

# **Brum Group News**

The *Free* Monthly Newsletter of the  
BIRMINGHAM SF GROUP

FEBRUARY 2001 ISSUE 353

*Honorary Presidents:*

**BRIAN W ALDISS**

**HARRY HARRISON**

*Committee:*

**Chairman: Vernon Brown**

**Secretary: Vicky Cook**

**Treasurer: Alan Woodford**

**Newsletter Editor: Rog Peyton**

**+ Steve Jones & William McCabe**

**NOVACON 31 Chairman: Tony Berry**

Friday 9th February

## **GRAHAM HIGGINS**

(Birmingham Artist/Illustrator)

Graham Higgins began drawing and publishing comics through Birmingham's Arts Lab Press in the 1970s and his published credits since include 2000AD; Marvel and DC comics; Q magazine and PUNCH under the editorship of Alan Coren and David Thomas. His 'Knockabout Comics' character *Luke Carew*, *Lone Wolf Detective* appeared for over a year in PUNCH, and remains one of his favourite characters.

Since 1993, he has commuted between Birmingham and Berlin, where he worked on comics and cartoons at the Honk! studios.

Gollancz published his second comic adaptation of a *Discworld* novel, GUARDS! GUARDS! in December 2000.

You might already have caught one of his brain-loosening Convention hours of rant and

puzzlement, 'Juggling with Eggs' or 'Playing with Worms' in which cartooning-for-the-timid takes a scenic route through the nature and uses of imagination and the rough and ready rudiments of comic semiotics.

"We're a deeply superstitious culture, one of whose fundamental tenets is that we are highly rational. I'm continually surprised at the stories we tell ourselves and each other about our reasons for behaving and thinking as we do.

"We believe that our fantasies are an escape from mainstream culture, but they're the most characteristic features of it. We have the luxury of the most comprehensive costume cabinet for the imagination ever, so it's as well to have some regard for the bits we borrow."

GH

**Graham Higgins** will be giving his talk in the usual place at the usual time. Which is in the Lichfield Room on the second floor at the Britannia Hotel, New Street (entrance in Union Passageway opposite the Odeon). The talk will commence at 7.45pm so please arrive early, get your drinks from the bar and be seated in plenty of time. Non-members always welcome.

## The A.G.M.

The Group's Annual General Meeting was held on Friday 12th January 2001. Copies of the minutes will be sent to all members prior to the AGM 2002 but anyone not being able to stifle their enthusiasm should ask our Chairman for an early copy... We can't guarantee when they'll be ready but...

### THE NEW COMMITTEE

For those of you who weren't at the AGM (and why not?) the new committee was elected. These are the people who will be responsible for the Brum Group over the next year and are as follows...

**Chairman** - Vernon Brown was re-elected.

**Secretary** - new committee member Vicky Cook was elected in her absence but she was in contact during the AGM thanks to the technology of mobile phones!

**Treasurer** - Alan Woodford was re-elected.

**Newsletter Editor** - No nominations were received.

**Committee Members** - Steve Jones and William McCabe were elected.

After the AGM, Rog Peyton was cornered by the new committee, cutting him off from his supply of red wine. The committee claim that this event had nothing to do with his cries of "I volunteer! I volunteer!" shortly after the AGM closed. His offer to become the Newsletter Editor was accepted by the Chairman.

### FORTHCOMING EVENTS

**February 6-11.** The Alexandra Theatre, Suffolk Street (just a few doors away from ANDROMEDA BOOKSHOP), is staging a production of **THE HOBBIT** by J R R Tolkien. It's adapted for the stage by Glyn Robbins and directed by Roy Marsden. There might just be time to get your ticket when you receive this Newsletter. Call 0870 607 7533 for tickets or 0121 632 5554 for further information.

**March 7.** **Robert Rankin** will be signing at ANDROMEDA BOOKSHOP (2-5 Suffolk Street, Birmingham) at noon. The new hardcover is **WEB SITE STORY** (well, why not? He's already done **PAINT YOUR DRAGON!**) and the new paperback is **WAITING FOR GODALMING**. Phone 0121 643 1999 to reserve your signed copy.

**April 13-16. PARAGON - the British National Science Fiction EasterCon.** This year the venue will be the Hanover International Hotel, Hinckley. Guests of Honour are Michael Scott Rohan, Stephen Baxter and Lianne Norman. Fan Guests of Honour are Claire Brialey and Mark Plummer. For details of prices, etc., contact Steve Lawson, 379 Myrtle Road, Sheffield S2 3HQ. Tel: 0114 281 1572. E-mail him at [steve.paragon@keepsake-web.co.uk](mailto:steve.paragon@keepsake-web.co.uk) or check out the website at [www.keepsake-web.co.uk/paragon](http://www.keepsake-web.co.uk/paragon)

**November 9-11 NOVACON 31** - the Birmingham SF Group's own annual convention. Guest of Honour will be Gwyneth Jones (who also writes as Ann Halam). Venue to be announced. Details from Steve Lawson at the address above.

*Although 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 events are always welcome - please send to me at [rog@andromedabook.co.uk](mailto:rog@andromedabook.co.uk), tell me about it in the shop or phone me at the shop on 0121 643 1999.*

### SWAP & BUY BOOKS. . .

Remember the days when members brought books along to meetings to sell or swap? When members would wheel in truckloads of dusty tomes for sale at only two groats each? Those halcyon days are about to return in all their glory (well, maybe not for groats...).

Yes, we're bringing the Swap & Buy Booktable back - after all, books are what this Group is supposed to be about. So bring a few books, or a load in a suitcase, or even a single book. No charge for the facility. Let's make the half hour before the meeting and the hour or so after a little more interesting - watching adults burst into tears when they discover the book they've wanted for years got sold five minutes before they arrived for a mere 20p. Or watching Chris cracking the whip over Pauline as she struggles with ten boxes of second-hand books so that Chris can sell them at vast profits - or not.

## ***From the Chair...***

As Omar Khayyam pointed out several hundred years ago, whenever people know or think they know, everything about something, they tend to want to alter it to "Something nearer to the Heart's Desire" and who am I to disagree with him? I spent last year familiarising myself with the present workings of the BSFG. My re-election gives me the opportunity to influence, or try to influence, the direction that the Group is taking if I so wish. But it's not my Group, or the Committee's Group, or even your Group. It's OUR Group! In fact, it could be said that we, the members, ARE the Group, for without us it would cease to exist. And don't forget that the Committee Officers are only members who have been entrusted with the task of organising what the members in general want. So, what do YOU, as a member, want done with the Group?

Essentially the Committee currently has three ways of gauging whether we are doing a satisfactory job; two are counting those present at a meeting and watching their expressions, the third is by seeing how many don't renew their membership, which smacks more than a little of stable doors. We need you, as a Group member, to tell us what you think of the Group, its programming and its *raison d'être*.

Why do you attend meetings? Is it the programme item? The other members? The chance to discuss SF? The chance to meet SF professionals and amateurs? Whatever the reasons, could they be improved? If you don't attend all the meetings, why not? Sometimes it may not be possible to attend but if you miss a meeting by choice, why is this? Even if you are not enamored of the evening's formal subject, there is still the informal part of the meeting to enjoy! Please tell us, either at meetings, or preferably by letter, just what you want from your membership. Any criticism is useful but constructive criticism is even more so, it can be praise or censure, suggestions for improvement or brand new ideas. Just let us know and we will do it if we can.

The Newsletter 'Letter Column' is being reinstated and will print any letter that's printable, so please write to me at the address on the Newsletter back cover. If you prefer your letter not to be printed, or printed anonymously,

then please say so. Your confidentiality will be respected. Similarly with e-mails sent to the Newsletter Editor. To get the ball rolling, all letters/e-mails received by the March deadline will be entered into a draw for an Andromeda Bookshop voucher, as will all letters/e-mails (including the March ones) received by the April deadline.

It's up to YOU now!

Vernon Brown *Chairman*

## ***BRUM GROUP 30th ANNIVERSARY***

Believe it or not, it will be the Brum Group's 30th Anniversary this summer. 30 glorious years since Peter Weston, Vernon Brown and Rog Peyton got together and decided to reform the Group which had been formed way back in 1961 but had folded around 1967.

It's even more amazing that two out of those three founder members are not only still around, but still stupid enough to be on the committee. Peter saw the light - why can't the other two get a life?

Seriously, though, 30 years is something to be proud of and we think that we ought to be celebrating (or something!).

Because of the state of the Group's finances, it would be unwise to attempt to organise any sort of minicon or whatever. Have you got any ideas?

One idea that has been suggested is that we organise a special illustrated postal cover to order only. Would you be interested?

## ***From the Editor...***

Apologies for the very slim newsletter this month. I never intended to 'volunteer' to be back on the committee and so have only had two weeks in which to prepare. Normal service - with reviews - will be back next month.

On the plus side, these 4 pages contain a lot more info than usual due to using different fonts and text sizes. It also saves money....

## **FUTURE MEETINGS**

**MARCH 9** - to be announced

**APRIL 20** - please note that this meeting will be on the third Friday as the second Friday coincides with Easter when many members will be at the Annual Easter Convention in Hinckley.

**MAY 11** - Debate with Birmingham University SF Group.

**JUNE 8** - to be announced

**JULY 13** - to be announced

**AUGUST 10** - Discussion "Is SF the coming thing?"

**SEPTEMBER 14** - to be announced

**OCTOBER 12** - to be announced

**NOVEMBER 9** - shared programme item with NOVACON 31

**DECEMBER 14** - Christmas Party - Beer and Skittles evening. Price and details to follow.

Yes, several meetings have yet to be arranged - in fact, the above may change at a moment's notice. Nothing is written in stone - except the December Christmas Party.

The new committee have only been in power (the Power! Oh! the Power!) for two weeks but hopefully the above programme will be filled very quickly. If there are any authors/artists/ publishers/editors/scientists etc., that you'd like us to contact please give your suggestions to a committee member. Please be sensible - we can't afford the fare for Sir Arthur. But you never know who might pop out of the woodwork. Only last week US author Elizabeth Moon visited ANDROMEDA while traveling from the south to the north of England. Unfortunately it was a Tuesday and we had 72 hours notice. It really was a flying visit to sign the stock. There are still some signed copies of all her books on the shelves if any Elizabeth Moon fan wishes to travel the short distance to ANDROMEDA.

Watch this space.

## **PHILATELIC CORNER**

### **2001 SOUVENIRS**

The Isle of Man Post Office has produced a very attractive 2001: A Space Odyssey large illustrated cover postmarked 1st January 2001. The Post Office opened specially on New Year's Day to handstamp them. Even if you are not interested in Philately these would look good framed. Only 2001 numbered covers were produced at £8.50 plus p&ep, so if you are interested ring them quickly on 01624 698430.

A G Bradley, 3 Link Road, Leicester (tel: 0116 270 5367) has also produced a standard sized 2001 illustrated cover dated 01/01/01. Price is about £8.00. It's not known how many he produced but he usually does a couple of hundred per occasion. VB

## **BRUM GROUP WEBSITE**

The Group now has its own website - [www.bsfg.freesevers.com/](http://www.bsfg.freesevers.com/) and this is currently handled by William McCabe.

This hopefully will have the very latest info on the Group and its activities. Any ideas, suggestions, contributions will be very welcome. See William at the meetings.

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The Birmingham Science Fiction Group meets on the second Friday of each month at the Britannia Hotel, New Street. 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, Alan Woodford, 2 Old Port Close, Tipton, West Midlands, DY4 7XN (e-mail enquiries [bsfg@bortas.demon.co.uk](mailto:bsfg@bortas.demon.co.uk))