

# **Brum Group News**

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

FEBRUARY 2003    ISSUE 377

*Honorary Presidents:*

**BRIAN W ALDISS**

**HARRY HARRISON**

*Committee:*

**Vernon Brown (Chairman)**

**Vicky Cook (Secretary)**

**Pat Brown (Treasurer)**

**Rog Peyton (Newsletter Editor)**

**+ Steve Jones & William McCabe**

**NOVACON 33 Chairman: Martin Tudor**

IN THIS ISSUE

## **GRAHAM JOYCE**

Our Speaker for February 7th

**DAVID A HARDY on TV!**

**(This weekend - don't miss it)**

**YOUR NEW COMMITTEE!**

**THE NEW MEETING PLACE**

REVIEWS, NEWS, etc.

**March Meeting** - Christopher Priest will be our speaker on March 14th, who will be talking about the problems with publishers (so what's new!) and his latest novel THE SEPARATION.

*February Meeting (Friday 7th at 7.45pm)*

## **GRAHAM JOYCE**

Those of you who have been to any conventions in recent years, or have been a BSFG member for several years, will almost certainly know Graham. He has spoken to the Group on several occasions and has been Guest of Honour at NOVACON. If you've ever propped up the bar with him in the early hours of the morning at any convention, you will certainly have been impressed with his skills as a raconteur. And probably, like me, ended up in fits of laughter.

His professional writing career started in 1991 with DREAMSIDE, a novel about lucid dreaming and over the years he has written several dark fantasies including the award-winning DARK SISTER, HOUSE OF LOST DREAMS. REQUIEM, THE TOOTH FAIRY (another award-winner), STORM WATCHER, etc. His new novel, THE FACTS OF LIFE is another dark fantasy set in Coventry shortly after the end of World War II. Graham's work reflects more and more, the area he grew up in and the traditions of the working class of that area.

Come along and hear Graham, chat to him and even get your books signed. It promises to be a wonderful evening. RGP

## **DAVE HARDY ON TV**

*Do NOT adjust your sets, do NOT adjust the vertical hold - Sir Patrick Moore has NOT shrunk!*

We are pleased to announce that David A Hardy - known to ALL of you - will be doing a Special 'Space Art' SKY AT NIGHT on Sunday 2nd February on BBC1 (late). It will be repeated on Saturday 8th February on BBC2 at a more convenient time. Exact times, unfortunately, are not yet available. The programme was recorded on 23rd January at Sir Patrick's home. It was successful and Dave survived. He has agreed to write a short piece about the filming for next month's newsletter. Thanks Dave! RGP

## **THE NEW COMMITTEE / THE A.G.M.**

This is where I would normally introduce the new committee. But it ain't new! In fact, the whole of last year's committee succeeded in proving their insanity once again by successfully volunteering for yet another year! I suppose that we must all be doing something right if you're happy to have us back.

The AGM itself went without any major hitches and finished relatively early. Thanks to Tim Stannard for chairing the AGM for the 32nd time!??

The AGM was followed by an Auction which raised the unprecedented sum of £103 for the Group. Thanks to all those who donated books and things especially the Russells from Wolverhampton who donated a whole trunk full of

books and magazines, and Dave Hardy who donated several pieces of artwork and prints.

## **OUR NEW MEETING PLACE**

Starting with our February meeting, we will be meeting at The Old Joint Stock - see separate leaflet for history, directions, etc.

## **THE 2002 PHILIP K DICK AWARDS**

The nominees for the 2002 Philip K Dick Award are:

- THE MOUNT by Carol Emshwiller (Small Beer Press)
- REPORT TO THE MEN'S CLUB by Carol Emshwiller (Small Beer Press)
- MAXIMUM ICE by Kay Kenyon (Bantam Spectra)
- WARCHILD by Karin Lowachee (Warner Aspect)
- THE SCAR by China Miéville (Del Rey)
- LEVIATHAN THREE edited by Jeff VanderMeer & Forrest Aguirre (Ministry of Whimsy)
- EMPIRE OF BONES by Liz Williams (Bantam Spectra)

First prize and any special citations will be announced on Friday, April 18, 2003 at Norwescon 26 at the Doubletree Seattle Airport Hotel, SeaTac, Washington.

## **THE ARTHUR C CLARKE AWARD NOMINEES**

Finalists for the 2003 Arthur C. Clarke Award, for best SF novel published in Britain during 2002, have been announced.

- KIL'N PEOPLE by David Brin (Orbit) (US title KILN PEOPLE)
- LIGHT by M. John Harrison (Gollancz)
- THE SCAR by China Miéville (Macmillan)
- THE SEPARATION by Christopher Priest (Scribner)
- SPEED OF DARK by Elizabeth Moon (Orbit)
- THE YEARS OF RICE AND SALT by Kim Stanley Robinson (HarperCollins)

The winner will be announced in a ceremony at the Science Museum on Saturday 17th May. This year's judges are Tony Cullen & Iain Emsley for the British Science Fiction Association, Doug Millard for the Science Museum, and Paul McAuley & Liz Sourbut for the SF Foundation. Chairman of the judges is Paul Kincaid.

## **RETRO HUGOS**

NOREASCON FOUR, the 62nd World Science Fiction Convention to be held in Boston, Massachusetts, in 2004, has announced that it will award Retrospective Hugo Awards for works from 1953.

Retrospective Hugo Awards are permitted by the World Science Fiction Society's Constitution, section 3.13, "A Worldcon held 50, 75, or 100 years after a Worldcon at which no Hugos were presented may conduct nominations and elections for Hugos which would have been presented at that previous Worldcon." Whether Retro-Hugos are presented by a given Worldcon is at the discretion of that convention's committee. Noreascon Four has decided to present the awards, since Hugo Awards were not awarded at the 1954 Worldcon in San Francisco CA. (The first Hugo Awards were presented in 1953, but then not again until 1955).

1953, the year for which Noreascon Four will present Retro-Hugos, was a particularly rich year for novels and short stories now regarded as classics: novels published that year include Arthur C Clarke's CHILDHOOD'S END, Frederik Pohl & C M Kornbluth's THE SPACE MERCHANTS, Hal Clement's MISSION OF GRAVITY, Ray Bradbury's FAHRENHEIT 451, and Isaac Asimov's THE CAVES OF STEEL; short stories include Clarke's "The Nine Billion Names of God", James Blish's "Common Time", Jerome Bixby's "It's a Good Life", and Philip K. Dick's "Impostor". Among novelettes published in 1953 are Dick's "Second Variety", Ward Moore's "Lot", Philip Jose Farmer's "Mother", and Damon Knight's "Four in One"; novellas include Blish's "A Case of Conscience" (later expanded into a novel, which won the Hugo in 1959), Theodore Sturgeon's "...And My Fear Is Great...", and Charles L. Harness's "The Rose".

<< WOW! Some of the best SF ever published! How do you pick 'the Best' from those mentioned above? And they're not even the final ballot! I've read everything listed but I don't think I could pick from the novels - I love all five. I'd be pushed between two of the short stories... the novelette category would be no problem - there's only one in it for my money. And I'd be torn between two in the novella category.

How about we wait until the final nominations are listed and then have a competition to see who can get the closest to the final result? - Now THAT would be interesting! - RGP >>

## **METAPHORICALLY SPEAKING....Pt 2**

*You enjoyed them last month, now here's Pt 2 of the metaphors used in students' papers.  
From member Robert Day*

16. Shots rang out, as shots are wont to do.

17. The plan was simple, like my mate Phil. But unlike Phil, this plan just might work.

18. The young fighter had a hungry look, the kind you get from not eating for a while.

19. "Oh, Jason, take me!" she panted, her breasts heaving like a student on 31p-a-pint night.

20. He was as lame as a duck. Not the metaphorical lame duck either, but a real duck that was actually lame. Maybe from stepping on a land mine or something.

21. Her artistic sense was exquisitely refined, like someone who can tell butter from "I Can't Believe It's Not Butter."

WELCOME  
TO  
THE BIRMINGHAM  
SCIENCE FICTION  
GROUP

at

THE OLD JOINT STOCK  
TEMPLE ROW  
BIRMINGHAM

Since its formation in 1971, the Birmingham Science Fiction Group (BSFG) has met at various venues in and around Birmingham, moving on as the city redeveloped and circumstances changed.

Currently we meet at The Old Joint Stock, ideally situated in the city centre, a few minutes walk from road, rail and Metro stations, in Temple Row overlooking St Philips Cathedral.

Some two hundred years old, The Old Joint Stock was a private lending library before housing The Birmingham Joint Stock Bank Limited, which remained there until the middle nineteen nineties when it moved away and the building was sold to Fuller, Smith and Turner Plc., an independent brewery who performed a very sympathetic conversion when turning it into a public house.

Apart from such necessary alterations as installing a bar and seating, The Old Joint Stock has retained many of its original features such as the panelling, windows and lighting, as well as gaining an interesting collection of bank memorabilia. The Boardroom, which has its own facilities, has become the function room where we hold our meetings. The decor is plush and smart, the food good and beer excellent, winning the pub numerous awards and commendations.

With so much to offer, the Old Joint Stock is deservedly popular, particularly with staff from the surrounding business area. This means that it can get crowded in the early evenings, specially on Fridays. However, having passed through the main bar and up to the function room, relative peace and quiet reigns, where once a month BSFG members and visitors enjoy listening to a guest speaker or other programme item for an hour or so before socialising until closing time.

### *GETTING THERE FROM:*

#### New Street Railway Station

Once through the ticket barrier, go up the escalators and turn left to the New Street exit. Go down the ramp and turn left up New Street towards the Town Hall. Take the third right, Temple Street, up to Temple Row. Cross over Temple Row and turn left to follow the railings round the corner, where you will see The Old Joint Stock on the other side of the road. A longer but less hilly way is to go

up New Street to Victoria Square, turn right into Colmore Row and then right into Temple Row.

#### Snow Hill Railway & Metro Station

From the main exit cross Colmore Row at the pedestrian crossing and turn right towards and past St Philips Cathedral. Temple Row is the first on the left past the Cathedral railings and The Old Joint Stock is just a few yards along.

#### Colmore Row buses

On alighting from bus turn right along Colmore Row past St Philips Cathedral railings then left into Temple Street.

#### Bull Street buses

Upper Bull Street. On alighting turn right into Colmore Row, left along Colmore Row and then into Temple Row

Lower Bull Street. On alighting turn left to Upper Bull Street and Colmore Row.

#### Corporation Street buses

Cross over to Rackham's Department Store and through the pedestrianised Cherry Street on its left. Turn left at Temple Row and follow the railings round where you will see The Old Joint Stock just before the junction with Colmore Row.

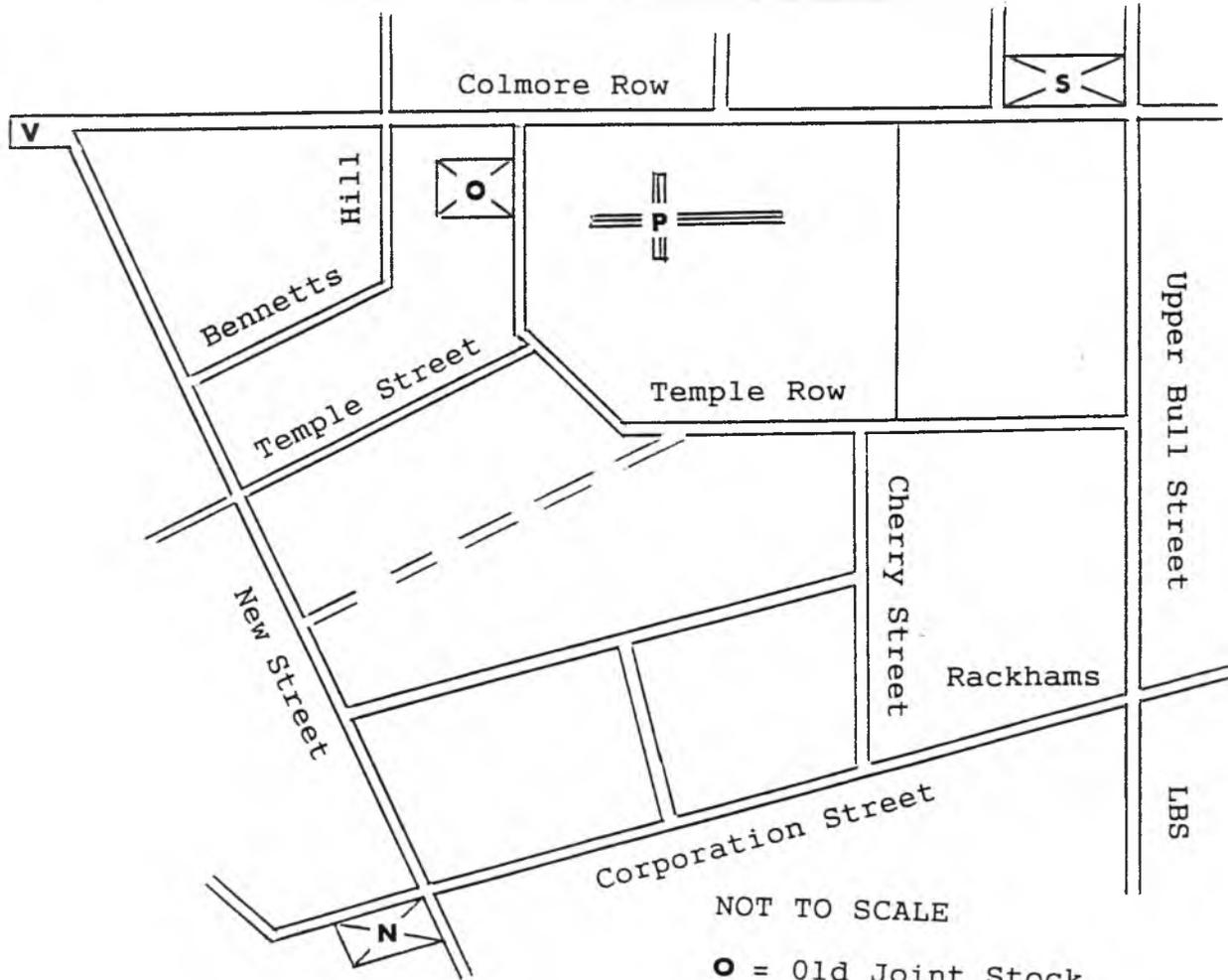
#### Anywhere else

Go to one of the above starting points and take it from there.

### *WHEN YOU GET TO THE OLD JOINT STOCK*

On entering, walk straight ahead, keeping the bar to your left, to the rear right-hand corner of the room. Go through two sets of double doors and up the flight of stairs to your right, next to the Ladies. At the top of the stairs turn left to the function room.

There is also a much smaller way in via the back of the building. Go along Colmore Row and turn down Bennetts Hill. A few yards down the hill is Wellington Passage leading to a set of steps and a patio behind The Old Joint Stock. The door there leads to the rear left corner of the main room. Turn left to the double doors. This way in is best used during the lighter evenings as Wellington Passage is narrow and often obstructed by scaffolding and materials from building works in Bennetts Hill.



NOT TO SCALE

● = Old Joint Stock

22. She had a deep, throaty, genuine laugh, like that sound a dog makes just before it throws up.
23. The ballerina rose gracefully *en pointe* and extended one slender leg behind her, like a dog at a lamppost.
24. The revelation that his marriage of 30 years had disintegrated because of his wife's infidelity came as a rude shock, like a surcharge at a formerly surcharge-free cashpoint.
25. The dandelion swayed in the gentle breeze like an oscillating electric fan set on medium.
26. It was a working class tradition, like fathers chasing kids around with their power tools.
27. He was deeply in love. When she spoke, he thought he heard bells, as if she were a dustcart reversing.
28. She was as easy as the Daily Star crossword.
29. She grew on him like she was a colony of *E. coli* and he was room-temperature British beef.
30. She walked into my office like a centipede with 98 missing legs.
31. Her voice had that tense, grating quality, like a first-generation thermal paper fax machine that needed a band tightened.

## **NEWS IN BRIEF**

.... **Virginia Heinlein**, widow of SF author **Robert Heinlein** passed away peacefully on January 18th after being in hospital for a broken hip .... **Virginia Kidd**, SF editor and literary agent, passed away in her sleep on January 11th. She was 81 .... **Will Smith** is to star in a new movie based on (and I quote) **Isaac Asimov's** short story "I, Robot" (end quote) - can you work out which one? It is to be directed by **Alex Proyas** and production is due to start in April .... **Ballantine/Del Rey** are to launch a new young adult imprint - Imagine - in the Spring. Launch title will be **Terry Brooks's** THE SWORD OF SHANNARA, split into three volumes. Coming later will be **Robert Heinlein's** HAVE SPACESUIT - WILL TRAVEL and **TUNNEL IN THE SKY**, **Alan Dean Foster's** ORPHAN STAR (what happened to book 1 - this is second in a series!!!) and **Gordon R Dickson's** THE DRAGON AND THE GEORGE .... Gollancz recently reprinted **Poul Anderson's** wonderful fantasy THE BROKEN SWORD in their Fantasy Masterworks series. Surprisingly, they've used the original 1954 version rather than the 1970s rewrite. I applaud Gollancz's decision - the original version is far superior .... Also in the Fantasy Masterworks series is THE HOUSE ON THE BORDERLAND AND OTHER NOVELS by **William Hope Hodgson**. What makes this volume special is that it also contains THE BOATS OF THE GLEN CARRIG, THE GHOST PIRATES and THE NIGHT LAND! Superb value! Second-hand copies of these four books - even in used paperbacks - would sell for about £30. IF you could find them .... LORD OF THE RINGS Pt 2: THE TWO TOWERS apparently broke several box office records and is already on several "Best of the Year" lists .... **Ursula K LeGuin** has been named Grand Master by the SFWA. The award will be presented at the Nebula Awards ceremony in April.

She has also won the Endeavour Award for the collection TALES FROM EARTHSEA .... A manuscript by **J R R Tolkien** discovered at the Bodleian Library in Oxford, containing Tolkien's translation and appraisal of Beowulf, will be published next summer .... Now here's a bit of news for would-be writers - 19-year-old **Christopher Paolini** of Paradise Valley, Montana, has sold a self-published first novel ERAGON and two unwritten sequels to Knopf for a deal reportedly over \$500,000. Start writing NOW! .... A fourth *Indiana Jones* movie is being planned for release in 2005 - moved into the 1950s to allow for **Harrison Ford's** age of 62 .... Signs of Things to Come? The SF bookshop in Melbourne, SLOW GLASS BOOKS and US bookshops THE STARS MY DESTINATION and ANOTHER CHANGE OF HOBBIT have all closed their retail outlets to sell exclusively on the internet .... Galaxy Press, publisher of **L Ron Hubbard**, is celebrating the 20th anniversary of BATTLEFIELD EARTH, "one of the best-selling science fiction stories of all time" << *obviously they never read Dave Langford's infamous review of BATTLEFIELD EARTH in FOUNDATION: THE JOURNAL OF SCIENCE FICTION - did you know that the contract is STILL out for Dave?* - RGP >>. Details: battlefieldearth.com. The book recently won a CyberRead Award as a top selling eBook of 2002 .... and while on the subject of BATTLEFIELD EARTH, copies of the video and DVD have been spotted around Brum at under £6 - STAND UP THE PERSON WHO SAID 'OVERPRICED!' .... **Robert Silverberg** received the 2002 Prix UTOPIA, the Life Achievement Award given by the Utopiales International Festival in Nantes, France in October .... a fourth *Mad Max* movie is planned - quite unbelievable as I recently caught up with the original movie. Certainly one of the most pointless, BAD movies I've been unfortunate to see .... HARRY POTTER AND THE ORDER OF THE PHOENIX by **J K Rowling** will run to a massive 768pgs and be published simultaneously in the UK, US, Canada and several other countries on June 21st. RGP



## BOOK REVIEWS



(**REVIEWERS** please note:- the flow of review copies from publishers has restarted and I believe Vernon has already arranged reviews for some of the books already received. In future all reviews should be emailed direct to me at [rog@rogpeyton.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:rog@rogpeyton.fsnet.co.uk)) Deadline for each issue is the 1st of the month.

This review reprinted with permission from Steve Mazey's website...  
<http://www.eternalnight.co.uk> - RGP

### **ABHORSEN** by *Garth Nix*

Harper Eos (US) / 368pgs / \$17.99 / Hardcover

Reviewed by Steve Mazey

Rating \* \* \* \*

This is the concluding volume to the trilogy which started with SABRIEL and continued with LIRAEAL.

Sabriel, the Abhorsen and her husband King Touchstone are ambushed in Ancelstierre whilst on a diplomatic visit and are believed dead. Their son Sameth and Lirael, Sabriel's half-sister are in the Abhorsen's house situated on an island on the Ratterlin river, a safe haven from the forces of the dead until now. Now they are surrounded on both sides of the river by Dead Hands, reanimated spirits of the dead brought back to serve evil necromancers.

Following an old escape route down the island's well, Lirael and Sameth, guided by Lirael's Clayr-given visions and accompanied by the magical creatures Mogget the Cat and the Disreputable Dog, set out to rescue Sameth's friend from Ancelstierre, Nick Sayre, and to prevent him from being the pawn used by Hedge to bring back the Destroyer, a force of pure evil intent on ending all life in both the Old Kingdom and Ancelstierre.

The Destroyer was bound many ages before into a steel sphere and this was then broken into two pieces to prevent his return. Hedge is conveying the hemispheres from the Old Kingdom and into Ancelstierre where he is planning to use a lightning farm to reunite the two halves to free this force. Lirael and Sameth are intent on preventing him from achieving this, and Lirael will use the knowledge of her birthright, as Abhorsen-in-Waiting, to combat Hedge in life and across the boundary into the realms of death.

Once again Garth Nix delivers a wonderfully gripping fantasy tale. It has everything you could want of a fantasy story - an original mythology, strong characters, a solid plot told at a good pace and moments of humour all in the mix.

If I was going to be picky I could mention (and am mentioning) a couple of minor points. The journey into death is familiar, a similar one having been undertaken by Sabriel in book one. And the Disreputable Dog to me is a slightly less interesting character than Mogget was in book one and seems to have effectively taken his place reducing Mogget to a more supporting role.

But these are precisely as described - minor! This book makes you feel for the characters; you certainly sympathise with Sameth's aim of rescuing his friend from the thrall of Hedge.

For me the real joy of this series has been the interaction with the armed forces of Ancelstierre. The soldiers for me evoke memories of the typical British chap as portrayed in the old black and white war movies I watched with my dad as a kid - some of them in my mind had John Mills's and Richard Attenborough's face. Their reaction to all this magick stuff is superb, although there are a few Charter Mages in the ranks amongst the corps patrolling the wall between the two realms, generally these are your typical army types. Imagine the reaction you see in films when you have a group of soldiers confronted by scientists who are going to tell them how to use their latest gizmo and you'll be on the right track.

This is a novel suitable for younger readers (I'd suggest the teenagers who were reading Harry Potter two years ago should read these books), but it should not be a novel exclusively for younger readers. This is a wonderfully

visualised world, and these books have been a delight.

SM

< <There's an article on Garth Nix in the January LOCUS - RGP> >

## **FORTHCOMING EVENTS**

**April 18-21 2003 - SEACON 03** - 54th National British Easter Convention will be held at the Hanover International Hotel, Hinckley, West Midlands. Guests of Honour are Mary Gentle, Christopher Evans and Chris 'Fangorn' Baker. Contact address is SEACON 03, 8 The Orchard, Tonwell, Herts, SG12 OHR

email - [membership@seacon03.org.uk](mailto:membership@seacon03.org.uk)

- [info@seacon03.org.uk](mailto:info@seacon03.org.uk)

- [programme@seacon03.org.uk](mailto:programme@seacon03.org.uk)

Website: [www.seacon03.org.uk](http://www.seacon03.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](mailto:rog@rogpeyton.fsnet.co.uk)*

## **FUTURE MEETINGS**

As at the time of writing, your 'new' committee are still negotiating with several speakers - nothing has actually been finalised yet. Hopefully, several meetings will have been finalised by next month.

\* \* \* \* \*

**Newsletter 377** copyright 2003 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 all the named contributors in this issue.

**The BRUM GROUP Website** address is [www.bsfg.freesevers.com/](http://www.bsfg.freesevers.com/)  
Contributions, ideas, etc. always welcome.

### **ABOUT US...**

The Birmingham Science Fiction Group meets on the second Friday of each month. 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, Wyld Green, Sutton Coldfield West Midlands, B73 5JH