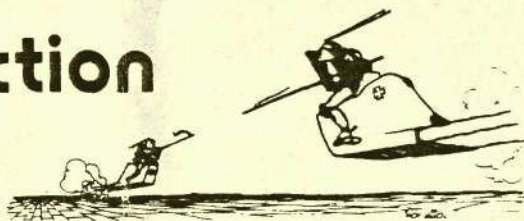


# Birmingham Science Fiction Group

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



## NEWSLETTER 178

JULY 1986

THE BSFG MEETS ON THE  
THIRD FRIDAY OF EACH  
MONTH IN THE NEW  
IMPERIAL HOTEL, TEMPLE  
STREET, IN THE CENTRE  
OF BIRMINGHAM. DETAILS  
OF THIS MONTHS MEETING  
IS GIVEN BELOW.

MEMBERSHIP OF THE GROUP  
COSTS A MERE £5.00 PER  
YEAR FOR ONE PERSON  
(£7.50 FOR TWO AT THE  
SAME ADDRESS) OR £2.50  
FOR SIX MONTHS (£3.75  
FOR TWO PEOPLE AT THE  
SAME ADDRESS).

ALL CHEQUES AND POSTAL  
ORDERS PAYABLE TO BSFG  
AND SENT TO THE TREASURER  
CHRIS CHIVERS AT 51,  
BOUNDARY ROAD, STREETLY,  
SUTTON COLDFIELD, WEST  
MIDLANDS.

This month's meeting on July 18th will be different,  
there's going to be a quiz called:-

### SF MASTERTEAM !!

with a prize of £50!!! The way it's planned is :-  
Members form teams of 3 and will be answering questions  
on a round by round basis.

The rounds will be Oral, Aural or Visual based and  
within these categories : the oral will be a choice  
of hard, medium or soft (easy) questions with marks  
awarded accordingly plus a luck of the draw score,  
(i.e. bonus points).

:the visual is slide oriented  
with each contestant writing down the answers on cards  
and these being marked on completion of that round  
(hence giving a short break to refill glasses and  
panic).

:the aural round is tape  
recordings of "something within the SF genre" i.e.  
quotations from films, tv etc.

OK? Get the idea? This could be the easiest money  
you've ever made! £50 between 3!

We aren't going to force you to enter - an audience  
would add 'drama' (any rich people who dont need the  
money!) If you intend to enter you MUST be a fully  
paid up member of the group.

To avoid confusion (and late starts) please try to  
arrange your team BEFOREHAND and report to Vernon  
Brown (as quizmaster) in Polly's bar, with your team  
at 7.30pm prompt.

\*\*\*\*\*GOOD LUCK\*\*\*\*\*

DAVE HARDY'S A WINNER

In the annual reader's poll for the best ANALOG cover in 1985 Dave Hardy was voted 1st and 2nd. 1st for The Postdiluvian World (November issue) and 2nd for World of Crystal, Sky of Fire (October issue). Congratulations and well done Dave!!

TALKING BOOKS FOR THE BLIND

If you were at Novacon last year (if you weren't - why not?) you will possibly remember that there was a collection for the Convention to donate £350 to Talking Books for the Blind. This is a concern who produce books on a cassette tape so that blind people can enjoy some of the literature that sighted people do. Our Chairman (Rog) noticed that there was a lack of SF books and suggested that maybe we - BSFG and Novacon - could sponsor the production of an SF book, and it was decided to put forward MYTHAGO WOOD as a possible title. You will all be pleased to know that our nomination has been accepted and the cheque will be handed over to Talking Books at the closing ceremony for Fifteencon, that's on Sunday Night.

HELP WANTED.

If you are free on Friday afternoon 11th July, contact Bernie Evans as she needs some help to set up Fifteencon. Contact Bernie on 021 - 707 - 6606 from 7.30pm onwards.

RICHARD COWPER - SIGNING SESSION

There will be a signing session at Andromeda on 16th August when Richard Cowper will be signing copies of his book A TAPESTRY OF TIME the third volume in the WHITE BIRD OF KINSHIP trilogy. There is also a possibility that there will be a special meeting the day before, if this is so it will be announced at the JULY meeting.

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Last Month's Meeting.

Last month's meeting starred Kim Stanley Robinson in what can only be described as an excellent evening. He began by revealing his upbringing in Orange County California and his fascination in Robert Louis Stevenson and Mark Twain, which he claimed gave him a 19th century mental outlook; through the technological changes of the 60's (agriculture to urban sprawl) into the automotive culture of post war America. Stan then went to the University of California in San Diego on a Science biased course. He claimed to be alphabetically based when reading, logically his SF began at A which obviously took ages to get through (Asimov - lots of them), until his 1973 'breakthrough' with the realisation of "good work" of which he read "everything in 2 years" i.e. Aldiss, Ballard, Bester, Dick, Le Guinn, Roberts, Sturgeon, etc. ('New Wave' authors). This he countered by forwarding Heinlein, Clarke, Asimov, Bradbury, Herbert, et al, as his reading "specific work cum best of" as he felt these were not as intense as the 'New Wave' writers. He felt books should have an emotional impact that is should 'move' you. However, at college his studies edged him to literature classes as his liking for reading fiction influenced him in his choices, so not surprisingly, he ended up literature biased. His PhD dissertation being on Philip K. Dick.



Stan came into SF writing through the usual channel of magazines (in his case Orbit ) and with the encouragement of teacher and friend, Damon Knight, stuck to it.

His first novel, THE WILD SHORE, took his home area in a post -nuclear winter to give a story with a 'sense of place' which he felt SF was largely unconcerned with. THE WILD SHORE, he stressed, gives a sense of local habitation on a real stretch of coastline. There won't be a sequel (refreshing to find an author NOT trying to cash in on early success- Ed.). Stressing further his view that SF must not only have a message ,it must also entertain and educate its readers with Dick's reality of character model as ideal. We all live political lives and expanding this into SF Stan's second novel ICEHEDGE evolved. ICEHEDGE revolves around a story of rebellion - but is it only a hoax? To back up this notion Stan quoted the Kensington Stone (Minnesota) which tells a tale of a Norse expedition to the USA dated 1362 (hoax?). This novel was originally a short story "On The North Pole Pluto" ORBIT 21, with the first and second sections slotting in later.

On trilogies Stan outlined two types : a long novel split into three for commercial reasons ;where a novel has been successful and continued, he suggested the latter was not good but rather like pouring water into gin. He then forwarded his trilogy proposal :(i) THE WILD SHORE ; (ii) Macdonalds/plastic dystopia ; (iii) 'If things go right'- Utopian ideology. This idea has three possible futures in three books related by place.

When questioned about his ideas/did he have whole novels mapped out 'per se', he revealed :- some scenes were known in some instances with blanks leading (plausibly) to the next liked scene; he usually knows a lot about the novel hence it is planned to a degree, but not in sequence. He further claimed his publisher and editor at Ace did help although both moved on to better things (this explained his move to Tor) and his subsequent selling of IN MEMORY OF WHITENESS ,his third novel to Arbour (where Silverberg was editor) prior to its completion. His old editor popped up to take over this and also offer Stan a chance to publish a short story collection (an ambition)- THE PLANET ON THE TABLE which covers the first ten years of his career.

He finished by saying he was now living in Switzerland as a house-husband which gave him time to think of ideas. On the basis of existing writings the mind boggles what he may come up with. We wish him well.

## IN MEMORIAM

It is sad, in the midst of our 15th Anniversary festivities, to have to speak of a death, but on 11th June we lost the greatest astronomical artist ever: Chesley Bonestell. He was 98 on New year's Day this year, and had seemed all set to make his century. He always claimed to be an illustrator, not an artist, and said that he did not paint science fiction. Despite that, his work appeared regularly on The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction, and on most of the other classic SF magazines.

Chesley started out as an architect, and worked on the Chrysler Building. At the age of 50, in 1938, he began to do matte paintings for movies such as The Hunchback of Notre Dame, Citizen Kane and, of course, the George Pal films Destination Moon, When Worlds Collide, War of the Worlds, and Conquest of Space in the 1950s.

It was the book with the same title as the last film (but not much else in common) which turned me on to space art, at the age of 14, so I have reason to be grateful. I corresponded with Chesley in the 60s, and he was always helpful. But we can all thank him, for being in many ways responsible for the fact that we now have space travel. It was his illustrations, first in Life and Colliers, then in his many books with Willy Ley, Wernher von Braun et al, which showed the public (in paintings which looked like photos) what wonders lie on other worlds, and how Man could get there; they provided that vital spark of inspiration. Chesley Bonestell will always be remembered as the Old Master of Space Art.

David A. Hardy



**BIRMINGHAM**

**SCIENCE FICTION GROUP**

As part of the celebrations for our fifteenth anniversary we - the committee - would like you to design us a new logo to go on our letter heads, newsletter etc. The above logo was designed by Dave Hardy using his computer. So, come on all you budding artists, send us in a design for a new logo, there will be a prize for the winning design which will be announced later.

## **FIFTEENCON**

**a convention to celebrate  
15 years of the brum group.**

**G.o.H Brian Aldiss  
& Harry Harrison**

**11 - 13 July 1986  
royal angus hotel. birmingham.**

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### ANDROMEDA'S TOP TEN FOR JUNE.

1. Paths of the Perambulator by Alan Dean Foster.
2. Dr. Who - Mark of the Rani by Pip and Jane Baker.
3. The Blackcollar by Timothy Zahn.
4. A Dream Of Kinship by Richard Cowper.
5. Lyonesse 2 by Jack Vance.
6. Moon by James Herbert.
7. Neuromancer by William Gibson.
8. Walking on Glass by Iain Banks.
9. Wild Shore by Kim Stanley Robinson.
10. Icehenge by Kim Stanley Robinson.

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# BOOK REVIEWS

NEUROMANCER by William Gibson, Grafton, £2.50, 308 pages, reviewed by Tony Morton.

Case, a thief in computer software by projecting his disembodied consciousness into the 'Matrix', is caught stealing from his employers and punished by mycotoxin 'burning out' his talent. He moves to Chiba to find a cure, but is unsuccessful. Thus, forced into a cheap life and drug dependency he is 'rescued' by Armitage for one big steal - or is he? Armitage is not what he seems to be and off we go into a story of intrigue and super computers (Artificial Intelligences) to a stunning climax which must be read! Nice interplay of believable characters - particularly liked Molly's influence on the story. Undoubtedly book of the year and deserved winner of Hugo, Nebula and Dick Awards. Buy this and read at leisure; wonderful, powerful stuff in the Bester tradition - SF at its best.

PATHS OF THE PERAMBULATOR by Alan Dean Foster, Orbit, £2.50, 204 pages, Reviewed by Tina Hewitt.

This book is volume 5 in the Spell Singer series written by Alan Dean Foster, and is certainly more of a science fantasy rather than a science fiction book. A man from Earth is stranded on a world where the animals talk and are level with and in some cases superior to the human as in the case of the greatest wizard in the world who just happens to be a turtle. Even for those who haven't read the previous 4 books, this one is certainly worth reading. The story revolves around a series of perturbations which alter the world and which will increase, unless stopped, resulting in the destruction of the world. These disturbances are caused by a perambulator, which having become trapped, must be released. The book's good plot and original storyline is enhanced by the colourful characters to whom we are introduced, and the humour which adds that third dimension that is sometimes lacking in characterisation. The author gives just the right amount of background information, so that anyone who has read the previous novels does not need to wade through mounds of detail that they already know, and yet there is sufficient background to enable readers who are not familiar with the characters to enjoy the book to the full. The main characters are a man, a turtle, a koala, an owl, an otter and a hinny. A nice and assorted bunch of characters, each with its own identifiable characteristics that make them memorable. The book has an interesting beginning which I must admit puzzled and intrigued me, and thoroughly hooked me, making it hard for me to put the book down, once I had started to read it. All in all the book was thoroughly enjoyable.

PATHS OF THE PERAMBULATOR by Alan Dean Foster, Orbit, £2.50, 204 pages, Reviewed by Carol Morton.

This the latest in the Spell Singer saga concerns Jon-Tom's and Clothahump's efforts to find the being who has trapped a passing perambulator - no, that's not a baby carriage, but a perambulating prime which is an organism that is capable of disrupting the entire fabric of existence. So Jon-Tom and Clothahump set out to discover the whereabouts of this trapped perambulator and they take along Sorbi



an alcoholic owl, Mudge a not quite honest otter, Colin a rune-reading koala and Dormas a kinny. Foster has once again presented us with an amusing adventure set in his imaginary world where animals talk and are the equal of man in intelligence (and height). Although the begining of this novel is quite strange, this can be explained as an effect of the perambulator.

THE KING'S JUSTICE by Katherine Kurtz, Arrow, £2.95, 324 pages  
Reviewed by Pauline Morgan.

This is volume two in Katherine Kurtz's third Deryni trilogy, and sequel to THE BISHOP'S HEIR. Her writing has improved tremendously since the first books although this is perhaps not as good as the trilogy concerning Saint Camber and recounting events that took place two hundred years earlier than these. In THE BISHOP'S HEIR, Kelson, King of Gwynedd, has to quell a rebellion aimed at raising a pretender to his throne. He, seeking a peaceful settlement to the issue, sees his bride, the daughter of the pretender, murdered by her own brother to frustrate his plans. Now, in THE KING'S JUSTICE, Kelson has to fight the war he sought to avoid.

The political situation in any country is never static and battles are never fought on one front only. The success of this series is the way in which this is not forgotten and complications always hover in the background. Highly recommended.

ORION by Ben Bova, Methuen, £2.95, 432 pages, Reviewed by Anne G ay.

Good v. Evil over the eons - this is Bova's theme, a trite one perhaps but magnificently handled. Orion, created by Ormazd (the Persian god of light) to combat Ahriman, the Dark One, is both likeable and credible. Set in different epochs, poor old Orion meets his enemy who has the advantage of having grown naturally through time. Again and again Orion must combat Ahriman who has learnt the cunning of ages.

This is a rivetting novel, rich and varied, told by a man who knows how to carry a story, though he has few pretensions to literary merit. All the same it is an intelligent and thoughtful novel. Excellent value both in terms of money and time invested in reading it.

THE ANUBIS GATES by Tim Powers, Grafton, £2.95 Reviewed by Chris Chivers.

Murder, suspense and mystery, from the 1980's to the 1660's Tim Powers in his latest novel creates a strong story for his leading character Brenden Doyle to inhabit. As a leading scholar on Coleridge, Doyle is invited to go back in time to 1810 to hear the poet speak; but manages to get abducted and is stranded in the 19'th century while his companions are returned to the 20'th century.

Persued by a pair of mystical villains, who are behind the time gates, Doyle tries to find a time gap back to the 1980's and home. His adventures take him through a London that is made all to real in its squalor and villainy. From the thieves den and gin houses of a Dickensian England to the ancient religions of Egypt, not only does Doyle travel through time, but also through magic, change bodies so spinning a tangled web throughout this story.

The 464 pages of Tim Powers novel, Doyle's story moves with a well paced manner and with twists and turns that leave the reader totally enmeshed in the characterisations and situations of the narrative.



THE HOODS ARMY TRILOGY by Nathan Elliot. EARTH INVADED, 160 pages. SLAVE WORLD, 143 pages. THE LIBERATORS, 144 pages; all £15.95 and published by Grafton.

The Earth has been invaded by the alien K'Thraa who have power shielded armour and the forces of the Earth are powerless against them. First Saegent Hood finds that primitive weapons will pierce this armour and together with his band of latter day merry men set out to single-handedly liberate the Earth. This is a novel re-working of the Robin Hood story only on an intergalactic level. These stories are so obviously aimed at the juvenile market that they would be better published under the Dragon label. Still if you have any young children - or relatives- you could not do better than to give them these as a starter in the SF field.

ISLE OF GLASS by Judith Tarr, Bantam, £8.95, 285 pages, reviewed by Carol Morton.

This is the first volume in the HOUND AND THE FALCON trilogy which is set in 12th century England, and concerns Alfred a foundling who was found abandoned on the steps of St. Ruan's Abbey. As Alfred grows up he determines to become a Monk, but as the years pass it becomes increasingly obvious that Alfred is not entirely human. As his contemporaries age he stays looking about 18. However events outside the safe walls of St. Ruan's take a hand in the life of Alfred when a rider collapses outside the Abbey, the rider has been savagely tortured. He turns out to be a messenger from the Elven King of Rhyana on a mission of peace. Due to the rider's injuries Alfred has to take over his mission and leave St. Ruan's, to journey to the court of Richard the Lionheart where his true nature is discovered by the evil priest Reynaud. The story is not entirely new, but is written in an intriguing manner. The series does seem to be off to a good start, I shall be interested to read the next volume.

SONGS THE DEAD MEN SING, By George R.R. Martin, Sphere, £2.50, 214 pages, reviewed by Chris Morgan.

George R.R. Martin writes SF horror stories: this is a collection of them, all reprints from magazines and anthologies. Two of the seven stories are long, gripping and unforgettable. "Nightflyers" is a novella about far-future humans flying at faster-than-light speeds to intercept a much slower alien space migration. It soon becomes a locked-room murder mystery, with lashings of gore. "Sandkings" is even better. This is the story of a man who loves to keep alien life-forms as pets, and of how a particular type of alien changes his life. It's extremely horrific but impossible to put down—a marvellous piece of writing. The five shorter stories are less wonderful though mostly worth reading. Buy this collection now!

DEATH IS A LONELY BUSINESS, by Ray Bradbury, Grafton, £9.95, 239 pages, Reviewed by Chris Morgan.

Bradbury's first new novel for 23 years is a magnificent piece of writing. It isn't a fantasy, though. If it must be classified it's a crime/horror story, but this doesn't matter. What does matter is that it is the inimitable Bradbury at his best, with his emotional, highly metaphorical, poetic style more important than the plot. It's about a struggling young writer (an unnamed narrator) in California in 1949. His friends die, one by one, and he tries both to convince a cop that they are being murdered, and to find the murderer. The cop, Elmo Crumley, who writes a novel in his spare time, is a marvellous character, but so is Constance Rattigan, a 60-year-old sexpot. In fact, the book is full of interesting characters, complemented by crazy dialogue and sinister events. The writing style adds a spurious air of fantasy—or nightmare—to every scene. It's worth buying even as a hardcover.

# NOVACON 16

**31st oct - 2nd nov 1986**

**de vere hotel, coventry.**

**g.o.h e.c. 'ted' tubb**

**special guest chris evans.**



REGISTRATION : £8.00  
(£10.00 on the door)

ROOM RATES :  
£21.50 single,  
£16.50 per person in double  
Inc. Full English Breakfast.

FOR REGISTRATION SEND CHEQUES  
PAYABLE TO 'NOVACON 16' AND  
SEND TO : GRAHAM POOLE ,  
86 BERWOOD FARM ROAD ,  
WYLOE GREEN ,  
SUTTON COLDFIELD ,  
WEST MIDLANDS .

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Our thankyou's this month go to  
Vernon for his info. about the quiz.  
Dave Hardy for the obituary for Chesley Bonestall, and the logo on page4.  
Tina, Pauline and Chris for the reviews, AND Anne Gay too.  
Tim Stannard for letting us use his photocopier to print this.

This newsletter was produced by Carol and Tony Morton, 45, Grosvenor Way, Quarry  
Bank, Brierley Hill, West Mids, DY5 2LJ.  
Deadline for next month's newsletter is 4th August.