

# BRUM GROUP NEWS

THE *FREE* MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE

## BIRMINGHAM SCIENCE FICTION GROUP

SEPTEMBER 2008

ISSUE 444

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

COMMITTEE: **VERNON BROWN (CHAIRMAN);**  
**VICKY COOK (SECRETARY); PAT BROWN (TREASURER);**  
**ROG PEYTON (NEWSLETTER EDITOR); WILLIAM MCCABE;**  
**NOVACON 38 CHAIRMAN: HELENA BOWLES**

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Friday  
12<sup>th</sup> September

# JAMES BARCLAY

*Adapted from James Barclay's website...*

James was born in 1965. He was introduced by his brother Mike to SF and Fantasy after reading all the *Biggles* books. His early influences included Tolkien, Brian Aldiss, Robert Heinlein, Alan Dean Foster and Michael Moorcock. Around this time he started to write but with little

success.

Deciding later to become an actor he ambled off to London to do a post graduate course in Performing Arts. Several walk-ons, the odd student film and a

**October 10<sup>th</sup> – to be announced**

whole lot of amateur dramatics followed. Now, with the clock ticking into his 44th year, he's looking to do professional work once again. And things are looking promising.

Through many jobs he never stopped writing and submitting and in May 1998 the call came through he was going to be published. He says, "It was a surreal moment, one of those you never forget. The next best feeling is seeing your book on a shelf for the first time - absolutely incredible. Lump in the throat stuff." That was DAWNTHIEF, first book of six about *The Raven*.

Since then, NOONSHADE, NIGHTCHILD, ELFSORROW, SHADOWHEART and DEMONSTORM have been written on and off the London Underground. He then completed the writing of CRY OF THE NEWBORN and A SHOUT FOR THE DEAD, the two books of *The Ascendants of Estorea*. In between, he has written LIGHT STEALER, a novella set in the world of, and before the time of, *The Raven*.

He is visiting the Brum Group for the first time. I have met James on a couple of occasions at conventions and am sure that he will be an extremely entertaining speaker.

RGP

## **ANN GREEN**

It is with much sorrow that we report the death of Ann Green, wife of Steve Green, last year's Novacon Chairman. Although not currently a member of the Brum Group Ann was a past-member and known to virtually everyone in the Group.

For several years Ann has run the Novacon Artshow – very smoothly and very efficiently – and she could always be found there (or in the bar!) with that great beaming smile that we all knew so well.

She will be greatly missed. We understand that a fund-raising collection of Ann's writing and artwork is planned. We will, of course, give full details of that.

Our condolences and thoughts go to Steve.

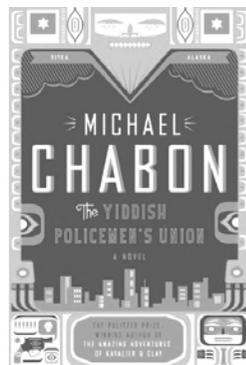
## **THE 2008 HUGO AWARDS**

**Best Novel:** THE YIDDISH POLICEMEN'S UNION by Michael Chabon (HarperCollins; Fourth Estate)

**Best Novella:** "All Seated on the Ground" by Connie Willis (Asimov's Dec. 2007; Subterranean Press)

**Best Novelette:** "The Merchant and the Alchemist's Gate" by Ted Chiang (F&SF Sept. 2007; Subterranean Press)

**Best Short Story:** "Tideline" by Elizabeth Bear (Asimov's June 2007)



**Best Non-fiction Book:** BRAVE NEW WORDS  
THE OXFORD DICTIONARY OF SCIENCE  
FICTION by Jeff Prucher (Oxford University Press)

**Best Dramatic Presentation, Long Form:**  
“Stardust” Written by Jane Goldman and Matthew  
Vaughn, Based on the novel by Neil Gaiman  
Illustrated by Charles Vess Directed by Matthew  
Vaughn (Paramount Pictures)

**Best Dramatic Presentation, Short Form**  
Doctor Who "Blink" Written by Steven Moffat  
Directed by Hettie Macdonald (BBC)

**Best Professional Editor, Long Form:** David  
Hartwell

**Best Professional Editor, Short Form:** Gordon Van Gelder (F&SF)

**Best Professional Artist:** Stephan Martiniere

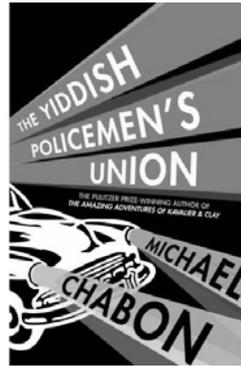
**Best Semiprozine:** LOCUS, edited by Charles N. Brown, Kirsten Gong-  
Wong, & Liza Groen Trombi

**Best Fanzine:** FILE 770

**Best Fan Writer:** John Scalzi

**Best Fan Artist:** Brad Foster

**Campbell Award:** Mary Robinette Kowal



<<WHAAAT!!! No Langford?>>

## **SIDWISE AWARD WINNERS**

This year's Sidewise Award winners were announced at Denvention following a short discussion in which the nominees in attendance discussed what made for bad alternate history. This year was also the second time there was a tie for the award.

**Long Form:** THE YIDDISH POLICEMEN'S UNION by Michael Chabon

**Short Form (tie):** “Recovering Apollo 8” by Kristine Kathryn Rusch and  
“Quaestiones Super Caelo et Mundo” by Michael Flynn

## **WORLD FANTASY AWARD NOMINATIONS**

### **LIFE ACHIEVEMENT**

Leo & Diane Dillon

Patricia McKillip

### **Novel**

FANGLAND by John Marks (Penguin Press)

THE GOSPEL OF THE KNIFE by Will Shetterly (Tor)

THE SERVANTS by Michael Marshall Smith (Earthling Publications)

TERRITORY by Emma Bull (Tor)

YSABEL by Guy Gavriel Kay (Viking Canada; Roc)

### ***Novella***

“Cold Snap” by Kim Newman (The Secret Files of the Diogenes Club)

ILLYRIA, by Elizabeth Hand (PS Publishing)

“The Master Miller's Tale” by Ian R. MacLeod (F&SF May 2007)

THE MERMAIDS by Robert Edric (PS Publishing)

“Stars Seen through Stone” by Lucius Shepard (F&SF Jul 2007)

### ***Short Story***

“The Cambist and Lord Iron: A Fairy Tale of Economics” by Daniel Abraham (LOGORRHEA)

“The Church on the Island” by Simon Kurt Unsworth (AT EASE WITH THE DEAD, Ash-Tree Press)

“Damned If You Don't” by Robert Shearman (TINY DEATHS)

“The Evolution of Trickster Stories Among the Dogs of North Park After the Change” by Kij Johnson (THE COYOTE ROAD)

“Singing of Mount Aora” by Theodora Goss (LOGORRHEA)

### ***Anthology***

THE COYOTE ROAD ed by Ellen Datlow & Terri Windling (Viking)

FIVE STROKES TO MIDNIGHT ed by Gary A. Braunbeck & Hank Schwaeble (Haunted Pelican Press)

INFERNO ed by Ellen Datlow. (Tor)

LOGORRHEA ed by John Klima (Bantam Spectra)

WIZARDS ed by Jack Dann & Gardner Dozois (Berkley)

### ***Collection***

DAGGER KEY AND OTHER STORIES by Lucius Shepard (PS Publishing)

HART & BOOT & OTHER STORIES by Tim Pratt (Night Shade Books)

PLOTS AND MISADVENTURES by Stephen Gallagher (Subterranean Press)

PORTABLE CHILDHOODS by Ellen Klages (Tachyon Publications)

THE SECRET FILES OF THE DIOGENES CLUB by Kim Newman (MonkeyBrain Books)

TINY DEATHS by Robert Shearman (Comma Press)

## ***BRITISH FANTASY AWARD NOMINATIONS***

### ***Novel: The August Derleth Award***

THE GRIN OF THE DARK by Ramsey Campbell (PS Publishing)

HEART SHAPED BOX by Joe Hill (Gollancz)

THE INTRUDERS by Michael Marshall (HarperCollins)

THE TAKEN by Sarah Pinborough (Dorchester)

THE TERROR by Dan Simmons (Little Brown)

THE SERVANTS by Michael Marshall Smith (Earthling)

### ***Novella***

STARSHIP SUMMER by Eric Brown (PS Publishing)

AFTER THE WAR (DOUBLE NOVELLA) by Tim Lebbon (Subterranean)

ALL YOUR GODS ARE DEAD by Gary McMahon (Humdrumming)

BLACK TIDE by Del Stone jr.(Telos)

RAIN by Conrad Williams (Gray Friar Press)

THE SCALDING ROOMS Conrad Williams (PS Publishing)

### **Short Fiction**

“Digging Deep” by Ramsey Campbell (PHOBIC: MODERN HORROR STORIES, Comma Press)

“The Spider Kiss” by Christopher Fowler (THE MAMMOTH BOOK OF MONSTERS, Robinson)

“Thumbprint” by Joe Hill (POSTSCRIPTS #10, PS Publishing)

“My Stone Desire” by Joel Lane (BLACK STATIC #1, TTA Press)

“Discovering Ghosts” Tim Lebbon (POSTSCRIPTS #10, PS Publishing)

### **Collection**

MIDNIGHT BAZAAR: A SECRET ARCADE OF STRANGE AND EERIE TALES by Simon Clark (Robert Hale)

STAINS by Paul Finch (Gray Friar Press)

OLD DEVIL MOON by Christopher Fowler (Serpent’s Tail)

PLOTS AND MISADVENTURES by Stephen Gallagher (Subterranean Press)

DIRTY PRAYERS by Gary McMahon (Gray Friar Press)

GOING BACK by Tony Richards (Elastic Press)

### **Anthology**

THE BLACK BOOK OF HORROR ed by Charles Black (Mortbury Press)

NEW WRITINGS IN THE FANTASTIC ed by John Grant (Pendragon)

THE MAMMOTH BOOK OF BEST NEW HORROR 18 ed by Stephen Jones (Robinson)

ZENCORE ed by D. F. Lewis (Megazanthus)

THE FIRST HUMDRUMMING BOOK OF HORROR STORIES ed by Ian Alexander Martin (Humdrumming)

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

.... Fan and author **George W Proctor** died on August 10. Proctor was active in fandom in the 1970s. Proctor published more than 90 novels, many of which were science fiction, although he also published Westerns. He wrote multiple novelisations for the television series "V" and the novel STARWINGS ....

**Harlan Ellison**, now 74, underwent a successful coronary artery stent implantation on August 5<sup>th</sup> and is recovering well .... Congratulations to Brum Group stalwart **David A Hardy** who is nominated for a Chesley Award in the Magazine section for his cover for ANALOG June 2007 .... Congratulation AGAIN to **Dave** who has been elected Vice-President of the ASFA (Association of Science Fiction & Fantasy Artists) .... It wasn't available at his recent talk, as expected, but it's now finally available – **Chris Priest**'s new book THE MAGIC is his story of the making of the book and of the film THE PRESTIGE. Signed hardcover copies available from me (Rog Peyton) at £16.99 plus £1.20 first class postage .... Our November speaker **Graham Joyce**'s “An Ordinary Soldier of the Queen” is a finalist for the O Henry Award and will appear in THE O HENRY PRIZE STORIES 2009. It's also part of his next novel .... The **Robert**

**A. Heinlein Award** is presented to recognize outstanding published works in science fiction and technical writings to inspire the human exploration of space. Presented each year since 2003, this year's winners are **Ben Bova** and **Spider Robinson** .... First Fandom recognizes fans active since the earliest days of fandom. Hall of Fame Award: **Mike Ashley & Ray Harryhausen**. Posthumous Hall of Fame Award: **Isaac Asimov**. Sam Moskowitz Archive Award: **Frank Robinson & Bob Peterson**. **John Hertz** presented the Forrest J Ackerman Big Heart Award for service to fandom and science fiction to Boston fan **Suford Lewis** .... Melbourne Australia has won the right to host the 68th World Science Fiction Convention from September 2-6 in 2010 .... The latest book in the *Dune* series by **Brian Herbert** and **Kevin J Anderson** is PAUL OF DUNE and fits between DUNE and DUNE MESSIAH and should be available in the US from Tor this month .... FLEET OF WORLDS by **Larry Niven** and **Edward M Lerner** is set 200 years before the events of RINGWORLD and is now out in paperback. The sequel, JUGGLER OF WORLDS appears in hardcover .... A new novel from **Peter F Hamilton**, THE TEMPORAL VOID, will appear from Macmillan in October .... Retail giant **Amazon** has purchased online booksite **AbeBooks** .... A new *Ender* book, ENDER IN EXILE by **Orson Scott Card** will be published in November by Tor USA .... February 2009 will see the publication of CALL ME JOE: SELECTED STORIES OF **POUL ANDERSON**, Vol 1 from NESFA Press .... **Isaac Asimov's** FOUNDATION will be made into a feature film produced by **Bob Shaye** and **Michael Lynne** of Unique Features for Warner Bros .... Universal Pictures has acquired film rights to the late **Robert Jordan's** best-selling *Wheel of Time* series of fantasy novels in a seven-figure deal, Variety reported. Big-screen adaptations of the books will begin with the first book in the cycle, THE EYE OF THE WORLD .... Lionsgate hopes to reboot the **CONAN** feature universe to produce a new, post-millennial franchise by going back to **Robert E Howard's** original stories, with the idea to create a \$100 million R-rated origin film, the largest production to date for Lionsgate and Millennium .... Quote from SCI FI Wire seen on the internet – “When was the last time a show featured an honest-to-god raving evil genius? OK, DOCTOR WHO doesn't count: Who can tell when an English person is being crazy or just English?” (And this from someone who admits to watching DOCTOR WHO and is probably still in his teens!!!) .... A federal judge has allowed a lawsuit by **Fox Studios** to go forward against **Warner Brothers** over the release of the film WATCHMEN. According to Fox, when Warner Brothers bought the rights to the film from **Lawrence Gordon**, they did not purchase the distribution rights, which Fox claims they still own. Fox has threatened to hold up the release of the film or take the case to trial .... Warner Brothers has announced that it will be delaying the release of the cinematic version of **HARRY POTTER AND THE HALF-BLOOD PRINCE** from November 2008 until July 2009. According to studio executives, the move is purely for marketing reasons and the film would have been ready for release on its initial date .... **For the geek who has everything:** CBS

Consumer Products announced that it will sell a full-size, operational replica of the chair piloted by **Capt. James T. Kirk** on the original *Star Trek* TV show. And it'll only set you back \$2,000. The officially licensed product features a working swivel design, light-up controls and sound effects from the series (intercom hail, photon torpedoes, etc.). The chair also issues snippets of dialogue from the show, including the famous "Space: The final frontier" prologue and **William Shatner's** voice uttering such deathless phrases as "Lt. Uhura, open a channel to all decks" and "Kirk to engineering: Scotty, report!" (The REALLY sad thing is that there'll be a lot of buyers...oh, dear...isn't it times like this that makes you ashamed to be stuck in the same category as these 'sci-fi' fans?) .....  
RGP



## BOOK REVIEWS



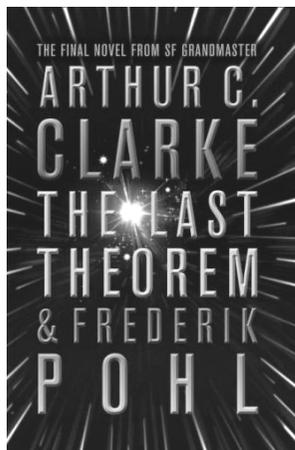
(**REVIEWERS** please note:- all reviews should be emailed direct to me at [rgp@rogpeyton.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:rgp@rogpeyton.fsnet.co.uk)) **Deadline for each issue is 14 days prior to the date of the monthly meeting.**

### ***THE LAST THEOREM***

**by Arthur C. Clarke & Frederik Pohl**

**Voyager / 336pgs / £18.99 / hardcover / ISBN: 978-0007289981**

**Reviewed by Peter Weston**



Well, it's a bit of a mess, really. Just as Heinlein repeated himself in his later, dreadful books, so Clarke returns to some of his old, well-worn ideas – the 'Skyhook' or space elevator on Ceylon, a solar sailing race with his 'Sunjammer', the wonders of deep-sea diving, and so on. I was ready for the scene in which someone has to go into vacuum without a spacesuit, and didn't quite get it though the story came close.

But wait a minute, did I suggest that Clarke wrote this? No, he didn't. The book has Fred Pohl's trademarks all over it, his tongue-in-cheek, don't-take-too-seriously depiction of human foibles and alien interventions, never mind the mathematical stuff which is his special forte, and the most interesting bit of the book. Unfortunately,

despite a few digressions our protagonist has solved Fermat's Last Theorem by Page 109, barely a third of the way through, and from then onwards it's downhill all the way.

Did I say ‘story’ up there? You know, with believable characters, plot, suspense, tension & resolution, maybe a bit of mystery and excitement along the way? Sorry, you don’t get any of that stuff. The best they can manage is some between-chapters verbiage about squids-in-space who are going to destroy the Earth... except that for no particular reason they decide not to, in the end.

There was a report in *Ansible* two years ago that Clarke ‘is no longer writing, and has asked dynamic young author Frederik Pohl (born two years after ACC) to finish his new novel’. I suspect that’s a bit of an understatement; my guess is that Arthur gave Fred an idea, a few notes, and left him to it. I wonder why either of them bothered. PRW

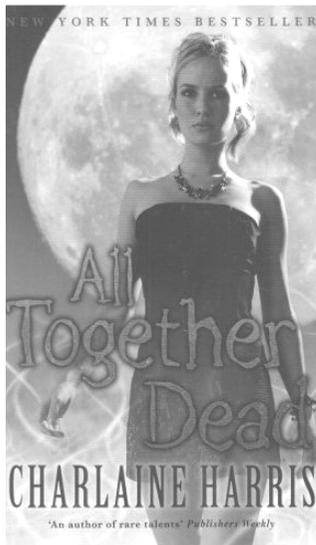
***ALL TOGETHER DEAD* by Charlainé Harris**

**Gollancz / 323pgs / £12.99 / Hardcover / ISBN: 978-0575083905**

***FROM DEAD TO WORSE* by Charlainé Harris**

**Gollancz / 259 pgs / £12.99 / Hardcover / ISBN: 978-0575083943**

**Reviewed by Pauline Morgan**

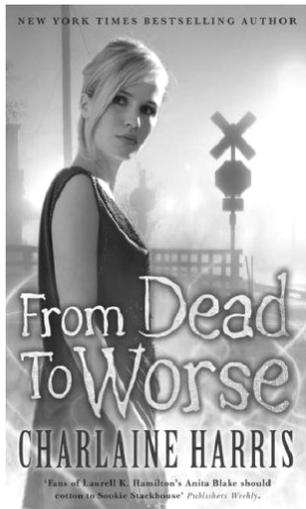


These two books form part of the continuing narrative of *Sookie Stackhouse*. And follow directly from *DEFINITELY DEAD* (see review in last month’s newsletter).

Sookie is a barmaid in the small Louisiana town of Bon Temps. For centuries, supernatural beings have been secretly living amongst us. Five years previously, the vampires came out. Legally, they have to be regarded like any ethnic minority bit naturally, there is prejudice – would you want your daughter to sleep with one? There are fundamentalist groups who want to see the vampires wiped out and will resort to violence. What these groups are unaware of is that there are also weres (wolves, panthers, foxes), shifters (who can become any animal) and fairies. Sookie is a telepath and has recently discovered that she has fairy somewhere in her ancestry. Her boss at the bar is a shifter and two of her ex-lovers are vampires. Her current boyfriend is a weretiger and her lodger is a witch. It is unsurprising that she is unfazed by supernatural creatures.

*ALL TOGETHER DEAD*, is set in the months after Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans. Many of Louisiana’s vampires are missing but that is not going to prevent the big vampire summit from taking place in Rhodes. The vampire queen of Louisiana, Sophie-Anne Leclercq, has insisted that Sookie goes with the party, partly because a telepath will be useful as she negotiates with non-vampires (Sookie cannot read vampire minds) and also because she is a witness to the death

of the vampire king of Arkansas. Sophie-Anne is to be tried at the summit, accused of killing her husband – an alliance of convenience. Unfortunately, almost as soon as Sookie arrives, three of the Arkansas party are found murdered, then Sookie finds a bomb by the lift. While the manoeuvring and infighting is going on between the vampires, the fundamentalist ant-vampire group Fellowship of the Sun have been temporarily and disastrously been forgotten.



FROM DEAD TO WORSE continues directly from ALL TOGETHER DEAD. It begins positively, with a double wedding which has been anticipated in the last two books. Sookie is there in her role of barmaid when she is press-ganged into being a bridesmaid. Among the guests are a smattering of the supernatural groups, vampires, weres, shifters. One guest who catches her eye, an older man with intense charisma, who she later meets and he identifies himself as her fairy great, great grandfather. This is all setting up the background for the gritty heart of the novel. This is the fall-out from Hurricane Katrina and the events of the previous novel. A displaced pack of werewolves makes a move on the local group and the Vegas vampires intend to fill the power vacuum left by these events.

The style is chatty, often seeming inconsequential but the end of these books the reader is sucked into Sookie's world. These are not deep, books, rather, light, fluffy, enjoyable entertainment. PM

## ***FORTHCOMING EVENTS***

*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 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)*

**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:-**

18th September - **CLOUD ATLAS** by **David Mitchell**

Future dates — 16th October, 20th November, 18th December

**FANTASYCON 2008**, Britannia Hotel, 1 St James St. Nottingham. 19th-21st September 2008. Registration is £60 (£50 for BFS members). Day rate is £25

Fri/Sun and £40 Sat. Contact 10 Sylvan Avenue, Northfield, Birmingham, B31 2PG or email [membership@fantasycon.org.uk](mailto:membership@fantasycon.org.uk)

**THE BIRMINGHAM INTERNATIONAL COMICS SHOW** will be held 10.30-5.30pm on October 4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> at the Think Tank, Millenium Point, Curzon Street, Birmingham B4 7XG. Further details from their website – <http://www.thecomicsshow.co.uk/>

**NEWCON 4** will be held at The Fishmarket, Northampton, NN1 2HL on Saturday October 11<sup>th</sup> & Sunday October 12<sup>th</sup>. Convention Chairman is Ian Watson and the Guests of Honour are Iain M Banks, Storm Constantine and Ken MacLeod. More details from their website... <http://www.newcon4.com/newcon/main/default.aspx>

**THE 19TH ANNUAL CONVENTION OF THE SOCIETY OF FANTASTIC FILMS** will be held at the Day's Hotel, Sackville St., Manchester (The Manchester Conference Centre). Dates are 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> October. Full details from their website... <http://fantastic-films.com/festival/>

**OCTOCON** will be held at the Royal Dublin Hotel, Dublin over the weekend of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> October. Ken MacLeod is Guest of Honour. More details from... <http://2008.octocon.com/>

**NOVACON 38** will be held at the Quality Hotel, Walsall, over the weekend of 14-16 November 2008; the guests are science fiction author Ian R MacLeod and the Brum Group's own Vernon Brown, who chaired the first Novacon back in 1971. Membership costs £38.00, payable to "Novacon 38" at 379 Myrtle Road, Sheffield, S2 3HQ; registration forms can be downloaded from the convention website, [www.novacon38.org.uk](http://www.novacon38.org.uk), along with the first two progress reports.



**LX2009 – the 2009 Eastercon.** April 10-13, 2009 – Cedar Court Hotel, Bradford. Guests of Honour: Jon Courtenay Grimwood, Dirk Maggs, Tim Powers, David Lloyd. Fan Guests of Honour: Mary and Bill Burns. Website is [www.LX2009.com](http://www.LX2009.com)

My apologies for this (almost) blank page. As I write this I am just hoping my computer stays working long enough to get this newsletter printed. My computer is reporting error after error due to a corrupted hard drive .I cannot access my emails or the internet – Word seems to be the only part that is working. It has taken me four days, instead of one, to do this newsletter with my computer crashing regularly and taking up to an hour to reboot each time. Yesterday it worked for about an hour and the rest of the day was crashing, rebooting, etc. A new 240GB hard drive is on order and hopefully I'll have a working computer within a week or so.

*RGP*

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

**10th October** – to be announced

**7th November** – fantasy author and Brum Group favourite **GRAHAM JOYCE** returns... (**NOTE: One week earlier than usual**)

**6th December – Christmas Social** – Skittles and buffet at the Selly Park Tavern. Tickets will be on sale in September.

**January 2009 – Annual General Meeting and Auction**

**February – Quiz** against Birmingham University SF Group

**March** - tbc

**BRUM GROUP NEWS #444** copyright 2008 for Birmingham SF Group. Designed by Rog Peyton (19 Eves Croft, Bartley Green, Birmingham, B32 3QL – phone 0121 477 6901 or email [rgp@rogpeyton.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:rgp@rogpeyton.fsnet.co.uk)). 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, 10 Sylvan Avenue, Northfield, Birmingham, B31 2PG