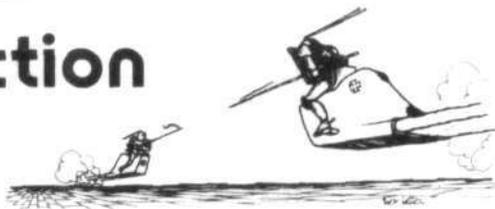


Birmingham Science Fiction Group

(Honorary Presidents: Brian W. Aldiss and Harry Harrison)



SEPTEMBER 1979

NEWSLETTER 97

The Birmingham Science Fiction Group meet on the third Friday of every month at 8.00 p.m. The meeting this month is at The Ivy Bush, on the corner of Monument Road and Hagley Road.

New members rate now £1 till December.

Treasurer: Dave Holmes, 75 Willows Crescent,
Cannon Hill, Birmingham B7 2 9NE.

NON MEMBERS ALWAYS WELCOME

This being a round up of news of and about the Brum Group.

Red Flame No. 5.

Red and Nolaughing emerged from the vortex to find they had been shifted through both space and time. That their appearance out of thick air among a bevy of armed and uniformed aliens went unnoticed was due solely to the fact that the place was on fire, which accounted for the air being so thick. They had materialized in what appeared to be a field control room which was very definitely under attack, with at least five species of agitated sentients running in all directions, some with buckets of water, others with sticks of dynamite. But surpassing all else in strangeness was Nolaughing, for she could now be seen and heard. Before they had any time to discuss their plight, a green clad officer approached them with much hesitation, when he arrived before them he threw up an unusual salute with his left hand at the same time as doing a prompt about turn; then with his back toward them he began to speak while the bemused pair gazed at the horrific mask which he wore on the back of his head. "I apologise most humbly for the state of things your Excellencies, but you were not expected until tomorrow" he said.



Red seized the opportunity to profit by the others mistake, and demanded a report immediately. "Well" said the officer "We were holding up well under steady fire until yesterday afternoon, when the enemy introduced this new fly-bomb". "Don't you mean flying bomb" Red interrupted. "No, they're definitely fly-bombs Sir, there comes another one now". There was a rending, zipping sound from above followed by a distant plunk. "That will be another tenthousander by the sound of it" said the green clad officer "The air's thick with them out there".

Tiring of this useless conversation Red tried another ploy. "My aid is due for promotion shortly and I am interviewing likely subalterns with a view to selecting his replacement, would you be interested in filling the position".

"Yes, I would" said the officer, "I'd like that very much, thank you, your Excell... "Just a moment" Red cut in, "I am not giving you the post until I have tested your knowledge of the war, start at the beginning and tell me all you can remember and if you do well I will put you on the short list".

"Well" the green clad began, "The Toupees from Debauch Island have been getting in our hair for centuries. They are kleptomaniacs of course, but of a highly selective type; they invade every nine years but they only take one type of thing. Like Airedales, that was the year I was born, or bicycles, or rucksacks. We were always able to repulse them quite easily and clear them out in about three or four months, but this time it is entirely different, they have come out of sequence it being only five years since the last invasion, they are taking all types of things but mainly chemicals and electrical components. Their tactics are better than ever before, and they seem to be fighting with something like religious fanaticism, new eapons appear daily, we are having great difficulty in holding our own, and the prisoners we have taken now call us the filthy ichthyophagous but I've no idea what it means".

"What does it mean" asked Nolaughing. "It means fish-eating" said Red, who had realised some little time ago that they had materialized on the wrong side.

Red quickly formed a plan in his mind which just might get them out of their present plight, to the officer he said "Have you a prisoner that I can interrogate". "Yes" said the green clad, "I will take you to him, walk this way", and with that he sauntered off in his hesitant, shuffling, bow-legged gait. They followed him through the shamolic control room and up two flights of stairs, emerging at last at ground level, the military installation being underground.

The air was thick with flies of every colour in the spectrum, except for one place a few yards to their left where a clear volume was being maintained around a somewhat overweight, four foot tall, pink parrot; who seemed to be talking to himself while ever and again he took a small hand mirror from a bag which he wore, and studied his reflection.

As soon as he spotted them, the parrot began to shriek, "Filthy ichthyophagous, filthy ichthyophagous" over and over, until it was almost impossible to think.

"I'm sure its your uniform he objects to" said Red, "You had better leave us along with him". "Very well Your Excellencies" said the other and ambled off. The parrot did become somewhat quieter once the officer was out of sight, but he continued to eye Red and Nolaughing with suspicion. "Now's our chance" Red whispered to Nolaughing; To the parrot he said "Sir we are not your enemy, in fact, we are friends of Wenzel, whom we are in search of. I have deduced that he is now living among your kind and we will help you to escape if you will take us to him.

"Do you take me for a bird-brain" said the parrot in a surly manner. "That is just what my enemy would say".

"I realise that" said Red. "But it is the truth, nevertheless, so we must find some way to satisfy your suspicions for all our sakes. Can you not think of a test for us that would prove my words".

"Yes, I can" said the bird. "I have spent much time in Wenzel's company and I know that I am the only one on this planet who is aware of where he came from and how he got here, tell me those two things and I will believe you".

"Well, that is quite easy for us to answer because we came from the same place which was the planet 'Leviathan', and by the same means, a Time Machine, which did not arrive when we did, I might add.

The parrot was understandably astonished at the accuracy of Red's reply, but recovered quickly with the realisation that he would soon be free and on his way home; then a sickening thought occurred to him. "Your answers establish your credentials beyond doubt" he said, "I am now pleased to meet you, and would gladly take you to Wenzel but you may have noticed that I am chained by the leg to this spot and as you are not the enemy you will no more know the combination of the lock, here on my foot, than I do".

Red bent and examined the combination lock which was holding the chain together, it had five wheels each of which had ten positions numbered 0 to 9, this meant that the correct code was one of 100,000 possibilities so that the task looked hopeless and the parrot said as much. "It would take more than a fortnight to work through all those codes" he said "So unless you have any bright ideas I'm stuck here.

Red looked grim. Then the parrot, remembering something, perked up a little and said "I did overhear one of the guards when they were securing me here, say something that could be useful to anyone with a brain like Wenzel's, but I have been able to do nothing with it".

Tell it to us quickly" said Red.

"Well" said the bird, "the one guard remarked to the other that he had noticed a curious thing, namely that the combination number when divided by four gave a quotient which was exactly its reverse".

"Do you mean like this" said Red, scratching on the ground with a stick.

$$\begin{array}{r} \text{A B C D E} \\ 4 \overline{) \text{E D C B A}} \end{array}$$

"Yes" he said. "That is how I see it, but I could never solve it".

"Oh, I think that is very easy" said Nolaughing. "We will have you freed in no time at all.

Is your brain as nimble as Nolaughing's ?
Could you come up with the correct combination, and free the incarcerated bird.



HUGO AWARDS

| | | |
|-----------------------|---|-----------------------|
| BEST NOVEL | - | DREMSNAKE |
| BEST NOVELETTE | - | HUNTERS MOON |
| BEST NOVELLA | - | PERSISTENCE OF VISION |
| BEST ARTIST | - | VINCENT DI FATE |
| BEST SHORT STORY | - | CASSANDRA |
| EDITOR | - | BEN BOVA |
| DRAMATIC PRESENTATION | - | SUPERMAN |
| BEST FAN WRITER | - | BOB SHAW |

AUGUST MEETING FERRY POURNELLE

A MILESTONE IN B.S.F.G HISTORY. A NEW VENUE. DOCTOR PORNELLE'S TALK WAS A GUIDED TOUR OF THE UNIVERSE, STARTING FROM GOOD OLD S.M. AND WORKING ONWARDS TO OTHER GALAXIES. THE TALK WAS ILLUSTRATED WITH A SELECTION OF SLIDES OF OFFICIAL N.A.S.A. PHOTOGRAPHS AND SLIDES OF PAINTINGS BY THE GOOD DOCTORS FRIENDLY NEIGHBOURHOOD ASTRONOMICAL ARTIST WHOSE NAME ESCAPES ME AT THE MOMENT.

ON THE WHOLE, AN ENJOYABLE EVENING, ESPECIALLY CONSIDERING THE WEATHER (THE IVY BUSH IN DISOBSERVATION, AS IF YOU DIDN'T KNOW). MANY THANKS TO DOCTOR PORNELLE AND OUR HOST, MR RAY BRADBURY.

SEPTEMBER MEETING

FOR THIS MEETING WE HAVE SPARED NO EFFORT. THE ORIGINAL PLAN WAS TO HAVE H.G. WELLS HIMSELF, HOWEVER DUE TO UNFORSEEN CIRCUMSTANCES, WE WERE UNABLE TO CONTACT HIM.

SO, YOU MAY ASK YOURSELVES, WHAT ARE WE DOING THIS MEETING. WELL, WE HAVE MANAGED TO GET JOHN HAMMOND A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE H.G. WELLS SOCIETY TO GIVE A TALK ON THE WORKS OF THIS PROMINENT AUTHOR. SO BE PREPARED TO LEARN THINGS ABOUT H.G. WELLS THAT WILL ASTOUND YOU AS NEVER BEFORE. THIS MEETING AT THE IVY BUSH

OCTOBER MEETING

WE HAVE WORLD FAMOUS AUTHOR DOUGLAS ADAMS. "WHO?" I HEAR YOU CRY. WHY THE AUTHOR OF 'TRICHIKERS GUIDE TO THE GALAXY' I REPLY

CHRISTMAS PARTY

ON DECEMBER 17TH AT THE IVY BUSH. WE ARE HOLDING OUR ANNUAL CHRISTMAS PARTY. TICKETS WILL BE AVAILABLE SHORTLY. ONCE THE PRICE HAS BEEN SETTLED. HOWEVER, THERE WILL BE 50 TICKETS. EACH MEMBER MAY ONLY BRING HUSBAND/WIFE SO BOOK YOUR TICKET A.S.A.P IF YOU WANT TO GO. DON'T FORGET, ONLY 50 TICKETS.

A.G.M. - JANUARY

SOON IT WILL BE TIME TO VOTE YOUR NEXT COMMITTEE ON, SO PLEASE START THINKING OF NOMINATIONS FOR THIS MOST AUGUST SET OF PEOPLE - REMEMBER, WE ALWAYS NEED NEW BLOOD.

MEMBERSHIP INCREASE

WE ARE SORRY TO SAY, BUT AFTER 5 YEARS, THE MEMBERSHIP FEES MUST GO UP AS FROM JANUARY. THE NEW RATE IS £2.00 FOR ONE PERSON, AND £1.00 FOR ANY SUBSEQUENT NAMES AT ONE ADDRESS. PLEASE DON'T FORGET TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP SOON.