

BRUM GROUP NEWS

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE

BIRMINGHAM SCIENCE FICTION GROUP

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& **HARRY HARRISON**

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Friday 11th May STEPHEN HUNT



Stephen Hunt is the fantasy and science fiction author behind the *Jackelian* series of novels: *THE COURT OF THE AIR*, *THE KINGDOM BEYOND THE WAVES*, *THE RISE OF THE IRON MOON*, *THE SECRETS OF THE FIRE SEA*, *JACK CLOUDIE* and *FROM THE DEEP OF THE DARK*. The *Jackelian* world features a fantastic far-future Earth where the laws of physics have rendered electricity unreliable and society has rebuilt the world with steam, clockwork, genetic engineering and nano-mechanical systems. His *Sliding Void* space opera serialization of novellas was number one in the Amazon SF charts over Christmas

June 8th - Brum Group favourite **GRAHAM JOYCE** returns with yet another talk that is bound to fascinate.

2011 in the UK, USA and every country in which Amazon does business.

Stephen is HarperCollins' main fantasy author in the UK, and he is published in the USA by Tor. Foreign language and international editions of the four novels of the Jackelian series have been sold to France, Germany, Japan, Portugal, Spain, Russia and China. Stephen's next trilogy, the *Far-called* sequence is due to be published by Gollancz.

His official web sites are www.SFcrowsnest.com, www.SFcrowsnest.net and www.StephenHunt.net.

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 our January AGM is free and the August and December socials are ticket only events. All other meetings the entrance fee is £3.00 for members and £4 for non-members.

2012 BSFA AWARD WINNERS

The winners of the 2012 BSFA Awards were announced at Eastercon on April 8.

Novel: THE ISLANDERS by Christopher Priest

Short Fiction: "The Copenhagen Interpretation" by Paul Cornell

Artwork: Cover of Ian Whates' THE NOISE REVEALED by Dominic Harman

Non-Fiction: THE SF ENCYCLOPEDIA, 3RD EDITION edited John Clute, Peter Nicholls, David Langford and Graham Sleight

HAVE YOU BEEN RIPPED OFF?

The big publishing news is currently the US Department of Justice's lawsuit filing against Apple and five major book publishers - Penguin, Macmillan, Hachette, HarperCollins and Simon & Schuster - for alleged ebook price fixing.

At the root of the dispute is the agency pricing model for ebooks which the publishers adopted in 2010. Under the wholesale pricing model that until then had been the norm for both ebooks and print books, publishers sell to intermediaries - such as bookstores or distributors - at a fixed discount off the list price, and the intermediaries are then free to re-sell to consumers at whatever price they choose. Under the agency pricing model, publishers sell directly to consumers via retailer 'agents' - such as Amazon or Apple - which get a commission on sales but cannot lower the publisher-set price. The wholesale model allows the retailer to control book prices; the agency model gives that control to the publisher.

The agency model, in other words, completely changes the selling relationship between publishers and retailers in regard to ebooks. This change is invisible to the consumer, but it is felt in the uniformity of ebook prices from retailer to retailer - since they can't discount - and in the unintended

The Middle-earth Weekend

19th & 20th May 2012

Celebrating 75 Years of

THE HOBBIT

J.R.R. Tolkien published THE HOBBIT in 1937 and started a literary career that has blossomed over 75 years into one of the most popular fantastic phenomena ever created. Therefore the Middle-earth Weekend in 2012 is devoted to the 75th birthday of this first book.

As always the weekend will be packed with things to do and see for all the family and this year there are lots of new attractions - so much so that we have more things going on this year than ever before!

Some of the new items include a climbing wall, the Hobbit Barefoot Walk, and the Wild-man of the Woods! These join lots of firm favourites including the Vikings, the Baby Dragons, the archery and all the various arts and crafts (especially the children's activities in Mirkwood Forest...)

The Middle-earth Weekend is hosted, as ever, by Sarehole Mill in Hall Green. The miller will be milling throughout the weekend and the Mill is free to go around for the duration of the event (normally there is a charge). The event is free to enter, although there may be minor charges for some activities. It is open from 11:00am to 5:00pm on both the Saturday and the Sunday. Sarehole Mill, off Cole Bank Road (B13 OBD), is on the number 11 bus route and just 12 minutes walk from Hall Green Station. There is a small charge for the car parking.

We hope to see lots of you there!

David Corby

consequences of competing pricing models, such as heavily discounted print books selling for less than their non-discounted electronic versions.

The DOJ doesn't have a problem with the agency model as such. What concerned them was the possibility that the publishers - at first among themselves and later with Apple - had colluded on establishing it as a way, not just to gain control of ebook pricing, but of limiting Amazon's perceived dominance of the ebook market, which Amazon had achieved in part by aggressive discounting.

According to the lawsuit, the collusion occurred through a series of meetings, email exchanges and telephone calls in 2008 and 2009 and culminated in the introduction of the agency model in early 2010, just ahead of the April debut of the iPad. (You may remember the February 2010 standoff between Amazon and Macmillan, in which Amazon turned off Macmillan's buy buttons in protest of the agency model, but later capitulated and turned them back on). As a result, the lawsuit alleges, consumers have paid tens of millions of dollars more for ebooks than they otherwise would have.

NEWS IN BRIEF . . .



.... Author and former publisher **Nick Webb** (b. 1949) has died. Webb had a long career in publishing, including roles as managing director of Simon & Schuster between 1991 and 1999 and previously as MD of Arrow and of Sphere. While at Pan in 1978 he commissioned **Douglas Adams** to write a novelisation of the first radio series of THE HITCHHIKER'S GUIDE TO THE GALAXY, resulting in the bestselling book. Following Adams' death in 2001, Webb wrote his

biography, WISH YOU WERE HERE (2003). He was also the author of THE DICTIONARY OF BULLSHIT (2006) and THE DICTIONARY OF POLITICAL BULLSHIT (2010) Author **K. D. Wentworth** (b.1951) died on April 18. Wentworth died from complications related to cancer and pneumonia. She was the author of the novels BLACK ON BLACK, MOONSPEAKER and THE IMPERIUM GAME, as well as several others, including two collaborations with Eric Flint. She was a multiple Nebula Award nominee and also helped run conventions Author **Peter Phillips** (b.1920) died on March 28. Phillips began publishing speculative fiction in 1948 with "No Silence for Maloeween" in *Weird Tales*, and continued publishing in *Astounding*, *New Worlds*, *Galaxy* and other magazines and anthologies until 1958 Author **Gene DeWeese** (b.1931 as **Thomas Eugene DeWeese**) died on March 19. DeWeese, who also published using the pseudonym **Jean DeWeese** and the collaborative names Thomas Stratton and Victoria Thomas, had been suffering

Lewy body dementia. Active in fandom, he broke into writing with *Man from U.N.C.L.E.* novelizations co-written with Buck Coulson. He has written novels set in the *Star Trek*, *Lost in Space* and *Ravenloft* universes as well as many original works, including THE ADVENTURES OF A TWO-MINUTE WEREWOLF and CHARLES FORT NEVER MENTIONED WOMBATS, the latter with Coulson **Keith Brooke** has announced that Infinity Plus, known for its e-books, will be releasing **Eric Brown**'s GHOSTWRITING, **Kaitlin Queen**'s ONE MORE UNFORTUNATE and **Iain Rowan**'s ONE OF US as their first venture into print publishing. They will also be publishing e-book versions The University of Iowa Library has announced the donation of **Rusty Hevelin**'s collection of pulp magazines, fanzines, and science fiction books. Hevelin began collecting pulps in 1930 and his collection includes acquisitions up until his death in 2011. Iowa's collection already includes the Horvat Collection of Science Fiction Fanzines, the Ming Wathne Fanzine Archive Collection, and a growing body of materials resulting from the Fan Culture Preservation Project The winner of this year's **Philip K. Dick Award** for Best original paperback publication was announced at Norwescon on April 6. The Dick Award is sponsored by the Philadelphia Science Fiction Society and the Philip K. Dick Trust. This year's judges were Scott Baker, Mark Budz, Roby James, Darrell Schweitzer, and Alice K. Turner. The winner was THE SAMUIL PETROVITCH TRILOGY by Simon Morden plus a Special Citation: COMPANY MAN by Robert Jackson Bennett The winner of the **James White Award** has been announced. This year, in addition to a winner, who will receive £200 and publication in a future issue of *Interzone*, the judges awarded a special commendation. This year's judges included Jon Courtenay Grimwood, Juliet E. McKenna, Andy Cox and Andrew Hedgecock. The winner was "Invocation of the Lurker" by Colum Paget plus a Special Commendation: "Train in Vain" by Tori Truslow

RGP



BOOK REVIEWS



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

***FROM THE DEEP OF THE DARK* by Stephen Hunt**

HarperVoyager / 455pgs / £12.99 trade paperback / ISBN: 978-0007289714

Reviewed by Pauline Morgan

The political manoeuvrings in Stephen Hunt's latest steampunk novel get ever more complex and the focus this time is under the ocean (the previous novel JACK CLOUDIE was set within the airships of the Aerostatical Navy). With his fondness for submersibles it can only be expected that Jared Black will

become involved, this time without his usual crew. Instead, he is inveigled into action by Charlotte Shades, a magician-thief who has been persuaded to steal King Jude's sceptre, the last remaining item of the crown jewels, from its vault beneath the Parliament building. Dick Tull is a member of the secret service of



assigned to watching out for Royalists who, it is rumoured, are planning to overthrow Parliament. It is tracking one suspect that leads him to Black's door. Also ending up in the same place are two characters from the fourth novel, SECRETS OF THE FIRE SEA. Jethro Daunt is an ex-cleric working as a detective along with this companion, an ostracised steamman, Boxiron.

For those not familiar with the setting for Hunt's novels the important thing to be aware of is that the technology is based on steam power. The hints which sneak into the text on occasion suggest that this is a world that has gone through a number of evolutionary upheavals leaving behind remnants of an earlier, more sophisticated, age. Many of the races appear as genetically modified humans and one country breeds organic machines using human slaves. At this point in history, an underwater race, referred to as gill-necks, seem to be moving towards war with the land-bound humans. As Black and his ill-assorted friends discover, they are being manipulated by another race which has come out of the deeps with conquest in mind. On their side, as advisor, is Gemma Dark, a staunch royalist and Black's estranged sister.

While some elements of the plot are hauntingly familiar, the manipulation of Victorian-level technology is ingenious, the characters are engaging and as an action-packed adventure it works very well. Though it would be better to start with the first volume, THE COURT OF THE AIR, to fully understand the structure of Hunt's creation it is not absolutely necessary, as long as you are prepared to suspend your disbelief and engage your sense of wonder. *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](mailto: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.

NOVA CON 42

9th to 11th November 2012
Park Inn Hotel, Nottingham
Guest of Honour:

Jaine Fenn



Photograph: James Cooke

Now into its 5th decade Novacon is the UK's longest-established regional science fiction convention. Held every autumn since 1971, it's built around a single-stream programme mixing literary items, science talks, panels and more informal events such as quizzes and the odd party, with deliberate emphasis on social contact between sf fans and genre professionals.

Join us for:

SF Authors + Science Talks + Dealers Room
+ Art Show + Book Launches + Book and Art
auctions

www.novacon.org.uk

Find us on Facebook,
follow us on Twitter @Novacon42

THE EIGHNNNNNNNN DISCWORLD CONVENTION - 24-27 August
at the Metropole Hotel, Birmingham. Guest of Honour: Sir Terry Pratchett.
Website: <http://www.dwcon.org/>

FUTURE MEETINGS OF THE BSFG

Jun 8th – bestselling Dark Fantasy author **GRAHAM JOYCE**

Jul 13th – SF editor and now publisher **JO FLETCHER**

Aug 10th – **SUMMER SOCIAL** – meal at the **Black Eagle**

Sep – comic fantasy/SF author **SIMON R GREEN**

Oct – tba

Nov – SF author **ERIC BROWN**

Dec - **CHRISTMAS SOCIAL** – **Skittles and buffet**

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WANTED URGENTLY ASSISTANT NEWSLETTER EDITOR

We need someone to assist on the production of our monthly newsletter. Please contact the Editor Rog Peyton on [rog \[dot\] peyton \[at\] btinternet \[dot\] com](mailto:rog.peyton@btinternet.com)

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