IS



ROG IN ACTION



ROBERT P. ER.....
WAS HIS NAME



CHILDREN'S FANCY DRESS

NOVACON 14



KEV IN ACTION



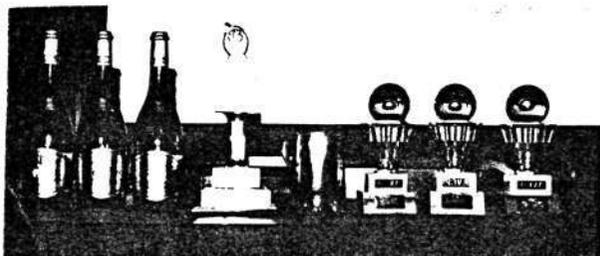
DAVE LANGFOLD



NOVACON IS COMMITTEE AND GUEST OF HONOUR



PANEL DISCUSSION



TRYING A NEW POSITION

- AUG 22-26 AUSSIECON II. The 43rd World SF Convention will be held at the Southern Cross Hotel, Melbourne, Australia. GoH Gene Wolfe, Fan GoH Ted White. Attending membership \$ 50. Full details from British agents Joseph Nicholas and Judith Hanna at 22 Denbigh St., Pimlico, London.
- AUG 23-26 ENTERPRISE 1. Star Trek convention in Liverpool. Details from Sharon Rowe. 24 Haywards Close, Clevedon, Avon.
- AUG 30- SEPT 2 NASPIC 85. Or The First Occasional Lone Star SF Con and Chili Cook-Off. The National US SF Con to be held in the Hyatt Regency Austin & Palmer Auditorium, Austin, Texas. GoH Jack Vance. Membership \$15 supporting, \$45 attending. Details- NASPIC, Box 9612, Austin TX, 78766, USA.
- SEP 13-15 CAMCON: UNICON 6. New Hall College, Cambridge. Attending membership £7.00 to CAMCON, c/o Neil Taylor, Perspective Design Ltd., Top Floor, 9 Pembroke St., Cambridge, CB2 3QY. Rooms £16.50 per person per night including breakfast and VAT. 'A weekend extravaganza including late bar, bookroom and a program of talks, films, panels, games & much more.'
- SEP 6-8 FANTASYCON X; The Tenth Anniversary British Fantasy Conference. To be held in Birmingham with Charles L. Grant as Master of Ceremonies. For information try writing to Steven Jones & Jo Fletcher at 130 Park View, Wembley, Middx., HA9 6JU.
- OCT 26-27 BENELUXCON 1985. Hotel Nieuw Minerva, Leiden, The Netherlands. Rooms circa f40 per person. Membership f30. GoH Annemarie van Ewyck. Limited to 150 members. Information c/o Roelof Goudriaan, Postbus 1189, 8200 BD Lelystad, The Netherlands.

1986

- FEB MEXICON II. Possibly to be held in Birmingham. Membership £9.00 to Pam Wells, 24A Beech Road, Bowes Park, London, N11.
- AUG 28- SEP 1 CONFEDERATION. 44th World SF Convention, Atlanta GA. GoH Ray Bradbury. Fan GoH Terry Carr, Toastmaster Bob Shaw. Membership - supporting and attending both due to go up from 1st of Jan 1985. Contact CONFEDERATION, 2500 N. Atlanta St., #1986, Smyrna GA 30080, USA.

Convention information collated from ANSIBLE (5 issues for £2.00 from Dave Langford, 94 London Road, Reading, Berks., RG1 5AU.); SMALL MAMMAL (SAE from Martin Easterbrook, 5 Bosworth Rd., Grange Park, Swindon, SN5 6AL.); SPACE VOYAGER (£1.50 from 'any good newsagent'.); SCIENCE FICTION CHRONICLE (European subscription 1 year \$27.00 from Andy Porter, PO Box 4175, New York, NY 10163-4175 USA.) and LOCUS (Contact British subscription agent Fantast (Medway) Ltd., PO Box 23, Upwell, Wisbech, CAMBS, PE14 9BU. Also available at Andromeda.)