

Brum Group News

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

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NOVACON 32 Chairman: Martin Tudor

Friday 12th JULY

MIKE CHINN

Author, editor and local active fan

Our speaker this month is none other than local author, editor and active fan **MIKE CHINN**. Mike should be known to many, if not all, Brum Group members as he has been a member of the Group for many years. Mike doesn't actually attend as many meetings as he'd like through pressure of work but has always supported the group.

He'll be talking about the writing and editing process and hopefully his enthusiasm will spark at least one person in the audience to attempt to write or edit.

RGP

This month's meeting will take place in the Lichfield room on the second floor of the **Britannia Hotel, New Street** (entrance in Union Passage almost opposite the Odeon, New Street). It will commence at **7.45pm** so please arrive early, get your drinks from the bar and be seated in plenty of time.

At the bottom of the ramp from New Street Station, turn right, cross over the road and you'll find Union Passage about 20-30 yards along.

August Meeting - informal meeting - venue to be confirmed but it will NOT be at our usual meeting place. Probably The Tap and Spile in Gas Street (off Broad Street)

THE IRONY OF HISTORY

by **VERNON BROWN**

(based on an article in
THE DAILY TELEGRAPH on June 21st)

Many authors have envisaged paraciological societies in which a rigidly orthodox Catholic Faith retained or regained its ultra conservative influence over Britain, with the result that the Industrial Revolution of the 1700s never took place, or took place much later, leading to a current society very different from the one that we know. Now it seems that these histories may have to be rewritten.

One of the requisites of the Industrial Revolution was a plentiful supply of good cheap iron rather than the labour-intensive small batch production hitherto known. The blast furnace, which was invented in the early 1700s to produce this, was, like many things, quite simple to build once designed. It now appears that it was actually discovered some 200 years earlier by monks at Rievaulx Abbey in Yorkshire.

It is known that the Cistercian monks there produced small amounts of iron for local use using the old methods before they were evicted in 1538 by Henry VIII when he broke with the Pope, but archaeologists have discovered that they were not the usual rote-driven community but were actually in the process of developing a prototype blast furnace when they left. Analysis of the slag in the remains of a larger than normal furnace has revealed a composition typical of that found in a blast furnace; a find so important that

scientists are recreating the furnace and will test the iron and slag produced to determine whether it was indeed what it seems to be.

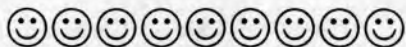
Which leads to some fascinating thoughts if they are right. What if the Reformation had taken place later or not at all? What if the project had been recognised and developed by Henry? Would an Industrial Revolution starting 200 years earlier have led to us living in a society 200 years more advanced? Or, would the differences between the two eras have meant a differently orientated Industrial Revolution? What differences would it have made to wars and institutions throughout the world? The possible ramifications are endless and all because a few monks didn't have time to finish what they were doing!

VB

NEWS IN BRIEF

.... Is nothing sacred? Vernon spotted a note in the DAILY TELEGRAPH on June 21st. It appears that **Dan Dare**, the SF hero of the EAGLE comic, which first appeared 52 years ago, is to appear on TV (Channel 5) in a new £15 million animated series. This computer-generated series will appear on Saturday mornings from July 6th and will feature the actors **Robbie Coltrane**, **Tim Curry** and **Charles Dance** as guest villains. The bad news is that **Elton John** has written the show's theme song. Hopefully he won't sing (or try to...!) Has the second STAR WARS movie flopped? Reports on it are few and far between, while SPIDERMAN seems to be everywhere - and getting rave reviews as well!

ANDROMEDA has finally closed its doors in Suffolk Street for the last time. What is left of the business has moved into its new owner's warehouse in Walsall where the two remaining members of staff - Ped and Laurence - will operate mail-order only until new premises can be found. *RGP*



FILM REVIEW



THE TIME MACHINE

(2002 version)

Reviewed by Vernon Brown

If you ignore the title, have a couple of drinks first and suspend a lot of disbelief, you will probably enjoy this film. Set around about 1900, it is about a rich American teacher who, after witnessing the murder of his brand new fiancée, contacts his friend Albert Einstein and picks his brain about his forthcoming Theory of Special Relativity. He then commences to build a time machine out of bits of an old lighthouse, so that he can go back in time to save his fiancée.

He discovers that, unfortunately, the past cannot be materially changed. He is unable to rescue his loved one. So he decides to go forward in time to find someone with the answer.

The film is advertised as being based on the novel by H G Wells. It isn't - it's lifted from the 1960s film starring Rod Taylor, which WAS based

on Wells' work. Just as a photocopy of a photocopy of a photocopy becomes progressively less like the original, so this film has less in common with its namesake. The Time Traveller is there, as is Mr Filby, Mrs Watchett the housekeeper, Weena, the good Eloi and the bad Morlocks; but what, where and how they do things are all different from the book. The 1960s film did it much better, keeping more or less to Wells' plot although it did add a few things to appeal to the cinema-going public. Unfortunately, it's these additions that the latest film has expanded at the expense of the original story.

You could do worse than spend a happy hour or so picking out the bits borrowed from other films and cringing at the occasional piece of PC. And it's even more fun if you've both read the book and seen the original film. Just don't expect Wells. *VB*

THE RAFFLE

Raffle tickets are available as soon as you get to the meeting. You do NOT have to wait until the break when someone twists your arm - do it voluntarily.

The Group needs your cash to pay visiting authors' expenses, the salubrious surroundings of our regular meeting room, etc. It's just a quid - not even the price of half a pint! And you could WIN this month's prize...

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

August 9-11 - CONTEXXT (UNICON 20) at University of Gloucestershire, Oxon, UK. Guests of Honour: Keith Brooke and Ben Jeapes. Details from Nigel and Sabina Furlong, 17 Cow Lane, Didcot,

Oxfordshire, OX11 7SZ, UK. email:
contextt@unicon.org.uk
website:
www.cix.co.uk/-bugshaw/uniconwin/

November 1-3 - NOVACON 32 - the Birmingham SF Group's very own convention will be held at the Quality Hotel, Bentley, Walsall, UK. Guest of Honour - Ian McDonald, author of *DESOLATION ROAD*, *ARES EXPRESS*, *CHAGA*, etc., etc. Cost of registration is £35 - send to NOVACON 32, 379 Myrtle Road, Sheffield, S2 3HQ.
email: xl5@zoom.co.uk

NOVACON is the one event that YOU should be attending! It is not too soon to register! Especially if you require a single room. BOOK NOW!

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.

FUTURE MEETINGS

September 13th - under negotiation

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, Pat Brown, 106 Green Lanes, Wylde Green, Sutton Coldfield West Midlands, B73 5JH

October 11th - our speaker will be local comics writer, Ian Edgington. Ian has written a series of sequels to the new PLANET OF THE APES movie, published in comics form.

November 8th - the annual competition versus the Birmingham University Science Fiction Group. At their request, this year will be a quiz.

December 13th - Christmas Social - Tickets will probably cost £10 which will include a basket or balti meal and prizes. More details later but put the date - 13th December 2002 - in your diary NOW. Tickets are available to members and their friends, relations, whatever. Bring friends along to make it a special occasion.

January 11th 2003 - the Annual General Meeting.

Newsletter 370 copyright 2002 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. Thanks to Vernon Brown and to LOCUS for news and info this month.

The BRUM GROUP Website address is www.bsf.free.servers.com/ Contributions, ideas, etc. always welcome.