

Brum Group News

The *Free* Monthly Newsletter of the
BIRMINGHAM
SCIENCE FICTION GROUP

SEPTEMBER 2001 ISSUE 360

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NOVACON 31 Chairman: Tony Berry

Friday 14th September

DAVID PRINGLE

Editor of the UK's No 1 SF Magazine **INTERZONE**

Britain's #1 science fiction magazine, **INTERZONE** - a Hugo winner - has been edited by David Pringle since its first issue over ten years ago. David is an ex-Brummie and is making his first visit to talk to the Group. His talk will be illustrated with slides and will show the development of the magazine from its humble beginnings using the profits from an Eastercon, to its highly-regarded position in the SF world today. He will also be talking about the economics of running such a magazine and doubtless will be giving tips to would-be writers - how to prepare a manuscript, the best place to send it, how much you should

expect to be paid for your efforts, etc. Of course, it's not only writers he will be advising, but artwork plays a huge part in the make-up of a magazine and he'll be advising any up-and-coming artists, too. *RGP*

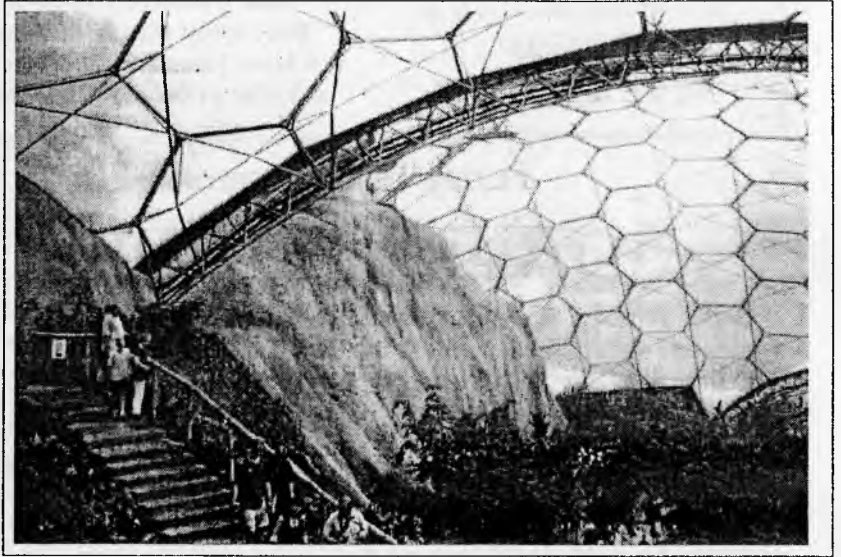
The meeting will take place in the Lichfield room on the second floor of the Britannia Hotel, New Street (entrance in Union Passageway opposite the Odeon). It will commence at 7.45pm so please arrive early, get your drinks from the bar and be seated in plenty of time. Non-members always welcome.

OCTOBER 12th MEETING - SF historian, fan and compiler of dozens of anthologies, **MIKE ASHLEY** will be giving an illustrated talk on "Hugo Gernsback: the Birth and Death (?) of Science Fiction".

VISITING SCIENCE FICTION

Vernon Brown

If you have ever wondered what it would be like to live in a hollowed out asteroid generation starship, or a bubble colony on Mars or indeed any similar habitat, visit the Eden Project at St Austell in Cornwall.



Pat and I visited the Project a few weeks ago; I wasn't too keen but she had heard a lot about these huge greenhouses in a quarry, so eventually I was persuaded (my arm will be out of plaster next week). To save time and trouble we went on a five day coach holiday that included the Project among its excursions and found that it more than lived up to what had been said about it. Its now my fifth personal Wonder of the World. To describe the place adequately would take me half a dozen Newsletters - all I can manage in a short article like this is to give a few facts and impressions.

The Project was set up to recreate the diversity of plant life on Earth in as natural a setting as possible, to show how people - i.e. us - interact with and depend on the world around them and to research into these interactions. It is set in a disused clay pit some 200 feet deep covering 127 acres. After clearing it of 1.8 million tonnes of waste, two huge bubble/dome like greenhouses were built against one wall, one to house Humid Tropical Zone plants from South America and similar environments while the other contains Warm Temperate Zone vegetation from Mediterranean-type places. Outside these biomes the quarry is landscaped and planted into a Temperate Zone - similar to Western Europe. In turn the Zones are divided into mini-zones, each reproducing a different type of environment with

its wild or domesticated plants, not in pots or flower-beds but all *au naturel*.

But what makes this all encroach onto the field of SF is its sheer size and construction; we've read about it now we can see it! The point is that no matter how well SF is written its always composed of familiar bits and pieces, one cannot imagine anything totally unexperienced, so its been impossible to feel, deep down, the real size of an artificial outdoor environment. Until now!

All the soil, outside and in, all 85,000 tonnes of it, is artificial, using china clay waste and organic waste, each mini-zone having its individually tailored type. The Humid Tropical biome is the largest conservatory in the world, 240m long, 55m high and 110m wide with a floor area of 16,000 sq.m; it contains over 2000 species of plant and has a volume of 330,000 cu.m. The Warm Temperate biome is 35m high with a floor area of 6,500 sq.m and a volume of 86,000 cu.m. Their bubble-shaped 'walls' are made of self-supporting scaffolding formed into hexagonal facets with multilayer translucent plastic panels. They are climate controlled, contain real hills, huge trees, houses and huts and take several hours to walk around. After which a pint or two of the local brew goes down very well indeed.

I'm no gardener, my ideal garden is a lawn that someone else mows, but the Eden Project is no more a conservatory than the Queen Elizabeth is a pleasure steamer. Its worth seeing now for many reasons, SF and otherwise, but it will improve as it matures - I certainly hope to see it a few more times. As the film reviewers would say 'Highly Recommended, see it soon'. *V/B*

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

October 13-14 OCTOCON - The Royal Marine Hotel, Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin, Ireland. Guests: Anne McCaffrey, Kim Newman, Colin Smythe, John Higgins, Roger Gregg. Registration IE£20 (GB£16). Contact: Octocon, c/o Yellow Brick Road, 8 Bachelors Walk, Dublin 1. website - www.octocon.com

October 22 - Stan Nicholls will be running a Science Fiction and Fantasy Workshop from 2-5pm in the Shakespeare Memorial Room, Birmingham Central Library, Chamberlain Square. Tickets are £15 each - call (0121) 246 2774 for details of this and other workshops.

October 23 - as part of the Birmingham Book Festival, Paul McAuley and Stephen Baxter will be interviewed by Stan Nicholls at 7pm to 8.30pm at Waterstone's, New Street, Birmingham. Tickets will be £2 each from the Box Office. Call (0121) 605 7000, 643 2514 or 236 5622, or in person from The Ticket Shop (City Arcade) or Central Library Box Office.

And have you registered yet for NOVACON? I thought I had but have only just discovered I hadn't. Double check NOW!

November 9-11 NOVACON 31 - the Birmingham SF Group's own annual convention. This year at the Quality

Hotel, Walsall. Guest of Honour will be Gwyneth Jones (who also writes as Ann Halam). Details from Steve Lawson, 379 Myrtle Road, Sheffield S2 3HQ Tel: 0114 281 1572 E-mail him at steve.paragon@keepsake-web.co.uk.

December 7-9 SMOFCON 19 (Conrunners Convention) The Monkbar Hotel, York. £25 reg. Contact: Kim Campbell, 69 Lincoln St., Leeman Rd., York YO2 4YP. Email to Smofcon19@hotmail.com

March 8-10 2002 MeCon V, Queen's University of Belfast. £10 reg. Contact: MeCoN V, c/o 30 Bendigo Street, Belfast BT6 8GD Website is www.mecon.org

March 29 - April 1 2002 HELICON 2: Hotel De France, St.Helier, Jersey, Channel Islands. £35 reg. Guests: Harry Turtledove, Brian Stableford, Peter Weston. . Contact: Helicon 2, 33 Meyrick Drive, Wash Common, Newbury, Berkshire, RG14 6SY. Website is www.helicon.org.uk

All 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 / Fantasy / Horror events are always welcome - please send to me at rog@rogpeyton.fsnet.co.uk, tell me about it in the shop or phone me at the shop on 0121 643 1999.

POUL ANDERSON 1926-2001

Within 24 hours of completing the last Newsletter we received the news of the death of Poul Anderson from prostate cancer. He was 74.

Back in the early 60s, I became a big fan of Anderson's work - particularly STAR WAYS, ORBIT UNLIMITED, NO WORLD OF THEIR OWN (aka THE LONG WAY HOME), THE ENEMY STARS, THE HIGH CRUSADE, THREE HEARTS AND THREE LIONS, EARTHMAN's BURDEN (the original *Hoka* collection written with Gordon R Dickson), etc. etc.

His magnificent fantasy THE BROKEN SWORD is still the only book I have ever read, cover to cover, turned back to page 1 and reread immediately. I never wanted it to end. Strangely, I've never read it since - nor have I read his rewritten version for Ballantine in the early 1970s.

I remember hunting out magazines for uncollected short stories and turning up gems like "Inside Earth", "The Snows of Ganymede" and "Sister Planet". So keen was I that I actually compiled and published a checklist of the works of Poul Anderson in 1965 and handed him a copy when I was fortunate to meet him at the WorldCon in London that year. He seemed genuinely pleased with the checklist and surprisingly remembered me when I met him again 15 years later.

The SF novel TAU ZERO and the fantasy novel HROLF KRAKI'S SAGA, both published in the early 70s were the last two Anderson novels I

read and thoroughly enjoyed. A couple of later ones I read and were OK and one I couldn't finish.

Maybe my tastes were changing and because by then I'd given up my job in the building industry and we'd opened ANDROMEDA, I was reading far less. Looking back now, I realise I have not read anything by him for 20 years except for a rereading of TAU ZERO and reading the extended version of THE ENEMY STARS.

It's certainly time I corrected that omission. RGP

DINNER ANYONE?

On a more cheerful and amusing note, Vernon saw a wonderful advertisement in his local SPAR recently. The ad was for an assistant whose job will include 'cleaning, cooking and serving customers'. Remember Damon Knight's "To Serve Man"?

Or remember the Chung-li virus in John Christopher's THE DEATH OF GRASS? NEW SCIENTIST (18/8/01) reports that a disease that attacks fish brains and can kill humans was treated with a vaccine. Trouble is that another strain has come to the fore that attacks organs as well.

ANDROMEDA SIGNING SESSIONS

PETER F HAMILTON will be signing copies of his new novel **FALLEN DRAGON** (no it's not fantasy - he's still with hard-SF) on Friday October 12th at 1pm.

ERIC BROWN and **GRAHAM JOYCE** will both be signing sometime in October - we're awaiting final dates. Eric will be signing **NEW YORK BLUES** - the second in the trilogy and Graham will be signing his new novel **SMOKING POPPY**.

ROBERT RANKIN and **TERRY PRATCHETT** will both be signing in November. More details next month.

All signings will be at **ANDROMEDA BOOKSHOP**, 2-5 Suffolk Street, Birmingham B1 1LT. Orders may be made by phone on (0121) 643 1999. No extra charges for signed copies, no entrance fee. So why not take advantage?

DAVID A HARDY SIGNING AT ANDROMEDA

I'd just like to thank all the members of the Brum Group who turned up for my **HARDYWARE** signing session at Andromeda on Saturday 18th August.

Thanks for your support guys! (both of you). Dave Hardy'

<< *In fairness, Dave, there were two other members there - Harry and myself!* - Rog >>

CORFLU 02 FANTHOLOGY

It might surprise some of you even more than it did me, but it transpires that I (and this is me, Gregory Pickersgill, talking) am editor of the Corflu 02 fanthology, which will

cover the year 1996. And I thought I was dead.

I can't say this project had been high on my priority list of things to do - well below, for example, sending a number of messages to the Memory Hole Mailing List, completing the new edition of the MHP listing, reading LIGHT OF OTHER DAYS, and so on - but Nic Farey asked me nicely and reinforced the idea by saying I'd been suggested by Mark Plummer, of whom it has been said... so... well, it just seemed churlish to refuse and burden some other poor soul with the task.

Don't take the preceding as lack of interest and enthusiasm for the project - since getting the invitation a couple of days ago I've been constantly ruminating on How To and organising my thinking and a list of fanzines to scan, the latter easy to obtain via the mighty MHPC database which told me instantly that I had 272 fanzines published in 1996 already on hand.

More to the point I definitely formed almost immediately an editorial attitude. I feel very strongly that the anthology should contain material that is central to or directly reflects the whole experience of being a science fiction fan. I am often disappointed by fanthologies which contain material, no matter how well written or contrived, which honestly could have appeared in any one of a million other venues because the amount of content that is specific to either SF fandom or to SF itself is minimal verging on non-existent. OK, I accept that anything written by a fan is fanwriting in the widest definition, but what I am interested in is content rather than form. So you can expect to see material on

SF, in all likelihood, for example.

Of course I am interested in suggestions, especially where they might cover material I don't have. Nic has already passed some on to me and they'll be the first to be re-read.

Please Note that the deadline for all suggestions will be the end of SEPTEMBER 2001 - this is a lot sooner than Nic's original suggestion of December, but is more sensible for me. It will also give plenty of time for material to be passed to Steve Swartz who will be doing the actual publication of the fanthology, and obviously more time for him to do the work at his end.

It would be nice if anyone has any observations of queries regarding any of this that they direct them to me. Is that expecting too much?

Please do copy and pass on this announcement to any forum you find appropriate.

MEMORY HOLE MAILING LIST
WEBSITE at
www.egroups.com/group/memoryhole

MEMORY HOLE WEBSITE at
www.gostak.demon.co.uk

Greg Pickersgill

THE HUGO FARCE

The Hugo Awards were presented at Philadelphia last weekend. And I'm pleased to announce that Dave Langford won, yet again, two Awards. Yes, his usual award for Best Fan Writer, but he also won a real Hugo for Best Short Story with "Different Kinds of Darkness" (F&SF Jan 2000).

So which brilliant SF novel won this year's prestigious science fiction award? You may well ask! If I told you that the award went to J K Rowling for the latest *Harry Potter* children's fantasy novel, you'd no doubt roll over and nearly have a heart-attack through laughing so much.

BUT - that's exactly what happened!

Am I shocked? Yes! Am I angry? You bet! I have nothing against J K Rowling nor Harry Potter. Almost certainly a very fine book - well, it's sold a hell of a lot of copies... but it ain't science fiction!

If you have an award for the best science fiction novel of the year, you would reasonably expect the winner to fit the category. No SF book has ever won the August Derleth Award, or the World Fantasy Award and neither would you expect one to win such an award.

Both the Fantasy world and the Horror Fiction world hold their own conventions and present their own awards. And this is as it should be. But why does the science fiction world allow books from other genres to even get on the ballots? It doesn't happen elsewhere. The people who vote for the Hugo are readers of science fiction - and possibly fantasy, detective, etc., etc. But can't they tell the difference between the genres? OK, so they've read a good book and have been impressed. They may be brilliant books - but why vote it for a science fiction award?

I went back to the June newsletter where the list of nominees were - three SF books and two fantasy novels. When typing that list, I pushed the two fantasy

novels into the back of my mind, never thinking they stood a chance. But, in reality, we should all have protested at that point and got both books thrown off the ballot.

We didn't - and the result is that we now have an award - our very own, much respected Hugo Award - that is tainted forever.

RGP



BOOK REVIEWS



(**REVIEWERS** please note:- in future all reviews should be e-mailed direct to me at rog@rogpeyton.fsnet.co.uk) Deadline for each issue is the 1st of the month.

Rating system:-

- 5 star - excellent. A must to read.
- 4 star - very good.
- 3 star - good but flawed.
- 2 star - very average.
- 1 star - read only if there's nowt on telly.
- 0 stars - Turkey! Turkey! Turkey!

TIME AND AGAIN

by Jack Finney

Gollancz Fantasy Masterworks / 399 pgs
with illustrations /£7.99 / pbk

Reviewed by Michael Jones

Rating * * * * *

In this long but tightly packed book Jack Finney brings to a climax the ideas he had been exploring for a few years previously in a number of short stories. The basic idea is to dress a man in ninety-year old clothes, fill his head with ninety-year old thoughts and put him in a ninety-year old building from

which he will be able to step out into the New York of ninety years ago.

From this beginning the story branches out into three or four intertwined sub-plots with sufficient unexpected twists to keep the reader guessing until the last possible minute - the ending is inevitable (especially in relation to the previous stories already mentioned) but it remains in doubt even until the last chapter. If there were nothing more to it than that it would still be a good book, but to dismiss it in this way is to overlook the meticulous research and sincere enthusiasm with which the author writes of that bygone age, conveying an irresistible impression of a far better time in which to live and belong.

It is a pity that the illustrations, which are important to the story, have not been reproduced better, but that is only a minor fault which cannot spoil a wonderfully satisfying read. An excellent book by a sadly underrated author.

MJ

MAMMOTH ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SCIENCE FICTION

by George Mann

Robinson / 612 pages / £9.99 / paperback.

Reviewed by Michael Jones

Rating * * * *

First things first - 'Mammoth' this certainly is not, particularly when compared with the 1993 Clute/Nicholls Encyclopedia. One wonders whether there was any need for anything new to supplant that benchmark publication, but it seems to have been felt that there was room for something that would be eight years more up-to-date as well as less expensive and more accessible

generally. Thus in the main half of the book, headed 'Science Fiction On The Page', Mann has confined himself to (about) 150 authors and these include a number of fairly obscure contemporary writers, presumably in the expectation of future promise rather than past accomplishments. This is in keeping with one of his aims, which is to provide a pointer to the way SF might be going in the future. However, I found that some quite important writers have been left out: I find it hard to agree with the inclusion of (for example) Michael Crichton if this has resulted in the exclusion of (for example) Dan Simmons. Also, although there are entries for about half a dozen SF artists, both British and American, I was disappointed to find that 'Hardy, David A.' was not among them.

Another criticism I might make is that this section concentrates 90%-plus on book-length work, the importance of the short-story form in SF being virtually ignored.

The other main section is 'Science Fiction on the Screen', comprising an eclectic selection of movies and TV programmes. I found I did not always agree with Mann's choice of what to include, or his comments, but that only represents the difference between my personal opinion and his and this is a useful guide.

There are also an introductory chapter providing a brief overview of 'The History and Origins of Science Fiction' and a section entitled 'Terms, Themes and Devices' with entries on subjects from Aliens to Wormholes. The former is both informative and insightful but the latter gives only superficial treatment to its various

topics and would be useful only to the more casual, non-technical reader.

I cannot vouch for the accuracy of every bit of information it contains although I did notice a very few minor errors. All in all, however, Mann (who incidentally is assistant manager at an Ottakar's bookshop) has succeeded in producing a viable alternative to the more comprehensive Encyclopedia. It is certainly handier, avoiding as it does the larger work's copious references to books etc., one will probably never read by writers one will probably never even hear of anywhere else. However, I cannot help wondering if its intended market really exists. The serious student of SF will want the larger work, despite its bulk and price, whilst the casual reader at whom this is aimed would perhaps be unlikely to consider buying a reference book of this kind, although I could be wrong of course. Within its own terms of reference it is a good piece of work and any who do buy it will find it to have been money well spent.

MJ

ORIGIN

by Stephen Baxter

Voyager / 455 pgs / £16.99 / hardback

Reviewed by Michael Jones

Rating * * * *

Here at last is the long-awaited (by me at any rate) final volume in the *Manifold* trilogy which began two years ago with *SPACE* and continued last year with *TIME*. Actually, it is not a trilogy as such, but a set of linked novels describing the destiny of humanity in a series of histories taking place in the Manifold of an infinite number of alternative universes, as seen

through the eyes of the same three lead characters. Consequently it is not at all necessary to be familiar with the earlier volumes to be able to appreciate this one, notwithstanding the fact that it ties the whole series together.

The series is informed by the question of alien life in the Universe and the Fermi Paradox - "if they exist, why aren't they here?" What we learn in the final chapters is that the ultimate descendants of humanity have ensured their own evolution by reaching back through time and seeding the universes of the Manifold with various versions of mankind's early proto-human ancestors as they begin to evolve on different alternate Earths. As a result, no other intelligent life has had an opportunity to develop, although the previous story *TIME* showed what might have happened if it had.

It is a grandiose concept, and one which reinforces Baxter's status as one of the foremost, and certainly one of the most audaciously imaginative, writers in the SF world today. He simply goes from strength to strength.

Unfortunately, the best of the book is all concentrated into about the last hundred pages. Remember the opening of *2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY*: the tediously drawn-out section with the ape-men and how you long for it to finish so that the proper story can get going? Four-fifths of this book is like that, describing the lives of different species of primitive men and the struggles of a handful of human castaways to survive amongst them, not always successfully. I must confess to have been somewhat at a loss to understand the importance of all this and the justification for devoting quite

so much time and effort to it. It has some relevance to the overall structure of the trilogy, but not that much.

It is because of this that I am only giving the book four stars instead of the five which it ought to deserve. Nevertheless, that is a good mark and the book is well-written and worth reading, the more so if you pursue the whole *Manifold* series. MJ

THE STOCHASTIC MAN

by Robert Silverberg

Gollancz / 229 pages / £10.99 / trade pbk

Reviewed by William McCabe

Rating * * *

There are very few science fiction stories based on the science of statistical analysis. The best known by far is the *Foundation* series. This novel sets out down the same road, describing how it might be possible to predict the future by refining the art of statistical prediction to an extreme degree. Then it drifts into fantasy.

Lew Nichols is 'The Stochastic Man'. He is a statistical analyst who has taken his 'science' as far as he can. He can tell you how long this year's fashion trend will last, whether your new product will sell, and what to say so that these people will vote for you in the next election and, most of the time, he'll be right. He's the perfect man for a political campaign team and so he is recruited to help a candidate for Mayor of New York. Then someone introduces him to Martin Carvajal. Carvajal can see the future. To be precise, he has seen his own future. All of it. He knows how he will die, what people will tell him, what he will see on television. The problem is that he can't change

anything. Whether this is from some personal compulsion or just because it can't be done simply isn't explained, but he has lived his life since he discovered this 'gift' according to a script. He has done well out of it, investments have made him rich, but he wouldn't deviate from the script even though he knows it will kill him.

This is the story of Nichols learning how to see the future.

I've already had arguments about whether this is science fiction or fantasy. The idea of using statistics to predict how large blocks of people will react is nothing new. It was common practice even when *FOUNDATION* came out. The question that remains is whether or not being able to see the future is the domain of psychics and fantasy or if there is some science there. The novel itself is well written but, like so many with a futuristic setting, loses a lot when the future it deals with (the setting is last year) conflicts with the real world of the same period. WM

***SALT* by Adam Roberts**

Gollancz / 248 pages / £6.99 / paperback

Reviewed by Michael Jones

Rating * * *

Salt is a planet with very little water, its surface covered with endless deposits of sodium chloride, its atmosphere contaminated with free chlorine and with no magnetosphere to shield its surface from radiation. To this inhospitable world come disparate groups of emigrants from Earth, including the Senaarians, a rigid hierarchical society with a strong religious element and the Alsists who live without rules, laws or compulsions,

with everybody free to do, or not do, whatever they wish. Mutual misunderstandings lead, perhaps inevitably to war, instigated by the former and lost by the latter. However, the victory of the Senaarians contains the seeds of their own destruction.

The story is told from the alternating points of view of a leading member of each society. The chief of the Senaarians reveals himself as a despotic bigot, whose belief in his own god-given righteousness justifies him in any destruction or slaughter, while the Alsist is a reasonably decent sort of individual who nevertheless finds himself both willing and able to assume the mantle of leadership despite thereby becoming everything that his fellow citizens hate and despise. By the end of the war he has come to an uncertain apotheosis as the principles he was trying to protect are lost amid the general chaos of defeat. Thus, ultimately, the book is seen as a commentary on the shortcomings of human nature.

Although extremely well written, almost poetic in parts, I found it somewhat tedious. Even the action sequences fail to bring it alive, the few most interesting parts for me being the face-to face encounters between the characters, each striving, and failing, to understand the other's motivation. I also felt that there was room for a better account of the two societies, particularly the Alsists where people work because they want to but the questions of how they know what needs doing and what would happen to anyone who was unable or merely disinclined to work remain unexplained.

In summary, there are some interesting and novel ideas here, but their execution leaves something to be desired. This is a first novel and author Roberts shows obvious promise. *MJ*

FUTURE MEETINGS

OCTOBER 12 - long-time SF fan, editor, biographer and bibliographer **Mike Ashley** will be along to the Group to talk about the early days - "**Hugo Gernsback: The Birth and Death (?) of Science Fiction**". The talk will be illustrated with slides.

NOVEMBER 16 - to be arranged. NOTE that it is one week later than normal (not the 9th) - we will NOT be sharing an evening with NOVACON 31 due to NOVACON being out at Walsall this year.

THE CHRISTMAS SOCIAL

DECEMBER 14

at the Selly Park Tavern (10 minutes bus ride from city centre). Enjoy an evening of good old-fashioned skittles - we play it the correct way (and the silly ways!). Price will be about £10 which includes hot food during the evening's festivities.

NOTE that this will be TICKET ONLY - there will NOT be any tickets on the door.

Full details next month.

JANUARY 11 2002 - the Annual General Meeting. The time to evaluate the previous year and to elect a new committee. Followed by an auction to raise funds for the Group.

FEBRUARY 8 2002 - SF artist **Fred Gambino** will be talking about his art and giving a slide show of his award-winning paintings.

MARCH 2002 - there's a **VERY** good possibility we've got US author **KIM STANLEY ROBINSON** (**RED MARS, GREEN MARS, BLUE MARS, ANTARCTICA, THE WILD SHORE, ICEHENGE**, etc.) to come and talk to the Group. Some of you may even have heard of him. Stan will be over in the UK to promote his new book (title unknown at present) and we've started negotiations with his publisher to get him to Brum. He'll almost certainly be signing at **ANDROMEDA** so things are looking good, though if he does talk to the Group it may have to be a Special, rather than the usual second Friday of the month.

Newsletter 360 copyright 2001 for the Birmingham Science Fiction Group. Designed by Rog Peyton. Opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect those of the committee or the general membership or, for that matter, the person giving their opinion. Some people like being controversial and may actually believe the opposite to what they say - I think I've been accused of that at various times in the past.

Thanks to Vernon for the article and Pat Brown for the photo on pg 2.

The **BRUM GROUP Website** address is www.bsfg.freesevers.com/ Contributions, ideas, etc. always welcome.

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)