

BRUM GROUP NEWS

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE

BIRMINGHAM SCIENCE FICTION GROUP

AUGUST 2015

ISSUE 527

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SUMMER SOCIAL MEAL 14th August

August is the Summer Social meal and there is no meeting at the Briar Rose. This year the venue is again The Bull in Price Street, a few minutes' walk from the City centre, a small old traditional pub with a separate dining area with good beer as well as good food. The address is 1 Price Street, B4 6JU and the time is 7:30 for 8:00 pm.



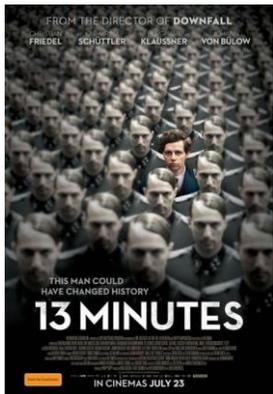
September 11th - editor, reviewer and author, Professor Edward James.

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 goodwincd@yahoo.com

UN/LUCKY 13 by Vernon Brown



Devotees of paracliotic fiction will, as I was, be interested to hear of a recently released film that tells of an incident that would, had not Fate intervened, have resulted in a very different present.

During the years following WWII when the genre was beginning to establish itself, a number of authors took as their premise that the Axis had won the War, usually but not always at some time in the past. These had the advantage of allowing some flexibility in their “predictions” of how things could have developed whereas writing about the moment that the fictional history diverged from “ours” required rather specific knowledge of conditions at that time. Some writers however did manage it and since then there has been a steady trickle of both types of novel.

One such possible divergence point took place in 1944 when Claus von Stauffenberg, a German general, headed a plot to assassinate Hitler with a bomb hidden in a briefcase placed under a large heavy table where Hitler was standing at a meeting. Unfortunately someone pushed it behind a table leg which deflected the blast, killing several people but missing its target. What would have happened if it had not been moved and Hitler had been killed? Several novels have explored this scenario and a film VALKYRIE made of the actual event. Probably because of his “glamour” Von Stauffenberg’s plotting is well known: a memorial statue, stamps and a commemorative postal envelope have been created as well

But this took place some five years into the War, what if things had been nipped in the bud? Apparently they could! In November 1939, just after Hitler had invaded Poland and before Britain and Germany were in outright conflict, Georg Elser, an ill-

educated handyman type of worker, came within 13 minutes of killing Hitler. He was not interested in politics but had watched with loathing as the Nazis had taken power. When the war began he had had enough and decided to assassinate Hitler, which took much ingenuity and planning but finally he had installed a bomb in a pillar in front of which Hitler would give his annual address at a beer hall. Hitler duly turned up, gave his address and left 13 minutes earlier than scheduled. When the bomb detonated a few people died but no-one of importance. Georg was captured and put in a concentration camp before he was murdered with the other inmates at the end of the war. Since then he has been forgotten.

Meticulous research by historians has recently discovered much about Georg, his life and death, and it has been used to create a film by director Oliver Hirschbiegel, who directed **DOWNFALL** the acclaimed story of Hitler's last days. Released in July the reviews all praise it so I am certainly going to find out what did happen and think about what could have happened.

(The film "13 Minutes" was released on July 17th)

VB

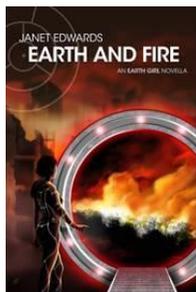
MEMBERS NEWS

A Happy 90th Birthday to our President, **Brian Aldiss** on the 18th August. A present has been sent on behalf of the group. For those of you not present at the July meeting, details will be in the next newsletter so as not to spoil the surprise!



Stan Nicholls and **Anne Nicholls** will each be launching a new collection of their stories at Novacon in November. Stan will be launching **ORCS: TALES OF MARAS-DANTIA** (NewCon Press) and Anne will be launching **MUSIC FROM THE FIFTH PLANET** (Alchemy Press)

Pro Se productions will be publishing a new collection of **Mike Chinn's** *Damian Paladin* stories (**WALKERS IN SHADOW**) in 2016. He has also been contracted to write a Western (for 2016 publication).



EARTH AND FIRE, an *Earth Girl* novella and **EARTH 2788: THE EARTH GIRL STORIES** by **Janet Edwards** are now available worldwide on Kindle.

Theresa Derwin is organising a convention in 2016 (9th - 10th September). **Andromeda 2** will be in Moseley and guests of honour to date are author Sam Stone and our own **David A Hardy**. Other guests confirmed to date also include BSGF members **Stan and Anne Nicholls**. Website still in preparation but bookings can be made via PayPal (£30 for two days, £25 Saturday only). Further details to follow.

BRITISH FANTASY AWARD SHORTLIST

The shortlists for the British Fantasy awards have been announced. The nominees for Best Fantasy Novel and Best Horror Novel are given below. Nominees in other categories are available at www.britishfantasysociety.org:

Best Fantasy Novel (the Robert Holdstock Award)

BREED by K T Davies (Fox Spirit)

CITY OF STAIRS by Robert Jackson Bennett (Jo Fletcher Books)

CUCKOO SONG by Frances Hardinge (Macmillan Childrens)

A MAN LIES DREAMING by Lavie Tidhar (Hodder & Stoughton)

THE MOON KING by Neil Williamson (NewCon Press)

THE RELIC GUILD by Edward Cox (Gollancz)

Best Horror Novel (the August Derleth Award)

THE END by Gary McMahon (NewCon Press)

THE GIRL WITH ALL THE GIFTS by M R Carey (Orbit)

THE LAST PLAGUE by Rich Hawkins (Crowded Quarantine Publications)

NO ONE GETS OUT ALIVE by Adam Nevill (Macmillan)

STATION ELEVEN by Emily St John Mandel (Picador)

THE UNQUIET HOUSE by Alison Littlewood (Jo Fletcher Books)

WORLD FANTASY AWARD SHORTLIST

The shortlists for the World Fantasy awards have been announced. The nominees for Best Novel are given below. Nominees in other categories are available at www.worldfantasy.org/awards/. The winners will be announced at World Fantasy Con on November 5th to 8th:

THE GOBLIN EMPEROR by Katherine Addison (Tor)

CITY OF STAIRS by Robert Jackson Bennett (Jo Fletcher Books)

THE BONE CLOCKS by David Mitchell (Sceptre)

AREA X: THE SOUTHERN REACH TRILOGY by Jeff

VanderMeer (Fourth Estate)

MY REAL CHILDREN by Jo Walton (Corsair)

NEWS IN BRIEF

The World Fantasy Lifetime Achievement Awards winners are **Ramsey Campbell** and **Sherri S Tepper** **Hodder** has an open submission period for unagented authors from August 3rd to 16th. They are looking for novels of 50, 000 words or more in the field of SF, fantasy or horror. Submission details are available at <http://hodderscape.co.uk/open-submissions-the-guidelines/>

Congratulations to our recent guests on making the British Fantasy Awards shortlists. **Adrian Cole** is nominated for Best Collection (**NICK NIGHTMARE INVESTIGATES**). **Alchemy Press** have nominations for Best Anthology (**THE ALCHEMY PRESS BOOK OF URBAN MYTHIC 2**), Best Collection (**NICK NIGHTMARE INVESTIGATES**), Best non-fiction (**TOUCHSTONES: ESSAYS ON THE FANTASTIC**) and Best Independent Press. Our forthcoming November guest, **Emma Newman** is also nominated in the Best Short Story section (“A Woman’s Place”)

The *New Horizons* spacecraft successfully managed its **Pluto Flyby** on July 14. Informal names given so far include **Tombaugh Regio** (the Heart-shaped area) that has been named after the discoverer of Pluto). The icy plains region (in the centre left of Tombaugh Regio) has been named **Sputnik Planum**



(after the first artificial satellite) and a mountain range in the south of the “heart” has been named **Norgay Montes** (after Nepalese mountaineer Tenzing Norgay, who was one of the first climbers to reach the summit of Everest Elsewhere in the Solar system, the **Rosetta** spacecraft has regained contact with the Philae lander on the surface of **comet 67-P/Churyumov-Gerasimenko**. Recovered data shows many complex organic molecules. The comet is due to reach perihelion (closest approach to the Sun) on the 13th August And finally, the *Dawn* spacecraft which is studying the **dwarf planet, Ceres** in the asteroid belt is descending to a closer third orbit (which is expected to take about five weeks) after which it should be able to capture even more detailed images and data A collection of previously unpublished works by the late author of weird fiction, **Shirley Jackson** is to be published next year. It will be titled **GARLIC IN FICTION**. The collection has been edited by two of her children **Worldcon special guest Kjell Lindgren** started his journey via a Soyuz craft which will carry him to the International Space Station, from where he will participate via a live satellite link **LEGENDS 2** (Stories in honour of David Gemmell) will be launched at **the David Gemmell Awards** ceremony in August SF writer **Lavie Tidhar** was one of the eight winners of the Jerwood Fiction Uncovered Prize for his novel **A MAN LIES DREAMING**. The prize celebrates the best UK fiction writers of the year in any field A short story competition “Science Fiction and the Medical Humanities” for SF short stories of up to 3000 words has been announced. The Wellcome Trust is funding the project and details are at <http://scifimedhums.glasgow.ac.uk/writing-competition/> Closing date is 31st January 2016 The first issue of a new UK magazine for SF has launched. *Shoreline of Infinity*. The magazine is available in different electronic formats for £2.95 (from the publisher at www.shorelineofinfinity.com/shoreline-of-infinity-issue-one/r) and a print edition for £4.95 on Amazon The Smithsonian Institute have successfully raised \$555,000 via online fundraising site, Kickstarter to preserve the spacesuit worn by **Neil Armstrong** in his first moonwalk. They are planning another Kickstarter campaign to preserve **Alan Shepard’s** spacesuit from the first US manned launch The 82-year old **Nichelle Nichols** (Lt. Uhura in *Star Trek*) will be

flying in a NASA Observatory mission in September, on a specially built 747 which houses the SOFIA telescope. CG

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 goodwindc@yahoo.com

MONSTERS AND MAYHEM FILM SEASON, 24th July -22nd August, Birmingham. Season of films in the Outdoor Arena at the MAC, Cannon Hill Park, B12 9QJ. Featuring GHOSTBUSTERS, BACK TO THE FUTURE II and ALIENS. Prices £10 per film. Events go ahead regardless of weather. Tel: 0121 446 3232 or email info@macarts.co.uk

MICHAEL GRANT IN CONVERSATION WITH ANDREW SMITH, 26th August, Birmingham. Author of YA *Gone* series in conversation with author of GRASSHOPPER JUNGLE (Kitschies winner) at Waterstones High Street from 7pm. Entry £3. Tel: 0121 631 4353

SCREENINGS OF BACK TO THE FUTURE, 28th - 31st August, Birmingham. Various times, Price £8.40 - £13.90. The Electric cinema www.theelectric.co.uk

SCREENING OF THE MATRIX, 31st August, Birmingham. Price £8.40 - £13.90. The Electric cinema at 4:15 pm. www.theelectric.co.uk

MIDDLE EARTH WEEKEND, 5th - 6th September, Birmingham. Family friendly event celebrating JRR Tolkien and his works. Includes music, arts and crafts, historical re-enactments etc. at Sarehole Mill, Hall Green Details at <http://middleearthfestival.co.uk/>

AN EVENING WITH PATRICK NESS, 10th September, Birmingham. Award-winning author of YA SF talking about his new novel, THE REST OF US JUST LIVE HERE at Waterstones New Street from 7pm. Entry £3. Tel: 0121 631 4333



BOOK REVIEWS



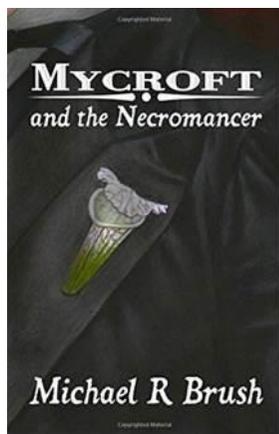
(REVIEWERS please note: - all reviews should be emailed direct to me at goodwinced@yahoo.com Deadline for each issue is 14 days prior to the date of the monthly meeting)

MYCROFT AND THE NECROMANCER by Michael R. Brush
KnightWatch Press / 369 pgs / £10 paperback / ISBN 978-1512241655

Reviewed by Michael Jones

His interest in SF (as in the *Professor Challenger* stories) and Spiritualism notwithstanding, Conan Doyle eschewed anything remotely fantastic in the Sherlock Holmes stories. Even “The Sussex Vampire” turned out not to be one. Now that many modern writers are turning their hands to creating additions to the Holmes canon, tales involving more outré events are beginning to appear, and Michael Brush has chosen in his first novel to delve into the supernatural with a story involving werewolves, shapeshifters, vampires and faeries, etc.

In point of fact, this is not a Sherlock Holmes story at all. He is mentioned in passing, scarcely more than that, and as the title of the book suggests, the principal protagonist, or one of them, is elder brother Mycroft. He is presented here as very much a man of action, far from the reclusive man of inaction who is described in his first, and only major appearance in an original story. (“The Adventure of the Greek Interpreter”) There is some suggestion that his withdrawal from an active role in criminology was a deliberate choice arising from the events recounted here.



Briefly, the story concerns the unmasking and eventual destruction of a sinister death cult operating from a disreputable private club in London called “The Grinning Skull” and controlled from the country residence of the Necromancer of the title. Mycroft, ably assisted by the narrator of the story, one Fox Hungerton, and a hitherto unheard-of younger Holmes brother, Carmel, together with

various others, both human and supernatural, and all supported by the staff of the Diogenes Club, leads the campaign to expunge this evil.

For the kind of reader likely to encounter this review the book has the potential to be of interest. Unfortunately, it is quite badly, almost amateurishly, written. The general construction and plotting are confusing and illogical and moreover, errors of grammar and punctuation are not uncommon, phraseology can be clumsy and the choice of words is often infelicitous to say the least. Although it is supposed to have been written in 1887, the writing reflects neither the style of the period nor that of Conan Doyle himself.

These faults may or may not limit the appeal of this book in the horror/supernatural market at which it is presumably aimed. On the other hand, true dyed-in-the-wool Holmes aficionados will probably recoil aghast at everything in it. *MJ*

(Review copy kindly donated by KnightWatch Press)

NEW CINEMA FILM RELEASES

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

ABSOLUTELY ANYTHING - Release date August 14th. Eccentric aliens give a human being the power to do absolutely anything.

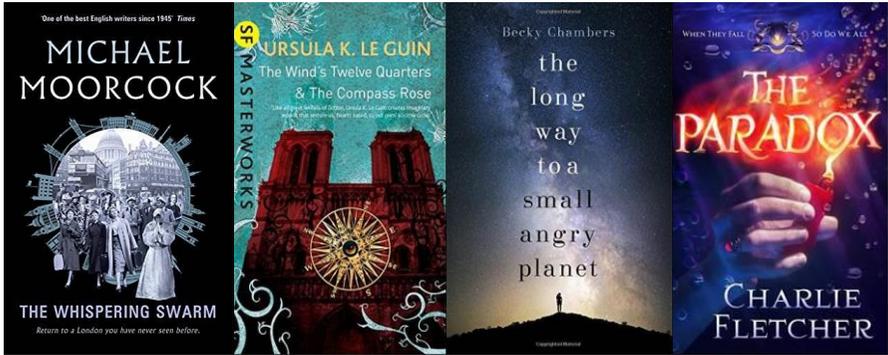
SINISTER 2 - Release date August 21st. Horror. A young mother and her twin sons move into a creepy country house.

STRANGE MAGIC - Release date August 21st. Animation. Goblins, fairies, elves and imps battle over a powerful potion.

MAZE RUNNER: THE SCORCH TRIALS - Release date September 11th. Sequel. YA SF. Having escaped from a deadly Maze, youngsters now face new challenges on the open roads in a desolate landscape. *CG*

FORTHCOMING BOOKS

(NB Prices given are Recommended Retail Price and may be available at cheaper prices)



THE WHISPERING SWARM by Michael Moorcock / Gollancz / 480 pgs / £25 hardback / ISBN 978-1473213326 / July 30th. Combining autobiographical and fantastic elements, a teenager discovers Alsacia, a lost London where real and fictional characters mingle.

THE WIND'S TWELVE QUARTERS & THE COMPASS ROSE by Ursula Le Guin (*SF Masterworks*) / Gollancz / 592 pgs / £9.99 paperback / ISBN 978-1473205765 / August 13th. Omnibus edition of two of her previous short story collections.

THE LONG WAY TO A SMALL, ANGRY PLANET by Becky Chambers / Hodder & Stoughton / 416 pgs / £18.99 hardback / ISBN 978-1473619791 / August 13th. SF. The crew of the *Wayfarer* are hired to build a hyperspace tunnel to a distant planet.

THE PARADOX (Oversight 2) by Charlie Fletcher / Orbit / 400 pgs / £16.99 hardback / ISBN 978-0356502854 / August 20th. Fantasy. The Oversight society struggle to protect the world from supernatural menaces.



THE HOUSE OF SHATTERED WINGS by Aliette de Bodard / Gollancz / 416 pgs / £14.99 paperback / ISBN 978-1473212558 / August 20th. Murder mystery set in a ruined Paris ruled by fallen angels.

THE SHEPHERD'S CROWN (Discworld) by Terry Pratchett / Doubleday Childrens / 352 pgs / £20 hardback / ISBN 978-0857534815 / August 27th. Young witch, Tiffany Aching must protect the land against a fairy invasion.

A BETTER WAY TO DIE: COLLECTED SHORT STORIES by Paul Cornell / NewCon Press/ 314 pgs / £12.99 paperback / ISBN 978-1907069840 / August 28th. Collection of short stories from Hugo-shortlisted and BSFA-winning novelist.

SORCERER TO THE CROWN (Sorcerer Royal 1) by Zen Cho / Macmillan / 416 pgs / £16.99 hardback / ISBN 978-1447299455 / September 10th. Fantasy. In Regency London, a malicious faction tries to remove the first African Sorcerer Royal.

CONVENTIONS

BRISTOLCON, 26th September, Bristol. Guests of Honour Jasper Fforde, Jaine Fenn and Chris Moore. Doubletree Hotel. £25. Details at www.bristolcon.org

FANTASYCON, 23rd - 25th October, Nottingham. Guests of Honour are John Connolly, Jo Fletcher and Brandon Sanderson

with Master of Ceremonies Juliet E McKenna. East Midlands Conference Centre & Orchard Hotel. Tickets £75 (non-members of BFS) from <http://fantasycon2015.org/>.

NOVACON 45, 13th - 15th November, Nottingham. Guests of Honour are Anne and Stan Nicholls. The Park Inn, Nottingham. Tickets £45. Details at www.novacon.org.uk

SLEDGE-LIT, 21st November, Derby. Literary SF/Fantasy festival. Guests of Honour Adam Roberts, Robert Shearman & Alison Moore. Tickets £25 from 01332 290606 or www.derbyquad.co.uk/special-event/sledge-lit

FUTURE MEETINGS OF THE BSFG

September 11th - editor, reviewer and author, **Professor Edward James**

October 9th - author **Justina Robson**

November 6th - author **Emma Newman**

December 4th - **Christmas Social**

January 8th - **AGM and Book Auction**

February 12th - **Annual Quiz**

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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