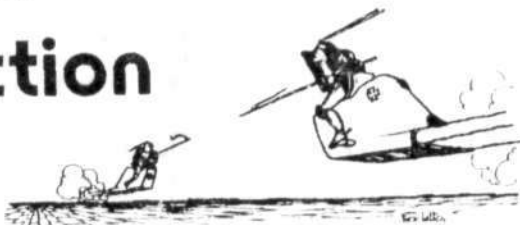


Birmingham Science Fiction Group

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



NEWSLETTER 122

OCTOBER 1981

The Birmingham Science Fiction Group has its formal meeting on the third Friday of each month in the upstairs room of THE IVY BUSH pub on the corner of Hagley Road and Monument Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham 16. There is also an informal meeting on the first Tuesday of each month at THE OLD ROYAL pub, on the corner of Church Street and Cornwall Street, Birmingham 3. (Church Street is off Colmore Row.) New members are always welcome. Our treasurer is Margaret Thorpe, 36 Twyford Road, Ward End, Birmingham 8. The 12-month subscription is £3.50.

OCTOBER MEETING - Friday 16th October 1981 at 7.45 pm

We have a speaker from THE AETHERIUS SOCIETY, probably Mr Tony Perrott, the Publicity Officer of their Derby Branch, speaking on the subject: "FLYING SAUCERS AND SPACE". The Aetherius Society was founded in 1955 by Sir George King. Its members believe that Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn are inhabited by powerful beings of great intelligence who have frequently visited Earth by flying saucer, and who are able to communicate with the chosen few on Earth by telepathic means. When the Leicester SF Group had a speaker from The Aetherius Society, everybody who attended agreed that it was probably the most lively and entertaining meeting the group had ever arranged. We expect this Friday's meeting to be just as good. Don't miss it!

SEPTEMBER MEETING

Bob Shaw and Dave Hardy showed us slides of all the illustrations in their joint book and related so much of the text that there'll be no need for you to buy a copy. Seriously, though, Thomas Cook's Galactic Tours will be published at the end of October by Proteus at £4.95. With a bit of luck it will be reviewed in next month's newsletter.

FORTHCOMING

- * November - Novacon 11 (Oct 30th - Nov 1st) at Birmingham's Royal Angus Hotel, with Bob Shaw as guest-of-honour. Send your £5.50 (for attending membership) to Helen Eling, 124 Galton Road, Warley, West Midlands. If you have any queries, telephone her on (021) 420-1369.
- * Our November speaker will be an editor from an important publishing firm, talking about the trials and tribulations of choosing which SF and fantasy books to publish.
- * December - Xmas Party on Friday 18th at The Ivy Bush. The inclusive price for entry, high quality buffet meal and various entertainments is only £2.25 per head. Numbers are limited to 55, and members will be given priority over non-members. Get your tickets from our treasurer at this month's meeting, or send her the money (her address is at the top of this page).
- * January 1982 - Annual General Meeting, including election of committee members, plus an auction.
- * Spring 1982 (probably either March or April) - Marion Zimmer Bradley.

HUGO AWARDS have been announced for SF published in 1980. Best novel: The Snow Queen - Joan Vinge; best novella: "Lost Dorsai" - Gordon R. Dickson; best novelette: "The Cloak and the Staff" - Gordon R. Dickson; best short story: "Grotto of the Dancing Deer" - Clifford D. Simak; best nonfiction book: Cosmos - Carl Sagan; best professional editor: Edward L. Ferman; best professional artist: Michael Whelan; best fanzine: Locus; best fan artist: Victoria Poyser; best fan writer: Susan Wood; best dramatic presentation: The Empire Strikes Back; John W. Campbell Award: Somtow Sucharitkul.

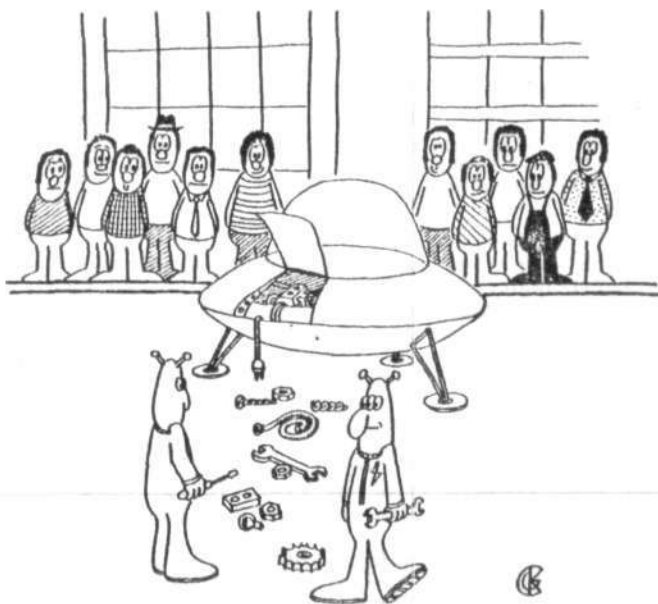
TAFF candidates for 1982 are Kevin Smith and our own Rog Peyton. One of them will win a free trip to the USA for the 1982 world SF convention in Chicago next September, the contest to be decided by popular vote. If you've been connected with SF fandom (been a BSFG member, for example) since at least April 1980, you'll be eligible to vote (and contribute to the fund). More details---and voting forms---next month.

ANDROMEDA BOOKSHOP's top ten best selling paperbacks for September were: 1. The Dr Who Programme Guide volume 1 - Jean-Marc Lofficier, 2. Death's Angel - Kathleen Sky, 3. Dragon's Egg - Robert L. Forward, 4. Dark Forces - ed by Kirby McCauley, 5. Firestarter - Stephen King, 6. Masks of the Illuminati - Robert Anton Wilson, 7. Duncton Wood - William Horwood, 8. Salem's Lot - Stephen King, 9. The Ringworld Engineers - Larry Niven, 10. Roadmarks - Roger Zelazny.

ANDROMEDA BOOKSHOP will be moving to a new location in the centre of Birmingham in December this year. Watch this space for details.

ARLINE PEYTON has resigned as BSFG secretary after four and a half years, due to over-work. Our thanks to her for doing such an excellent job. Now we need to find a replacement, preferably somebody willing to take on the job now and stay with it at least throughout 1982. It involves taking and typing up the minutes of BSFG committee meetings---one a month. Anybody interested should mention it to Rog Peyton (or any committee member).

SOLIHULL SF GROUP meets on the second Friday of each month, from about 8pm at the Mason's Arms, High Street, Solihull.



"Just act
nonchalant."

CLASH of the TITANS

First of all I must explain that I like the Greek myths. The original stories of wild and petulant gods throwing thunderbolts across the sky and flying with winged sandals were among my favourite childhood tales. But Charles H. Schneer has managed to direct a film about them that may well qualify as dud of the decade. You can't even laugh at the thing.

The story (of the film) is concerned with a rift between the gods. Zeus has seduced the daughter of the King of Argos, who produces a son, Perseus. The King is enraged, and casts them both adrift on the sea. Zeus is in turn miffed, so he summons up the Kraken and uses it to produce a tidal wave which destroys Argos. Thetis (a sea-nymph) bears a son, Calebos, whom she plans to marry to Andromeda, princess of Joppa. Perseus is meanwhile growing up on an island where he and his mother landed safely. Perseus is presented as all that is good, Calebos as all that is evil. Zeus points this out rather vividly to all concerned by changing Calebos into a slimy, mis-shapen creature. Thetis, deciding to have a final confrontation between Perseus and her son, dumps Perseus into an amphitheatre in Joppa. The rest of the story concerns two quests, one being Andromeda's hand in marriage and the other a way of preventing Andromeda from being sacrificed to the Kraken, mainly involving seeking out and killing the Gorgon.

Many of these facts have been altered from the Greek original, but, even worse, the powers that be decided that any contemporary fantasy film had to possess the stock ingredients of Star Wars. In other words, the good guys had to be genial middle-class Americans and the bad guys nasty, misshapen brutes, the heroine had to be a princess, and there had to be a cute robot in it! Furthermore, most of the acting is reminiscent of Thunderbirds. 'Nuff said.

The film's saving grace is in its special effects, which are never less than reasonable and often very good, particularly the destruction of Argos and the juxtaposition of live action and stop-motion photography in the capture of Pegasus. Ray Harryhausen is one of the masters of such techniques, and his work here will disappoint no-one.

Which brings us to the book by Alan Dean Foster. He was obviously onto a loser with the script. The description in it is virtually limited to having to remind readers of the special effects, which leaves very little scope for originality. One thing he can't be forgiven for, however, is the description of fish as "finny hordes". Purple prose is one thing, but finny hordes... The best that can be said about the book is that it is a competent rendering of the film. Which makes it almost impossible to read.

Reviewed by Margaret Thorpe.

Clifford Simak at his best is a very good writer, and this latest novel ranks with City as his best. Robots functioning without human guidance can give rise to many interesting situations, and in this case the role is also reversed, with robots controlling humans. Robots from Earth, unhappy at being denied the existence of souls, colonise a planet in order to build a Vatican of their own. They construct a computer pope which, by its very nature, is something more and less than they hope. Their continued anonymity and even their existence are threatened by aliens and by one of the human sensitives in a research programme, who thinks she has discovered Heaven---complete with golden staircase and angels. The story of how the robot cardinal Theodosius and his two human companions unravel the problems makes highly entertaining reading.

THE LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS by Ursula Le Guin, Macdonald £4.95, 256 pages and Granada £1.25, 205 pages

Reviewed by Chris Morgan.

Not only did this novel win the Hugo and Nebula when it appeared in 1969, but it has probably won more praise from the critics than any other modern work of SF. At the same time as telling a good story about an Earth envoy's experiences on the alien (but not very alien) planet of Gethen, it succeeds in saying something important about interpersonal relationships (particularly sexual relationships and sex roles) and about cultural alienation. It's interesting that two completely separate British publishers should have the book in print at the same time. If you don't already have a copy of it I urge you to rush out and buy one, and you may find that, for a work of this high calibre, it's worth possessing a hardcover.

CITIES IN FLIGHT by James Blish, Arrow £2.50, 607 pages

Reviewed by Chris Morgan.

This is the first British one-volume edition of Blish's four "Okie" novels, which have achieved the status of classics of SF. They tell of large cities (such as New York) being powered by spindizzies---anti-gravity devices---which enable mankind to go off and explore the galaxy. Compared with other future history series, by Heinlein and Asimov, for example, Blish's stands up well to the test of time. It is deeply written, with historical, sociological and technological implications all well thought out. Of necessity the series is episodic (you can't cover two thousand years of history any other way) but good fun.

CITIZEN OF THE GALAXY by Robert A. Heinlein, Penguin £1.50, 263 pages

Reviewed by Alan Cash.

This is another reprinted novel which Penguin used to market as a juvenile but have now upgraded. After an entertaining first half---a slave boy with an unknown past is adopted by a crippled beggar who is, in reality, a galactic secret agent---the story loses direction and drive. A fair read.

THE LAND LEVIATHAN by Michael Moorcock, Granada £1.25, 173 pages

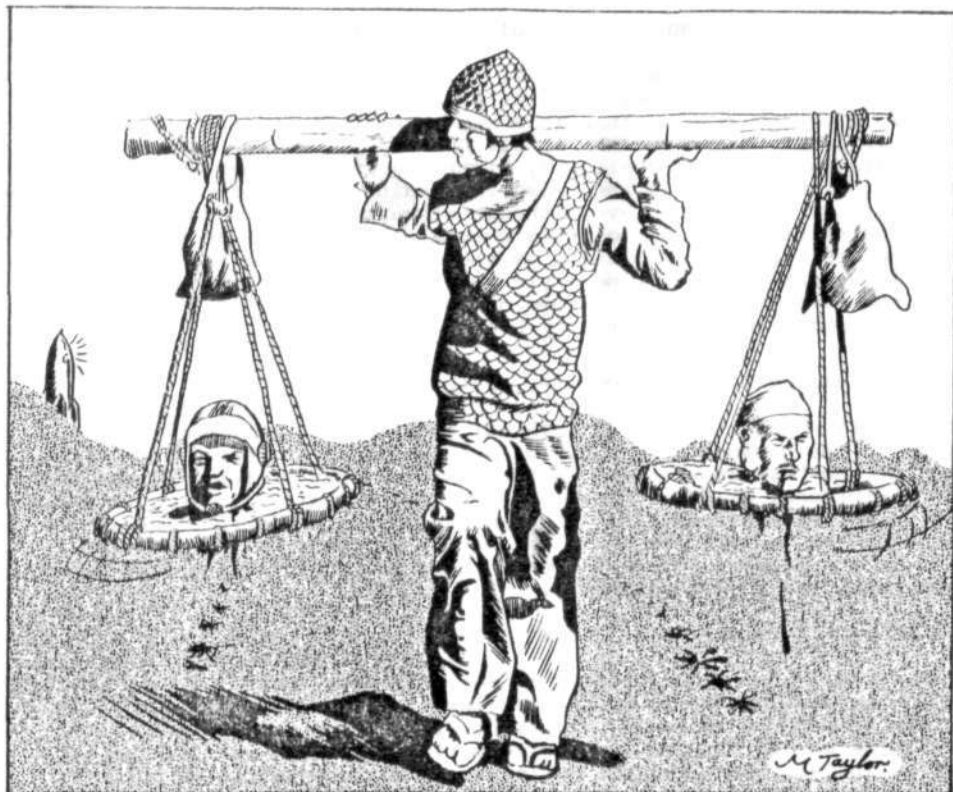
Reviewed by Anne Gay.

Oswald Bastable strikes again. Well, picks a bit. If you want to find out what happened to the Warlord of the Air---nothing. First, Moorcock's (improbable) grandfather relates his inability to publish part 1; then Bastable describes What Happens When You Feed The Poor; War and the Black Attila. Sketchily journalistic with all the good ideas cowering in corners.

DIRECT ENCOUNTERS by Judith M. Gansberg & Alan L. Gansberg, Coronet £1.25, 191 pages

Reviewed by Dave Hardy.

Basically this is a series of "contacts" with UFO occupants---of highly differing shapes and sizes, but all humanoid---often culminating in a flight, and apparently authenticated by hypnosis, lie-detectors, etc. For a sample of the science, try this: "Voyager 1's findings that there could be volcanic activity on Eos [sic; they meant Io], one of Jupiter's moons, indicate that the satellite could support life forms and add to speculation about other organisms on [also sic] our galaxy." One for real UFO buffs and psychologists, this.



EYES OF AMBER by Joan D.Vinge, Macdonald £5.95, Futura Orbit £1.75, 288pp

Reviewed by Bob Vernon.

Ms Vinge is an ambitious writer, using her anthropological training and SF writing to raise some of the "basic questions of life and death", such as moral relativity, justice/punishment, reality/illusion, humanity, love and redemption. Thankfully the results are not as turgid as the intent. Most of the stories in this collection are written with a pace that carries you across their faults, and although her writing is not as limpid as she thinks, it is competent. Three stories involve aliens---more carefully realised than some of the humans---while another two concern alienated humans ("View from a Height" and "Tin Soldier") and work well. "Media Man" inhabits the Heaven Belt and is the least successful (despite having a heroine called Fukinuki). Recommended, poised twixt Jayge Carr and Ursula Le Guin, and with the potential to become first rate as long as The Snow Queen's success doesn't spoil her.

THE VERY SLOW TIME MACHINE by Ian Watson, Granada £1.25, 222 pages

Reviewed by Dave Packwood.

Ian Watson is better known for his novels, so to see his work in short story format is somewhat disarming. This collection of 13 stories spans the years 1973-1978 and ranges from the surrealistic "My Soul Swims in a Goldfish Bowl" to the hard science of "The Event Horizon". Each story is extremely self-contained and brings to light a different facet of the author's capabilities. For instance, there is rampant lampoonery in "Programmed Love Story" and satirical racial comment in the apocalyptic "The Roentgen Refugees". Watson can often confuse and confound with his penchant for new technology and mystical ways of thought, but on the whole the collection is sufficiently diverse to please all tastes.

Many thanks to Locus, Ansible and all contributors; without you this newsletter could not exist. Art credits this issue: Ivor Latto (p.1), Kevin Clarke (p.2), Dave Hardy (p.4) and Mike Taylor (p.7). Next month's issue will contain reviews of Harry Harrison's Starworld, Gene Wolfe's The Claw of the Conciliator and Robert Silverberg's Lord Valentine's Castle, plus a report on Novacon 11. This issue has been edited & produced for the BSFG by Chris Morgan, 39 Hollybrow, Selly Oak, Birmingham B29 4LX.

At the Central Hotel, St Mary's St, Cardiff.

WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE WELSH ARTS COUNCIL

CYMRUCON NOVEMBER 14/15, 1981

Information Sheet Two 9th September, 1981

1. Guest Speakers include:- LIONEL FANTHORPE (The World's Most Prolific SF and Fantasy Author), YE GERBISH, CHRIS MORGAN, BRIAN STABLEFORD, IAN WATSON, PETE LYON, URIEN WILLIAM & B.D.HARRIES.

2. Fancy Dress: All entrants should get in touch with Richard Downes at 56 Cefn-yr-Allt, Aberdulais, Neath, West Glamorgan, SA10 8HE, telephone: Neath 58338.

3. Debating and Discussion Groups: Suggestions for topics and volunteers wishing to speak should contact Richard Downes at the above address.

4. Art Exhibition: Several interesting pictures have already come in - some offered for sale and some for display only - further entries will be very welcome. Artists should contact:- John Sinclair, 416 Green Way, Rumney, Cardiff, telephone (0222) 796949.

5. Model Exhibition: This is being run on similar lines to the art show. Steve Purbrick is in charge. Model makers should contact Steve direct at 23 Rectory Road, Canton, Cardiff, telephone (0222) 33286.

6. Video Games/Cassettes: Mike King, Hotel Manager, The Central Hotel, St. Mary's Street, Cardiff, has organised a selection of video games to be available throughout the Convention. Any members with particular requests for favourites are invited to contact Mike at the Hotel, telephone 396455. He will then ask the suppliers if your favourite machine can be included.

7. We now have a non-stop, 35 (YES! THIRTY-FIVE!) hour SF and Fantasy/Horror film programme lined up. This probably represents the best value in terms of films offered at any Convention. Titles include:- Eight StarTrek Episodes, Star Trek the Motion Picture, Barbarella, Invaders from Mars, The Lost World (1924 Silent Version), King Kong (W.O'Brien's Original Version), Mighty Joe Young, Quatermass, Quatermass 2, Quatermass and the Pit, X the Unknown, Night of the Living Dead, Battlestar Galactica, Buck Rogers, Dark Star, Silent Running, Texas Chainsaw Massacre, Rosemary's Baby, Dracula Prince of Darkness, Scars of Dracula, Plague of the Zombies, The Star Wars Saga, Superman the Movie, Tribute to Gerry Anderson, and many more! (Some of the above will be shown in abridged versions.) We are also negotiating for additional video films.

8. Saturday night disco: SHACKSOUNDS - 8 p.m. to 1 a.m. Sunday. The disco will follow the Fancy Dress Parade and Competition and it's hoped that the fancy dress competitors will dance in costume!

9. Ken and Sherry Ward of the Norwich Science Fiction Society "BREAKAWAY" are bringing their really superb "FANTASY WORKSHOP" show. Their costumes have featured at World and National Conventions, and their models are top professional quality.

10. Mike Tilley is bringing his Hammer Horror Show - a selection of the spectacular special effects that made Hammer synonymous with effective cinema horror for so many years.

11. Mike Parry - Organiser of the highly successful STAR ONE Blake's Seven Conventions - is bringing most of his I.S.T.R.A. Team, with models, displays and costumes.

12. Mike and Kathy Westhead, members of the Committee who organised BECCON at Basildon earlier this year - this was a really great Convention - are coming along with other members of the BECCON team to organise the SF/Fantasy Games and Charades.

13. George Wootton and Lionel Fanthorpe, who are both 2nd Dan Judo Instructors with N.S.J.L. are arranging some SF/Fantasy Fight Simulations.

14. The British Amateur Electronics Club [BAEC] will be running a separate BAEC Exhibition in a room adjacent to CYMRUCON. Attending membership of Cymrucon entitles members to visit the BAEC Exhibition FREE, and to participate in the electronic games and experiments FREE. Further details from the BAEC Chairman: Mr C.Bogod, 26 Forrest Road, Penarth, Cardiff, S.Glamorgan, telephone: Penarth 707813.

15. Especially for Welsh Language Speakers:-
Bydd URIEN WILLIAM a B.D.HARRIES yn trafod Ffuglen wyddonias a dychymyg mewn llenythiaeth Gymraeg. GYDA CHYMORTH CYNGOR CELFYDDYDAU CYMRU. Two addresses will be given in the Welsh Language on Sunday morning at 11 a.m. Mr William and Mr Harries will talk about Fantasy and Science Fiction in Welsh Literature. English language summaries of their talks will be available for non-Welsh speakers. Special tickets will be available for Welsh language enthusiasts who wish to attend these two talks only. These tickets will cost 50p, and will be available in advance from 129 City Road, Cardiff, telephone (0222) 498368 or at the door on the day.

16. Writers' Workshop: as part of the Alternative Programme there will be a writers' workshop for those interested in the techniques of writing SF and Fantasy. Sessions will be led by Ian Watson, Brian Stableford and Lionel Fanthorpe. The Workshop is being organised by: Tony Donovan, 29 Llanbleddian Gardens, Cardiff, telephone (0222) 372490 [Home] or (0222) 43474 [Work]. Those interested in taking part should contact Tony in advance or at Cymrucon.

17. Book and Badge Sales: Dealers' Tables are available at £10 per table which includes 1 full membership per table. We are already being well supported by dealers, but there are one or two tables still available. This will be an excellent bookroom from a collector's point of view. Ian Watson's new anthology PICTURES AT AN EXHIBITION will be on sale, and both Ian and Pete Lyon, the illustrator, will be on hand for autographs, as will several of the writers whose stories are in the anthology. Helen McNabb will be in charge of the Book Room during the Convention. Advance bookings from dealers should be sent to 129 City Road, Cardiff, telephone (0222) 498368.

18. Saben and James, lightning Artists, will be in attendance at Cymrucon so that members can have their portraits and/or cartoons drawn, in fancy dress or alongside a guest speaker.

PLUS MANY OTHER ATTRACTIONS!!

ACCOMMODATION AND CATERING

Venue: THE CENTRAL HOTEL,

St Mary's Street, Cardiff.

Telephone: (0222) 396455

The Hotel is adjacent to Cardiff Central Railway Station.

Rates: Single £13.50 per night including V.A.T. and Full English Breakfast

Double £20 per night including V.A.T. and Full English Breakfast.

Members of the Convention are responsible for their own accounts.

Please make your booking direct with the Hotel Manager: Mr M.J.F.King.

Food

The Hotel Management, who are very helpful and co-operative, are arranging for economically priced snacks and basket meals, fish and chips, etc., to be available for members during normal hotel meal times.

Bar

There will be a 24 hour private bar available to members.

Organising Committee

1. Lionel Fanthorpe, Executive President, 129 City Road, Roath, Cardiff, CF2 3BP. Telephone: (0222) 498368.

2. Patricia Fanthorpe, Programme/Order of Events/Allocation of Areas, address above.

3. Naveed Khan, Chairman, Room 16, Traherne Hall, Llwyn-y-Grant Rd., Penylan, Cardiff, CF3 7UX.

4. Tony Donovan, Writers' Workshop, 29 Llanbleddian Gardens, Cathays, Cardiff. Telephone: (0222) 372490 [Home], (0222) 43474 [Work].

5. Tony McCarthy, Films, 28 Claude Road, Cardiff. Telephone: (0222) 493590.

6. Richard Downes, Debates and Fancy Dress, 56 Cefn-yr-Allt, Aberdulais, Neath, West Glamorgan, SA10 8HE. Telephone: Neath 58338.

7. John Sinclair, Art Exhibition, 416 Greenway, Rumney, Cardiff. Telephone: (0222) 796949.

8. Steve Purbrick, Model Exhibition, 23 Rectory Road, Canton, Cardiff. Telephone: (0222) 33286.

9. Mike McNabb, Chief Gopher, 47 Harding Close, Boverton, Llantwit Major. Telephone: Llantwit Major 4282.

10. Helen McNabb, Book Room, address as above.

11. Mike and Cathy Westhead, Panel Games/SF Charades, 191 The Heights, Northolt, Middlesex, UB5 4BU.

12. George Wootton, 2nd Dan N.S.J.L., Security, 102 Ryder Street, Cardiff.

Registrations as at 9.9.81

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 Mike Ashley G | 51 David G. Gibson F |
| 2 Lionel Fanthorpe G | 52 Martin Walters F |
| 3 Chris Morgan G | 53 Mark Craske F |
| 4 Brian Stableford G | 54 John Carter S |
| 5 Ian Watson G | 55 Pete Lyon (Art) |
| 6 Ye Gerbish F | 56 Patricia Fanthorpe (Admin.) |
| 7 Mike Westhead (Games) | 57 Stephanie Fanthorpe F |
| 8 Cathy Westhead F | 58 Fiona Fanthorpe F |
| 9 Roger Perkins F | 59 Andrew Jones F |
| 10 Tony McCarthy (Films) | 60 Neil Burgess F |
| 11 Richard Downes (Fancy Dress/Debates) | 61 Bill via Tony McCarthy F |
| 12 John Sinclair (Art) | 62 Forever People F |
| 13 Steve Purbrick (Models) | 63 " " F |
| 14 Peter Tyers F | 64 " " F |
| 15 Jessica Brennan S | 65 B.D.Harries (Welsh Speaker) |
| 16 Stephen Coffin F | 66 Urien William (Welsh Speaker) |
| 17 Peter Watts F | 67 Mike King (Central Hotel) |
| 18 Dave Bath F | 68 Patricia King (Central Hotel) |
| 19 David Denis F | 69 Nicholas King (Central Hotel) |
| 20 Simon Rudyk S | 70 Louise King (Central Hotel) |
| 21 Barbara Rudyk S | 71 Saben and James (Lightning Artists) |
| 22 Dave Jones F | 72 Ken Ward (Fantasy Workshop) |
| 23 David Bevan F | 73 Sherry Ward F |
| 24 I.Davis S | 74 David Ward F |
| 25 Sergio Masci F | 75 Robert Stubbs F |
| 26 Darren White F | 76 Dee Fullerton F |
| 27 R.Mortimore S | 77 George Wootton (Security/Fight Scenes) |
| 28 Peter Hughes F | 78 Laurie Gee F |
| 29 Miss S.Hollingdrake S | 79 Joan Gee F |
| 30 Roger Campbell F | 80 Mike Parry (I.S.T.R.A. Organiser) |
| 31 David Clough (Film Staff) | 81 C.Bogod (BAEC Chairman) |
| 32 Steve Fyles (Film Staff) | 82 Mike McNabb (Chief Gopher) |
| 33 A.N.Other (Film Staff) | 83 Helen McNabb (Book Room) |
| 34 Pauline Morgan F | 84 Tony Donovan (Secretary/Writers' Workshop) |
| 35 Linda Thomas F | 85 Naveed Khan (Chairman) |
| 36 Afan Ab Alun F | |
| 37 P. Howard Roche F | |
| 38 Andrew P. Wallum F | |
| 39 David Redd S | |
| 40 Chris Davenport F | |
| 41 Andy Holyor F | |
| 42 Andrew Whitfield F | |
| 43 John Porter F | |
| 44 Laurence Taylor F | |
| 45 Susan Taylor F | |
| 46 Steve Davies F | |
| 47 John Stewart S | |
| 48 Simon Beresford F | |
| 49 Hugh P. Mascetti F | |
| 50 Dave Ellis S | |

STOP PRESS: Membership is now
up to 120 and still growing!!