

# BRUM GROUP NEWS

THE *FREE* MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE

## BIRMINGHAM SCIENCE FICTION GROUP

AUGUST 2010

ISSUE 467

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

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**Previous 'fsnet' and 'hotmail' addresses should NOT be used**



## Friday 13th August Summer Social

Once again our summer social will be a meal at the Black Eagle. Popular and friendly, the Black Eagle Bar & Restaurant is situated at 16 Factory Road, Hockley, Birmingham, just a couple of hundred yards from Benson Road Metro Station on the Wolverhampton to Birmingham Metro line.

The Black Eagle offers an excellent range of ever-changing guest ales from small breweries along with 4 or 5 permanent brews. Excellent food is also available throughout the day and evening. They offer a range of great value food including roast chicken, home-made pies, various fish dishes, steaks & grills including an excellent mixed grill. They also have a great selection of daily

**September 10th – SF author JAIN FENN will be visiting the Group and will be interviewed by Pauline Morgan.**

specials. The Black Eagle has won the CAMRA Birmingham Pub of the Year on several occasions due to our combination of warm and friendly service and excellent food and drink.

Most of the available tickets are already taken but if you haven't yet booked there is still a chance. £5 deposit required – contact me (Rog) **immediately** on 477 6901 if you wish to join us.

See last month's newsletter for times and details of how to get there. Their website is: <http://www.blackeaglepub.co.uk/> RGP

## **SCIENCE FICTION BANNED!**

Excerpted from *Daily Telegraph*, July 22nd

A short story competition to celebrate the life of H G Wells failed to attract a single entry after organisers banned science fiction writing. The contest, organised by Reg Turnill the former BBC aerospace correspondent, challenged fans of the author, considered by many as the father of science fiction, to write stories about contemporary life in his home county of Kent rather than aliens or time travel. Another condition was that the story had to be handwritten rather than typed in an effort to challenge the modern over-reliance on computers. The contest offered a £1000 prize for the winner but failed to attract entrants

Ray Potter, 54, a Kent resident said: "People who love sci-fi want to write about alien invasions. Writing about Kent life in 2010 would be the most boring thing in the world for them."



## **Joe Haldeman's FOREVER WAR movie**

Joe Haldeman has posted this over on LiveJournal:  
Got some 'sort-of' news about the FOREVER WAR movie, in that Ridley Scott did mention it while he was talking to a bunch of film buffs at an action movie convention. Kind of rambling, but at least the movie is still on his mind –

"[Haldeman] thought instead of writing the book about Vietnam, he'd write a book about a future idea of this perpetual war that seemed to be perpetual if you were a soldier serving in Vietnam. Why on earth were we there? What were we doing? What's the ultimate target? How do we get out? In a word, that reflects the whole tenor of the book. So it's philosophical and, in a funny kind of way, romantic. Romantic in the sense of I think 2001 was romantic and STAR WARS is romantic, the first *Star Wars*, George Lucas', by far the best of the *Star Wars*, the one he directed, I think. That's the kind of romantic view. Romantic, I don't mean love story. I mean there's a vision there which elevates the idea."

To me that's pretty good news. I've been hoping against hope that the movie wouldn't be just another skiffy big-explosions, big-boobs, big-but-stupid-ideas sort of thing. The main story is really about love and time. – Joe

## **SHIRLEY JACKSON AWARD – THE WINNERS**

The winners for the 2009 Shirley Jackson Award were announced at Readercon on July 11. The award is presented to recognize outstanding achievement in the literature of psychological suspense, horror, and the dark fantastic.

**Novel:** BIG MACHINE by Victor LaValle

**Novella:** MIDNIGHT PICNIC by Nick Antosca

**Novellette:** “Morality” by Stephen King

**Short Story:** “The Pelican Bar” by Karen Joy Fowler

**Single-Author Collection (tie):** TUNNELING TO THE CENTER OF THE EARTH by Kevin Wilson and LOVE SONGS FOR THE SHY AND CYNICAL by Robert Shearman

**Edited Anthology:** POE: 19 NEW TALES INSPIRED BY EDGAR ALLAN POE edited by Ellen Datlow

## **...AND WHAT DID YOU THINK?**

### **THE LETTER COLUMN OF ‘BRUM GROUP NEWS’**

Anything to say about the Group, meetings or SF in general? Email your opinions to me at rog [dot] peyton [at] btinternet [dot] com >>

**And, continuing our discussion on “What is SF”....**

Unfortunately, everyone’s deserted the discussion and I’m no nearer to finding a suitable definition of SF to present to the public in general. Come on people! Let’s have some feedback....!



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

.... Author **James P. Hogan** (b. 1941) was found dead on July 12 according to his literary agent. Hogan, who won three Seiun Awards and 2 Prometheus Awards, wrote the *Giants* series, beginning with his debut novel, *INHERIT THE STARS*, as well as *THRICE UPON A TIME* and *THE PROTEUS OPERATION* among others ....

Author **F. Gwynplaine MacIntyre** (b.1948) died on June 25, an apparent suicide. MacIntyre was the author of *THE WOMAN BETWEEN THE WORLDS* and *MacINTYRE’S IMPROBABLE BESTIARY*, the latter made up of his columns for *Asimov’s*. A body identified as MacIntyre’s was found in his burned apartment a day after

he was taken to Coney Island Hospital for observation after police had received word that he might be suicidal .... **Samuel R. Delany** and **Harlan Ellison** have been announced as recipients of the Eaton Award for Lifetime Achievement by the University of California-Riverside. Delany is the 2010 honoree and Ellison is the honoree for 2011 .... **Neil Gaiman** quits his vampire novel because of the TWILIGHT effect! According to an interview in *The Independent*, Gaiman, whose *GRAVEYARD BOOK* recently became the first children’s book to win the Carnegie Award, has decided there are far too many bloodsuckers out there. In fact, he compared the growth of vampires in books, TV and movies to a cockroach infestation .... the winners of the **2009 Prometheus Awards** have been announced by the Libertarian Futurist Society. The Prometheus Awards are given to honor excellence in libertarian science fiction. Best Novel -THE

UNINCORPORATED MAN by **Dani & Eytan Kollin** and the Hall of Fame Award - “No Truce for Kings” by **Poul Anderson** .... **Jean M Auel** has handed in the final book in the Earth’s Children series, THE LAND OF PAINTED CAVES – only 30 years after book 1, CLAN OF THE CAVE BEAR .... the winner of the **2010 Cordwainer Smith Rediscovery Award** was announced at Readercon. The award seeks to recognize and draw attention to lesser-known fantasy or science fiction authors. This year’s award went to **Mark Clifton**, perhaps best known for co-authoring the second novel to win the Hugo Award, THEY’D RATHER BE RIGHT (a.k.a. THE FOREVER MACHINE), strangely enough the ONLY Hugo winner never published in the UK! .... CRYOBURN, a new Vorkosigan novel by **Lois McMaster Bujold** is due in hardcover from Baen in November .... the winners of the **John W Campbell Award** and the **Theodore Sturgeon Award** have been announced. The Campbell being presented to THE WINDUP GIRL by **Paolo Bacigalupi** for the Best SF Novel and the Sturgeon to “Shambling Towards Hiroshima” by **James Morrow** for Best Short Story .... Filmmaker **George Pál** (1908-1980) and nineteenth century author **Percy Greg** (1836-1889) have had craters named for them on Mars. Both craters are located east of Hellas Planitia basin. Pál Crater is about 79 km wide near 110°E, 30°S and Greg is about 68 km wide near 112°E, 38°S. This also marks the first time the IAU has use **John Clute** and **Peter Nichols**’ THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SCIENCE FICTION on the list of references cited in planetary nomenclature .... BSGF members **Pauline Morgan** and **Dave Hardy** have just returned from a trip taking in Tahiti to watch a total eclipse and then travelled a further 6000 miles to visit Easter Island! Don’t forget to ask them about the trip when you see them .... Twelve years after she converted to Christianity from atheism, bestselling author **Anne Rice** has ‘quit being a Christian’ because of the religion’s attitude to birth control, homosexuality and science. In a message posted on her Facebook page Rice said she was ‘out’. “In the name of Christ, I refuse to be anti-gay. I refuse to be anti-feminist. I refuse to be anti-artificial birth control. I refuse to be anti-Democrat. I refuse to be anti-secular humanism. I refuse to be anti-science. I refuse to be anti-life. In the name of Christ, I quit Christianity and being Christian. Amen,” the author wrote. An atheist for decades, Rice returned to her childhood faith of Catholicism in 1998. – wasn’t it just my luck that when she signed books at Andromeds she ‘desecrated’ the visitors’ book by writing in it “Thank you for the Signing – you do the Lord’s work!”. We all nearly threw up!

RGP

    **BOOK REVIEWS**    

(**REVIEWERS** please note:- all reviews should be emailed direct to me at rog [dot] peyton [at] buinternet [dot] com) **Deadline for each issue is 14 days prior to the date of the monthly meeting.**

**BY MIDNIGHT** by *Mia James*

**Gollancz / 453pgs / hardcover £11.99 ISBN: 978-0575095526**

**Reviewed by Pauline Morgan**

This is one of Gollancz’s Young Adult novels and the first of a supernatural series. April Dunne is a sixteen-year-old uprooted from Edinburgh to a house opposite Highgate

Cemetery because her father has a new job. She is sent to Ravenwood, a private school for high fliers. While most of the other sixth-form pupils seem either rich or geeky, she pals up with Caro who is, amongst other things, a conspiracy theorist, and Simon, Caro's gay childhood friend.



While her father researches the Highgate vampire and April is becoming intrigued by Gabriel, a fellow pupil, two murders take place. One is of Alix Graves a pop star who lives nearby, the other April almost stumbles over on her way home. Then April's father is murdered. Caro is convinced that the deaths are linked. She also becomes convinced that the school is being run by vampires.

Told from the perspective of a teenager, this is a fine portrayal of teenage angst, full of the usual arguments with parents, the on-off relationship with Gabriel, the urgings of her mother to make friends with Davina, daughter of one of the school's richest patrons. Her loyalties are torn and she has not only her grief to contend with but also her mother's decline. Then, just when she thinks things cannot get worse, she discovers that not only is Gabriel a vampire but she is a Fury. She can kill vampires – not with a stake but by kissing them. She is falling in love with a boy that she will kill if he kisses her.

Do these characters sound familiar? Imagine this as Buffy the Vampire Slayer with Highgate taking the place of Sunnydale. If you are a Buffy fan, you should enjoy this.

By the way, I forgot to mention the teacher who... never mind. Read the book and find out. Regardless of this, *BY MIDNIGHT* is a good example of teenage fiction that can also be appreciated by older readers.

*PM*

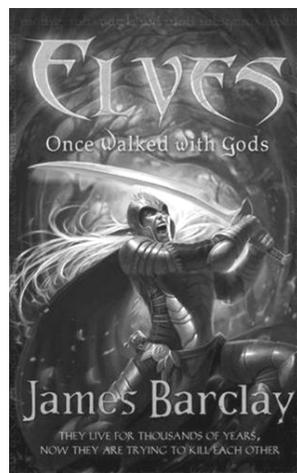
## ***ELVES ONCE WALKED WITH GODS* by James Barclay**

**Gollancz / 366pgs / hardcover £18.99 ISBN: 978-0575085015 / trade paperback £12.99/ ISBN: 978-0575085022**

**Reviewed by Jim Pearce**

*ELVES ONCE WALKED WITH GODS* is the first of a trilogy by this prolific author. The many species of Elves (called Threads) have lived in an unnatural harmony for over a thousand years on both their original home world and Calius where this story is set. About 10 years before the present date they are forced to flee their home world to escape from the demonic Garonin leaving about 100,000 behind to be slaughtered. Takaar, the elf who created the harmony and lead the resistance to the Garonin, is blamed for the loss and has fled into the jungles of Calius.

Malcontents are working to destroy the harmony established by Takaar. On its formal repudiation, Elven society immediately and violently fractures with each Thread



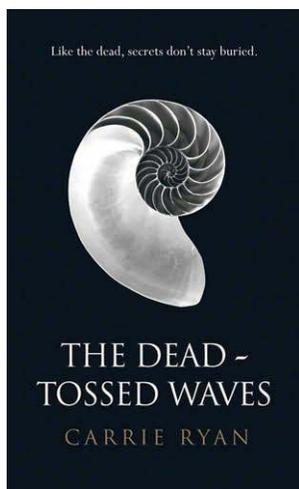
taking revenge for perceived slights and inequalities. Human mercenaries have been brought in to help re-establish the pre-harmony ruling Thread but, using magic, brutally take over and establish their own rule. In desperation, controversial steps are taken to recall Takaar from his exile; but will he be of help or a hindrance as in the 10 years since he was last seen he has gone mad?

As was to be expected of this author the book is competently written and moves along at a high pace with its many narrative strands being seamlessly woven together. That said the plot did not grip nor the characters engage. I did not become interested in what was happening to the elves, either as a race or as individuals, until the end of the book when the story started to grow on me. Do I want to read the next part of the story, perhaps? Would I buy a copy? No. *JTP*

### ***THE DEAD-TOSSED WAVES by Carrie Ryan***

**Gollancz / 402pgs / £9.99 hardcover ISBN: 978-0575090897**

**Reviewed by Pauline Morgan**



It is very difficult to make zombies sexy. Instead of trying to, Carrie Ryan concentrates on the burgeoning emotions of her human characters. Since this is written for the young adult market, do not expect steamy sex scenes. Compared with some of the offerings in the bookshops, this is very chaste.

This is a post apocalyptic novel. The event that changed the world was The Return when the dead, known as Mudo, started walking. They are dormant until they smell living flesh. Then all they want to do is infect the living with their condition. Bites are invariably fatal.

Gabry is an adolescent who lives in an enclave of the living with her mother. One night, she and a group of friends defy the rules to venture outside the barrier to a derelict fairground. She is encouraged by her best friend Cira and Cira's brother, Catcher. Just as Catcher is about to give Gabry her first kiss, they are attacked one of the Mudo, the returned dead. Two of the teenagers are killed, Catcher is bitten. Gabry escapes back inside the barrier but the others are rounded up and sentenced to join the Recruiters whose job is to hunt down Mudo. Gabry is torn between wanting to stay safe and owning up to being with her friends. Hormones take over and she decides to brave the outside again to find Catcher, expecting him to be dying. Instead, she discovers that he is a very rare person, an Immune. The bite did not kill him and now the Mudo cannot sense him. Rescuing Cira, they venture into the Forest of Hands and Teeth. During the flight, Gabry learns about her own origins which are not what she thought.

The tensions and anxieties of living in a world like this are well drawn and the obsessions of adolescents are well handled. There is, however, a bit too much of the teenage angst about who she fancies most – Catcher or Elias – perhaps a bit too much even for the readership the book is aimed at, as Gabry never really gets beyond the tentative kissing stage. *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 [dot] peyton [at] btinternet [dot] com*

**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.

Future books to be discussed will provisionally be...

Forthcoming:- COALESCENT by Stephen Baxter; DIVERGENCE by Tony Ballantyne; LET THE RIGHT ONE IN by Jon Avide Lindquist; HUNTER'S RUN by Martin, Dozois & Abrahams.

**THE MISFiTs** are an informal group of local SF fans who meet regularly at 7pm at the Wagon & Horses, Oldbury on the third Friday of each month. Real ale, good food and great company. More details from Martin Tudor - (empties084 [at] btinternet [dot] com).

**FANTASYCON 2010** will be held over the weekend of September 17-19 at the Britannia Hotel, 1 St James Street, Nottingham. Guest of Honour will be Lisa Tuttle. Master of Ceremonies will be James Barclay. Website is...  
<http://sites.google.com/site/fantasycon2010/>

**PROFESSOR IAN STEWART speculates on the possibilities of extra-terrestrial life and how different it might be to our own, while Professor Andy Fabian and Dr Carolin Crawford reveal the secret sounds of the solar system, including the big bang itself. Gaze into the vastness of space in the company of some of the biggest scientific brains on the planet. Thursday 7th October 7:00pm at Symphony Hall, Broad Street, Birmingham. £7.50, £5 students and under 16s**

**DOCTOR WHO LIVE!** BBC Worldwide has announced a series of arena dates for the very first production of DOCTOR WHO LIVE which is coming to The NIA, Birmingham, 18 - 20 October 2010. Tickets range from £25 to £38.50 each. The new stage show, based upon the BBC's smash-hit, award-winning series *Doctor Who*, promises to deliver a spectacular audio/visual experience featuring live music, special effects and appearances from the show's most popular monsters. Full details from The Ticket Factory - phone 0844 338 0388 or see their website [www.theticketfactory.com](http://www.theticketfactory.com)

**ILLUSTRIOUS** is the 2011 Eastercon to be held at the Hilton Metropole Hotel, the NEC, Birmingham over the Easter weekend 22-25 April. Guests of Honour are US author David Weber and UK author Peter F Hamilton. Artist GoH is none other than our own David A Hardy! Fan GoH is Vince Doherty. More info: <http://www.illustrious.org.uk/>



**NOVACON 40** – the Brum Group’s own convention and the longest-running regional convention in the UK, will be once again held at The Park Inn, 296 Mansfield Road, Nottingham, NG5 2BT. Dates are November 12th to 14th November. Guests of Honour are **Iain M Banks** and our Co-President **Brian Aldiss, O.B.E.** Full details at <http://novacon.org.uk/>

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

**October 8th – SF, fantasy author and satirist ADAM ROBERTS**

**November 5th – SF author CHARLES STROSS**

**December 3rd – Christmas Social**

**Jan 2011 – Annual General Meeting and Auction**

**Feb – QUIZ with University SF Society**

**BRUM GROUP NEWS #467** (August 2010) copyright 2010 for Birmingham SF Group. Designed by Rog Peyton (19 Eves Croft, Bartley Green, Birmingham, B32 3QL – phone 0121 477 6901 or email [rog.peyton\[at\]btinternet\[dot\]com](mailto:rog.peyton[at]btinternet[dot]com)). 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