

BRUM GROUP NEWS

THE *FREE* MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE

BIRMINGHAM SCIENCE FICTION GROUP

MAY 2005

ISSUE 404

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Friday 13th May

'The Write Fantastic' – SIX Fantasy Authors!

SARAH ASH + CHAZ BRENCHLEY

MARK CHADBOURN + JULIET MCKENNA

STAN NICHOLLS + JESSICA RYDILL

We've had four people on a panel at times in the past where one, maybe two, were published authors but NEVER have we had SIX visiting authors! This month sees the official launch of 'The Write Fantastic' group and the BSFG is privileged to be having the complete group just 10 days after their launch party – for their full details and aims, see their website....

www.thewritefantastic.com

Each of the authors will be talking about their work and their attitude toward Fantasy, why they write fantasy and why they think that fantasy is an important genre. This evening will be an exceptional one and even if you've

JUNE MEETING - ????? Sorry, folks, we're still working on this one. Everyone seems to be going on holiday or just coming back...

never read a fantasy book in your life, we're sure you will be entertained – and who knows, you may go away having learned something. You may even find that you fancy reading a fantasy novel for a change – they're not all about elves and pixies! We may even get into a heated discussion on the merits of SF versus fantasy – so come along for a unique evening's entertainment – you won't be disappointed!

As most of you know, I'm a HUGE fan of fantasy fiction. I've read so many wonderful fantasy epics that it's difficult to remember just how many I have read. Gosh, it must almost be approaching double figures now – possibly even INTO double figures! Now, that's a LOT of fantasy.....! Far more than our illustrious Chairman admits to having read, anyway. Though all those alternate world novels he reads should be classed as fantasy.

SERIOUSLY – Vernon and I are just the people who this programme item is aimed at. We're die-hard SF fans and we're about to be persuaded to read what I am sure are excellent books. Oh, come ON Vernon, I can see you hiding under that table. RGP

The 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. 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). It will commence at 7.45pm so please arrive early, get your drinks from the bar and be seated in plenty of time.

LAST MONTH'S MEETING - "The Rog Peyton Inaugural Lecture 2005" by Alan Cash

Afterwards he confided he had been nervous. A man who sold five or more copies of Frank Sinatra's biography IN JAPANESE to a Novacon audience *nervous*? After a brief canter through how he got into SF (I loved the body language accompanying how he consigned SWALLOWS AND AMAZONS to the bin), he got on to the meat of his talk – what MATRIX might call 'Rage Against Eastercon 2005' – how can younger con-goers be made aware of the joys of the written word of genuine SF? A lot of ideas were bandied about between Rog and the audience. In a perfect world, SF buyers for the big stores would actually know what it was about, know what they liked and would pass this on, because the best way for written SF to gain a wider audience was by personal recommendation. In a number of amusing anecdotes he demonstrated how this had worked in practice. Word of mouth is obviously the *key*. A well known Building Society has a slogan 'The X – pass it on'. That's what we've *all* got to do – pass it on. Somehow. Before it's too late.

ALC

NOVA AWARDS UPDATE

In 1973, the Brum Group convention Novacon instituted the annual Nova Awards to celebrate achievement in British science fiction fanzines. Originally handed down by a panel of judges, these accolades are now decided by Novacon members who can demonstrate a basic knowledge of current fanzines.

Following Novacon 32, the three categories – best fanzine, best fanzine writer, best fanzine artist – were extended to cover fanzines produced in Eire. In addition, electronic fanzines are now eligible, provided a file copy is lodged with the administrator.

The following fanzines were received between 1 October 2004 and 23 April 2005, and are eligible for the 2005 awards:

Ansible #207 [10/04], #208 [11/04], #209 [12/04], #210 [1/05], #211 [2/05], #212 [3/05; all A4, all 2pp], Dave Langford, 94 London Road, Reading, RG1 5AU, downloadable from <<http://www.ansible.co.uk>>

The Banksonian #4, #5 [both A5, 12pp], David Haddock, 84 Foxhollow, Bar Hill, Cambridge, CB3 8ES, <david@haddock.me.uk> or <banksoniain@yahoo.co.uk>

Banana Wings #20 [A4, 36pp], #21 [A4, 28pp], Claire Brialley & Mark Plummer, 59 Shirley Road, Croydon, CR0 7ES, <banana@fishlifter.demon.co.uk>

Brum Group News #401 [2/05, 6pp, guest-edited by Vernon Brown], #398 [11/04, 8pp], #399 [12/04, 4pp], #400 [1/05, 8pp], #402, [3/05, 12pp], #403 [4/05, 12pp; all A5], Rog Peyton for the BSFG, 19 Eves Croft, Bartley Green, Birmingham B32 3QL <rog@rogpeyton.fsnet.co.net> or <bhamsfgroup@yahoo.co.uk>

DiverseBooks – Nov 2004 [A4, 2pp], Alex McLintock, 88 Poppleton Road, Leytonstone, E11 1LT, <info@diversebooks.com>

Final to Land #1 [A4, 18pp], Antony J “Dop” Shepherd, <dop@btinternet.com>; downloadable from <www.efanzines.com>

Grunt Grunt #1 [A4, 26pp], Captain Buggernuts (Clarrie O’Callaghan), Basement Flat, 4 Elliston Road, Bristol, BS6 6QE <punchable.nun@tesco.net>

Halo of Flies #4 [A5, 24pp], Tony Keen, 48 Priors Street, Tonbridge, TN9 2AN, <keentony@yahoo.co.uk>

Meta #1 [A5, 36pp], Geneva Melzack, 5 Brooklands Avenue, Withington, M20 1JE, <geneva.mlzack@gmx.net>

More Balls [A4, 2pp], Ang Rosin, 26 Hermitage Grove, Bootle, L20 6DR, downloadable from <<http://www.liv.ac.uk/~lister/balls/>>

On the Town with the League of Extraordinary Gentlemen [plaintext; A5, 27pp], Tony Keen, address as above

Plokta #32 [16pp], #33½ [12pp, both A4], Steve Davies, Alison Scott & Mike Scott, 52 Westbourne Terrace, Reading, RG30 2RP, <www.plokta.com>

Snapshot #5 [6pp], #6 [8pp; both A4], Ian Sorensen, 3 Portia Place, Motherwell, ML1 1EL <ian@soren.demon.co.uk> [note new address]

The Convertible Bus #14 [A4, 2pp], Tony Keen, address as above

The Unnamable #2 [A5, 12pp], Feòrag NicBhrìde, 89 Brunswick Street, Edinburgh, EH7 5HS

This Way Up #12 [A5, 40pp], John Connors john.connors@lineone.net

Thought Experiments #2 [A5, 18pp], Geneva Melzack, address as above

Tortoise #20 [A4 landscape, 23pp], Sue Jones, Flat 5, 32-33 Castle Street, Shrewsbury, SY1 2BQ, <sue.tortoise@btinternet.com>

THE MAY QUIZ - Steve Green

1. Name the American author, resident in Eire in the 80s and 90s, who switched to writing SF after initially working as a comics artist.
2. Who plays Arthur Dent in the new movie of THE HITCH-HIKER'S GUIDE TO THE GALAXY?
3. John Brosnan, who died in early April, edited which Nova Award-winning fanzine?
4. Which SF author's private correspondence was published posthumously as GRUMBLES FROM THE GRAVE?
5. Who played the Big Giant Head in the long-running SF sitcom THIRD ROCK FROM THE SUN?
6. Which British author is guest of honour at this year's Novacon?
7. Whose novels include BIGOT HALL, SLAUGHTERMATIC and THE CRIME STUDIO?
8. Which SF novel is the subject of two separate movie adaptations this year?
9. Who shared the first Sir Arthur Clarke Award for scientific writing in April?
10. Name the author of THE SPARROW and CHILDREN OF GOD.
11. Which actor will succeed Christopher Eccleston as Doctor Who?
12. Name the newspaper journalist who chronicled the history of American SF fandom in A WEALTH OF FABLE and ALL OUR YESTERDAYS.

ANSWERS TO APRIL QUIZ IN ISSUE #403 (Nobody claimed a drink! Again!!! Are you REALLY SF fans? You don't have to get them ALL right, you know. ONE right answer would have won First Prize for the last three months!!!)

1. Ursula K Le Guin's THE LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS.
2. Michael Moorcock.
3. THE INCREDIBLES. Mutant toddler Jack-Jack will no doubt join up in the inevitable sequel.
4. Susan Calvin.
5. Frank Hampson, yet another past Brum Group speaker.
6. Syphilis.
7. THE MODERN PROMETHEUS.
8. Novacon 31's guest of honour, Gwyneth Jones.
9. TIME AFTER TIME.
10. The Bene Gesserit.
11. Ray Bradbury.
12. Pink Floyd.

NEWS IN BRIEF . . .

.... Author and fan **John Brosnan** (b.1947) was found dead alone in his flat, although the exact time and cause of death are unknown. Brosnan was the author of several science fiction novels, most recently MOTHERSHIP. He also published fiction under the names **Harry Adam Knight**, **Simon Ian Calder**, and **James Blackstone**. He was well-known to convention attendees being a regular at Eastercons and Novacons, though not in recent years. Nearly two pages of

obituaries appear in the May LOCUS from **Malcolm Edwards**, **Rob Holdstock**, **Jo Fletcher** and **John Baxter** The third annual **Robert A. Heinlein Award** will be presented to **Larry Niven** and **Jerry Pournelle** at CascadiaCon, this year's NASFiC, in Seattle on September 4. The award is presented to recognize outstanding published work in hard science fiction or technical writings inspiring the human exploration of space Meisha Merlin has announced plans to publish a definitive collection of **Robert A. Heinlein's** books, to be called 'The Virginia Edition: The Definitive Collection of Robert A. Heinlein'. The first book, *I WILL FEAR NO EVIL*, is scheduled for publication in the Fall of 2005, with subsequent books to follow every six weeks. The entire series will consist of 46 titles and be limited to a run of 5000 copies. No price has yet been set. *I WILL FEAR NO EVIL* is supposed to encourage people to buy the set??? **Peter Hamilton** has turned in *JUDAS UNCHAINED*, sequel to *PANDORA'S STAR* **Alastair Reynolds** has quit his job at the European Space Agency to write full time *THE BRADBURY FILES: THE LIFE OF RAY BRADBURY* by **Sam Weller** – the first fully authorised biography of **Ray Bradbury** is just out in hardcover in the USA from Eos Fans of the TV series **STAR TREK: ENTERPRISE** have formed *TrekUnited.com* in a campaign to save the series. They are hoping to raise \$32 million to cover the expenses of making Season 5. Er, who was it who said SF fans are all poor because they buy too many books? For the first time, astronomers have managed to take a picture of a planet in orbit around another star. The planet, believed to be about twice as massive as Jupiter, is in orbit around GQ Lupi, a Sol-type star at a distance of 150 AU. The planet is believed to take 1200 years to complete an orbit. GQ Lupi is about 400 light years away and is believed to be only one million years old *RGP*

TV REVIEW

QUATERMASS IS BACK!

Or was it? I'd wondered why the first live television drama to be shown on the BBC for over 20 years, was relegated to BBC4 instead of the prestige of BBC1.

I'd been told that the Beeb had found the lost film of the original 50s serial and I was awaiting April with much anticipation. It had been over 50 years since I'd seen Nigel Kneale's *THE QUATERMASS EXPERIMENT*. Many images and scenes from then are still embedded in my memory quite clearly. But it turned out that they hadn't located the original but had re-made it for today's viewing public. So I duly taped it and sat down a couple of days later to watch it.

THE QUATERMASS EXPERIMENT managed to retain the 'feel' of the 1950s original by being broadcast live. I only noticed one instance of an actor forgetting his lines and unfortunately it was when the camera was on a close-up. But he recovered very quickly.

Unfortunately, it had two major faults. It's second biggest failure was being shown in one 2-hour lump. The original was shown in six half-hour episodes where the tension built up to a cliff-hanger ending each week. This audience-grabbing device was completely lost being shown without any breaks at all – not even any adverts. Without the breaks it became very boring and I almost gave up on it but stuck with it to see whether the finale would live up to that wonderful ending that the original had.

That was the show's biggest failure – an anti-climax that had to be seen to be believed. Nothing happened...a slight build up and like someone flipping a switch, it was all over. The programme ran several minutes shorter than the advertised time so whether something went drastically wrong and they had to cut a segment (the whole ending!), is something we will probably never know. Or care about!

Verdict: Original 50s version – 9 out of 10. New version – 4 out of 10. Must try harder Auntie. RGP

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

The Central Library SF and Fantasy Reading Group meets on Thursdays at 5.30pm to 7pm monthly, in GP5 on the 5th Floor at the Central Library, Chamberlain Square, B3 3HQ. It's a small friendly group meeting to discuss SF & fantasy books. Contact person is Pam Gaffney on (0121) 303 3398. Books to be discussed:-

May 12th - David Gemmell - DARK MOON

June 23rd - Robert Holdstock - CELTIKA

July 21st - Diana Wynne-Jones - YEAR OF THE GRIFFIN

TOLKIEN WEEKEND AT THE SHIRE COUNTRY PARK. The sixth annual Tolkien Weekend will be held at Sarehole Recreation Ground and Moseley Bog LNR, part of the new Shire Country Park. This year's event also commemorates the 50th anniversary of the publication of THE LORD OF THE RINGS trilogy. This family event includes attractions such as Tolkien archives, dramatisations in Moseley bog by 'Shire Productions', historical re-enactments, crafts stalls, have-a-go at archery, woodland craft demos, Moseley Farmers Market, children's activities and craft workshops, one of the last two working water mills in Birmingham, local poets and writers including Stan Nicholls (author of the bestselling *Orcs: First Blood* series of books), guided walks, bus tours to 'The two towers' and much more! The Event is being held at 11am to 5pm sat 14th & Sunday 15th May 2005 on Sarehole Recreation Ground, Cole Bank Road, Moseley, Birmingham. The Event is Free Entry with a small fee for car parking and for some of the activities. Due to the popular demand many activities have restricted numbers and require that you obtain a ticket from the information stand. These are issued on the day on a first come, first served basis, so make the information stand your 1st port of call to avoid disappointment! Public Transport: buses: nos 11 & 4 stop directly outside the venue. Trains: Hall Green Station on the Stratford Road (approx 10 min walk away), Yardley Wood Station on Highfield Road (involves a pleasant 15/20 min walk along the River Cole Valley through The Dingles and The John Morris Jones Way). Venue: Sarehole, Birmingham. Contact details:

millstream@birmingham.gov.uk Phone: 0121 702 2739

FARINGDON ARTS FESTIVAL runs every year in the Oxfordshire town of Faringdon, between Oxford and Swindon. In 2005, our dates are 4-10 July, and on Saturday 9th July we're playing host to three SF and fantasy authors. Running a half-day workshop on How To Write A Novel (£10 fee, limited to 20 places), is Juliet E. McKenna; talking about her work will be Gwyneth Jones; and headlining our literary strand, in a rare public appearance, will be Brian Aldiss. (Both authors admission free, and will not run at the same time as Juliet's workshop.) Our website is now <http://www.faringdonartsfestival.org/> For more information, or to book for Juliet's workshop, contact Paul Cornell at paulcornell@owlservice.freeserve.co.uk

INTERACTION: THE 2005 WORLDCON will be held in Glasgow, 4th to 8th August 2005. Guests of Honour are Greg Pickersgill, Christopher Priest, Robert Sheckley, Lars-Olof Strandberg and Jane Yolen. Full details, printable forms, etc., from their website <http://www.interaction.worldcon.org.uk/>
Snail mail address: INTERACTION, 379 Myrtle Road, Sheffield, S2 3HQ

TOLKIEN 2005: THE RING GOES EVER ON is a 5-day conference celebrating 50 years of THE LORD OF THE RINGS, to be held at Aston University, Birmingham, from the 11th to 15th August 2005. All details on website <http://www.tolkiensociety.org/2005/>

FANTASYCON 05 has been booked for the 30 September - 2 October 2005, at the Quality Hotel, Walsall, near Birmingham. Guests of Honour: Steven Erikson, Simon Clark and Mark Chadbourn. For further details please see www.britishfantasysociety.org.uk or email fcon@britishfantasysociety.org.uk

*** * * NOVACON 35 * * *** - the Brum Group's own convention, will again be held at the Quality Hotel, Bentley, Walsall over the weekend of 11th to 13th November. Guest of Honour is Alastair Reynolds. Cheques to 'Novacon 35', Steve Lawson, 379 Myrtle Road, Sheffield, S2 3HQ Email: x15@zoom.co.uk Website: www.novacon.org

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

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FUTURE MEETINGS OF THE BSFG

June 10th - tba

July 8th - Harry Harrison

August 12th - tba - hopefully a US author staying on after Worldcon

September 10th - Jane Johnson/Jude Fisher/Gabriel King

October 14th - Peter Hamilton

November 11th - tba

December 2nd - Skittles Social Evening

January 13th 2006 - AGM

February 10th - Ian R MacLeod

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Thanks to all the named contributors in this issue and to William McCabe who sends me reams of news items every month from which I sift through for the best/most entertaining items.

STOP PRESS>>>>STOP PRESS>>>>>>STOP PRESS

SF writer **Robert Sheckley** is in a Kiev hospital suffering respiratory failure after a week of treatment, the Ekho Moskvyy Web site reported Thursday (5th May). The 76-year-old writer was taken to hospital with a cold during his visit to the Ukrainian Sci-Fi Computer Week, an international event for SF writers, Itasr Tass reports. His condition has deteriorated since. Sheckley is now in one of Kiev's private medical institutions, a clinic called Boris. He has also been examined by specialists from the Ukrainian State Pulmonology Institute and the National Medical University. The writer is currently on artificial respiration and doctors describe his condition as grave, Ekho Moskvyy adds.

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 Secretary, 5 Greenbank, Barnt Green, Birmingham, B45 8DH