

BRUM GROUP NEWS

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE

BIRMINGHAM SCIENCE FICTION GROUP

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ALASTAIR REYNOLDS

June 8th



Photograph by Barbara Bella

This month we are really pleased to welcome back SF author, Alastair Reynolds. He is the author of, in his own words “rather a lot of science fiction novels” as well as many short stories and novellas.

Alastair Reynolds was born in Barry, South Wales, where he encountered his first Arthur C Clarke story a week after his eighth birthday. He went on to study space science, and eventually worked for the European Space Agency in the Netherlands. He started writing science fiction not long

July 13th - Details will be confirmed in the next newsletter.

after that birthday but took a little longer to get into print. His first stories started appearing in *Interzone* in 1990, and a decade later he published his first novel, REVELATION SPACE, which was shortlisted for both the Clarke and BSFA awards. He is now the author of sixteen novels and more than seventy short stories, of which his most recent book is ELYSIUM FIRE, published earlier this year.

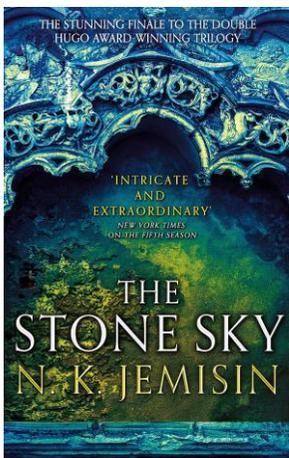
More information can be found on his website, www.alastairreynolds.com and reviews of some of his works can be seen on the BSFG website. CG

(Biographical details courtesy of Alastair Reynolds)

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.

NEBULA AWARD WINNERS



The Science Fiction Writers of America have named the winners of the annual Nebula Awards.

Best Novel: THE STONE SKY by N K Jemisin (Orbit)

Best Novella: ALL SYSTEMS RED by Martha Wells (Tor.com Publishing)

Best Novelette: “A Human Stain” by Kelly Robson (*Tor.com*)

Best Short Story: “Welcome to Your Authentic Indian Experience” by Rebecca Roanhorse (*Apex*)

Andre Norton Award for Young Adult Science Fiction and Fantasy: THE ART OF STARVING by Sam J Miller (Harper Teen)

Ray Bradbury Award for Outstanding Dramatic Presentation: GET OUT

Kevin J. O'Donnell Service to SFWA Award: Bud Sparhawk

Kate Wilhelm Solstice Award: Gardner Dozois & Sheila Williams

Damon Knight Grand Master Award: Peter Beagle

CLARKE AWARD NOMINATIONS - SHORTLIST

The nominees for the Arthur C Clarke Award have been announced. The winner will be announced on July 18th.

SEA OF RUST by C Robert Cargill (Gollancz)

DREAMS BEFORE THE START OF TIME by Anne Charnock (47 North)

AMERICAN WAR by Omar El Akkad (Picador)

SPACEMAN OF BOHEMIA by Jaroslav Kalfar (Sceptre)

GATHER THE DAUGHTERS by Jennie Melamed (Tinder Press)

BORNE by Jeff VanderMeer (Fourth Estate)

LOCUS AWARD NOMINATIONS

The Locus Science Fiction Foundation has announced the finalists for the 2018 Locus Awards. The nominees for the SF novel and Fantasy novel categories are given below. Full details of all categories are available at <http://locusmag.com/2018/04/2018-locus-awards-finalists/>

SCIENCE FICTION NOVEL

PERSEPOLIS RISING by James S.A. Corey (Orbit)

WALKAWAY by Cory Doctorow (Head of Zeus)

THE STARS ARE LEGION by Kameron Hurley (Angry Robot)

PROVENANCE by Anne Leckie (Orbit)

RAVEN STRATEGEM by Yoon Ha Lee (Solaris)

LUNA: WOLF MOON by Ian McDonald (Gollancz)
SEVEN SURRENDERS by Ada Palmer (Head of Zeus)
NEW YORK 2140 by Kim Stanley Robinson (Orbit)
THE COLLAPSING EMPIRE by John Scalzi (Tor)
BORNE by Jeff VanderMeer (Fourth Estate)

FANTASY NOVEL

THE STONE IN THE SKULL by Elizabeth Bear (Tor)
CITY OF MIRACLES by Robert Jackson Bennett (Jo Fletcher)
KA: DAR OAKLEY IN THE RUIN OF YMR by John Crowley
(Saga)
THE HOUSE OF BINDING THORNS by Alette de Bodard
(Gollancz)
THE RUIN OF ANGELS by Max Gladstone (Tor.com)
SPOONBENDERS by Daryl Gregory (Riverrun)
THE STONE SKY by N.K. Jemisin (Orbit)
JADE CITY by Fonda Lee (Orbit)
THE DELIRIUM BRIEF by Charles Stross (Orbit)
HORIZON by Fran Wilde (Tor)

NEWS IN BRIEF



Former Apollo astronaut, **Alan Bean** has died at the age of 86. As part of the Apollo 12 crew, he walked on the Moon in 1969 and also commanded the Skylab crew in 1973. He retired from NASA in 1981 and then had a successful career as an

artist. Much of his work was inspired by his space experiences, with features such as lunar boot prints and incorporating small pieces of his mission patches which were covered in Moon dust. Only four moonwalkers are now left alive Author and editor, **Gardner Dozois** died on May 27th. He had been hospitalised with

a minor illness which turned into an “overwhelming systemic infection”. He was the founding editor of *The Year’s Best Science Fiction* anthologies and editor of *Asimov’s Science Fiction* magazine. As an author he won the Nebula Award for Best Short Story twice (“The Peacemaker” in 1963 and “Morning Child” in 1984). As an editor he won the Hugo Award for Best Professional Editor an amazing 15 times in 17 years. He was inducted into the Science Fiction Hall of Fame in 2011 and in May this year was joint winner of the Kate Wilhelm Solstice Award for distinguished contributions to the science fiction and fantasy community ...

Director **Michael Anderson** died on April 25th. He directed films such as **AROUND THE WORLD IN 80 DAYS** (1956), **DOC SAVAGE** and **LOGAN’S RUN**. He also directed a TV version of **20,000 LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA** (1997) Author **Philip Pullman** was awarded Author of the Year in the British Book Awards (also known as “Nibbies”). His latest fantasy novel, **THE BOOK OF DUST** also won Audiobook of the Year ...

Following a successful crowdfunding campaign, *Amazing Stories* is returning to print as a quarterly fiction magazine. The last print edition was in 2005, and an online-only version has existed since 2012. The first issue will coincide with this year’s Worldcon

Waterstones has sold a majority share to Elliot Advisers, a management hedge fund. Despite some fears, they insist that they are still in “expansion mode” and plan to open more stores ...

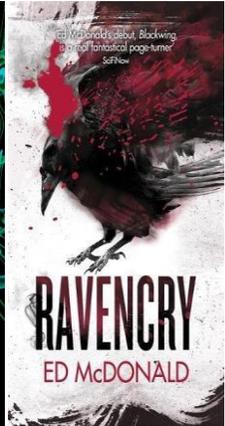
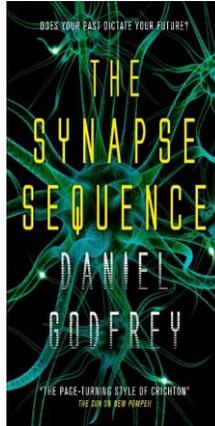
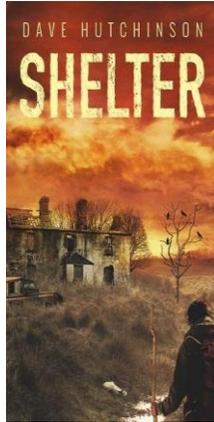
Video streaming channel Twitch (www.twitch.tv) will be hosting over 500 free episodes of classic *Dr Who* online, beginning on 29th May. Details at www.doctorwho.tv/whats-new/article/classic-doctor-who-comes-to-twitch-for-seven-week-marathon

A row is developing over the UK’s continued access to the **Galileo satellite system** (an alternative to the US GPS) after Brexit. Britain played a major role in developing the satellites (expected to be operational in 2026). However, Brussels is saying that legal issues about sharing sensitive issues with a non-member are a reason to shut out British firms and to restrict access to the encrypted signals. The UK is threatening to sue the EU for the return of £1 billion it contributed if excluded.

CG

FORTHCOMING BOOKS

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



REVENANT GUN (*Machineries of Empire 3*) by Yoon Ha Lee / Solaris / 400 pgs / £7.99 paperback / ISBN 978-1781086070 / June 14th. SF. A general must work with a crew that hate him and no memory later than being 17 years old.

SHELTER by Dave Hutchinson / Solaris / 304 pgs / £7.99 paperback / ISBN 978-1781085042 / June 14th. SF. In a post-apocalyptic England, society is starting to rebuild itself.

THE SYNAPSE SEQUENCE by Daniel Godfrey / Titan Books / 432 pgs / £7.99 paperback / ISBN 978-1785653179 / June 19th. SF. Anna investigates neglected cases by entering witnesses' memories. However, her latest case may put everyone in danger.

RAVENCRY (*Raven's Mark 2*) by Ed McDonald / Gollancz / 432 pgs / £14.99 hardback / ISBN 978-1473222052 / June 28th. Captain Galharrow must enter the devastated Misery to recover a powerful artefact.



SUMMERLAND by Hannu Rajaniemi / Gollancz / 336 pgs / £14.99 paperback / ISBN 978-1473203280 / June 28th. SF. The British Empire and the Soviets vie for power in Summerland, an afterlife city for the dead.

STONE CLOCK (The Spin 3) by Andrew Bannister / Bantam Press / 320 pgs / £18.99 hardback / ISBN 978-0593076521 / July 12th. SF. The artificial planetary cluster, the Spin is old and decaying. Amidst conflict over its remaining resources, an alien holds the key to its past - and its future.

THE BASTARD LEGION: FRIENDLY FIRE (*Book 2*) by Gavin G. Smith / Gollancz / 3688 pgs / £10.99 paperback / ISBN 978-1473217270 / July 12th. SF. The Bastard Legion are hired for a daring power-armoured heist. Escaping however will be gruelling.

DEATH OF A CLONE by Alex Thomson / Abaddon / 272 pgs / £7.99 paperback / ISBN 978-1781086346 / July 12th. SF. On a mining colony, Leila investigate her sister's murder, guided by old detective novels she has read - but this is no cosy mystery. *CG*

NEW CINEMA FILM RELEASES

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

HEREDITARY - Release date June 15th. Horror. After the death of matriarch Ellen, the family discover frightening secrets about their ancestry.

THE FIRST PURGE - Release date July 4th. Horror prequel. To control the crime rate, the government introduces an annual 12-hour period where all crime is legal.

MARY SHELLEY - Release date July 6th. Story of the love affair between Percy Shelley and Mary Godwin, which led to her writing FRANKENSTEIN.

THE INCREDIBLES 2 - Release date July 13th. Animation. Mr Incredible stays home to watch kids while Elastic Girl works as a hero. CG



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)**

ONE WAY by S J Morden

Gollancz / 336 pgs / £7.99 ebook / ISBN 9781473222588

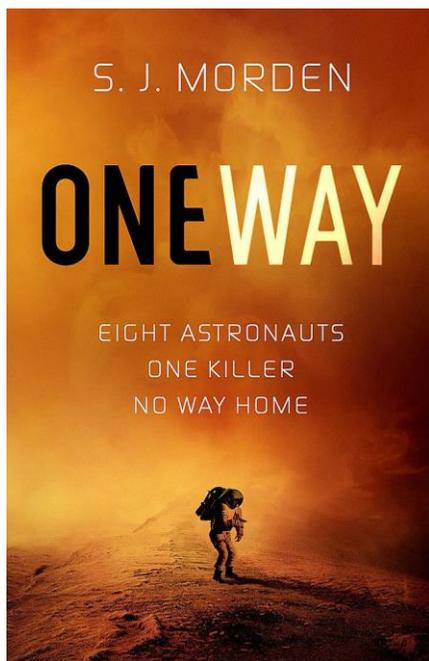
Reviewed by Jim Pearce

This is the author's first book under the pen name of S J Morden although he has written several books as Simon Morden and has won the Phillip K. Dick Award and been a judge for the Arthur C. Clarke Award. In addition, he has degrees in geology and planetary geophysics so he should know what he is talking about when writing a book about the exploration of Mars, and it shows. **ONE WAY** is also the first book by this author that I have had the pleasure of reading. In my opinion it was well worth my time, it being full of engrossing action taking place in an extremely

demanding environment. In many ways it reminded me of Andy Weir's excellent book, **THE MARTIAN** although there are significant differences. For instance, this is a murder mystery and there is no last minute spectacular rescue of the marooned astronaut. It also has some echoes of Agatha Christie's **10 LITTLE INDIANS** in that one by one the protagonists are killed off. Like me you may deduce who is the murderer but as in all well-written mysteries that does not spoil the reader's enjoyment; how the story unfurls is key.

In **ONE WAY** a private conglomeration, Xenosystems Operations (XO) has, with promises of a fully automated construction process, won the contract to build NASA's permanent Mars base. Unfortunately for them the required technology does not work! So, without telling NASA, they decide to manually construct the base; this will have the advantage that if any unforeseen glitches occur the adaptability and problem-solving abilities of humans will triumph where machines would fail. They will also have enhanced profits. But who could they get to do the job without NASA finding out?

Fortunately for them XO 'owns' three prisons which would provide the workforce. In addition, as much American fiction would have us believe, prisoners have no rights and for serious crimes sentences are inhumanly long so who would know of their 'recruitment'. So, a number of convicts with appropriate technical backgrounds are clandestinely selected as candidates and undergo strenuous but basic training. Prisoners who do not accept this



offer or fail the training process will be returned to prison and 'buried' in perpetual solitary confinement. Accompanying these prisoners to Mars will be one XO supervisor, who will return to Earth when the NASA astronauts arrive, but as far as the prisoners know they will be left to maintain the base. Shortly after they arrive things go wrong and the first death occurs; is it an accident or murder?

As I said at the beginning of this review I really enjoyed ONE WAY and look forward to reading more books by this author. I highly recommend it.

PS My wife, who is not an SFF fan, also thoroughly enjoyed this book. *JTP*

(Review copy kindly donated by Gollancz)

BEFORE MARS (Planetfall 3) by Emma Newman

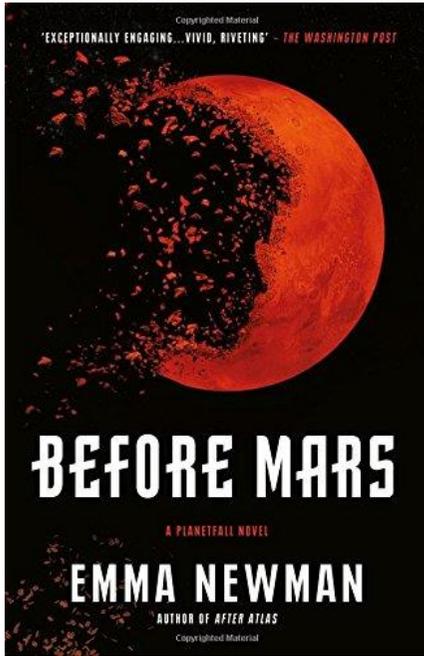
Gollancz / 352 pgs / £13.99 paperback / ISBN 978-1473223899

Reviewed by Carol Goodwin

Although listed as the third in the *Planetfall* series, BEFORE MARS can be enjoyed without having read the previous two books (PLANETFALL and AFTER ATLAS) as they all take place in different locations and with different characters. I have read PLANETFALL but not yet AFTER ATLAS and did not feel I was missing any vital information. PLANETFALL (reviewed by Pauline Morgan in July 2016 newsletter #538) looked at the first extrasolar colony, founded by a group of true believers led by a visionary, Suh-Mi. BEFORE MARS is set forty years after that first expedition departed and where people are hoping that a time-locked capsule they left behind will divulge the secret technology of the first spaceship. Earth is mainly run by giant corporations where people have few rights and most people connect directly by a chip in their brain to corporate systems, entertainment and the equivalent of the Internet.

BEFORE MARS is told from the first-person perspective of Anna Kubrin, as she arrives at the Mars base. The base has a longstanding crew of four people plus the base AI, Principia. A qualified geologist, Anna has been sent unwillingly to Mars base

by its multimillionaire owner, Stefan Gabor mainly to paint the Martian landscape as his pet vanity project. During her long solo journey, she has used “immersives” (full sensory recordings which can be hard to distinguish from reality) including memories of her partner and son back on Earth. When she arrives, she feels an eerie familiarity with the location and the other workers. As she



faces hostility and tension from her new colleagues, things start to not add up. Is there something hidden going on at the base or is it her own paranoid mind playing tricks on her due to a combination of guilt at leaving her family and “immersion psychosis” where a person can no longer separate reality from the fiction of immersive stories?

The first novel PLANETFALL was different from much contemporary SF in firstly, its extrapolation of the use of 3D printing technology and also for having a protagonist who was

concealing a mental health issue, something that is rarely touched on in most SF or Fantasy. Again, in BEFORE MARS, the author is not afraid to give us another protagonist who has flaws and a back history which will make her unsympathetic to some readers. The author has excelled at writing a complex character with a finely defined internal voice. As this is a first-person story we see less of the inner motivations and thoughts of the other characters, but they are still realistic and the reasons for their differing relationships and reactions to newcomer Anna feel very credible. Whilst 3D printing was a major focus of the first novel, time has moved on (both in the series and the real world) and this whilst still present is not as prominent. Instead it is the debate about how

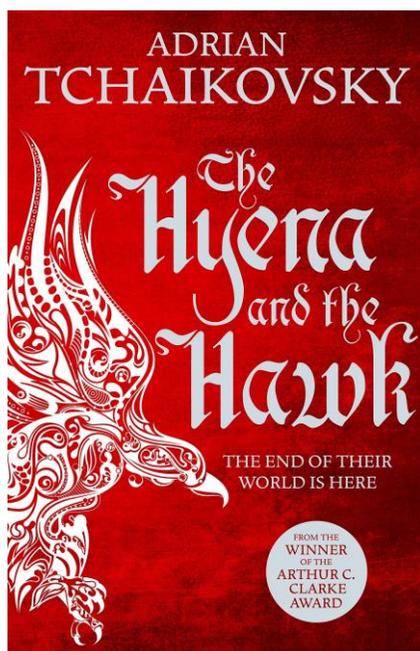
autonomous our minds can be when everyone is connected and how much we can trust what our senses are telling us. However, if this all feels a bit heavy reading, it is far from it. There is a good developing plotline and the balance between Anna's internal musings and the events on Mars offset well against each other. This is excellent SF and this author goes from strength to strength. Her work is intelligent, profound, empathic and still entertaining. Also, she deserves immense kudos for her bravery in using her own experiences with post-natal depression to illuminate and elicit sympathy for her protagonist. Highly recommended. *CG*
(Review copy kindly donated by Gollancz)

THE HYENA AND THE HAWK (Echoes of the Fall 3) by Adrian Tchaikovsky

Macmillan / 448 pgs / £18.99 hardback / ISBN 978-1509830268

Reviewed by Carol Goodwin

This is the third book in a trilogy set in a world where individual tribes can shift into the form of their totemic animal. As the books have unfolded, the focus has broadened from Maniye and her troubled coming of age in a northern Wolf tribe, passing through the people of the grasslands and then to the river lands where another character, Asmander dealt with the civil war between his two best friends for control of the kingdom. Overarching all this is the invasion of the land by strange people whose very existence is enough to strip the dual souls from the tribes leaving them merely human or a mindless animal depending on their form at the time. Only the Champions,



those who have earned a third and stronger form have any resistance to this fear. Now as the invaders move southwards all the fractious tribes from across the land must unite together to repel the invader who threatens them and their gods with utter destruction.

As most of you know, I am a huge fan of Adrian Tchaikovsky's work. There is always a depth to his work that stops to consider the consequences of conflict for individuals rather than just relishing in "glorious" battle scenes. Here we see the fear and doubt of the invaded and we also see that the mysterious invaders are not just black and white villains. For the most part they do not understand the dual nature of the people, and the effect they have of "stripping" their souls is not a conscious act. That being said they do have dreadful and destructive weapons which they have no compunction in using. Unlike many authors Adrian Tchaikovsky also includes attempts at rapprochement and the avoidance of war, though this does not prevent a climactic and thrilling final conflict towards the end of the book.

The author continues to show his skill in writing action scenes, which whether small or large scale, are well done and exciting to read. Necessarily with a concluding book where all the participants and plot strands are drawn together, there is less time to focus on individuals but the author still manages to resolve the personal dilemmas of most of the principal characters even if these are not always perfect "happy ever after" endings (again adding to the realistic feel of the narrative). For those readers who have also read the *Shadows of the Apt* series, there is also a clear link back to those stories and one which illuminates a previously hinted at aspect of the history of the Apt peoples. Furthermore, while it is not belaboured there are clear comparisons and thus comment on the real world's history of violent colonisation (such as America and Africa). There are also metaphors for the prejudice and treatment of minorities. All of this adds profundity and strength to this series whilst still being a fabulously entertaining read.

Yet again, this book is highly recommended to fantasy readers especially those who want something which makes a superb effort to rise above the laziness of standard tropes and stereotypes.

CG

(Review copy kindly donated by Macmillan Books).

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.

HANS ZIMMER vs JOHN WILLIAMS, 22nd - 24th June.

A selection of movie music including E.T., STAR WARS, BATMAN BEGINS etc.

Symphony Hall. 3 pm. £19.50 - £48.50. Book at Town Hall/Symphony Hall Box

Office (0121 780 4949) or www.thsh.co.uk



2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY 50TH ANNIVERSARY screening, 23rd - 24th June. At the Electric Cinema. Tickets from £10.50. www.theelectric.co.uk or 0121 643 7879

SPACE LATES, 30th June, Leicester. Asteroid Day with guest speakers, Planetarium show, stargazing and screening of DEEP IMPACT. £6/£12 with film. Tel: 0116 261 0261 or online at <https://spacecentre.co.uk/event/space-lates-march/>

CONVENTIONS and EXHIBITIONS

EDGE-LIT 7, 14th July, Derby. Literary SF/Fantasy festival. Guests of Honour Frances Hardinge & Paul Tremblay. Tickets £30 at www.derbyquad.co.uk/events/edge-lit-7.aspx

NINE WORLDS GEEKFEST, 10th - 12th August, London. Multi-media con with strong literature strand. Tickets £99 at <https://nineworlds.co.uk/>

BRISTOLCON, 27th October, Bristol. Guests of Honour Joanne Hall & Dave Hutchinson. Doubletree Hotel. £20. Details at www.bristolcon.org

FANTASYCON, 19th - 21st October, Chester. The Queen Hotel. Tickets (until May 1st) £51 + £36 Awards Banquet www.hwsevents.co.uk/shop-2

NOVACON 48, 9th - 11th November, Nottingham. Guest of Honour is Chris Beckett. The Park Inn, Nottingham. Tickets £48. Details at www.novacon.org.uk

TOLKIEN 2019, 7th - 11th August 2019, Birmingham. 50th Year Anniversary of Tolkien Society, MacDonald Burlington Hotel (New Street). £95 www.tolkiensociety.org

WORLDCON 2019, 15th - 19th August 2019, Dublin. Guests of Honour Ian McDonald, Jocelyn Bell Burnell, Steve Jackson, Diane Duane, Ginjer Buchanan and Bill & Mary Burns. Convention Centre. 180 Euros. <https://dublin2019.com/>

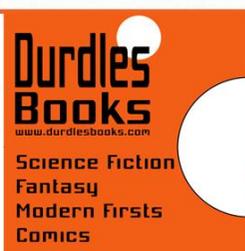
FUTURE MEETINGS OF THE BSFG

July 13th - tbc

August 10th - Summer social

September 14th - 200th anniversary celebration of **Mary Shelley & FRANKENSTEIN**. Film and speaker, academic **Steve Cotterill**
October 12th - Comics writer & editor, **David Leach**
November 16th - Astrophysicist & NASA Kepler mission leader, **Professor Bill Chaplin**
December 7th - **Christmas social**

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<p>Durdles Books is run by Ian & Lou Morley, BSFG members We want to buy books hardbacks and pre 1980 paperbacks, individual items or whole collections. Send us details of your surplus items or speak to us at the next meeting BSFG Members offer: use code BSFG18 to receive 10% discount on orders Visit www.durdlesbooks.com email info@durdlesbooks.com or call 0121 777 0209</p>	 <p>Durdles Books <small>www.durdlesbooks.com</small> Science Fiction Fantasy Modern Firsts Comics</p>
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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. Details of how to join/pay can be obtained at a meeting or by email to bhamsfgroup@yahoo.co.uk