

# BRUM GROUP NEWS

THE *FREE* MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE

## BIRMINGHAM SCIENCE FICTION GROUP

OCTOBER 2005

ISSUE 409

HONORARY PRESIDENTS: **BRIAN W ALDISS, O.B.E.**  
& **HARRY HARRISON**

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**NOVACON 35 CHAIRMAN: TONY BERRY**

WEBSITE: [www.bsfg.freesevers.com](http://www.bsfg.freesevers.com)

EMAIL: [bhamsfgroup@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:bhamsfgroup@yahoo.co.uk)

**Friday 14th OCTOBER**

# PETER F HAMILTON

Peter is currently touring the UK to coincide with the publication of his new book, *JUDAS UNCHAINED*, and we are fortunate that he has managed to slot in an evening to talk to us.

Peter F Hamilton's first novel was *MINDSTAR RISING* back in 1993. It was the first book in the *Greg Mandel* series and was followed by *A QUANTUM MURDER* and *THE NANO FLOWER*. His *Night's Dawn* trilogy – *THE REALITY DYSFUNCTION*, *THE NEUTRONIUM ALCHEMIST* and *THE NAKED GOD* must hold some kind of record being over 3,000 pages long! Along the way he's also written five other novels, one short story collection, a major novella and a companion non-fiction book to the *Night's Dawn* trilogy.

*JUDAS UNCHAINED* is the second half of the story started in *PANDORA'S STAR*. RGP

**NOVEMBER MEETING – Once again we have a cancellation. Storm Constantine, however, has agreed to talk to us early next year**

*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.*

## **THE MARTIANS ARE COMING!**

Inspired by the classic HG Wells novel, Jeff Wayne's Musical Version of THE WAR OF THE WORLDS will head for Birmingham's NEC Arena on April 19 2006.

With plans to have five Martian Fighting Machines as tall as 30 feet, a Martian Handling and Flying machine and the Thunder Child Frigate, it promises to be truly spectacular – and, thanks to state-of-the-art technology, Richard Burton's original performance will be brought back to life!

“This large-scale show is somewhere between a rock concert and very large-scale theatre production,” explains Jeff Wayne who will be conducting The Black Smoke Band and the 48 piece ULLAdubULLA Strings (pronounced as one word: oole-dub-oole) along with special guest Justin Hayward.

The show follows the multi-award winning classic album that has become the biggest selling re-issue album this year, and now includes a prequel showing Mars suffering from severe ecological problems forcing the Martians to leave the planet.

You can book online at the website ‘[www.necgoup.co.uk](http://www.necgoup.co.uk)’ or ring +44 (0) 870 730 0196

<<It's been suggested that we arrange a block booking for this event and have a Brum Group outing. We'd also get a discount. What do you think? Let Vicky know if you think you'd be interested. If we have sufficient interest, we'll go ahead and start planning. Contact Vicky on ‘[aunico@hotmail.com](mailto:aunico@hotmail.com)’ or at the address on the back page of this newsletter – RGP>>

## **THE CHRISTMAS SOCIAL**

This year's Christmas Social will be held at the Selly Park Tavern, 592 Pershore Road, Selly Oak, where we have once again hired the Skittles Room for our own private use from 7.00 to 11.00pm on Friday 02 December. To get there take a 45 or 47 bus from Corporation Street. Ask for Selly Park Tavern – it's about 15 minutes ride. **PLEASE NOTE THE CHANGE OF DATE FROM THE USUAL SECOND FRIDAY.**

Tickets are £10 each which covers the cost of the Skittle Alley and the food but not your drinks (we have our own Bar). There will be prizes for individual games – you don't have to know how to play skittles because we have our own variants of the game designed to give everyone a chance, none of which would be allowed at Competition or any other level. There will be a free half hourly raffle, crackers and, to judge by the answers to the questionnaire circulated after last year's Social, a good time to be had by all.

The meal will be a buffet of a selection of sandwiches (cheese, ham, tuna), sausage rolls, quiche, chicken wings, pizza, onion rings, coleslaw, potato salad, mixed salad, Indian selection and chips. There will also be a separate selection for vegetarians provided that this requirement is stated when you order your ticket.

With this Newsletter there should be order forms for Social tickets. If they are missing please email us on 'bhamsfgroup@yahoo.co.uk' or see Pat or Vernon at the October Group Meeting. Ticket numbers are restricted for safety reasons – we hit this number last year so don't delay!

Two forms are enclosed because although people may come together, a separate order form is needed for each to avoid confusion, so please complete one form per person AND complete Parts A & B of each form. Don't just write 'as above' or 'as left'. You can, of course, photo copy the forms if there will be more than two of you coming.

Send your completed form(s) and cheque/PO, made payable to 'Birmingham SF Group', to Vicky Cook, Social Info, 5 Greenbank, Barnt Green, Birmingham, B45 8DH as soon as possible and you will receive your receipt/tickets by post. Or hand them to Pat or Vernon at the October Meeting, after the Speaker's talk. If you can't do this there are usually some tickets available at the November Meeting, but the deadline for applications is Friday 18 November, because the Tavern needs food numbers the following week. By this time however NOVACON will have happened and there may not be any tickets left! If you have any queries please email us.

Remember **TICKETS WILL NOT BE AVAILABLE ON THE NIGHT** - Get them now.

## ***...AND WHAT DID YOU THINK?*** **THE LETTER COLUMN OF 'BRUM GROUP NEWS'**

***From member Dave Hardy...*** In 'News in Brief' (August) you mention the Deep Impact rendezvous with comet Tempel and go on to say: "a Russian astrologer has filed a lawsuit claiming that NASA has ruined 'the natural balance of forces in the universe' and will deform her predictions."

Well, maybe, but what about the new planet just discovered, '2003 UB313' but now apparently named 'Xena', and the other two whose discovery was overshadowed by this? Not to mention Quaoar and Sedna.

Well at least the previous ones were named after North American deities, but Xena, Warrior Princess, is an entirely new creation. Noting this, astrologer Jonathan Cainer writes in the DAILY MAIL:

*"... if the world's top astronomers now want to offer eternal legitimacy to a thoroughly modern myth, we should all feel inspired. It suggests an imminent impulse, all across the globe, to shed the shackles of convention.*

*"We have a new spirit in the sky; a strong, sexy, independent woman who fights for freedom, truth and justice. The sooner her influence gets to work on our stuffy old male-dominated planet, the better. Girl Power has arrived in our Solar System."*

Which is the biggest load of cr\*p I've seen in a long time! No, it's a big lump of rock and ice, and it's not new - it's been part of the Solar System for billions of years. The wonder is surely that astrologers weren't able to predict it?

Anything to say about the Group, meetings or SF in general? Email your opinions to me at [rog@rogpeyton.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:rog@rogpeyton.fsnet.co.uk) >>

## **OCTOBER QUIZ - Steve Green**

01. Which 1962 SF novel was 'real horrorshow'?
02. Name the newly-released movie spin-off of the short-lived sf series FIREFLY.
03. Whose SF reviews were collected as IN SEARCH OF WONDER (1956)?
04. Name the Shanghai-born author interned by the Japanese from 1942-1945.
05. Which *Fantastic Four* supervillain features in the new movie adaptation?
06. Name the American SF and pornography author nicknamed 'Chip'.
07. Who produced the majority of the novels published under the Badger Books house pseudonyms 'John E Muller' and 'Karl Zeigfreid'?
08. Which former DR WHO assistant will return in the next series?
09. Who started his writing career by producing short fantasies for TARZAN ADVENTURES?
10. Name Tom Reamy's only novel, completed shortly before his death in 1977.
11. Which Roman emperor links STAR TREK's Jim Kirk and CHEERS barman Woody Boyd?
12. Name the UK organisation formed in 1971 for 'all devotees of fantasy, horror and the supernatural'.

## **ANSWERS TO SEPTEMBER QUIZ**

01. Brum Group co-president Brian W Aldiss.

02. They've all played Clark Kent in serials or on TV: Kirk Alyn in 1948 and 1950, George Reeves from 1951-58, Dean Cain from 1993-97 and Tom Welling (in SMALLVILLE) since 2001, but Welling is the only one of the four *not* to have also played Superman. Incidentally, Brandon Routh slips his underpants over his tights next year for SUPERMAN RETURNS, which will apparently use archive footage of the now-deceased Marlon Brando from the 1979 movie.
03. Greg Pickersgill. This 68pp tome covers three decades of his fanwriting and is now available at £4.00 (incl. UK p&p) from Claire Brialey, 59 Shirley Road, Croydon, CR0 7ES.
04. Azkaban. The movie adaptation is out next month.
05. Birmingham's own Chris "Fangorn" Baker.
06. Bob Kane, although artist Bill Finger arguably deserves to share some of the limelight.
07. PAVANE.
08. "Casting the Runes".
09. Alastair Reynolds. See [www.novacon.org](http://www.novacon.org) for details.
10. Former MEN ONLY favourite Fiona Richmond. And yes, it's truly awful.
11. THX:1138. Like the early *Star Wars* movies, it's since had its special effects updated.
12. The Brum Group. Have you *still* not read Peter Weston's WITH STARS IN MY EYES?

WILLIAM McCABE wins with 10 correct answers, missing out on Nos 3 and 8.

### ***NEWS IN BRIEF . . .***

.... Seven times Oscar-winning Director **Robert Wise** (b.1914) died on September 14. Best known for his Oscar winning films WEST SIDE STORY and THE SOUND OF MUSIC, Wise also directed the classic THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL, THE ANDROMEDA STRAIN, STAR TREK: THE MOTION PICTURE, and the 1963 version of THE HAUNTING. He made his directorial debut in 1944 with THE CURSE OF THE CAT PEOPLE. In 1941, he worked as a film editor on CITIZEN KANE, and was the last surviving crew member of that film .... Actor **Tommy Bond** (b.1926) died on September 24 following complications from heart disease. Bond portrayed Jimmy Olsen in THE ADVENTURES OF SUPERMAN and ATOM MAN VS. SUPERMAN, both starring Kirk Alyn as Superman .... So far, no members of the science fiction community have been confirmed as casualties of the hurricane and flooding in Mississippi, Louisiana and Arkansas, although several have been confirmed as safe. There are still some who have not been heard from. Mercedes Lackey and Larry Dixon have opened their home in Oklahoma to several fans made homeless by the disaster .... However, small press **Tyrannosaurus Press**

has become a victim of hurricane Katrina and the flooding of New Orleans. **Roxanne Reiken** reports that while the staff is all safe, their offices are underwater and practically all of their stock was destroyed by water damage. Future projects are suspended indefinitely .... **Southern Writers Recovery Fund Established WordArt Inc.** has established a recovery fund for author affected by Hurricane Katrina. The fund is not to be used to meet the immediate humanitarian needs, but rather to serve the longer term needs of writers to help them get writing again. Pledges can be made to [wordartsinc@yahoo.com](mailto:wordartsinc@yahoo.com). Once enough pledges are received, WordArt will contact people with information about how to donate .... The **ANSIBLE** archive located at Glasgow University has been ordered offline by the University after fourteen years in the face of a legal threat made over the contents of one of the issues .... SF fan **Maureen Kincaid Speller** has filed to run as the Liberal Democrat candidate in the by-election for Harvey Central Ward. She is running against both a Conservative and a Labour candidate .... Written by **Eoghann** and published September 21st, 2005, Yale University Press has published a collection of science fiction quotations called, appropriately enough, **SCIENCE FICTION QUOTATIONS**. The book contains thousands of quotations from works of science fiction. Taking a fairly wide definition of SF, the book has quotations from Mary Shelley's **FRANKENSTEIN**, Robert Louis Stevenson's **DR. JEKYLL AND MR HYDE**, **BATMAN** and many others. There are almost 3000 quotations in the book and they are drawn from books, films and television .... Author **Jonathan Lethem** has been awarded a MacArthur Fellowship grant along with twenty four others. The MacArthur grant is an award of \$500,000 which may be used in any way the recipient sees fit. In awarding the grant, Lethem was praised for his works that combine noir mysteries, westerns, science fiction and comic books—and explore the relationship between high art and popular culture .... The **Heinlein Award** was presented at a banquet at CascadiaCon. The award, presented by the Heinlein Society, was given to **Larry Niven** and **Jerry Pournelle** for lifetime achievements for outstanding published work in hard science fiction or technical writings inspiring the human exploration of space .... A fund raising drive for the **Arthur C. Clarke Award** has been launched by the Serendip Foundation. The award has had budgetary problems since Rocket Publishing withdrew its funding in 2003. Although the Science Fiction Foundation has promised £1,000 for each of the next five years, more funds are needed. Donations can be made at [www.clarkeaward.com](http://www.clarkeaward.com). Up to £25 is a Mercury Supporter, from £26-£100 is a Gemini Supporter and about £100 is an Apollo Supporter .... Director Anand Tucker told SCI FI Wire that he's ready to begin the first of a trilogy of movies based on Philip Pullman's His Dark Materials series, but that casting is a ways off .... They're still making Star Trek? Check out the new series featuring Kirk, Spock, Bones, etc. See <http://www.newvoyages.com/> .... NASA has announced plans to develop a reusable spacecraft blending elements of the space shuttle and the Apollo capsule to reach the Moon by 2018. The plan would be to have two

lunar missions a year beginning in 2018. From 2008 through 2018, a series of robotic probes would be launched to help pave the way for the manned mission

RGP



## BOOK REVIEWS



(**REVIEWERS** please note:- 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 14 days prior to the date of the monthly meeting.

RGP

### ***THE HEALER* by Michael Blumlein**

**Pyr / 376pgs / hardcover / \$25.00**

**Reviewed by Steve Mazey**

**Star Rating: \* \* \* \* \***

Every now and again a book surprises me. This is one of them. For when I picked up this book I was expecting a completely different book to the one I read. In some ways I think I was expecting a tale along the lines of James White's *Sector General* series with a slight twist due to the nature of the healers in this tale. What I found in the pages of this book was a quite brilliant tale, one which had no problems not following its more expected path, preferring to strike out and find its own path.

It's a book which had no problems leaving loose ends, not clearing up after itself. For if bad things happen, then they happen and that's just the nature of the world.

Payne is a Tesque (short for Grotisque) a sub species of human, kept in virtual slavery by humans. And like his brother before him when it comes to the time of the testing he is found to be a potential healer and taken away for training, there being no choice for either him or his parents in the matter.

From that point onwards his life is not his own, and his healing talent is to be at the beck and call of any human who needs it, until he reaches the time of The Drain and his talent is exhausted.

But despite the fact that these healers are vital to the health of their human masters, they are despised and reviled - no human willing to spend time with them or consider them anything other than chattel.

This is an incredible book, full of exquisite prose. I know this may sound a little overblown but I cannot describe this book in any way else. It does nothing wrong for me.

Now, should you feel that you prefer your fiction all snug and cosy and want everyone to survive and have good lives (except any passing bad guys that is) then this book might not be the best thing for you to read.

SM

**PANDORA'S STAR by Peter F. Hamilton**

**Pan / 1143pgs / paperback / £ 8.99**

**JUDAS UNCHAINED by Peter Hamilton**

**Macmillan / 949pgs / hardcover / £18.99**

**Reviewed by Pauline Morgan**

**Star rating: \* \* \* \***

PANDORA'S STAR is part one of *The Commonwealth Saga* a vast undertaking in two huge volumes, the second being JUDAS UNCHAINED. The saga combines a lot of elements, not just from science fiction but from other genres as well. It begins with the discovery of a revolutionary technological development. Just as the first manned mission lands on Mars, Nigel Sheldon and Ozzie Isaacs build a prototype wormhole generator which takes them almost instantaneously to Mars. Space travel becomes obsolete overnight as humankind spreads out from Earth stepping from planet to planet via the manufactured wormholes. There is no need to control the population, surplus people can just move on to another world. There is no need for war. If you don't get on with your neighbour you can settle a new planet along with those who think the same way as you do. You can live on one planet and commute to work, via a wormhole, to a job light years away. Rejuvenation, too, becomes commonplace. When your body begins to fail, the clock can be turned back and youth can be restored but with all the experience of age retained. Death holds no fear. With a regular memory download a new body can be cloned and the memories restored to it, should the old one become too damaged for revival.

This sounds like a recipe for Utopia. The problem is that people are still human. They still have the same ambitions, jealousies, obsessive behaviours they always have had. There is still interpersonal conflict. So, one element of the novel is a detective story. Paula Myo is the best detective in known space. She has always caught the perpetrator of any case she has handled, with one exception. She has been obsessively pursuing Bradley Johansson and Adam Elvin for well over a century. They are terrorists who believe that an alien known as the Starflyer has infiltrated the highest echelons of government and is manipulating humankind for its own nefarious ends. Johansson, she believes, is paranoid. He is also cunning. She suspects that someone is tipping them off as they always seem to be able to slip past her.

It is also a political thriller as the Burnelli family vie for influence. There is adventure as Ozzie Isaacs sets off to explore the Silfen paths. The Silfen are an alien race which seem simple and peace loving. Electronic gadgets tend not to work on the worlds they occupy and there are rumours that they have ways of moving from planet to planet without the use of wormholes.

This is a society that has become dependent on wormholes. Then Dudley Bose, an astronomer at a backwater university makes an alarming discovery. It has been known for a long time that a pair of star systems has been surrounded by an impenetrable shield. At first it was thought that these were

Dyson spheres so the systems have been generally known as the Dyson pair. Bose discovers that the shields around the systems appeared instantly and simultaneously. The question is, are these force fields? And have they been erected to keep something in, or something out? Because of the distance the only way to investigate is to build a space ship and visit. The expedition is commanded by Wilson Kime who was on the only manned space flight to Mars. What he and his crew discover is not good news.

This is a very complex plot, and by the end of the first volume, the strands are only just beginning to come together. Some, as yet, seem unconnected from the whole. Hamilton does not introduce random factors without a very good reason and in *JUDAS UNCHAINED* the final links are made. Although there is a tendency to lose sight of characters during the narrative, they are strongly enough portrayed to be quickly remembered. It becomes more of a problem if the books are read with a time lapse between them. These are very large books and require a lot of investment of time to read them. On the plus side, reading Peter Hamilton is enjoyable. PM

***THE ROAD TO DUNE by Brian Herbert and Kevin J Anderson***  
**Hodder & Stoughton / 494pgs / trade paperback / £11.99.**  
**Reviewed by Michael Jones**  
**Star rating:**

The late, great Frank Herbert seems to have been one of those people who never throw away any piece of paper with any form of words on it and when he died in 1986 he left an enormous archive of letters, notes, drafts, chapters, outlines etc., much of it concerned with his *DUNE* novels. His son Brian has devoted himself to studying all this material and has, as well as a biography of his father, produced two trilogies of prequel novels co-written with Kevin J. Anderson. I have reviewed several of them in these pages and found myself less than overwhelmed, so much so that I made a point of avoiding the last couple.

Now they have come up with this, which is for the most part more specifically based upon the material left behind by Frank. It divides fairly simply into four sections: starting from the back of the book, these are – Firstly (or lastly, I should perhaps say ) four of their own short stories. One of these is the first story they wrote together based on the *DUNE* saga; it is connected to the events in the original book and is quite a good tale. The remainder are connected to their own later novels and I found them to contain little of either interest or merit.

Secondly, a baker's dozen of scenes and chapters written by Frank but omitted from the novel as finally published, together with a further four deleted from the first sequel *DUNE MESSIAH*. It is explained that these scenes were trimmed from *DUNE* for the original magazine publication to make it fit better into the editor's requirements for the lengths of the instalments, but were never reinstated for the subsequent book publication. Presumably, Frank would have

had the opportunity to do so but decided against it, and his decision must be accorded some significance. Indeed, one can sometimes see why he chose not to bother bringing them back. Some clearly do not fit and would have had to be extensively revised; nevertheless they are on the whole illuminating and helpful if read in conjunction with the original book(s). Here on their own, however, they are somewhat out-of-place.

Next, a series of letters and notes recounting the original conception of DUNE and the processes of getting it published, first as a serial in ANALOG and then, after many unsuccessful attempts, in book form. This part is perhaps of some interest to an SF historian, but the ordinary day-to-day reader (even an SF reader) will probably find it less than fascinating.

Last, but not least, a full-length (220 pages) novel entitled SPICE PLANET put together from outlines and drafts left by Frank Herbert himself. I did wonder whether it was in fact the mythical 'seventh DUNE novel' which has previously been mentioned elsewhere, but this is not made clear and may not be the case. What it is, is a preliminary version of DUNE, abandoned by the author while still far from complete. He then started all over again with a radically different concept. Reading it, I was constantly comparing it in my mind with the infinitely better real thing of which this is a pale shadow, looking for familiar characters and events and mentally correlating them with what 'really' happened. In comparison it seemed a trivial work, shorter and lacking the depth and subtlety of the final version, and not nearly so complex, engrossing and well-written.

All-in-all, this book stands in relation to the original novel like the bonus disc you get with the 'Director's Cut' of a movie on DVD. There are the deleted scenes, the production notes, the 'making of' documentary and even the original release version. Nobody would want the bonus disc without the feature, many would not want it at all, and few would bother with it more than once – all of which comments I feel apply equally to THE ROAD TO DUNE. I hope I have explained enough to enable you to decide which category you fall into – I will only add that rather than a book to be enjoyed in its own right by a casual reader this is more one to be studied by a dedicated DUNE enthusiast who may find something worthwhile in it.

*Mj*

## ***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:-**

20th Oct - Anthony Burgess - A CLOCKWORK ORANGE

17th Nov - Robert J Sawyer - FRAMESHIFT

15th Dec - Sarah Zettel - A SORCEROR'S TREASON

**The Birmingham Orange Book Festival** starts October 7<sup>th</sup> – see <http://www.creativelaunchpad.co.uk/opportunities/publications.htm> and <http://www.orangebirminghambookfestival.org/>

**The Light House media centre** in Fryer Street, Wolverhampton is showing NIGHT OF THE DEMON on 31 October. From their website: "A special Halloween screening of Jacques Tourneur's cult classic to tie-in with the release of the book BEATING THE DEVIL - THE MAKING OF 'NIGHT OF THE DEMON' by Tony Earnshaw. From its opening scenes at Stonehenge to its rail side finale with a sensational fire demon, this classic '50s chiller really delivers. Helmed by Jacques Tourneur, who had worked with producer Val Lewton on a string of Universal pictures in the early 1940s, NIGHT OF THE DEMON stars Dana Andrews as a sceptical US scientist battling a malevolent British occultist (Niall MacGinnis) who has the power to raise demons to destroy his enemies. Dir. Jacques Tourneur, UK, 1hr35.

"Join us before the screening for a Book Signing by Tony Earnshaw and Drinks Reception, with a complementary glass of 'Demon's Blood' for all ticket holders. Tony will also introduce the film and take part in a Q & A session after the screening led by journalist Steve Green." The reception/signing is at 7:30pm, with the film starting at 8:15pm. Tickets are £4.90 (£3.70 conc.). Box office: 01902 716 055.

**HEFFERS BOOKSHOP**, CAMBRIDGE sends us this message. "On November 1st from 6.30pm, we are hosting a Science Fiction and Fantasy Evening at Heffers, Grafton Centre, Cambridge. It's a chance to mingle with some great authors and get some of your books signed. Tickets are free and are available from Heffers, The Grafton Centre, CB1 1PS or to reserve tickets or have them sent telephone 01223 568573 or email me on [sarah.whyley@heffers.co.uk](mailto:sarah.whyley@heffers.co.uk).

We have a fantastic line-up so far, authors attending include: PETER F HAMILTON, STAN NICHOLLS, CHINA MIEVILLE, JON COURTENAY GRIMWOOD, SARAH ASH, CHAZ BRENCHLEY, DAVID LEE STONE, JULIET E McKENNA, MARK CHADBOURN, SUSAN PRICE, S F SAID, MICHAEL SCOTT ROHAN, JESSICA RYDILL AND COLIN GREENLAND. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you need further information." – Sarah Whyley

**The Fifth European Mars Society Conference** (EMC5) FROM EARTH TO MARS November 4-6, 2005 Alexandra House Conference Centre, Wroughton, Swindon, England A weekend of guest talks, panels, debates, workshops and events featuring some of the world's leading experts in Mars exploration and featuring an opportunity to visit the Mar Society's newest Mars Analogue Research Station: Euro-MARS. Featured Guests: **Charles Cockell** -

(BAS) Mars Polar Base; **Adam Hawkey** - (U of Wolverhampton) - Mobility on Mars; **Piero Messina** - (ESA) Aurora Exploration Programme; **Pat Norris** - (LogicaCMG) ExoMars Rover; **Jens Ormo** - Wearable Astrobiology Computer; **Robert Zubrin** - Options for Human Mars Missions.

To register for the conference, go to: <http://www.marssociety.co.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](mailto:x15@zoom.co.uk) Website: [www.novacon.org](http://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](mailto:rog@rogpeyton.fsnet.co.uk)*

### ***FUTURE MEETINGS OF THE BSFG***

November 4<sup>th</sup> - tba

December 2<sup>nd</sup> - Christmas Social Evening – Skittles, buffet, prizes.

January 13<sup>th</sup> 2006 – Annual General Meeting / Auction of Books

February 10<sup>th</sup> - Ian R MacLeod

March 10<sup>th</sup> – Brian Stableford

**Newsletter 409** copyright 2005 for Birmingham SF 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 the 'opinion'.

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

***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