

BRUM GROUP NEWS

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE

BIRMINGHAM SCIENCE FICTION GROUP

NOVEMBER 2016

ISSUE 542

HONORARY PRESIDENT: BRIAN W ALDISS, OBE

COMMITTEE: VERNON BROWN (CHAIRMAN); PAT BROWN (TREASURER);
VICKY STOCK (SECRETARY); CAROL GOODWIN (NEWSLETTER EDITOR);
DAVE CORBY (PUBLICITY OFFICER); WILLIAM MCCABE (WEBSITE);
VICKY STOCK (MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY); NOVA CON 46 CHAIR: DOUG
SPENCER

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SF FILM NIGHT

4th November

This month we are having a screening of an SF film. For various reasons, this will be a members-only evening and the film will be announced on the night. In order to try and finish at a reasonable time, we would like to start the film as near to 8pm as possible so it would be appreciated if people can arrive promptly.



December 2nd - Christmas Social and Skittles at Selly Park Tavern.

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 for members and £4 for non-members.

THE CHRISTMAS SOCIAL. FRIDAY - 2nd DECEMBER

As detailed in last month's newsletter, this year's December 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 7pm until 11pm on Friday 2nd December.

For those of you who wish to attend and have not yet purchased a ticket please note, **THE DEADLINE FOR APPLICATIONS IS FRIDAY 18th NOVEMBER.**

An application form was included in the October newsletter. 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.

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

VB

ELECTION OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS – Vernon Brown

At the forthcoming January AGM the committee members will, as usual, step down from their posts. The 2017 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 present a report at the monthly Committee meeting

To have email access at home.

OFFICERS' DUTIES

CHAIRMAN

To chair Committee meetings.

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 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 report on current membership numbers at Committee meetings.

PUBLICITY OFFICER

To advertise the BSFG by all means possible.

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.

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

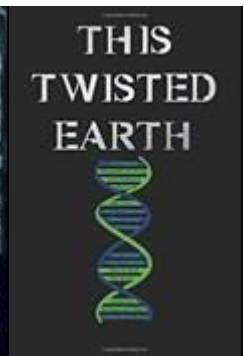
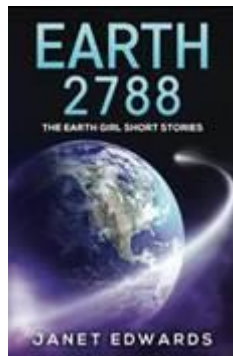
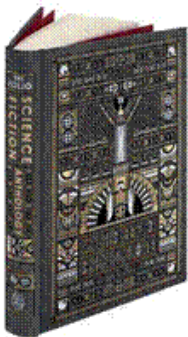
WEBSITE MANAGER

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

The other **ORDINARY MEMBER**

To contribute to the efficient functioning of the Committee.

MEMBERS NEWS



Brian Aldiss introduces and edits a collection of SF short stories in **THE FOLIO SOCIETY SCIENCE FICTION ANTHOLOGY**

(includes stories by HG Wells, Brian Aldiss, Philip K Dick, James Tiptree Jr, Alice B Wilson et al.) Hardcover £29.95 from www.foliosociety.com

Janet Edwards has issued a new paperback, *EARTH: 2788*, a collection of *Earth Girl* short stories. Price £6.99 /232 pgs /ISBN 978-1536883909

Pauline Morgan (writing as Pauline Dungate) is the joint editor (and contributor to *SOMETHING REMAINS*, an anthology of stories based on the notes left by the late Joel Lane. BSFG members **Mike Chinn** and **Chris Morgan** are also contributors. Any profit after costs goes to Diabetes UK.

Mike Chinn also has a story published in *THIS TWISTED EARTH*, an anthology of stories edited by Dion Winton-Polack. Paperback £10.99 / 424 pgs / ISBN 978-1537200842 CG

NEWS IN BRIEF

Comic book artist **Steve Dillon**, has died. He worked on comics since the age of 16 when he drew a lead story for Marvel's *Hulk Weekly*. He illustrated for many UK magazines particularly 2000 AD. His US work included contributions to *The Punisher* and the John Constantine *Hellblazer* series. He was the co-creator of the highly regarded *Preacher* series UK Horror writer **Steve Harris** has died at the age of 62. His books included *THE EYES OF THE BEAST*, *WULF* and *STRAKERS ISLAND* Publisher and online magazine **Tor.com** will be open to unsolicited submissions of fantasy novellas from October 12th to January 12th 2017. Novellas must be set in "worlds that are not modelled on European cultures" and must be between 20,000 - 40,000 words. They particularly welcome submissions from "under-represented populations". Details at www.tor.com Gollancz is to publish a new novel by **David Gemmell**. It was recently discovered by his widow among his personal effects. The novel *RHYMING RINGS* is a crime novel. Gollancz will also be re-issuing another crime novel *WHITE KNIGHT*, *BLACK SWAN* which has been out of print for 25 years Nominations for the 2017 **British SF Awards (BSFA)** are open and will run until 31st December. Voting will then commence on 1st January. Nominations are open to members of the BSFA The Competition and Markets Authority is investigating the proposed takeover of Imagine Publishing (which publishes *SciFiNow* magazine)

by Future (which publishes *SFX magazine*) as the merger could “lead to higher prices or a reduction in choice and quality for readers”. They are not convinced by the companies’ argument that the main competition is from online titles The European Space agency’s **Schiaparelli Mars Lander** failed to land safely. An American satellite around Mars has captured an image of a large gouge in the ground which was probably made by the crashed probe A group of scientists hope to build a new “pacifist nation-state in space” called **Asgardia**. They hope to launch a first satellite next year. Already more than 50,000 people have applied to join the “state online”. Other experts have cast doubt over the plan, as international law prohibits national sovereignty claims in space. *CG*

FORTHCOMING BOOKS

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



THE POWER by Naomi Alderman / Viking / 352 pgs / £12.99 hardback / ISBN 978-0670919987 / October 27th. SF. When women can inflict pain with a thought, how will society be altered.

WAKING HELL (The Station 2) by Al Robertson / Gollancz / 336 pgs / £14.99 hardback / ISBN 978-1473203433 / October 27th. SF. On the Station, the dead live on as digital “fetches”, but even they may not be able to save this last outpost of humanity.

AFTER ATLAS (A Planetfall novel) by Emma Newman / Roc / 384 pgs / £11.58 paperback / ISBN 978-0425282403 / November 10th. SF. Forty years after the colony ship *Atlas* left Earth, a religious cult leader is found dead.

ARCANUM UNBOUNDED: THE COSMERE COLLECTION by Brandon Sanderson / Gollancz / 672 pgs / £16.99 hardback / ISBN 978-1473218031 / November 24th. Fantasy. Short story collection.



WRATH (*The Faithful and the Fallen 4*) by John Gwynne. / Tor / 720 pgs / £18.99 hardback / ISBN 978-1447259688 / November 17th. Fantasy. Corban must make new allies to stop King Nathair from destroying the Banished Lands.

THE CORPORATION WARS: INSURGENCE (*Corporation Wars 2*) by Ken MacLeod / Orbit / 400 pgs / £8.12 paperback / ISBN 978-0316363693 / November 29th. SF. Ruthless corporations fight for control of Earth-like planet using AI minds and re-incarnated mercenaries.

FIVE STORIES HIGH edited by Jonathan Oliver / Solaris / 384 pgs / £11.57 paperback / ISBN 978-0857666215 / December 1st. Fantasy. Five novellas set in the same house. Authors: Nina Allan, K J Parker, Robert Shearman, Sarah Lotz & Tade Thompson.

OCEAN OF STORMS by Christopher Mari & Jeremy K Brown / 47 North / 410 pgs / £8.99 paperback / ISBN 978-1503938779 / December 1st. SF. Rival nations must cooperate in investigating the aftermath of a catastrophic lunar explosion. CG

NEW CINEMA FILM RELEASES

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

ARRIVAL - Release date November 10th. SF. When mysterious spacecraft touch down on Earth, the military hire a linguist to translate their communications.

FANTASTIC BEASTS AND WHERE TO FIND THEM - Release date November 18th. Fantasy. *Harry Potter* prequel. Adventures of a writer in the secret community of wizards in 1928 New York.

📖📖📖📖 **BOOK REVIEWS** 📖📖📖📖

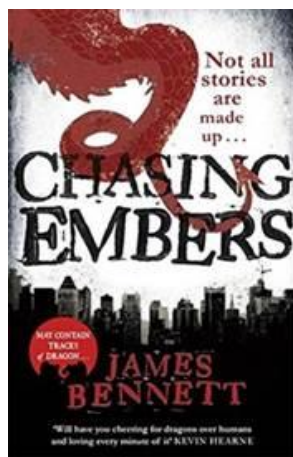
(REVIEWERS please note: - all reviews should be emailed direct to me at goodwindc@yahoo.com **Deadline** for each issue is 14 days prior to the date of the monthly meeting)

CHASING EMBERS by James Bennett

Orbit / 417 pgs / £ 8.99 paperback / ISBN 978-0356506649

Reviewed by Theresa Derwin

Once upon a time, a long time ago, Ben Garston didn't need to drink to forget. Known as Red Ben, he had lived for far too long. Ben is sitting in the bar drowning his sorrows, bemoaning his love life and the loss of his damsel Rose, when Fulk of the House Fitzwarren turns up, with vengeance in mind. He throws a tatty newspaper at Ben (who has lived for centuries) detailing the theft of the Star of Eebe, a jewel housed in a NY museum centre; a jewel that is supposedly an uncut gem which fell in a meteor striking the African continent over 3,000 years ago. Fulk tells Ben he's reading his own death warrant. The 'Pact' is null and void. Ben isn't the only one anymore.



A fight ensues, as it tends to in these books, then expectations are thrown out the window. Ben becomes something ... else. Part grizzled noir PI in the vein of Raymond Chandler and Jim Butcher, (but in a modern setting), part dangerous creature, part heartbroken man, Garston is resistant to magic and can kick arse with the best of them. You find out what type of 'thing' Ben is pretty quickly, but it's a nice surprise and it's been a while since I've encountered such a mythology in a modern Urban Fantasy. It can be done badly, or it can be done well. Here, it's bloody awesome. Ben, in his alternate identity can hear, see,

smell and taste everything. This makes Red Ben an excellent investigator, ally or adversary.

The senses are alive and Bennett accurately captures this. His writing is gritty, well-paced, darkly humorous and somehow lyrical. Bennett also knows his classic literature throwing in a Dickensian reference early on.

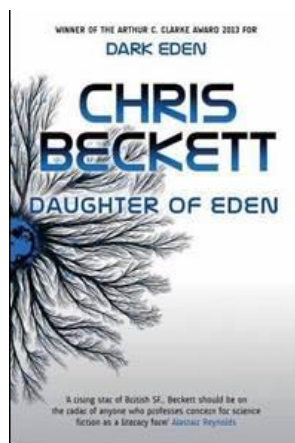
Amidst the narrative style of the novel, there's a whole plethora of quirky characters; the 'Three Who Are One' Coven of witches, or CROWS, a cult reluctantly following the Lore (outlawing magic) laid down by the Guild. Dwarfish Babe Cathy is like something out of the **ROCKY HORROR SHOW** or *Twin Peaks*; exotic, enigmatic and wholly entertaining. The entire novel is filled with adventure, misadventure, magic, mayhem, humour and surprises. Having also met the author at FantasyCon, he is as bright a spark as Red Ben. This is a series I shall devour in flames, with each new instalment. TD

DAUGHTER OF EDEN (Dark Eden 3) by Chris Beckett

Corvus / 400 pgs / £16.99 Hardback / ISBN 978-1782392392

Reviewed by Carol Goodwin

In the previous two novels in this series, we saw a society evolve from two shipwrecked survivors on the strange world of Eden. This is a world with no sunlight but with a strange ecology of luminescent plants and animals sustained by geothermal energy. A schism in the early descendants has persisted and as the humans have spread and multiplied the ill-feeling between the two groups has festered. In this novel, we see this erupt into full blown war as the Johnfolk attack the settlements of the Davidfolk at a critical time when many of the latter's warriors are away celebrating a significant anniversary. The story is told mainly by Angie Redlantern, a "batface" (one of the many colonists with facial deformities) as she joins the other non-combatants of the Davidfolk as they flee to Circle Valley (the revered original Landing site) hoping for protection from the missing warriors, and also in flashback as she considers her earlier life. Once there she is witness to an event which will change the Eden peoples' view of both their past and their future.



Whilst I don't know that this is the last book in the *Dark Eden* series, there is certainly some sense in the narrative that the story has come full circle. The events take place at the original settlement of "Circle Valley" as people return there from the wider world and (without spoiling the plot) there is the challenge that new knowledge brings to the differing beliefs they have about their origin and their societies.

Chris Beckett is an author who writes with both great imagination and depth. His creation of *Dark Eden*, its biology and society is one I have greatly enjoyed. His books are multi-layered, telling a compelling story which is at the same time a metaphor for many contemporary issues. In particular, in this novel it is the role and value of belief systems to people and the variety of ways they react if these are challenged. All that being said, whilst I still enjoyed this novel and believe it is exceptional writing, it is my least favourite of the trilogy. The problem I found myself having is that for the first time it felt that the message was less subtle at the expense of characterisation to some extent. Also, there were so many threads left from the second novel in particular that had hooked me that weren't explored here and I found myself thinking as I read when are we going to get to this issue and then being disappointed when I reached the end and they were not addressed. Even with these caveats however, this is still well worth reading as a significant piece of SF. CG

(Review copy kindly donated by Corvus)

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

All details are correct to the best of our knowledge, we advise contacting organizers before travelling. Any information about forthcoming SF/Fantasy/Horror events is always welcome - please send to Carol at goodwincd@yahoo.com

NOTE: Waterstones Birmingham have kindly agreed to a 50% discount on any of their events for Brum Group members. Just tell them you are a member when booking your place.

TIM PEAKE'S PHOTOS FROM SPACE, 23rd September - 31st December, Birmingham. Exhibition of photos taken whilst aboard the ISS. At Thinktank, Millennium Point. No Booking required, Thinktank entry fee applies (£13)

UNIVERSAL MONSTERS SEASON, 15th October - 15th November, Birmingham. Electric Cinema screening of many Universal monster films including BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN, THE WOLF MAN and THE CREATURE FROM THE BLACK LAGOON (3D) £8.70. www.theelectric.co.uk or 0121 643 7879

FIRST MEN IN THE MOON (1964) screening, 11th November, Leicester. At Leicester Space Centre. 7pm Price £5+£1.34 fee (in aid of Armed Forces Charity SSAFA. Hot food available. Book at www.spacecentre.co.uk/

CONVENTIONS

(Thanks to Dave Lally for information on 2017 London exhibits)

WINDOWS ON OTHER WORLDS, October - January, Dronfield. Exhibition of SF art by Alex Storer at Art 4 Restore Gallery, The Forge, Church Street, Dronfield, Derbyshire S18 1QX. Tues-Sat 10am - 5pm

NOVACON 46, 11th - 13th November, Nottingham. Guest of Honour is Juliet McKenna. The Park Inn, Nottingham. Tickets £46. Details at www.novacon.org.uk

SLEDGE-LIT, 26th November, Derby. Literary SF/Fantasy festival. Guests of Honour Justina Robson & Stephen Volk (novelist & screenwriter). Tickets £25 www.derbyquad.co.uk/special-event/sledge-lit

BIRMINGHAM HORROR CON, 4th February, Birmingham. At Edgbaston Stadium. Guests include Caroline Munro, David Moody, Adam Millard, Adam Nevill. Prices £8-10. <http://horrorfan.co.uk>

ROBOTS: 500 years of Humanoid Robots, 8th February - 3rd September. Major exhibition at the Science Museum, London. £15 at www.sciencemuseum.org.uk/

REDEMPTION '17, 24th - 26th February 2017, Sheffield. At Royal Victoria Hotel. Guest of Honour: Dr Lynette Nusbacher, Steve Lycett (others tbc). Tickets £70 at <http://redemptioncon.org.uk>

SCI-FI WEEKENDER, 30th March - 2nd April, Hafan Y Mor, North Wales. Commercial multi-media convention. Various prices depending on level of access/accommodation. See www.scifiweekender.com

INNOMINATE (EASTERCON), 14th - 17th April, Birmingham. Guests of Honour are Pat Cadigan, Judith Clute and Colin Harris. To be held at the Hilton Metropole, NEC, Birmingham. Membership £60 at www.eastercon2017.uk/home

INTO THE UNKNOWN: A JOURNEY THROUGH SCIENCE FICTION, 2nd June - 1st September, London. Major exhibition at the Barbican Centre. Includes original manuscripts by Jules Verne and others, music, film and art. Details to follow at www.barbican.org.uk/

FUTURE MEETINGS OF THE BSFG

December 2nd - **Christmas Social**

January 13th - **AGM**

February 10th - **Quiz**

March 10th - Space scientist, writer and SF Fan, **Gerry Webb**

April 7th - SF writer **Dave Hutchinson**

May 12th - SF/Fantasy writer **Adrian Tchaikovsky**

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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