

BRUM GROUP NEWS

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE

BIRMINGHAM SCIENCE FICTION GROUP

MARCH 2014

ISSUE 510

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STAN & ANNE NICHOLLS



Friday 14th March 2014

April 11th - Epic fantasy author and games developer, Gav Thorpe

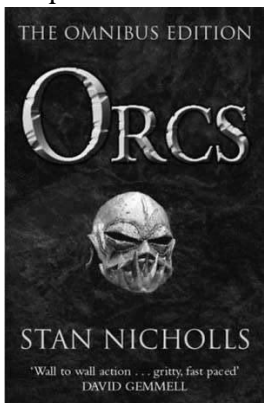
We welcome back Stan and Anne Nicholls who are going to entertain us with a talk entitled **WHAT IS FANDOM FOR?** This will include a discussion of how technology, particularly in the area of social interaction, is changing everything, including the sf/f community, and how best to respond to this. No doubt the discussion will range wider than that

Stan Nicholls is the author of more than thirty books, most of them in the fantasy and science fiction genres, for both adult and young readers. Titles include **STRANGE INVADERS**, **FADE TO BLACK**, *The Nightshade Chronicles* trilogy and **WORDSMITHS OF WONDER: FIFTY INTERVIEWS WITH WRITERS OF THE FANTASTIC**. He adapted David Gemmell's **LEGEND** and **WOLF IN SHADOW** into graphic novel form, novelised TV series *Dark Skies*, and wrote authorised biographies of, among others, Gerry Anderson of *Thunderbirds* fame and Coronation Street's William Roache. His *Quicksilver* trilogy (*Dreamtime* trilogy in the US) - **QUICKSILVER RISING**, **QUICKSILVER ZENITH** and **QUICKSILVER TWILIGHT** - is published in the UK by Voyager/HarperCollins.

His *Orcs: First Blood* trilogy - **BODYGUARD OF LIGHTNING**, **LEGION OF THUNDER** and **WARRIORS OF THE TEMPEST** - published in the UK by Gollancz, is a worldwide bestseller, with over a million copies sold to date. The associated Orcs story 'The Taking' was shortlisted for the 2001 British Fantasy Award. The second trilogy, *Orcs: Bad Blood*, consists of **WEAPONS OF MAGICAL DESTRUCTION**, **ARMY OF SHADOWS** and **INFERNO**. An original Orcs graphic novel, **ORCS: FORGED FOR WAR**, illustrated by Joe Flood, was published in October 2011 (Pan Macmillan UK) and entered the New York Times bestseller list. It also won the 2011 Geek Life Award for Best Comic Book of the Year, and was awarded a Great GN Accolade by *Graphic Novel Reporter*. Overall his books have been published in more than 20 countries.

Before taking up writing full-time in 1981, Stan co-owned and managed Notting Hill bookstore *Bookends*, and was manager of specialist sf bookshop *Dark They Were and Golden Eyed*. He was

the first manager of Forbidden Planet's original London store, and helped establish and run the New York branch.

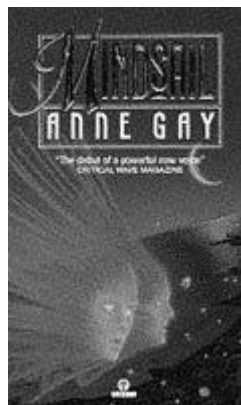


He has had approximately fifty short stories published in anthologies and magazines. A collection entitled **SHAKE ME TO WAKE ME: THE BEST SHORT FICTION OF STAN NICHOLLS** was published by NewCon Press in November 2013.

A journalist for national and specialist publications, and the Internet, Stan was for six years the science fiction and fantasy book reviewer for London listings magazine *Time Out*, and subsequently reviewed popular science titles for the magazine. His journalism has appeared in *The Guardian*, *The Independent*, *The Times*, *Film Monthly*, *Films & Filming*, *Movie*, *Rock Power*, *SFX*, *Sight & Sound* and some seventy other publications.

He was the recipient of LeFantastique Lifetime Achievement Award for Contributions to Literature, presented at the Trolls & Legendes Festival in Mons, Belgium, 7th-8th April 2007. Stan is Chair of the annual David Gemmell Awards For Fantasy. The first presentation, which he co-hosted, took place at the headquarters of The Magic Circle in London on 19th June 2009. Further information at www.stannicholls.com

Stan is married to psychotherapist Anne Nicholls, who writes self-help books and journalism under that name, and sf/fantasy as Anne Gay. Nowadays Anne Nicholls is best known as a counsellor and broadcaster. At one point her novel **MINDSAIL** was listed higher in the Sunday Times Best-Sellers than a Dick Francis thriller. As well as writing fiction (she's brewing a novel) she's producing a series of paintings for an exhibition at Salus in Sutton Coldfield in May. Other novels include **THE BROOCH OF AZURE MIDNIGHT**, **DANCING ON THE VOLCANO** and **TO BATHE IN**



LIGHTNING. Recent short stories include "The Seeds of a Pomegranate" in URBAN MYTHIC (Alchemy Press) and "The Giant's Heartbeat" in WEIRD TRAILS 1 (Fringeworks Press) both as Anne Nicholls.

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 normally 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

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 or queries to me at goodwinced@yahoo.com

AGM MINUTES

Dear Carol,

I know that it saves a sheet of A4 paper, but does anyone else think the tiny text in the Minutes for the AGM is too small for comfortable reading? As an artist I think my eyes are pretty good, but I need to hold this in a very good light to be able to read it -- and a magnifying glass would help!

Thanks,
Dave Hardy

Dear Dave,

Thanks for the feedback. I apologise to you and anyone else who had difficulty reading the AGM minutes. I have passed your comments on to the Committee and hopefully by the time of the meeting we should be able to give you a response.

*Thanks
Carol*

ANDROMEDA TWO POSTPONED - Theresa Derwin

Unfortunately, due to issues securing the right venue Andromeda Two will be postponed until 2015 although the same GOH are lined up for next year. Dates and venue TBC. Updates at <http://terror-tree.co.uk/andromeda-tw/> TD

NOVACON 44 - by Steve Green, Novacon 44 Chair

For those of you who haven't heard yet, the 44th instalment of the Brum Group's own convention, Novacon, will be held at the Park Inn, Nottingham, over the weekend of 14-16 November 2014.

We have a fantastic guest of honour in Kari Sperring, author of the acclaimed fantasy novels **LIVING WITH GHOSTS AND THE GRASS KING'S CONCUBINE**, and a terrific guest science speaker in John Gribbin, technology journalist, astrophysicist, sf novelist, and a visiting fellow in astronomy at the University of Sussex.

Membership costs £45, which includes all publications and a special limited-edition chapbook featuring Kari herself. You'll find a registration form at our website, <http://novacon.org.uk>.

We've managed to negotiate excellent rates at the Park Inn - £45 per person per night for twin and double rooms, £63 per person per night for single rooms - but you must be a member of Novacon 44 to qualify for these discounts. Booking forms will be circulated with our first progress report, due out shortly. SG

DAN DARE MEMORABILIA - Vernon Brown

Since the demise of his strip in the "Eagle" Dan Dare has had a number of reincarnations of various types and lengths. One of his shortest was in "The Planet on Sunday", a new newspaper which only ran to one edition on June 16th 1996 before being scrapped by its owner because of disagreements with the Editor.

The paper devoted one whole page to an article about Frank Hampson, Dan Dare's artist, and to information about the "Eagle". A second page carried the first episode of a new Dan Dare strip, about 2/3 page size, plus another article about its artist. So a promising new beginning came to an abrupt end.

Having an interest in Dan Dare, probably because he was the first SF that I can remember reading - I can even remember where and when - I bought several copies of the "Planet" to add to my SF collection. But I'm currently having a massive cull all my stuff and so have five copies of the paper to get rid of. It would be a pity to put them in the recycling bin if someone would like them so if you would like a copy for your collection please email me via the BSGF and I'll bring one for you to the March meeting. VB

NEWS IN BRIEF

Harold Ramis, the American director, writer and actor has died. Most famous for playing Dr Egon Spengler in **GHOSTBUSTERS**



(1984) and its 1989 sequel, both of which he co-wrote with Dan Ackroyd. His other screenplays include **GROUNDHOG DAY** (1993) and the remake of **BEDAZZLED** (2000), both of which he also directed. He was nominated for Hugo's for **GHOSTBUSTERS** and **GROUNDHOG DAY** whilst his vocal talents featured in **HEAVY METAL** (1981) and **SPACEHUNTER:**

ADVENTURES IN THE FORBIDDEN ZONE (1983).

His non-genre films included **ANIMAL HOUSE**, **CADDYSHACK** and **STRIPES** Director **Christopher Barry** died on February 7th. He directed more than 40 episodes of Doctor Who, from the season one episodes containing the first appearance of the Daleks to his last in 1979 ("The Creature from the Pit.") He also worked on other British genre productions such as **THE MAN IN THE WHITE SUIT** and the British SF series *The Tripods*, *Moonbase 3*, and *Out of the Unknown* Director, animator and producer **Jimmy T. Murakami** died on February 16th in Ireland. Genre films included **THE SNOWMAN**,

BATTLE BEYOND THE STARS and WHEN THE WIND BLOWS Loncon 3 announced that **Jonathan Ross** would be the MC at the Hugo Ceremony this year. Given his controversial nature and previous gaffes, there was a storm on social media. One committee member immediately announced her resignation, as she viewed Ross's form of humour as sexist. Following a storm on social media, Ross announced his offer to withdraw and the Loncon chairs accepted this The **SFWA** continues to tear itself apart between the "freedom of speech" camp and those who view that as a cover for offensive sexist/racist remarks. One of the people who defended the "free speech petition" has threatened to sue others for libel! Two bids, from **Beijing** and **Kansas City** have filed the necessary paperwork to appear on the ballot for the **2016 Worldcon**, which will be selected at Loncon 3. Beijing would be China's first Worldcon if successful. Any Attending or Supporting member of Loncon may vote - ballot information will be subsequently available on the Loncon site www.loncon3.org The 2013 winner of the **James Tiptree Jr Award** (for SF/Fantasy which expands or explores our understanding of gender) is RUPETTA by N A Sulway (published by Tartarus Press) The **Horror Writers Association** has announced this year's **Lifetime Achievement Awards**. The recipients will be **Stephen Jones** (editor of many horror anthologies) and R L Stine (author of the children's horror series, *Goosebumps* and *Fear Street* BSGF member **Theresa Derwin** will be a guest author at SciFi Weekender in Wales (details below) The British Fantasy Society Short Story Competition is open for submissions from 1st March to 30th June. Story length is up to 5000 words. More details at www.britishfantasysociety.org/post-archive/ The **BBC** is aiming to make a documentary about **British SF fans**. They are looking for people who can talk eloquently about the genre and what it means to them. Anyone interested should contact Chloe Penman (email chloe.penman@bbc.co.uk or tel: 0117 974 6890 The BBC is also allegedly adapting **Neil Gaiman's ANANSI BOYS** into a TV mini-series Harlan Ellison's short story "**Repent, Harlequin! Said The Ticktock Man**" has been optioned by *Babylon 5* director J Michael Straczynski for possible filming Last year's Hugo Award winning novel, **REDSHIRTS** by **John Scalzi** is to be a TV series

shown on the FX channel (UK transmission yet to be confirmed) A folio of **Iain Banks** poetry, collected and co-edited by Ken MacLeod, will be released in February 2015 **Waterstones** have been criticised for including only 9 female authors from a total of 113 in a guide booklet to the SFF genre BSGF member **Janet Edwards'** third book EARTH FLIGHT will be published on August 14th

NEBULA AWARD NOMINATIONS - Novels

The nominees for the Nebula Award have been announced. The winners will be announced at the Nebula Awards Weekend on May 15th - 18th. Other categories at www.sfgwa.org/2014/02/2013-nebula-nominees-announced/

WE ARE ALL COMPLETELY BESIDE OURSELVES by Karen Joy Fowler (Marian Wood)

THE OCEAN AT THE END OF THE LANE by Neil Gaiman (Headline)

FIRE WITH FIRE by Charles E Gannon (Baen)

HILD by Nicola Griffith (Farrar, Straus and Giroux)

ANCILLARY JUSTICE by Ann Leckie (Orbit)

THE RED: FIRST LIGHT by Linda Nagata (Mythic Island)

A STRANGER IN OLONDRIA by Sofia Samatar (Small Beer)

THE GOLEM AND THE JINNI by Helene Wecker (Harper)

THE KITSCHIES 2013 AWARD WINNERS

The Kitschies, presented by The Kraken Rum, reward "the year's most progressive, intelligent and entertaining works that contain elements of the speculative or fantastic". The prizes were announced on 12th February at the Seven Dials Club in London.

Red Tentacle (Novel): A TALE FOR THE TIME BEING by Ruth Ozecki (Canongate Books)

Golden Tentacle (Debut Novel): ANCILLARY JUSTICE by Ann Leckie (Orbit)

Inky Tentacle (Cover Art): THE AGE ATOMIC by Adam Christopher illustrated by Will Staehle (Angry Robot)

The Black Tentacle: Malorie Blackman (this is a discretionary prize for an outstanding contribution to the conversation surrounding genre literature)



BOOK REVIEWS



(**REVIEWERS** please note: - all reviews should be emailed direct to me at goodwincd@yahoo.com **Deadline for each issue is 14 days prior to the date of the monthly meeting.**)

GEMSIGNS by Stephanie Saulter

Jo Fletcher Books / 389 pgs / £8.99 paperback / ISBN 978-1780878652

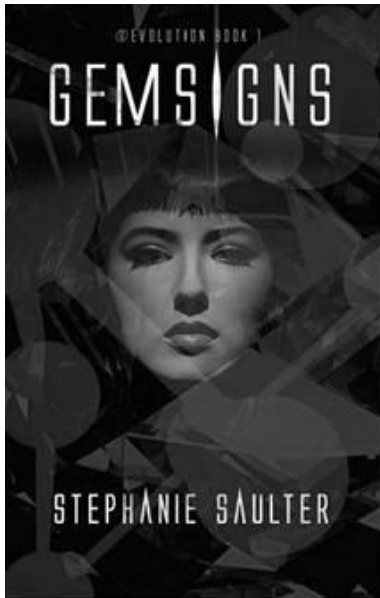
Reviewed by Carol Goodwin

In the near future humanity was nearly destroyed by the Syndrome. A degenerative neurological disease which emerges in puberty, victims of the Syndrome required constant care for 10 to 15 years until their eventual death around 30 years old. The severe emotional and economic strains caused by losing almost an entire generation radically alter society. Money and resources were poured into research and amidst the hysteria, ethical considerations are a very low priority. The only “cure” was to genetically engineer resistance into all embryos. Facing massive labour shortages (whilst the new generation of resistant babies grow and mature) the genetic engineering companies (“gemtechs”) use their newfound techniques to produce specialised Genetically Modified Humans (GEM’s) to fill this gap. A desperate public initially turn a blind eye to the gemtech experiments and the GEM’s are slaves in all but name.

At the start of this book, things have started to improve slightly for the GEM’s. They have been freed from the control of the gemtech companies and a European conference is about to report on what should be done to give the GEM’s legal protection and rights. However all is not well. Various factions oppose the GEM’s. These include the gemtech companies who want the lucrative gem’s

back under their control, the religious godgangs who see them as abominations and much of the general public who resent and fear them. Also the Gems have their own problems caused by decades of physical deprivation and genetic experimentation.

Dr Eli Walker is the scientist charged with deciding whether gems should be considered human. Trying to be objective he must resist the manipulative gemtech executive, Zackva Klist as he gets to know the gem's including their deformed, brilliant spokeswoman, Aryel Morningstar and the young boy, Gabriel whose hidden past and abilities will prove pivotal to the story. Over the period of a week before his vital report, the manipulations of the various parties escalate into violence.



Now if this sounds a bit dry, it is far from it. For what I believe is a first novel , this book is very impressive and I loved it - to me it does exactly what SF should do - take that “What If?” idea and then consider the various consequences and developments. The characters are sympathetic yet believable. The book is very readable with a good pace and it builds to a very exciting climax. It left me wanting to know more about the next developments in the characters’ lives. To be even-handed there are a few minor niggles such as a slightly heavy information dump at the beginning of the book but hopefully as the

author gains experience this will improve and I am looking forward to the sequel.

CG

(Review copy kindly donated by Jo Fletcher Books)

FORTHCOMING BOOKS

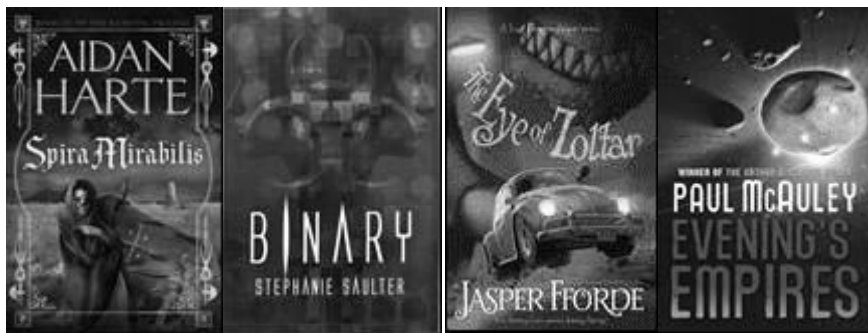


WHEN THE BLUE SHIFT COMES by Robert Silverberg & Alvaro Zinos-Amara / Gollancz / 192 pgs / £8.99 paperback / ISBN 978-0575131873 / March 13th. SF. In the far future, a changed humanity try to save Earth from a black hole.

SEVERED STREETS (James Quill 2) by Paul Cornell / Macmillan / 400 pgs / £13.99 paperback / ISBN 978-0230769489 / March 27th. Supernatural detectives investigate an invisible murderer.

VALOUR (Book 2 Faithful and the Fallen) by John Gwynne / Tor / 640 pgs / £12.99 hardback / ISBN 978-0230758469 / March 27th. Epic fantasy. The Banished Lands are threatened by invasion of the otherworldly Fallen.

BLOOD OF DRAGONS (Rain Wild 4) by Robin Hobb / Harper Voyager / 544 pgs / £8.99 paperback / ISBN 978-0007444168 / March 27th. Fantasy. The dragon keepers fight to save wounded dragon Tintaglia and her ancestral memories.



SPIRA MIRABILIS (The Wave 3) by Aidan Harte / Jo Fletcher Books / 592 pgs / £20 hardback / ISBN 978-1780871530 / April 3rd. Fantasy. Can the people of Etruria defeat the engineers of Concord and their Wave Technology?

BINARY (@evolution 2) by Stephanie Saulter / Jo Fletcher Books / 400 pgs / £12.99 paperback / ISBN 978-1780878928 / April 3rd. SF. The legacy of their past causes problems for the newly emancipated Gems (Genetically modified humans).

THE EYE OF ZOLTAR (Last Dragonslayer 3) by Jasper Fforde / Hodder & Stoughton / 304 pgs / £12.99 hardback / ISBN 9781444707274 / April 10th. Humorous fantasy. Sixteen year old Jennifer quests (50% Fatality Index) for a legendary jewel to save the dragons.

EVENING'S EMPIRES by Paul McAuley / Gollancz / 384 pgs / £8.99 paperback / ISBN 9780575100817 / April 10th. SF. Stranded with only a semi-intelligent spacesuit, Hari vows to reclaim his spaceship.

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NEW CINEMA FILM RELEASES

Listings should not be necessarily taken as recommendations. Release dates are subject to change. View at your own peril!

UNDER THE SKIN - Release date March 14th. An alien seduces and preys upon hitchhikers in Scotland

ZERO THEOREM - Release date March 14th. SF. A computer hacker tries to discover the reason for human existence. Director Terry Gilliam

DIVERGENT - Release date March 21st. Dystopian SF based on YA novel. In a world divided into factions, the “Divergents” who do not fit are in danger.

CAPTAIN AMERICA: THE WINTER SOLDIER - Release date April 4th. Sequel. A revived Captain America struggles with the modern world and a new threat linked to his past.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

All details are correct to the best of our knowledge, we advise contacting organizers 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 is always welcome - please send to Carol at goodwincd@yahoo.com

ORIGINS OF MIDDLE EARTH WALK, 14th March, Birmingham. Guided walk exploring the childhood “haunts” of JRR Tolkien. Starting at Sarehole Mill and through Moseley Bog. Starts at 1pm and lasts about 1.5 hours. Tickets £7 per person. Booking essential (Email sarehole.mill@birminghammuseums.org.uk or telephone Sarehole Mill on 0121 777 6612). Shoes can get muddy!

IAIN BANKS RETROSPECTIVE, HUDDERSFIELD LITERATURE FESTIVAL, 15th March, Huddersfield. A series of talks discussing his works. Guests include Ken MacLeod and John Jarrold (literary agent). At the Diamond Jubilee Lecture Theatre, University of Huddersfield from 2 - 7pm. Tickets £12. See www.thelbt.org/celebration-life-works-ian-banks Tel: 01484 430528

IAIN BANKS EXHIBITION, STIRLING UNIVERSITY, Now - 4th April, Stirling. Featuring foreign editions of Iain Banks' novels and a commemorative sculpture. In the Archives & Special Collections area of the University Library. Tel: 01786 466619 or email archives@stir.ac.uk

BIRMINGHAM INDEPENDENT BOOK FAIR, 12th April, Birmingham. Featuring independent publishers of poetry and fiction from across the UK. Complete participant details unavailable at present but SF/Fantasy publisher Alchemy Press is confirmed. Free entry - Drop in between 11am - 5pm at Ikon Gallery, 1 Oozells Square, Brindleyplace, B1 2HS.

HER DARK VOICE BOOK LAUNCH, 26th April, Coventry. Launch of Dark Fantasy/Horror anthology at the Coventry Transport Museum Café. 7- 9pm. Contributors include Jaime Fenn, Vicky Stock, Gaie Sebold, Lynn M Cochrane and Theresa Derwin. Some authors will be in attendance (details TBC). Proceeds, after royalties and costs to Breast Cancer Research

CONVENTIONS

E-M CON (EAST MIDLANDS CON), 16th March, Nottingham. First year of one day mixed media convention. Guests to date include Virginia Hey (Farscape), Craig Charles (Red Dwarf) and Sam Stone (horror/fantasy writer). Tickets £8.50/£12 (early bird). Details at www.em-con.co.uk/

SCI-FI WEEKENDER (formerly SFX Weekender), 27th - 30th March, Hafan Y Mor, North Wales. Commercial multi-media convention. Various prices depending on level of access/accommodation. See www.scifiweekender.com

SATELLITE 4 (EASTERCON), 18th - 21th April 2014, Glasgow
Guests of Honour include John Meaney, Juliet McKenna, Alice & Steve Lawson, Jim Burns, Dame Jocelyn Bell Burnell and Sir Terry Pratchett (limited appearance subject to health). £65/50 concessions. Membership form at www.satellite4.org.uk

LONCON 3 (WORLDCON 72), 14th - 18th August 2014, London. Held at ExCel exhibition centre. Guests of Honour include Chris Foss, and Robin Hobb. £125 Adult membership. See www.loncon3.org

SHAMROKCON (EUROCON), 22nd - 24th August, Dublin.
Guests include Hugo Award nominated Seanan McGuire, Andrzej Sapkowski (THE WITCHER also now a TV series and game) etc. Price is £35) at www.shamrokon.ie

FANTASYCON, 5th - 7th September, York. Guests of Honour are Kate Elliott, Toby Whithouse and Larry Rostant. Master of Ceremonies is Graham Joyce. Tickets £50 (£35 for British Fantasy Society members). Tickets and details at www.fantasycon2014.org

NOVACON 44, 14th - 16th November, Nottingham. Guest of Honour: Kari Sperring and Science Guest: John Gribbin. Cost £45 (subject to review after Easter). Details at www.novacon.org.uk

FUTURE MEETINGS OF THE BSFG

April 11th - Writer **Gavin Thorpe**.

May 9th - Senior lecturer in robotics, **Dr Nick Hawes**.

June 13th- SF and fantasy author **Stephen Hunt**

July 11th - Urban fantasy author **Sam Stone** and publisher **David Howe**.

August 8th - **Speaker tba**

September 12th - **Chris Morgan**

October 10th - Dr Who fan and lookalike **Richard Ashton**

November 7th - SF and fantasy author **Storm Constantine**

December 5th - **Christmas Social**

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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