

# BRUM GROUP NEWS

The Free Monthly Newsletter of the  
**Birmingham Science Fiction Group**

February 2008

Issue 437

Honorary Presidents

Brian W Aldiss O.B.E. & Harry Harrison  
Committee

Vernon Brown (Chairman), Vicky Cook (Secretary)

Pat Brown (Treasurer), William McCabe

Novacon 38 Chairwoman—Helena Bowles

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Friday 8th February

## Roy Gray

Interzone is Britain's professional SF magazine based around original fiction. Its silver jubilee issue (#209) was published in 2007 and January 2008 brings the issue count to 214. In those years many recognised SF authors, including Solihull's Ian R. MacLeod started their careers with early success in Interzone.

How many stories have been published by Interzone, in its 25 years, by how many authors? Who were the top 20 authors?

In the Sept. 06 e mail submission 'window' 375 stories were submitted by 341 authors.

Where did they come from and how many from women? A random sample of 60 were analysed. What were their concerns and themes?

Roy Gray's job is to obtain useful publicity and advertising for Interzone. Not an easy task. What does he do and how does he do it? Is he any good? As he isn't how can he do better?

Admission £4 (Members £3)

The meeting will commence at 7:45 p.m.

**This will be our first meeting at the Briar Rose Hotel. See inside for more details.**

Next Meeting—14th March: **Andy Sawyer**, critic, reviewer, editor & SF Foundation librarian

# PREVIOUS MEETINGS

Firstly, here are a few photos taken at the Christmas party with all the trimmings and everybody having fun



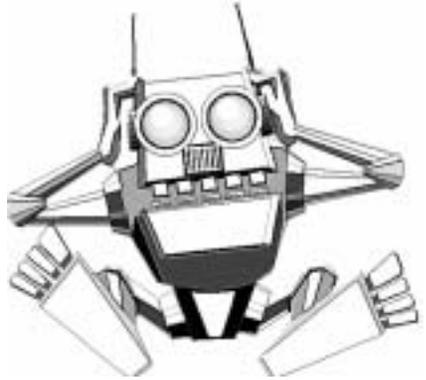
## THE 2008 AGM

The January AGM was quite well attended considering the inclement weather, with thirteen members, including Malcolm and Margaret Thorpe, who rejoined that evening after many years absence, and two non members present. Unfortunately Tim Stannard, our Legal Officer, slipped and hurt himself on his way to the meeting so he had to delegate his position as Chairman of the AGM to me. However he was up and about the next day, albeit with a strained shoulder and black eye.

As has become the norm in recent years, volunteers for the Committee were conspicuous by their absence, so as Rog had resigned last year under the pressure of other commitments and Tim did not re-stand for similar reasons, the remaining Committee members were re-elected unopposed with the posts of Newsletter Editor and Publicity Officer remaining unfilled. This will not only result in the remaining officers having to take on extra work to cover these vacancies, but as we haven't had a second Ordinary Member for many years, the Committee is only just quorate when everyone currently elected is present. So if you think that you can fill, or help in any way with, any of these vacant posts please contact the Secretary by email or any Committee member at a Group meeting. If you cannot help us directly but have any suitable contacts or viable ideas for Speakers, please contact us in the same way – the Committee can only do so much or come up with so many ideas.

The AGM was on the whole unexceptional, with Officers Reports commented on and accepted, but a major decision was taken to move from the Britannia Hotel to the Briar Rose Hotel in Bennett's Hill. The main reason for this was that the

Group made a loss of £607 in 2007. Because Birmingham is promoting itself as a convention centre while simultaneously becoming a drinker's haven, hotel prices are high and pubs have converted their function rooms into vertical drinking areas. Although we had been lucky in negotiating a reduced price at the Britannia our room expenditure was still more than its income.



Discounting the January (AGM) and February (snow/cancelled) 2007 meetings when we had to pay for our room but had no income, admissions only managed to break even once against room hire charge. Even including raffle proceeds on average we made a loss on each meeting. Adding in the AGM Auction income helped a little but count in the Jan/Feb hire charges and room expenditure vastly outweighed room income. On top of all this we had our Speakers expenses – well over £500 last year.

Of course we have Membership income but the Newsletter takes a large slice of this with the remainder being used for a variety of essential outings. So the choice was simple – increase Membership Fees and/or admission charges or cut back on room costs. The latter won the day hands down.

## NEW VENUE

We have managed to secure a room at the Briar Rose for all our usual evenings this year. It is smaller than the Lichfield but should hold our usual numbers easily – in fact it's not a function room as such but is the hotel's Conference Room where the Wetherspoon hotel/pub chain holds committee meetings and discussions. The Briar Rose is adjacent to but separate from the pub of the same name in Bennett's Hill, although there is a communicating door in Reception through which we can obtain our drinks, which are palatable enough to put the pub in Camra's GBG. When you arrive please ask at Reception for the Birmingham Science Fiction Group's meeting room, in fact would you please always speak to reception on arrival because, like most hotels, they are a little more security conscious than the Britannia.

Although we have told the BR our needs we have not seen the room set up as we want it so there will probably have to be a degree of adjustment at our first meeting there so please be patient if things don't run quite as smoothly as usual. On the other hand we would be grateful if you would do your part by, for example, paying on entry, not blocking the door and, somewhat more importantly, being quiet in the corridor outside, which is lined with bedrooms.

# GETTING THERE

There should be a map enclosed with this Newsletter but the BR is quite easy to find – just walk up New Street towards Victoria Square i.e. away from New Street Station/the Britannia, and Bennett's Hill is the last road on your right. The BR Hotel entrance is immediately before the BR pub a little way up the road on your right. (text Vernon Brown, pictures Pat Brown)

## NEWS

The new "Pern" novel "Dragon Harper" is a collaboration between Todd McCaffrey and his mother Anne. Although both have written solo novels in the series this is the first time they have worked together on one.

The shortlist for the BSFA award for novels this year (see below) includes Bryan Talbot's "Alice in Sunderland" a (mostly) non-fictional history of Sunderland in comic book form. The story of the creation of this book formed part of Talbot's talk to this group in 2004.

Organizers are inviting filmmakers to submit entries for the Extraterrestrial Biological Entity Award, which will be presented at the 2008 UFO Conference and Film Festival, Feb. 23-March 1, in Laughlin, Nev. Deadline for entries is Jan. 23. Winners will get a trophy.

The Shirley Jackson Award--named in honor of the author of such classics as "The Lottery" and The Haunting of Hill House--has been established to recognize superior achievement by writers of psychological suspense, horror and dark fantasy.

Joseph Kahn (Torque) is to direct a film version of William Gibson's Neuromancer possibly starring Hayden Christensen (soon to be seen in Jumper).

Ron Howard's Imagine Entertainment and Universal Pictures are negotiating with the estate of legendary SF author E.E. "Doc" Smith for film rights to Smith's seminal Lensman novels.

Following a "successful" campaign to resurrect the TV show Jericho in which fans of the show sent packets of peanuts to CBS, fans of "The 4400" will send

sunflower seeds to "USA Network" and "Journeyman" fans will send "Rice-a-roni" to NBC. Although 7 more episodes of Jericho were made after the campaign, it seems unlikely to continue.

Arthur C Clarke seems to be getting a new Hollywood treatment. Producer David Fincher wants "Rendezvous with Rama" and director Kimberly Peirce wants "Childhood's End".

The Messenger spacecraft performed its first flyby of Mercury, providing the first close-up images of the planet since the Mariner 10 in 1975. While the Mariner mission mapped only 40-45% of the planet's surface, Messenger will perform two more flybys before settling into an orbit around the planet in 2011.

## AWARDS

The shortlists for the **British Science Fiction Association (BSFA) awards** were announced January 22, 2008:

### **Best Novel**

Alice in Sunderland Bryan Talbot  
(Jonathan Cape)

Black Man Richard Morgan (Gollancz)

Brasyl Ian McDonald (Gollancz)

The Execution Channel Ken MacLeod  
(Orbit)

The Prefect Alastair Reynolds (Gollancz)

The Yiddish Policemen's Union Michael  
Chabon (Fourth Estate)

### **Best Short Fiction**

"Lighting Out" Ken MacLeod (disLocations;  
NewCon Press)

"Terminal" Chaz Brenchley (disLocations;  
NewCon Press)

"The Alchemist and the Merchant's Gate"  
Ted Chiang ( F&SF, September)

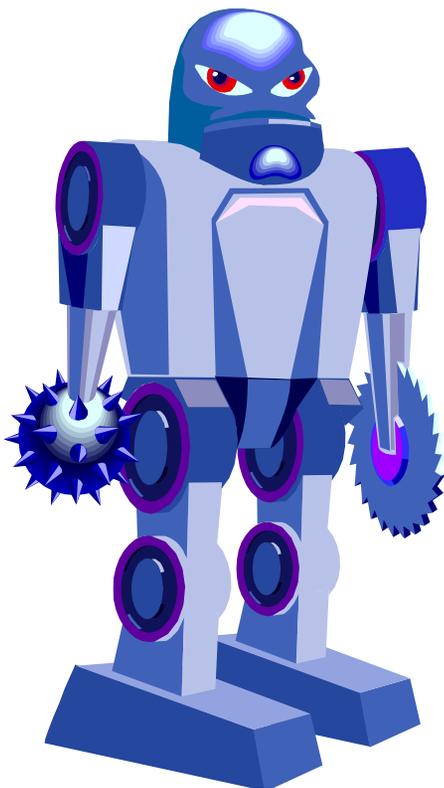
"The Gift of Joy" Ian Whates (TQR)

"The Sledge-Maker's Daughter" Alastair  
Reynolds (Interzone #209)

### **Best Artwork**

"Cracked World" Andy Bigwood (cover of  
disLocations anthology, published by  
NewCon Press)

"H P Lovecraft in Britain" Les Edwards (cover of chapbook by Stephen Jones,



published by the British Fantasy Society)  
"Lunar Flare" Richard Marchand (cover of Interzone #211)  
"Metal Dragon Year" Kenn Brown (cover of Interzone #212)

### **BSFA Fiftieth Anniversary Award: Best Novel of 1958**

A Case of Conscience James Blish (first published by Ballantine)

Have Spacesuit, Will Travel Robert A Heinlein (first published in F&SF, August – October 1958)

Non-Stop Brian Aldiss (first published by Faber & Faber)

The Big Time Fritz Leiber (first published in Galaxy, March/April 1958)

The Triumph of Time James Blish (first published by Avon; subsequent UK title A Clash of Cymbals)

Who? Algis Budrys (first published by Pyramid)

The awards will be presented on Saturday 22 March 2008.



### **Philip K. Dick Nominees**

Seven paperback originals have been nominated for this year's Philip K. Dick Award, to be presented at Norwescon 31 in Seattle on March 21.

Grey, by Jon Armstrong

Undertow, by Elizabeth Bear

From the Notebooks of Dr. Brain, by Minister Faust

Nova Swing, by M. John Harrison

Gradisil, by Adam Roberts

Ally, by Karen Traviss

Saturn Returns, by Sean Williams

## **OBITUARIES**

Marion Van Der Voort died on 26th December 2007 from pneumonia. Marion was proprietor of "At the Sign of the Dragon" book shop with her husband Richard. She also ran conventions in the early 1980s.

Actress Maila Nurmi (b.1921 as Maila Syrjäniemi) died on January 11. Nurmi is better known by her character's name "Vampira" and appeared in films including "Plan 9 From Outer Space" and "The Magic Sword."

Author Edward D. Hoch (b.1930) died on January 17. Hoch is best known for his work in the detective genre, but also published at least three science fiction novels, set in the mid-twenty-first century: *The Transvection Machine*, *The Fellowship of the HAND*, and *The Frankenstein Factory*. He won the Edgar Allan Poe Award in 1968 and two Anthony Awards, in 1998 and 2001, as well as Lifetime Achievement Awards from Bouchercon and Private Eye Writers of America and a Grandmaster from the Mystery Writers of America.

Actor Heath Ledger (b.1979) was found dead on January 22. Ledger, had recently finished filming *The Dark Knight*, in which he was cast as the Joker. He also appeared in the mediaeval comedy "The Knight's Tale" and Terry Gilliam's "The Brothers Grimm."

## FUTURE EVENTS

**The Central Library SF and Fantasy Reading Group** meets on Thursdays at 5.45pm 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:**- 21st February— Powersat by Ben Bova  
Future dates—13th March

21-24 March 2008 ORBITAL (Eastercon), Radisson Edwardian Hotel, Heathrow, London. £55 reg; £20 supp or junior (12-17), £5 child (5-11), £1 infant. Contact 8 Windmill Close, Epsom, Surrey, KT17 3AL. Credit card bookings: [www.orbital2008.org](http://www.orbital2008.org).

Miami Lakes branch public library in the USA has decided to put its new book group on-line. The first book will be Frank Herbert's *Dune*. There will be a live discussion at the end of March and there is already a google group set up to begin the discussion. See <http://groups.google.com/group/dune-book-group> for more details.

22nd-25th August 2008. Discworld Convention 2008, Hilton Metropole Hotel, (NEC) Birmingham. Registration £55 (£36 concessions). Guests Terry Pratchett, Stephen Briggs, Diane Duane, Peter Morwood, Lionel Fanthorpe, Ian Stewart, Jack Cohen & others. [www.dwcon.org](http://www.dwcon.org)

19th-21st September 2008 FANTASYCON 2008, Britannia Hotel, 1 St James St. Nottingham. Registration £50 (BFS members £40) to 31 March 08; then £50 (£60). Supp or day rate £25. Contact 3 Tamworth Close, Lower Earley, Reading, RG6 4EQ. [www.fantasycon.org.uk](http://www.fantasycon.org.uk)

14-16 November 2008 NOVAcon 38, Quality Hotel, Bentley, Walsall. GoH Ian R. MacLeod. £36 reg, until Eastercon 2008. Contact 379 Myrtle Road, Sheffield, S2 3HQ. See [www.novacon38.org.uk](http://www.novacon38.org.uk) for more details

## FUTURE MEETINGS OF THE BSFG

14th March: Andy Sawyer from SF Foundation

11th April : Michael Scott Rohan

9th May , 13th June

We are currently negotiating with Ian R Macleod (Novacon Guest) and Eric Brown.

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Thank you to all the named contributors.

**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