

BRUM GROUP NEWS

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE

BIRMINGHAM SCIENCE FICTION GROUP

JANUARY 2011

ISSUE 472

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

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Friday 14th January 2011 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING and BOOK AUCTION

A Happy New Year to all our members from the committee. We hope that you enjoyed your Christmas and that the New Year will be a good one.

January is traditionally the time for the Annual General Meeting usually followed by the Book Auction.

Our Annual General Meeting is a legal necessity. It is the time for a new committee to be elected and is also the time for you to voice your views on the Group. Full details of committee member requirements were included in the December newsletter so we trust you've all had time to peruse at length and decide which of the committee posts you'd love to stand for.

All the current committee are restanding for re-election with the exception of Vicky who, after 10 years, has decided to stand down. So the post of Secretary needs to be filled. You **must** be a member of the Group and ideally should have been a member for at least 12 months. And, of course, you can stand against any of the current committee should you so wish. We **need** to get some kind of changeover in the committee each year, otherwise the Group could suffer. This year we will have at least one change in the

**February 11th - the QUIZ with the Birmingham University
SF Society. A pub-style quiz with prizes for the winners.**

committee which is always a good thing - it prevents ideas stagnating. SO VOLUNTEER NOW!

The Agenda for the AGM together with the Constitution is included in this mailing. PLEASE BRING IT WITH YOU TO THE MEETING.

The AGM is usually completed very quickly and we can get on with the main event of the evening – **the Auction**. Once again, I will try to empty your wallets/purses with as little pain as possible. But we do need items to sell so please donate. Other members *need* the items you've finished with. They are not aware of that yet but it will be my job to 'persuade' them.

All the proceeds go to help the running of the Brum Group – without the money raised from auctions we'd most likely have to increase the membership fees. So please bring a few items with you – books, magazines, fanzines, artwork, posters, videos DVDs, CDs, etc. RGP

The meeting will take place in the conference room on the first floor of The Briar Rose Hotel, Bennetts Hill, off New Street.

The doors open at 7.30pm and the meeting will commence at 8.00pm so please arrive early, get your drinks from the bar on the ground floor, and be seated in plenty of time. The entrance fee for this meeting is free. Non-members are not eligible to vote on any motions in the AGM.

THE CHRISTMAS SOCIAL

Well, what happened? For the first time in many, many years, we didn't sell all the tickets, falling short by about 10. Which means that the Group lost money on the evening! Unfortunately, due to illness, etc., nine people who *had* purchased their tickets failed to show which left just 16 attendees. On the positive side, each of those 16 got to bowl far more than they would have had everyone turned up. There was more food to eat and more chances to win prizes so it's safe to say that those who did turn up had a good time.

ARE HIDDEN 'BIBLE CODE' MESSAGES OMINOUS NUKE WARNINGS? By Benjamin Radford, LiveScience's Bad Science Columnist

Author Michael Drosnin believes he has information that's vital to national - indeed global - security, and he is concerned that President Obama is being shielded from these important revelations by senior members of the administration.

Drosnin is so concerned, in fact, that he took out a full page ad on Dec. 8 in the *New York Times* (pg A27) that asks, "Why Won't the White House Let the President Read This Letter?" Under that is a photograph of Osama bin Laden, with a large caption that reads, "Bin Laden May Already Have Nuclear Weapons." How did Drosnin get this information? He read it (along with the weapons' location) in the Bible: it was "first stated by a code in the Bible as the hide-out for nuclear weapons... The code clearly states that Al Qaeda has nuclear weapons there."

Hundreds of millions of Christians who have read THE BIBLE may be scratching their heads, wondering how they missed the 'clear' references to nuclear weapons and Al

Qaeda among the gospels and parables. The answer is that Drosnin, author of the best-selling *Bible Code* book series, claims he can see things in the Bible that no one else can.

Drosnin believes that the Bible contains codes (hidden in numbers and letters) accurately predicting world events.

Drosnin's critics have demonstrated that the meanings he found were simply the result of selectively choosing data sets from a vast sea of random letters within the Bible text. For example, physicist David E. Thomas showed that the patterns Drosnin and others found were the result of 'data mining'. If you run a computer program through enough massive pieces of text (whether THE BIBLE or WAR AND PEACE or MOBY-DICK), looking for enough patterns (every 10th letter, every 12th letter, etc.), it will eventually spit out some words and jumbled sentences that could be interpreted to make sense. It's the sort of thing that the veritable room full of monkeys with typewriters would be able to generate, given enough time.

Thomas demonstrated this for LiveScience by downloading an excerpt from Drosnin's new book from his website. "It was 3,681 characters in length after stripping spaces and punctuation, or just over one percent of the Torah's length," Thomas explained. "I ran two quick algorithms, and even though the chapter is short, it teems with amazing 'Bible Codes'. For example I found the words 'vain' and 'hoax' in one analysis, and the word 'megalomania' in another. Do these codes mean anything? Of course not! They just serve to show how easily hidden messages can be produced in any text, not just the Torah."

Drosnin does not explain why God would bother to hide messages in Biblical text that can only be revealed (by him) through complex computer algorithms scouring millions of letters. If the deity felt the message was important, presumably it could have been presented clearly and plainly.

The most likely answer to Drosnin's question is that President Obama is not interested in responding to claims based on numerology, scripture or fortune-telling - nor in helping Drosnin promote his new book.

<<Amazing what people will do to make money! Remember Erich von Daniken? It would appear that all you really need is a crazy idea and some journalists without brain cells to promote your 'idea'. Forgetting of course that THE BIBLE was written in a different language and what we read (well, you, certainly not me) is a translation. Wondering what this type of idiot looked like, I searched on Google Images. And guess what - one of the first photos of him is with Uri Geller!!! Says it all really, doesn't it? - RGP>>

WORLD FANTASY AWARD WINNERS

Best Novel: THE CITY & THE CITY by China Mieville

Best Novella: "Sea Hearts" by Margo Lanagan

Best Short Fiction: "The Pelican Bar" by Karen Joy Fowler

Best Anthology: AMERICAN FANTASTIC TALES: TERROR AND THE UNCANNY; FROM POE TO THE PULPS/FROM THE 1940s TO NOW edited by Peter Straub

Best Collection: (tie) THERE ONCE WAS A WOMAN WHO TRIED TO KILL HER NEIGHBOR'S BABY: SCARY FAIRY TALES by Ludmilla Petrushevskaya and THE BEST OF GENE WOLFE by Gene Wolfe

Best Artist: Charles Vess

Life Achievement: Brian Lumley, Terry Pratchett and Peter Straub

NEWS IN BRIEF . . .



.... **John Steakley** (b 1951), actor and writer died November 27th. He started writing SF in 1981 and was the author of one SF novel, *ARMOR* (1984) and one horror novel, *VAMPIRES* (1990) The original handwritten manuscript to **Mary Shelley's FRANKENSTEIN**, considered by some to be the first science fiction novel, will be on display at the Bodleian Libraries in Oxford as part of the display *Shelley's Ghost: Reshaping the Image of a Literary Family*, scheduled to run from December 3 through March 27. This is the first time the manuscript has been displayed publicly Quercus Publishing has announced a new imprint: **Jo Fletcher Books**. Fletcher has been working as an editor for

Gollancz for fifteen years and has decided to move to Quercus to launch her imprint, beginning in January 2011 **Gollancz**, the science fiction imprint of Orion Publishing, is looking to fill an editorial



position in London. The editor will be working with the Deputy Publishing Director, authors, agents, and various members of the production and marketing teams **Greg and Astrid Bear** and **Karen Anderson** have accused Project Gutenberg of posting stories written by **Poul Anderson** in violation of copyright. Project Gutenberg claims the stories, originally published in the 1940s and 1950s, are in public domain. The Bears and Anderson state that the copyrights are current and belong to their family. Karen Anderson is Poul Anderson's widow, Astrid and Greg Bear are Anderson's daughter and son-in-law **Jim Butcher** has sold the 14th, 15th and 16th books in the Dresden series to Roc in a seven figure deal **Paolo Bacigalupi** has sold the award-winning *THE WINDUP GIRL* to Orbit Books here in the UK Fantasy author **Joel Rosenberg** was arrested and charged with felony

dangerous weapon at a courthouse and misdemeanor contempt of court on December 8. The charges stem from an incident on November 5 when Rosenberg visited the courthouse to make a request for documents. Minneapolis Sgt. William Palmer noticed Rosenberg was armed and tried to disarm him Tokyo has banned the sale of **Manga videos** that depict rape, incest and other sexual crimes to anyone under the age of 18. Anyone caught violating this rule faces a fine of ¥300,000 (\$3,570). A group of publishers has threatened to boycott the Tokyo International Anime Fair in March 2011 over what they see as an attempt at censorship **NASA** has discovered a microorganism in California's Mono Lake which has replaced phosphorus with arsenic in its cell components. This is the first organism ever discovered to use arsenic in this manner, which expands the possibility for the search for life, both terrestrial and extraterrestrial. Until this discovery, carbon, hydrogen, nitrogen, oxygen, phosphorus, and sulfur were considered the six basic building blocks of all known forms of life on Earth. Extraterrestrial maybe?

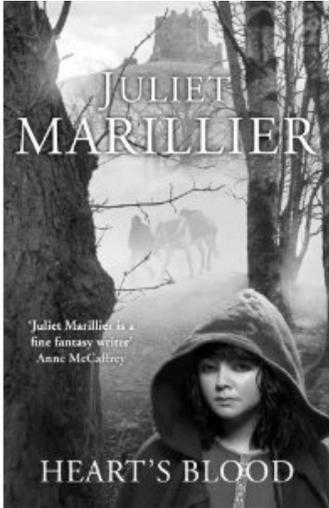
RGP



BOOK REVIEWS



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



***HEART'S BLOOD* by Juliet Marillier**
Tor / 560pgs / £7.99 paperback
ISBN: 978-0330451123
Reviewed by Steven Gough

Caitrin is an adolescent on the run in Ireland in the eleventh or twelfth century. Creative and independent-minded, with almost psychic sensitivity, she has been psychologically and physically brutalised by the mundane and domineering men and women of her home community. She's a scribe, struggling to succeed in a traditional man's role against her society's straightjacket views of a woman's place. Isolated and sexually intimidated, she's on the run from the dark lust of her cousin Cillian.

Juliet Marillier's regular readers may take the Irish setting as a given, but for newcomers it arrives grudgingly via scattered clues. Pointers to the period are equally oblique, guessed from vague concerns about 'the Normans' and their capacity for non-specific fiendishness. Luckily both time-frame and location are about as relevant as they are credible. Just as most Hammer films were set in a vaguely familiar Foreignshire, usually populated by Cornishmen, this is Marillier-land and resembles nothing so much as the ancient Greece – or even Ireland – of Lucy Lawless and Kevin Sorbo.

The opening scene, lifted straight from a Hammer film, sets the general tone of mild spookiness and constant sexual threat. Caitrin is dumped from a farmer's cart in the woods around spook-troubled Whistling Tor. "Oi can't take you farther unless you pays, hur hur," drools the farmer, ogling her lady-parts. "But oi wouldn't stay round 'ere, with all them ghosts and monsters." Revolted and scared, Caitrin stumbles into the woods, talking to herself like a loon.

When she reaches Whistling Tor village, Caitrin learns of a vague but terrible curse on both the land and the local chieftain Anluan. The woods are full of evil 'presences' and Anluan is a disfigured hermit who won't honour his duty to protect his serfs from the invading Normans.

Caitrin is drawn to the community of oddballs who quite literally haunt the forest around the other-worldly castle-mansion on top of Whistling Tor. She seems to have an affinity for the strange folk who walk the wild wood's paths. Could this mysterious place possibly be the safe haven where she'll find both a new family and a use for the talents that set her apart in the outside world? She immediately clashes with the tormented,

disfigured, solitary, brooding Anluan. Will her fragile femininity crack the ice that guards his heart?

The brusque, muscular warrior-butler Magnus sets Caitrin to work in the library, transcribing the 'latin' writings of black sheep great-grandfather Nechtan into Anluan-friendly 'Irish'. This flips us back into Hammer gothic territory because what amount to Nechtan's diaries describe his 'experimentation' with dark forces, hurriedly pasting 'evil wizard' across 'mad scientist' on his dressing-room door.

There's a constant background hum of sexual threat. Caitrin's been abused and beaten by sexual predator Cillian and his mum. She's told she has 'the body of a whore', which is to say big breasts and wide hips. She seems to think of people, not even just men, as either pimps or rapists. I wasn't entirely comfortable that this dark psychological territory is expressed in reductive, coy language and covered by a sweaty, bodice-heaving film of wish-fulfilment power fantasy. When Caitrin travels psychically back in time to watch evil Nechtan torture and murder a hedge-witch and her little dog, too, she senses his gruesome 'hardness' for Aislinn his 'pert-buttocked' Igorina. Later she can't sleep and wonders feverishly about the mental perversion his cruel mastery has forced on the innocent serving girl.

Cold shower, anyone?

It's a tortured girl meets sullen boy story, built from the Meccano set of stock fantasy characters and situations. The writing style's unsophisticated, with a juvenile quality you could say is appropriate to its young lead character, but which I'd argue probably isn't that thought-through or deliberate. Some very deliberate button-pushing skews the book towards a particular gender and demographic. A sour-tasting fog of frustrated, sado-masochistic sex clings to every page, and I'd say the sexual politics are a bit suspect. If this had come from another stable, and significantly another gender viewpoint, let's say John Norman, I think it would be mercilessly hounded and parodied into oblivion. SG



***THE NEMESIS LIST* by R. J. Frith**

Tor / 315 pgs / £16.99 Hardcover

ISBN 978-0230748910

Reviewed by Michael Jones

Already established as a short-story writer, Frith won a 2009 competition aimed at discovering new talent: this book is the result.

It tells the story of a boy taken from his family at age five to (unwillingly) take part in a secret and illegal project using drugs and mental conditioning to enhance its subjects' mental abilities – "We're going to make you clever" he is told. After eleven years the project is overrun by Government troops but he escapes, finding himself in possession of an enormous fund of knowledge which he hardly knows how to use; eidetic memory and a degree of telepathy, plus a burning desire for revenge. This much is recounted in a series of flashbacks, the

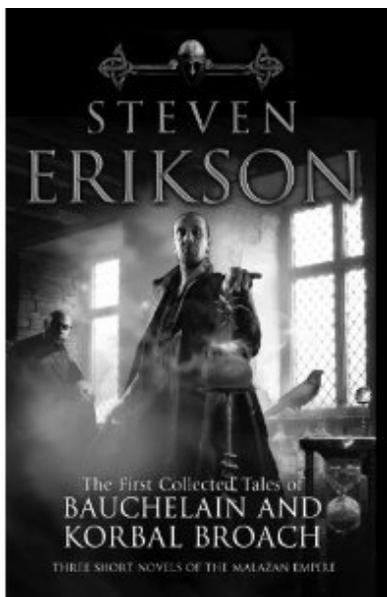
main narrative being concerned with a period another five years hence when he has

become a target for both a Government agency probably wanting to reproduce the experiments that created him and a rebel group wanting to use his powers for their own ends. With the help of an uncertain ally whose life he once saved, he escapes both, albeit perhaps only for the time being.

On the face of it then, a reasonably lively and exciting space-opera-science-fiction piece, with plenty of spaceships, space stations, guns and fighting. Look more closely however and you can start to see the joins – the main theme of an experimental child who grows into a disturbed young adult is far from original and in general one tends to feel one has heard it all before. Fortunately, there are both enough action and enough originality to keep the reader interested in what will happen next.

Less fortunately, the book is not always that well-written, perhaps betraying the author's limited experience; after all, it is his first full-length novel. The use of flash-backs has already been mentioned, but one quite important story element is effectively overlooked altogether. The storyline is confusing at times and there is a general impression that he has incorporated elements of explanation as and when the need arose instead of working the plot out in advance. Also there is a bit too much of people sitting around in rooms thinking about things or talking about what to do next, instead of getting on with it.

None of which is to say that this is any sense a bad book. It is well worth reading and holds the interest well and such parts as may seem derivative are drawn from the very best sources. As a new and up-and-coming author Frith will be certainly bear watching and the sequel this first book cries out for should be eagerly anticipated. *Mj*



***THE FIRST COLLECTED TALES
OF BAUCHELAIN & KORBAL
BROACH by Steven Erikson***

**Bantam / 313pgs / £16.99 hardcover
ISBN: 978-0593063941**

Reviewed by Pauline Morgan

The three novellas reprinted in this volume first appeared as slim volumes from PS Publishing between 2002 and 2007 and are published together here, for the first time. They form a trilogy of tales centred around the characters of the title. In most fantasy novels, the wizards tend either to be on the side of the heroes or are their evil nemeses. Bauchelain and Korbal Broach are neither. They are necromancers who the narrator is following around for a time. They are not nice people but they are not overtly wicked. They have a different outlook on life to ordinary people.

In “Blood Follows” the first of this trilogy, they are in the town of Lamentable Moll. There have been a number of bloody murders with body parts being taken. Emancipor Reese has the misfortune of being the coachman to one of the dead meaning that he automatically loses his job. His wife Subly is not sympathetic, sending him out to look for another with the injunction not to come back without one. Drunkenly acting on a

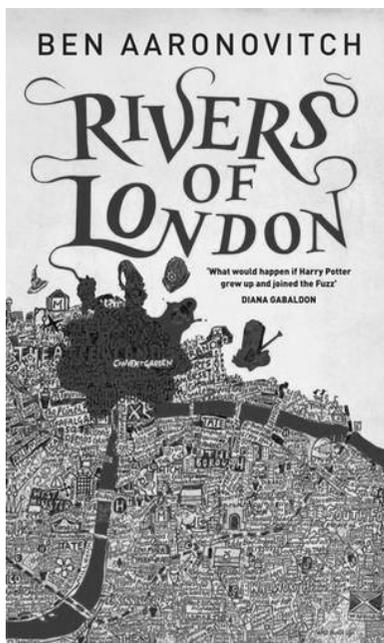
tip-off, he suddenly finds he has been hired by the necromancers as their manservant. He is delighted to find that the job entails travel and that the first job is to secure passage out of the town on the next ship. It means he has to leave his wife, and the town, behind.

The narrative continues almost immediately in “The Lees of Laughter’s End”. The ship the necromancers sail on is stolen, crewed mainly by deserting soldiers with little seamanship. The danger comes not from their ineptness but the fact the repairs have been carried out with nails from old burials in Lamentable Moll. They are imbued with the spirits of the dead and once the ship enters the red road – the lees - that leads to Laughter’s End, they begin to manifest. Also aboard is a lich and a child created from bits of people by Korbal Broach. He is a eunuch but is obsessed with procreation. His creation is a monster which escapes and adds to the mayhem.

The third story, “The Healthy Dead”, takes place a couple of years into their travels on dry land. The two necromancers and their manservant are approaching Quaint when they are asked to sort out a problem in the city. The present king has deposed his tyrant brother and set up a beneficent regime. Unfortunately, the effect is to restrain people even more as they are not allowed to do anything which is bad for them, such as drinking or fornicating or being noisy. Children who cry are taken away to the temple.

Each of these novellas descends into gory mayhem. The necromancers are amoral rather than evil; they follow the strictures of their chosen profession. The stories are packed with black humour, especially the third. Do not dismiss them just because they are fantasy. They transcend the genre.

PM



RIVERS OF LONDON

by Ben Aaronovitch

Gollancz / 282 pgs / £12.99 hardcover

ISBN: 978-0575097568

Reviewed by William McCabe

This is the first novel of a series of fantasy/detective novels set in present day London. On one hand it has an apparently realistic version of the Metropolitan Police Force with its procedures and politics and on the other there is a view of London that drifts between the surreal and the fantastic. The author manages to pull this off mostly by having as little connection between the recognisable everyday members of the force and the weird stuff as possible.

This is the story of Peter Grant, a newly promoted Detective Constable, and Chief Inspector Nightingale his new boss. Nightingale is also a wizard. He deals with minor deities and monsters on a regular basis. Here he takes on some of the more surreal aspects of community policing including peace negotiations between

Father and Mother Thames over who runs which part of the river. He is also teaching Grant the basics of magic. There are vampires and ghosts to deal with and, of course, since this is a detective novel, there are also a series of bizarre and grisly murders to solve.

It's not a matter of whodunnit so much as who made them do it and how and why. The answer comes in the form of an easily recognisable and generally unexpected figure.

On the whole this works. The pace is good enough but the various plot threads are a little too distracting. The river dispute plot doesn't really impact on the murders and vice versa. In such a short novel the central plot and the situation/character building should take up more of the story. It makes me wonder if the writer could manage more novels in this series without the plot becoming too fragmented. *WAM*

ZENDEGI by Greg Egan

Gollancz / 332 pgs / £18.99 hardcover ISBN 978-0575086173

£14.99 large paperback ISBN 978-0575086180

Reviewed by Michael Jones



The opening third of this book is set in 2012 and recounts the visit of Martin, an Australian journalist, to Iran where he watches a revolution take place resulting in the overthrow of the present tyrannical government. In parallel, a young Iranian woman, Nasim, is exiled in America where she is engaged on a project aimed at working out how to transfer the processes of real brains into computer programmes.

Fifteen years later, Nasim has returned to Iran and works for a software company providing totally-immersive computer games. She hopes to be able to develop her previous project to provide a degree of authentic pseudo-human autonomy to virtual characters in these games. Meanwhile Martin has settled in Iran, married an Iranian woman and has a son. His wife dies in a car crash and when he discovers he has cancer and is likely to die also, he concocts a plan to use Nasim's

technology to transfer his personality into a character in the computer games to which his son is becoming addicted, thus being able to stay with him while he grows up.

Perhaps this could have been a dramatic, even moving, story, but it fails. The ending is inconclusive and, apart from that, there are several auxiliary storylines which have only tenuous relevance to the main theme and are not resolved either, and several lengthy descriptions of Martin's participation with his son in computer simulations which serve as little more than padding. The resulting totality is rambling, disconnected and ultimately boring. Plus, of course, the necessity to set it at a fairly specific time in the near-future means that the background to the story is all too liable to be overtaken by events (or more likely non-events). Why choose Iran as a setting in the first place?

It is probably no exaggeration to say that Egan has produced some remarkable work in the past, but no way is this more of the same. Not recommended. *PM*

ON THE THIRD DAY by Rhys Thomas

Doubleday / 520pgs / £12.99 large paperback ISBN 9780385614733

Reviewed by Ian Allwyn



This is a post-apocalyptic novel set in present day London and Cornwall, published on the back of the resurgence of horror novels actively being marketed as such after a decade of inertia from the publishing industry. However, the review copy is the only real evidence I've found for its publication apart from its standard Amazon presence. Perhaps the cheaper paperback will be better promoted in bookshops. Its cover and title appear throwbacks to similar recent post-apocalypse stories such as 28 DAYS LATER and its title refers to the slightly melodramatic statement that on the third day...they die.

Miriam is a twenty something mother living in London when her husband develops a contagious psychological disorder called the Sadness. This involves him sitting in a chair seemingly having established that his life, the world, and the people he knows, is all meaningless. After three days he dies, and as the

illness spreads, so do most of the population. The Sadness strikes at random with few immune and a small minority become violent which provides the backdrop for her escape from London and the first third of the novel.

The remainder of the novel takes place on a Cornish headland where she and her family hole up with her elderly father-in-law. It is a narrative of survival as the country's infrastructure crumbles around them and food becomes scarce, as well as having to cope with illness and a lack of utilities. The novel changes tract when a large container ship sinks close to their house and other survivors are drawn to the beach beneath their house where a make-shift community is built.

Miriam becomes an irritating character, seemingly present at times as a set-up for other characters to save her in dramatic ways; it's remarkable she makes it past the opening few pages as she makes so many basic mistakes. Like much in the genre, the main tension becomes less about the initial threat from those infected by the illness and more with the ruthlessness of bandits adapting to a lawless society. However, there is much to admire in the novel, the basic image of the Cornish landscape will stay with me for a long time although the last few pages seem more like an editorial compromise than a satisfying pay-off.

The best of this sub-genre I've read continues to be Simon Clark's excellent second novel BLOOD CRAZY and there are better recent horror novels such as John Ajvide Lindqvist's LET THE RIGHT ONE IN or Justin Cronin's THE PASSAGE but I liked the concept of the Sadness as an interesting take on the genre and overall, it was well written and engaging, and I'm pleased to have read it.

IA

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 to be announced

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).

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/>

FUTURE MEETINGS OF THE BSFG

Jan 14th 2011 – Annual General Meeting and Auction

Feb 11th – QUIZ with Birmingham University SF Society (to be confirmed)

Mar 11th – Fantasy author FRANCES HARDINGE

April 8th – comic SF/Fantasy author ROBERT RANKIN

May 13th - SF author JOHN MEANEY (who will also be Guest of Honour at Novacon 41 this year)

June 10th - Happy Birthday BSFG! 40th Anniversary Special Meeting

July 8th – SF author and mathematician IAN STEWART

Aug 12th - SUMMER SOCIAL at the Black Eagle

Sep 9th – SF/Fantasy author LIZ WILLIAMS (to be confirmed)

Oct 14th Nov 4th – tba

BRUM GROUP NEWS #472 (January 2011) copyright 2011 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). 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.

STARTING IN THE FEBRUARY NEWSLETTER My 100 Top SF Books - Rog Peyton

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