

BRUM GROUP NEWS

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE

BIRMINGHAM SCIENCE FICTION GROUP

NOVEMBER 2015

ISSUE 530

HONORARY PRESIDENT: BRIAN W ALDISS, OBE

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EMMA NEWMAN

6th November

This month we welcome author, Emma Newman. Emma writes dark short stories, science fiction and urban fantasy novels. She was shortlisted for the British Fantasy Best Novel and Best Newcomer awards



Photograph courtesy of Lou Abercrombie

for her urban fantasy **BETWEEN TWO THORNS**. This was the first in the *Split Worlds* trilogy, all of which (**ANY OTHER NAME** and **ALL IS FAIR**) have been published by Angry Robot Publishing. She has also just won (October 2015) a British Fantasy Award for Best Short Story (“A Woman’s Place”). Emma’s latest book, **PLANETFALL** is a standalone science fiction novel published by

December 4th - Christmas Social (details in this Newsletter).

Ace/Roc on November 3rd.

Emma is also a professional audio book narrator and co-writes and hosts the twice Hugo-nominated podcast, TEA AND JEOPARDY. She will be talking to us about podcasting, audio book narrating and how they help with her writing. More information about Emma can be found at her website www.ewman.co.uk CG

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

THE CHRISTMAS SOCIAL - Friday 4th December

This year's 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 4th December. To get there take a 45 or 47 bus from outside Boots, opposite New Street Station's old entrance on Smallbrook Queensway, or from near Boots in High Street. Bus stops are still changing so check the destination sign carefully. Ask for The Selly Park Tavern – it's about 15 minutes ride. Fuller details on how to get there are given on your ticket.

PLEASE NOTE THE CHANGE OF DATE FROM OUR USUAL SECOND FRIDAY.

Tickets are £10 each which includes the buffet etc but not your drinks. As we have the Alley you can play skittles if you wish - there will be prizes for winners and you don't even have to know how to play because we have our own variants of the game, designed to give everyone a chance, none of which would be allowed at competition or any other level. There will be a free half hourly raffle and, to judge from past comments, a good time to be had by all.

The buffet will consist of a selection of sandwiches, sausage rolls, quiche, chicken wings, pizza, salads etc., plus a separate selection for vegans/vegetarians, provided that this requirement is clearly stated when you order your ticket.

With this newsletter there should be an application form for one or two tickets. Please complete it as indicated and hand it to Pat, with the necessary money, at the November Group Meeting or send it to the Membership Secretary, together with a cheque/postal order for the appropriate amount, at the address on the back page of the Newsletter. However, as there are sometimes problems with the postal system if you apply by post please send her an email at the same time in case your application is delayed. **THE DEADLINE FOR APPLICATIONS IS MONDAY 23rd 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 almost every year and had to refuse latecomers.

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

BRITISH FANTASY AWARDS 2015

The 2014 British Fantasy Award winners were announced on October 25th. The ceremony was at FantasyCon in Nottingham.

Best Fantasy Novel (Robert Holdstock Award): CUCKOO SONG by Frances Hardinge (Macmillan Children's Books)

Best Horror Novel (August Derleth Award): NO ONE GETS OUT ALIVE by Adam Nevill (Macmillan)

Best Short Story: "A Woman's Place" by Emma Newman (TWO HUNDRED AND TWENTY-ONE BAKER STREETS edited by David Thomas Moore, Abaddon Books)

Best Anthology: LIGHTSPEED: WOMEN DESTROY SCIENCE FICTION SPECIAL ISSUE edited by Christie Yant (*Lightspeed Magazine*)

Best Collection: NICK NIGHTMARE INVESTIGATES by Adrian Cole (Alchemy Press)

Best Small Press: Fox Spirit Books (Adele Wearing)

Best Comic/Graphic novel: THROUGH THE WOODS by Emily Carroll (Margaret K McElderry Books)

Best Artist: Karla Ortiz

Best non-fiction: LETTERS TO ARKHAM: THE LETTERS OF RAMSEY CAMPBELL AND AUGUST DERLETH, 1961-1971 edited by S T Joshi (PS Publishing)

Best Magazine/Periodical: *Holdfast Magazine* edited by Laurel Sills and Lucy Smee

Best Film/Television episode: GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY by James Gunn and Nicole Perlman (Marvel Studios)

Best Newcomer (the Sydney J Bounds Award): Sarah Lotz for THE THREE (Hodder & Stoughton)

British Fantasy Society Special Award (Karl Edward Wagner): Juliet E McKenna

ELECTION OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS – Vernon Brown

At the forthcoming January AGM the committee members will, as usual, step stand down from their posts. The 2016 committee will then be elected by those present.

An outline of the various committee members' duties is given below but if you do consider standing for any of the positions please ask me, without any commitment, for more details at the November meeting or the December Social. Alternatively email me via the Group address and I'll email them to you.

THE COMMITTEE OFFICERS DUTIES

The following "Job Descriptions" are outlines of the basic duties of each Officer. However, there is a great deal of interaction and working to common deadlines between the various posts and

some reports, such as the Financial Report and the Minutes, are made to an established format.

GENERAL DUTIES (and a requirement)

To help organise BSFG Meetings throughout the year.

To attend monthly Committee meetings in the City Centre, usually on the Wednesday evening of the week preceding the week in which the Group Meeting is held.

To assist other Committee members in their duties as necessary.

To present a report at the AGM.

To have email access at home.

OFFICERS' DUTIES

CHAIRMAN

To chair Committee meetings and present a report.

To chair Group Meetings, introduce and thank the Speaker.

To negotiate with hotels and other organisations on behalf of the Group.

To organise, prepare and supervise the annual Christmas Social.

To liaise with the Secretary in arranging the Committee meeting agenda.

SECRETARY

To communicate with Speakers on behalf of the Committee.

To communicate with other persons and organisations on behalf of the Committee.

To present a report at Committee meetings.

To take and circulate ASAP Records of Committee meetings.

TREASURER

To maintain the current BSFG Bank Account.

To attend Group Meetings, arriving early and ensuring that the Meeting room is prepared for Group use.

To collect admission money etc at Group Meetings.

To liaise with the Membership Secretary in the collection of membership fees etc.

To present a detailed current Financial Report at Committee meetings.

To present an Annual Financial Report at the AGM.

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY (This post and the post of Secretary may be held by one person)

To maintain BSFG Membership records.

To organise the collection of membership subscriptions, renewals etc.

To liaise with the Treasurer as necessary.

To present a report on current membership numbers at Committee meetings.

PUBLICITY OFFICER

To advertise the BSFG by all means possible.

To present a report at Committee meetings.

NEWSLETTER EDITOR

To maintain contact with sources of potential information for the Group Newsletter.

To edit and produce master copy to an agreed format ready for printing.

To organise printing of the Newsletter, and to distribute it, to a specific timescale.

To liaise with book publishers for review copies.

To present a report at Committee meetings.

ORDINARY MEMBERS - one of whom will be....

WEBSITE MANAGER

To maintain the BSFG Website to an agreed format and to update it as necessary.

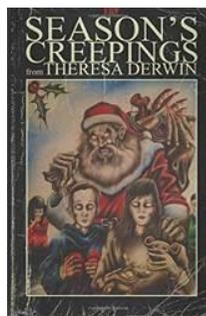
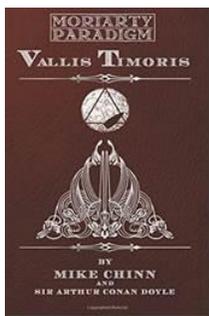
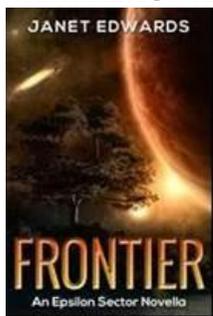
To present a report at Committee meetings.

The other **ORDINARY MEMBER**

To contribute to the efficient functioning of the Committee.

To present a report at Committee meetings.

MEMBERS NEWS



Janet Edwards is to release a new novella, **FRONTIER** as an ebook which will be available sometime December 2015/January 2016.

Apologies to **Mike Chinn**, as I have only just become aware of his steampunk/Holmes mash-up **VALLIS TIMORIS** published by FringeWorks in July.

Theresa Derwin has released a short collection of festive humorous horror called **SEASON'S CREEPINGS**. It contains five short stories and one poem and is published by Knight Watch Press. *CG*

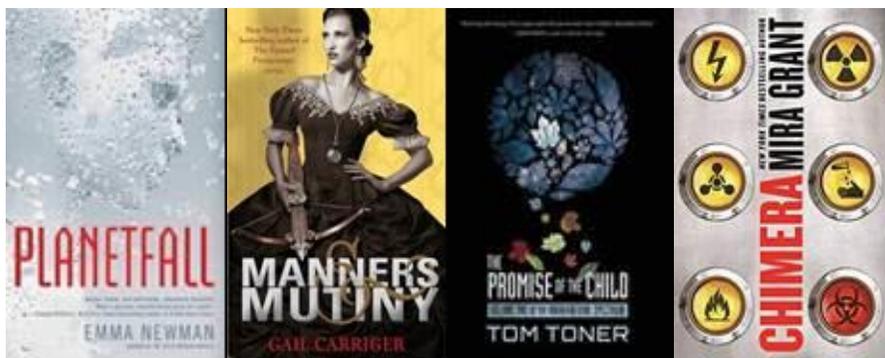
NEWS IN BRIEF ...

Terry Pratchett's Estate will fund a Sir Terry Pratchett Memorial Scholarship, which will provide \$100,000 000 to a student at the University of South Australia to work on a Master's degree jointly with Trinity College, Dublin. Terry Pratchett was an adjunct professor at Trinity College and received an honorary doctorate from the South Australia University in 2014 The Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund (**TAFF**) will reverse the direction of the 2016 race to allow a European fan to attend the Worldcon in Kansas City. This has been done to allow the 2017 race to send a North American fan to the Helsinki Worldcon **Angry Robot** will have an open submissions period for unagented SF or Fantasy novels. It will run from the 1st December until the 31st January. See <http://angryrobotbooks.com/opendoor/> for details **Gollancz** will also be holding an Open submissions period for SF, Fantasy, Horror or YA Crossover novels. Submissions will be open from

4th - 22nd January. See www.gollancz.co.uk/2015/10/gollancz-direct-submissions-january-2016/ The **Kepler Space Telescope** has discovered a bizarre light pattern around a distant star, KIC 8462852. The light pattern suggests that the star was being circled in tight formation by a large mass of matter. One possible (although remote) explanation may be an **alien megastructure** such as a **Dyson sphere**. Astronomers from SETI are now looking at the star with the Allen Telescope array to investigate further. *CG*

FORTHCOMING BOOKS

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



PLANETFALL by Emma Newman / ROC / 336 pgs / £9.89 paperback / ISBN 978-0425282397 / November 3rd. SF. The return of a missing colonist after two decades threatens a new colony.

MANNERS AND MUTINY (Finishing School 4) by Gail Carriger / Atom / 336 pgs / £7.99 paperback / ISBN 978-1907411595 / November 3rd. Steampunk fantasy. Lady spy, Sophronia is the only one who can save her school, friends and all of London.

THE PROMISE OF THE CHILD (Amaranthine Spectrum 1) by Tom Toner / Gollancz / 544 pgs / £14.99 paperback / ISBN 978-1473211360 / November 19th. SF. In a far future where humanity occupies many worlds, a rumour begins that not only man left Earth.

CHIMERA (*Parasitology 3*) by Mira Grant / Orbit / 496 pgs / £9.99 paperback / ISBN 978-0356507057 / November 26th. SF. Implanted tapeworms are taking over their human hosts and humanity battles to survive.



SLEEPING EMBERS OF AN ORDINARY MIND by Anne Charnock / 47 North / 256 pgs / £8.99 paperback / ISBN 978-1503950436 / December 1st. SF. A mystery linked to a painting in the past, present and the future.

THE RISING (*Alchemy Wars 2*) by Ian Tregillis / Orbit / 480 pgs / £8.99 paperback / ISBN 978-0356502335 / December 3rd. Jax, a mechanical slave has escaped – but doesn't intend to run forever.

ONEIROS by Markus Heitz / Jo Fletcher Books / 640 pgs / £8.99 paperback / ISBN 978-1848665293 / December 3rd. Three people are linked by a curse which makes them dangerous to everyone.

MEETING INFINITY edited by Jonathan Strahan / Solaris / 432 pgs / £11.99 paperback / ISBN 978-1781083796 / December 3rd. SF. Anthology with a theme of how will humanity need to change to live in the future. CG

NEW CINEMA FILM RELEASES

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

THE HALLOW - Release date November 13th. Horror. A family in Ireland face demonic creatures which live in the nearby woods.

HUNGER GAMES: MOCKINGJAY Part 2 - Release date November 19th. SF. Katniss, survivor of the Hunger Games leads revolution against the tyrannical President.

THE GOOD DINOSAUR - Release date November 27th. Pixar Animation. In a world where the dinosaur-killing asteroid missed, a boy and a young Apatosaurus become friends

VICTOR FRANKENSTEIN - Release date December 3rd. The story of Victor Frankenstein as seen by his friend and assistant, Igor.

KRAMPUS - Release date December 4th. Comedy Horror. After a bad Christmas, a young boy accidentally summons a Christmas demon. CG



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)**

THE RITHMATIST by Brandon Sanderson

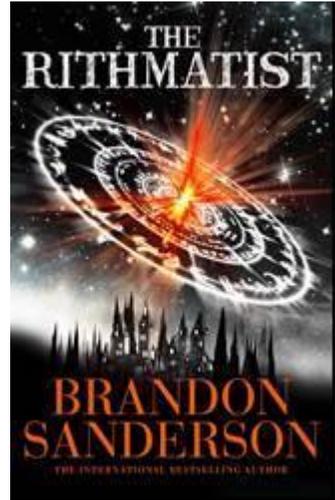
Tor / 372 pgs / £7.99 paperback / ISBN 978-1447266150

Reviewed by Pauline Morgan.

There is a knack for writing books in the category often referred to as Young Adult. Ideally, they should appeal to the younger reader but also be enjoyable for those who would never admit to reading children's books. Often the thing that separates a YA book from a normal book is the age of the principal characters. These need to be on the cusp of adulthood with all the conflicting emotions that stage of development entails. Adult characters such as parents take a back seat for a variety of reasons although it is unwise to neglect their

presence as they will shape the actions of the protagonists. Having a problem that only the young people can solve because of their talents, expertise or flexibility of mind can be a useful strategy. All this is wrapped up in a pacey narrative and skilful story-telling. **THE RITHMATIST** succeeds at all these criteria, admirably.

The setting for the action is an alternative world where America is a series of island states. Joel is a student at the Armedius Academy on New Britannia. His passion is Rithmatics. He really wants to be a Rithmatist but missed the ceremony that might have led to him being chosen when he was eight. The only reason he is allowed to study there is because his father was the chalk maker until his death. His mother is a cleaner. The other students who are not studying Rithmatics come from important or wealthy families. Joel is an exception, which immediately sets him up as an outsider and a member of the despised class.



Rithmatics is a science and phenomenon peculiar to this world. Practitioners are able to animate two dimensional figures on any surface by drawing them with chalk. There are attack and defensive shapes and lines. The better the drawings, the greater the ability to survive or retaliate in a duel. While most of it appears to be harmless fun, there is one island, Nebrask, which is infested with feral chalklings which can actually kill. Every Rithmatist has to spend time there keeping the world safe.

Joel is a Rithmatic nerd, spending his spare time reading about classic duels. He knows how draw the lines even though they don't come alive for him. He sneaks into lectures that only Rithmatists are supposed to attend. This particular summer, he has to choose an area to study. He manages to get himself assigned as research assistant to Professor Fitch who has been given the task of trying to find out why some students have disappeared. Also assigned to the Professor is Melody, an annoying girl who is brilliant at

sketching but rubbish at drawing the circles and lines a Rithmatist must draw accurately. Naturally, they start off by despising each other. Their relationship has its ups and downs but as might be expected in a YA book, it is the flexibility of young minds that looks at the problem from a different angle and it able to guide the adults in the right direction.

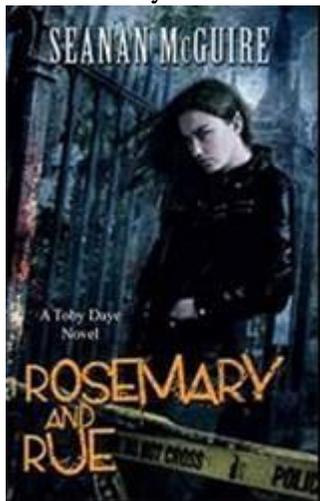
This is a book which oozes enthusiasm. Joel and Melody are complementary characters who spark off each other. Yes, they have their spats but at their age, that is to be expected. Not only do we have two beautifully drawn teenagers but the idea of Rithmatics is original and feels as if it could exist. A lot of thought and care has been taken in developing the science behind the discipline. This adds to the enjoyment of the book as it is peppered with the diagrams and illustrations that Joel and Melody spend their days with. This is a book that has to be highly recommended to anyone who wants a fast paced adventure novel. It will fascinate readers of all ages, not just the ones it was aimed at. PM

(Review copy kindly donated by Pan Macmillan Tor)

ROSEMARY AND RUE (Toby Daye Book 1) by Seanan McGuire.

Corsair / 368 pgs / £8.99 paperback / ISBN 978-1472120076

Reviewed by Theresa Derwin



October (Toby) Daye is a changeling - half human/half fae and a knight of the Summerland Court. Things get a little fishy for Toby when she's tailing Simon Torquill, twin brother of her liege, Sylvester Torquill. And by fishy, I'm being literal; no fancy metaphors here. Simon uses his power to turn Toby into a fish where she flounders in a pond for fourteen years until the spell breaks and she is found naked and disoriented, the apparent victim of an attack.

When she tells the police who she is they are in uproar at her for impersonating a dead woman. So she has no choice but to retain a

human disguise and work the night shift at the local Safeway, dealing with the loss of her partner Cliff and daughter Gillian who wants nothing to do with her after she reappears fourteen years later.

However Toby can't ignore Faerie much longer when her friend Countess Evening Winterrose phones her, in trouble and sounding scared. And she is on the case before she can blink.

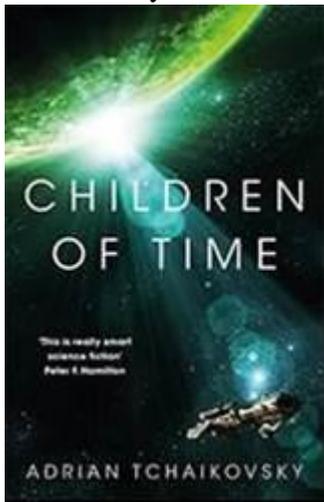
Blending magic, fae mythology and the sprawling city of San Francisco, McGuire puts the 'urban' and 'fantasy' in equal measure back into this busting-at-the-seams genre. It is at times over-saturated but McGuire's combination of a truly sassy, likeable female hero, her supporting cast, and the murder mystery elements make this book stand above the rest. It is written with a wonderful wry sense of humour and Toby has to deal with attempts on her life as well as attempts on her chastity by ex-lover Devin, whilst building up a whole host of debts to various fae including the annoying, yet alluring Tybalt, Cait Sidhe and King of Cats.

The initial murder mystery is wrapped up nicely by the end but the book does leave lots of questions open for the following book. A rollicking good read. TD

***CHILDREN OF TIME* by Adrian Tchaikovsky**

Tor / 608 pgs / £18.99 hardback / ISBN 978-1447273288

Reviewed by Carol Goodwin



For those of you who are unfamiliar with his work, Adrian Tchaikovsky has written, amongst other things the well-regarded 10-volume *Shadows of the Apt* series which is a fantasy where different races of people have the aspects/abilities of real insects. His new book **CHILDREN OF TIME** is Science Fiction but the author's fascination with arthropods clearly was the inspiration behind this story as well.

Two thousand years after human civilisation tore itself apart in civil war, the ark ship *Gilgamesh* and its cargo of

hibernating humans is desperately trying to find a new home. Earth is poisoned, damaged and dying. Patched together from bits and pieces of salvaged old technology that present humanity cannot replicate, the ship is heading for Kern's World. This planet was terraformed and seeded with life in the final days of the old civilisation. What they do not know is that the Kern's World project was also an attempt at species uplift. The world has been seeded with a nanovirus which was designed to accelerate the evolution of intelligence in the offspring of infected individuals. The original aim had been to work with monkeys but in the chaos of the civil war, the launch was sabotaged and only the virus is safely deployed. On the planet the virus infects the available fauna. In particular, the hunting spider, *Portia labiata* has the mental capacity and flexible behaviour that allows the virus to work most effectively.

The story then alternates between the humans on the failing ship and the developing spider civilisation as both species head towards a confrontation which will decide which of the "Children of Earth" will inherit this new world. The story rattles along at a good pace and kept my interest all the way through.

I enjoyed this book immensely. The spiders are well devised so that although they are clearly "alien" (ie not human) they are still sympathetic. I particularly liked that their approach to problems and their technology is clearly influenced by their non-human biology so it is different to humans. The author has succeeded admirably in a difficult task of making what many people see as scary into something fascinating instead. It is very refreshing to see them not just as the monster in a story. The story of their progression reminded me of an old favourite of mine, John Brunner's **THE CRUCIBLE OF TIME** in which an alien race evolves from primitives into starfarers.

The other main strand of the story, of the humans confined to the decaying spaceship is also well written, as we see them divide into factions as their resources dwindle and the technology fails. As with the spiders, they are interesting as characters and the plot feels credible. The author cleverly shows the similarities and differences between the two species so that towards the end I found myself wanting both species to "win" even as they head towards an inevitable

confrontation. Unless you are an arachnophobe, I would definitely recommend this book.

CG

(Review copy kindly donated by Pan Macmillan Tor)

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

JEKYLL & HYDE, 18th November - 21st November at **Blue Orange Theatre, Great Hampton Street, Jewellery Quarter**. Play starts at 7:30 pm. Tickets £11. Box Office 0121 212 2643 or at www.blueorangetheatre.co.uk

CG

CONVENTIONS

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

MANCUNICON (EASTERCON), 25th - 28th March 2016, **Manchester**. Guests of Honour are Alette de Bodard, David L Clements, Ian McDonald and Sarah Pinborough. To be held at the Hilton, Deansgate, Manchester. Attending £60 (until 30th November). Details at www.mancunicon.org.uk/

SATELLITE 5, 28th - 29th May 2016, Glasgow. Guests of Honour
Jaine Fenn & Ed Buckley. At the Marriott Hotel, Glasgow. Attending
£55. Details at www.satellite5.org.uk/

BRISTOLCON, 29th October 2016, Bristol. Guests of Honour
Ken MacLeod, Sarah Pinborough and Fangorn. Doubletree Hotel.
£20. Details at www.bristolcon.org

FUTURE MEETINGS OF THE BSFG

December 4th - **Christmas Social**

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

February 12th - **Annual Quiz**

March 11th - SF author **Christopher Priest**

April 8th - SF/Fantasy author **Jacey Bedford**

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Goodwin (goodwinced@yahoo.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.

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