

BRUM GROUP NEWS

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE

BIRMINGHAM SCIENCE FICTION GROUP

NOVEMBER 2011

ISSUE 482

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

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Friday 4th November

IAN WHATES

Ian Whates' earliest memories of science fiction are fragmented. He remembers loving *Dr Who* and other TV SF shows from an early age, but a defining moment came when he heard a radio adaptation of John Wyndham's *THE CHRYSALIDS*. From that moment on he was hooked and haunted the local library, voraciously devouring the contents of their SF section.

Ian's first published stories appeared in the late 1980s in small press magazines such as *Dream* and *New Moon Quarterly*, after which he took a break from writing in order to research his chosen fields of science fiction and fantasy.

Dec 2nd – THE CHRISTMAS SOCIAL – an evening of skittles, buffet, prizes and just plain fun! TICKET ONLY so make sure you get yours NOW!

He published nothing further for some seventeen years. In the early 2000s he made the decision to pursue writing seriously, joining the Northampton SF Writers Group in 2004 after being introduced to its chairman, Ian Watson.

In 2006 he started submitting stories again, and has subsequently been surprised at how many otherwise eminently sensible people have chosen to publish him.

Also in 2006 Ian launched the independent publishing house NewCon Press - the books, their covers and contents have racked up an impressive array of credits – four BSFA Awards, one British SF Award to date, inclusion in *Year's Best* anthologies and recommendations and honourable mentions from the likes of Gardner Dozois and *Locus* magazine.

In addition to his publishing and writing, Ian has been a director of the Science Fiction Writers of America (SFWA) and is currently a director of the British Science Fiction Association (BSFA).

His first two completed novels both appeared in 2010: *THE NOISE WITHIN* from Rebellion imprint Solaris and *CITY OF DREAMS AND NIGHTMARE* via Harper Collins' imprint Angry Robot, with sequels that followed early in 2011 – *THE NOISE REVEALED* and *CITY OF HOPE AND DESPAIR*. When not pinching himself to make sure this is all really happening, Ian is currently beavering away at further sequels... honest!

<<*the above was adapted and updated from Ian's own website – 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 £3 for members, £4 for non-members

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 7.00pm until 11.00pm on Friday 3rd December. To get there take a 45 or 47 bus from Corporation Street. Ask for The Selly Park Tavern - its about 15 minutes ride. **PLEASE NOTE THE CHANGE OF DATE FROM OUR 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, free half-hourly raffle plus the buffet and, to judge from past comments, a good time to be had by all.

Order your tickets from Vicky Stock, our Membership Secretary, at the address on the back page of this Newsletter. However, as there are sometimes problems with the postal system if you apply by post please send Vicky an email at the same time in case your application is delayed. **THE DEADLINE FOR APPLICATIONS IS MONDAY 21st NOVEMBER** because the Tavern needs

food numbers that week. However, by that time NOVACON will have happened and there may not be any tickets left – numbers are restricted for safety reasons and we have reached that number every year previously and had to refuse latecomers.

REMEMBER THAT TICKETS WILL NOT BE AVAILABLE ON THE NIGHT – GET THEM NOW!

BRITISH FANTASY AWARD WINNERS

The winners of the 2011 British Fantasy Awards, presented by the British Fantasy Society, were announced on October 2 at Fantasycon in Brighton.

Best Novel (August Derleth Fantasy Award): DEMON DANCE by Sam Stone

Best Novella: “Humpty’s Bones” by Simon Clark

Best Short Story: “Fool’s Gold” by Sam Stone

Best Collection: FULL DARK, NO STARS by Stephen King

Best Anthology: BACK FROM THE DEAD: THE LEGACY OF THE PAN BOOK OF HORROR STORIES edited by Johnny Mains

Best Non-Fiction: ALTERED VISIONS: THE ART OF VINCENT CHONG

Best Artist: Vincent Chong

Best Small Press: Telos Publishing

Best Magazine/Periodical: *Black Static* edited by Andy Cox

Best comic/Graphic Novel: AT THE MOUNTAINS OF MADNESS by Ian Culbard

Best Film: INCEPTION directed by Christopher Nolan

Best Television: SHERLOCK, Steven Moffat

Karl Edward Wagner Special Award: Terry Pratchett

Sydney J. Bounds Award for Best Newcomer: Robert Jackson Bennett, for MR. SHIVERS

AND THE AFTERMATH...

Immediately following the convention, Stephen Jones sparked a controversy on his blog pointing out a conflict of interest between British Fantasy Society Chairman David Howe and Telos, a small press imprint in which Howe is a partner. Telos won the Best Small Press Award and published two of the award-winning stories. Jones also noted that Howe’s domestic partner, Sam Stone, won in yet another category.

Following allegations concerning the administration of the British Fantasy Awards, David Howe has resigned from his position on the British Fantasy Society despite exoneration of any wrong-doing from the organisation. Ramsey Campbell, the President of the organisation, notes that Howe had stepped up to procure the awards, but had nothing to do with the nominations or tabulations of results and has thanked Howe for his service, particularly regarding the past year.

Sam Stone has announced that she will return the British Fantasy Award she won over the weekend after accusations of mismanagement and controversy erupted. Stone, who said “it was always my dream to one day win an award,” is “absolutely devastated by the comments made in the last few days” and decided to return the award because she “cannot allow this controversy to taint the integrity of those involved.”

Following David Howe’s resignation as Chairman of the BFS, Graham Joyce has been appointed acting chair. He has stated that the 2012 Fantasycon will not be held in Corby, as previously announced, and will not be chaired by David Howe and Sam Stone. The organisation is searching for a new venue and will announce the location and dates as soon as they are finalised. Joyce will also appoint a committee to overhaul the Awards system and make it more transparent and enfranchise a broader base of readers.

NEWS IN BRIEF . . .

.... Actor **George Baker** (b.1931) died on October 7. Baker may have been best known for appearing in *The Ruth Rendell Mysteries*, but he also had numerous genre roles, including an appearance in the *Doctor Who* serial “Full Circle”, the 1980s television series *Robin Hood*, the movies **THE CURSE OF THE FLY**, **THE SWORD OF LANCELOT** and several James Bond films Actress **Diane Cilento** (b.1933) died on October 6. Cilento, who was married to **Sean Connery** for 11 years, appeared in **THE WICKER MAN**, **THE ANGEL WHO PAWNED HER HARP** and several episodes of *Halfway Across the Galaxy* and *Turn Left* Actor **Charles Napier** (b.1936) died on October 5. Napier appeared in the *Star Trek* episode “The Way to Eden” as well as episodes of *The Incredible Hulk*, *Lois & Clark: The New Adventures of Superman* and *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* Author **Suzette Haden Elgin**, who wrote the *Native Tongue* trilogy and the *Ozark* trilogy, among other works has become disabled and that she “just can’t focus on things well enough to even answer an email, let alone talk to anyone.” It is inferred that Elgin may not be able to finish the novel she announced she was working on several months ago Author **Mitchell Gross**, who publishes fantasy under the name **Mitchell Graham**, has been arrested for fraud. According to federal authorities, Gross bilked women he met on on-line dating sites out of millions of dollars. Under his Graham pseudonym, Gross published the novels **THE FIFTH RING**, **THE ANCIENT LEGACY** and **THE EMERALD CAVERN** US bookseller **Greg Ketter** has announced that he will be closing DreamHaven Books on 38th Street in Minneapolis. DreamHaven has been in business for thirty-five years and, at one time, had multiple stores as well as a catalogue and convention presence. According to Ketter, the catalogue will continue and he will continue to attend and sell books at conventions **Vernor Vinge’s** **THE CHILDREN OF THE SKY** – a direct sequel to the award-winning **A FIRE UPON THE DEEP**, is now out in hardcover in the US The long-lost conclusion to **Glen Cook’s** *Dread Empire* trilogy, **A PATH TO COLDNESS OF HEART** will finally appear in hardcover from Nightshade

Books in January. The first two volumes appeared over 20 years ago. REAP THE EAST WIND and AN ILL FATE MARSHALLING will be republished in trade paperbacks **Flora McMichael**, Rights Manager at Quercus, has sold Turkish rights in DEMI-MONDE: WINTER by UK novelist **Rod Rees**. World rights in Rod's four-book *Demi-monde* series were acquired pre-emptively by Quercus (who published the first volume successfully in January 2011, and in paperback in September) from agent **John Jarrold** for a major advance in 2009. Rights have now been sold in ten territories including the US, Germany, Russia, France, Poland, the Czech Republic, Croatia and Italy **Jonathan Oliver**, commissioning editor of Solaris Books, has acquired the sequel to HELIX by **Eric Brown**, which was published by the company in 2007 and has reprinted ever since, selling regularly. HELIX WARS will be delivered in the spring of 2012, for an autumn publication **Jonathan Carroll** has sold a new collection, THE WOMAN WHO MARRIED A CLOUD, to Subterranean Press **Robin Maxwell** will write JANE: THE WOMAN WHO LOVED TARZAN for Tor on behalf of the **Edgar Rice Burroughs** estate *Mslexia Magazine* will be running an sf-themed issue in March and are looking for short stories (up to 2,200 words) and poems (up to 40 lines) by women based on the concept "In the year 2212". The deadline for submissions is November 22. Full details at <http://www.mslexia.co.uk/info/submit.php> *RGP*



BOOK REVIEWS



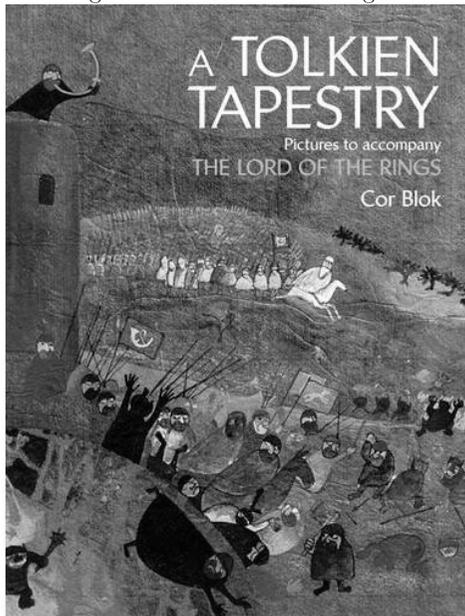
(**REVIEWERS** please note:- all reviews should be emailed direct to me at [rog \[dot\] peyton \[at\] btinternet \[dot\] com](mailto:rog[dot]peyton[at]btinternet[dot]com)) **Deadline for each issue is 14 days prior to the date of the monthly meeting.**

***A TOLKIEN TAPESTRY* by Cor Blok/text by Pieter Collier**
HarperCollins / 160pgs / £20.00 hardcover ISBN: 978-0007437986 /
£50 slipcased deluxe hardcover ISBN: 978-0007437993
Reviewed by Dave Corby

Cor Blok is a recognised Dutch artist with a long association with illustrating J.R.R Tolkien's works, most recently seen providing the illustrations for the 2011 and 2012 Tolkien calendars. At first glance Cor's artwork tends to draw criticism from an audience more familiar with the works of Alan Lee, John Howe, Ted Naismith and the brothers Hildebrandt. Cor's illustrations of THE LORD OF THE RINGS (LOTR) are often described as childish and overly simplistic, which is an interesting comment given the artist's process of producing the pictures.

This book presents the complete collection of Cor's LOTR pictures, and as such makes up a visual narrative of over 100 pictures not unlike a tapestry; hence the title. However, the first 40 pages or so present a series of essays by Cor

written to give an insight into the artwork. Firstly, it is important to note that Cor alters his style for different projects, and to assume all his artwork has similar style to his LOTR illustrations is a grave error. Anyone who has seen the intricately detailed and astonishing images from his IRON PARACHUTE project might not recognise the artworks as being from the same artist!



The prose describes both the physical process of producing the pictures and the historical context in which they were produced. The reader cannot help but feel greater warmth for the pictures when one knows that Tolkien himself purchased two of the LOTR illustrations, such as the author's like for Cor's works (Cor visited Tolkien in 1961, and subsequently Cor provided the covers for the Dutch translations of LOTR in 1965). Some of the text is given over to illuminating his inspiration by way of explaining the author's fascination with LOTR. Any fan of Tolkien's books can give a similar exposition, but each is personal to the reader, and

insight into Cor's interpretation is helpful in gaining a deeper understanding of his works.

But the artistic interpretation goes deeper than simple fandom. Cor gives us an insight into his inspiration in Barbarusian art, an area Cor was exploring when he discovered LOTR. His studies in this area caused Cor to realise that an art style may be adopted consciously, for specific purpose, for many reasons (for example, when a comic artist might adopt style to match the limitations of mass printing processes). Cor goes on to give examples of Barbarusian artwork where the style is such to reduce the image to only the essentials necessary to convey the meaning, leaving the rest up to the viewer's imagination to fill in. An analogy might be the design of signs at an airport, where an image must be simple and easily visible, yet must contain the meaning pictorially with the greatest clarity. And it is this approach that Cor brought to illustrating LOTR.

Thus the pictures are not truly simplistic but instead the pictures follow a deliberate philosophy of representation. Indeed, the physical process for creating the pictures is exacting and complex; involving Japanese silk paper painted on both sides and then applied to coloured backgrounds when wet, an artwork process as technically demanding as it sounds, but which results in luminous

colours. Once the viewer is enlightened to the meaning in the style the pictures become considerably more fascinating!

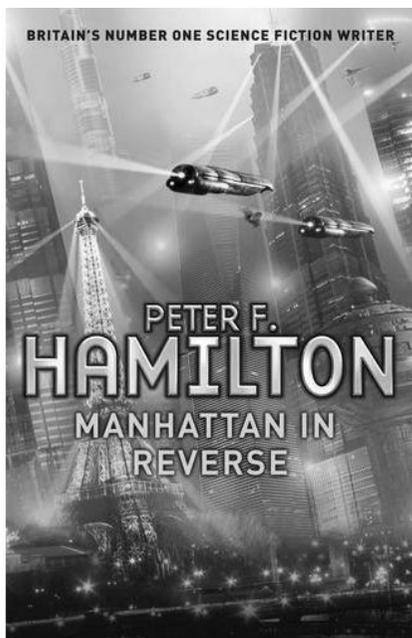
Given the above, I approached the pictures with renewed interest; given that the pictures attempt to present the story at its barest essence, I resolved to try and interpret the story I know well from the pictures alone. True, some of the pictures were so reduced that I misunderstood the scene, but in most cases the meaning leapt out in a slightly wonderful way. Never again will I look at Cor Blok's artwork quite the same way.

It is hard to say whether the reader should buy this book; certainly those interested in the art styles may find a lot to enjoy, and maybe for the Tolkien fan who has found little to enjoy in the artist's work might well discover something new to appreciate. I cannot help but feel that the book occupies something of an odd niche. However, if you have an appreciation for LOTR and fantasy artwork, this might be a niche of interest... DC

***MANHATTAN IN REVERSE* by Peter F Hamilton**

Macmillan / 260pgs / £17.99 hardcover ISBN: 978-0230750302

Reviewed by Michael Jones



This new book brings together a number of stories published since Hamilton's first collection *A SECOND CHANCE AT EDEN*, although several earlier pieces, including the Novacon 27 Special "Softlight Sins" remain uncollected.

The first, and longest, story "Watching Trees Grow" is set in an alternate history where Rome rules the world, albeit in a much more enlightened fashion than in Keith Roberts' *PAVANE*. Here we find electric cars on the streets by 1830, the Solar System explored by 1920 and interstellar colonies established by the end of the 20th Century. The world is effectively run by a handful of great families for whose members rejuvenation brings near-immortality and the story follows the efforts of one

family member over two centuries to solve a murder and to bring the perpetrator to a justice which is at the same time humane and devastating.

Two other long stories feature the detective Paula Myo who played a significant part in the *Commonwealth Saga* comprised of *PANDORA'S STAR* and

JUDAS UNCHAINED. In “The Demon Trap” she is instrumental in bringing an unpleasant, though well-deserved, retribution to a multiple murderer, while in the title story “Manhattan In Reverse”, written specifically for this collection, she becomes involved in a case in which familiar themes of First Contact and Uplift both come into play.

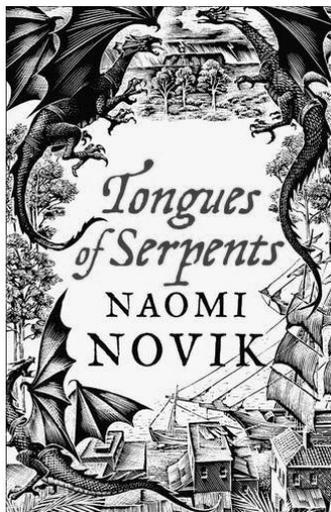
The remaining four stories are all much shorter and explore a variety of issues, albeit in what at first sight appears to be a relentlessly downbeat fashion. There are no happy endings and the protagonists do not always get the conclusions they might think they deserve, although the reader may think differently.

To say that “Watching Trees Grow” is the stand-out story in this collection, worth the price of the book on its own, would be less than fair to the rest of the collection. It comprises a varied and well-balanced selection of stories, showing both severally and collectively that Hamilton is as accomplished a writer of shorter work as he is of his blockbuster novels and series. Highly recommended. Mf

TONGUES OF SERPENTS by Naomi Novik

HarperCollins / 347pgs / £7.99 paperback ISBN: 978-0007256785

Reviewed by Vicky Stock



This is book 6 of the Temeraire series - a very engaging series following the adventures of Captain William Laurence and his dragon Temeraire as they are thrown together to fight for Britain during the turbulent time of the Napoleonic Wars. In this latest book in the series, Laurence has been convicted of treason and stripped of rank, and sent to Australia along with a prison colony. With them travel three dragon eggs which are to be handed over to officers willing to accept such a remote assignment in that part of the world, including Captain Rankin, a former acquaintance, whose cruelty once cost a dragon its life. They arrive to a colony in turmoil and accept a mission to venture into the interior of Australia. But one of the eggs is then stolen which changes the

shape and urgency of their mission, as they must recover it before it hatches. Their quest also leads to further discoveries about the global war between Britain and France.

This book for me took a fair bit of settling into. I am normally a quick reader and fully expected a book of this size and subject matter to not take me long at all. I have read most of the others in this series, and had become a bit of a

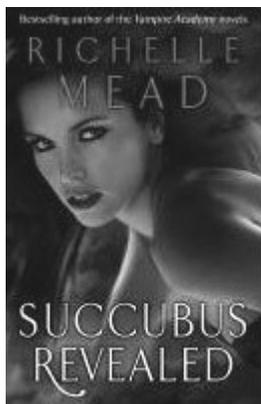
big fan so was rather excited to have the opportunity to review this latest offering. The first section, set in the colony when Laurence and Temeraire have just arrived, has quite a slow pace. Not a lot happened, there was lots of discussion about the latest developments in the war, and the characters were all maybe a bit too prim and proper for me to warm to them. However, the book changes pace and feel as the expedition is launched into the interior of the continent and the chase to find the egg starts. I really enjoyed the descriptions of the Blue Mountains and later on the desert regions. The narrative here makes the experience a very vivid one for the reader. The characters settle down a bit and become warmer, and more realistic in general in the way they talk and react to events and situations. The number of dragons increases which leads to more variety in characters, and it is easy to imagine them and what they are like. I am a big fan of good characterisation and this really improved the book for me. Interestingly, whereas the first section took me a long time to read, the last two thirds of the book took me a few days! Not just that I had more time to read it, I was more inclined to want to press on and see what happened!

Overall a good book, and as engaging ultimately as some of the earlier books, although the heroes are more settled with each other now. There is still new territory to explore with this ongoing story, something which the author hints at in her final chapters which suggest possible trips to other countries and regions. /S

***SUCCUBUS REVEALED* by Richelle Mead**

Bantam / 277pgs / £6.99 paperback ISBN: 978-0553826081

Reviewed by Jim Pearce



I dislike seeing items described as ‘Must Have’ when I am out shopping, many things are but most of those so labelled are not. However being a ‘bookaholic’ certain series by particular authors are to me ‘Must Haves’, a novel in Richelle Mead’s *Georgina Kincaid* urban fantasy series is one of these.

SUCCUBUS REVEALED is the 6th and possibly final book in the series which chronicles the story of Georgina Kincaid a succubus and her, quite pure, passion for author Seth Mortensen. Both are engaging characters and following their tale is a great pleasure. Georgina may be a member of Hell’s Legions, but she is smart, funny and compassionate having sold her soul to the Devil in order to save others from harm. Adding breadth to this and the previous novels are her Seattle-based mundane and ‘infernal’ friends, a somewhat disreputable angel as well as Seth’s delightful family who are suffering more than their fair share of misfortune. In **SUCCUBUS REVEALED** all seems to be going well in her love life when she is suddenly given

notice requiring her to move to Las Vegas, a seemingly ideal location for a succubus. When she gets there everything seems too good to be true while misfortune hits Seth's family. To solve these mysteries her Seattle friends rally round, especially the nephilim, Roman and the angel Carter. To resolve matters requires a trip to hell and, as is to be expected, getting back is by no means guaranteed.

One of the things that I like about **SUCCUBUS REVEALED** is that although it is part of series and full of well-fleshed engaging characters, it is eminently readable by itself and a reader is not disadvantaged if he/she has not read any of the previous five books. The whole of the *Georgina Kincaid* urban fantasy series is an excellent read. JTP

RECOMMENDED SF BOOKS – Rog Peyton

List number 9. Please note that these 10 books are NOT my favourite ten, or whatever – I've just picked books from the 100 at random. Another 10 next month. Please remember that I may be able to supply most of these titles – just email me and I can bring orders to the Group meetings.

Currently in print and widely available:-

Brian Aldiss – GREYBEARD (1964) Following an ecological disaster, humanity faces extinction when most humans (and many animals) become sterile. (Gollancz SF Masterworks 978-0575071131 - £7.99)

Isaac Asimov - THE CAVES OF STEEL/THE NAKED SUN (1954/1958) The original two novels featuring Lije Baley and R Daneel Olivaw that fused mystery fiction with SF. Make sure you read them in order as the second book reveals the ending of the first mystery. (HarperCollins 978-0586008355 - £7.99 and 978-0586010167 - £6.99)

Iain Banks - THE BRIDGE (1990) The Bridge is the World – a surreal novel of comas and dreams. For me this is Iain's best book and should be judged as SF. (Abacus 978-0349102153 - £8.99)

Daniel F Galouye - DARK UNIVERSE (1961) Galouye's first and best novel – a novel set in a post-holocaust world in which the survivors live underground. Light is only remembered as something holy and radiation as the biggest evil. (Arc Manor 978-1604504873 - £7.99)

Anne McCaffrey – DRAGONFLIGHT (1968) Dragons? No they are not fantasy dragons but alien creatures that are bio-engineered to make them resemble the dragons of myth in order to fight invasion from a companion planet. This is excellent science fiction. (Corgi 978-0552084536 - £7.99)

Frederik Pohl & C M Kornbluth - THE SPACE MERCHANTS (1955) The novel about advertising agencies that helped warn the world of the dangers of subliminal advertising. The agencies run the governments and they now wish to take over Venus. (Gollancz SF Masterworks 978-0575075283 - £7.99)

Robert Silverberg - SHADRACH IN THE FURNACE (1976) Young surgeon Mordecai Shadrach's job is to keep alive a 93-year old tyrant, Genghis II

Mao IV Khan with spare parts but he learns that the tyrant's mind is to be transferred into a young body...Mordecai's. (University of Nebraska Press 978-0803216310 - £11.99 import)

And the out-of-print books:-

Robert Heinlein - TIME FOR THE STARS (1956) The story of telepathic twins – one on an interstellar ship, the other remains on Earth....

Bob Shaw - THE TWO-TIMERS (1968) Time travel, psychic powers, the creation of alternate worlds – Shaw at his best!

Joan Vinge - THE SNOW QUEEN (1980) Hugo Award winner that is out of print – criminal!

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

STARMAKER: THE PHILOSOPHY OF OLAF STAPLEDON – 23rd November at the British Interplanetary Society – see their website <http://www.bis-space.com/2011/08/18/2424/starmaker-the-philosophy-of-olaf-stapledon>

OLYMPUS 2012 - The 2012 Eastercon, 6th - 9th April 2012 at the Radisson Edwardian Hotel, Heathrow, London, UK. Guests of Honour: Paul Cornell, George R.R. Martin, Steph Swainston. Fan Guests of Honour: Margaret Austin, Martin Easterbrook. Registration is £55 and increases on Aug 31st so register NOW. Website is <http://www.olympus2012.org/>

FUTURE MEETINGS OF THE BSGF

Dec 2nd – The Christmas Social

Jan 13th 2012 – Annual General Meeting and Auction

Feb 10th – the Annual Quiz

Mar - tba



NOVACON 41 will be held over the weekend of **November 11th to the 13th** at **The Park Inn, 296 Mansfield Road, Nottingham. NG5 2BT.** The **Guest of Honour** will be SF author **JOHN MEANEY.** Further details can be found on the website <http://novacon.org.uk/>

BRUM GROUP NEWS #481 (October 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 [dot] 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 Membership Secretary, 10 Sylvan Avenue, Northfield, Birmingham, B31 2PG