

BRUM GROUP NEWS

THE *FREE* MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE

BIRMINGHAM SCIENCE FICTION GROUP

MAY 2007

ISSUE 428

HONORARY PRESIDENTS: **BRIAN W ALDISS, O.B.E.**
& **HARRY HARRISON**

COMMITTEE: **VERNON BROWN (CHAIRMAN); VICKY COOK (SECRETARY);**
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Friday 11th May

IAN WATSON

We're pleased to announce that our speaker this month will be Ian Watson who will be giving a talk titled "Artificial Intelligence and Storytelling". This is an updated version of a talk he gave at Imperial College 18 months ago and later, in Spanish, at HispacCon in Seville. So the chances of any Brum Group members having heard this talk is very remote, if not impossible.

Ian has lectured in English in Tanzania (1965-67) and Tokyo (1967-70). From 1971 to 1976 Ian taught a course on SF/Future Studies here in Birmingham at the Polytechnic. In 1976 he became a full-time writer.

His first novel, *THE EMBEDDING* published in 1973, won the Prix Apollo in its French translation. Since then Ian has written several novels, primarily SF but also fantasy, a couple of horror novels and a comedy including a couple of *Warhammer 40,000* gaming novels. He has edited several anthologies, the first of which was *PICTURES AT AN EXHIBITION* in 1981.

I believe that Ian has spoken to the Group on two previous occasions both of which were completely different from each other but equally as

June 8th 2007 – ROBERT HOLDSTOCK will returning to speak to us. Rob turned up in February, but the meeting was cancelled due to the heavy snow.

entertaining. We know that this month's talk will again be totally different and, again, extremely entertaining. RGP

The meeting will take place in the Lichfield room on the second floor of the Britannia Hotel, New Street (entrance in Union Passage almost opposite the Odeon. At the bottom of the ramp from New Street Station, turn right, cross over the road and you'll find Union Passage about 20-30 yards along). It will commence at 7.45pm so please arrive early, get your drinks from the bar and be seated in plenty of time.

APRIL MEETING – KEN MacLEOD

By Dave Corby

The April meeting hosted a return visit by popular author Ken MacLeod. Ken's popularity can easily be judged by the attendance at this meeting, which I believe the largest for several months, and significant for the number of guests and (potential?) new members who turned up.

For this visit Ken had been asked to speak a little about the writing of his books. Ken was glad to oblige and gave us a detailed, yet frank and easy to understand account of his writing process, which seems to vary a great deal. Ken was able to give insight into the processes of starting, finishing, and indeed all the bits in between, the writing of each of his novels in turn, peppered with interesting and amusing anecdotes. In this way he was able to demonstrate the way his writing style and approach has evolved over the years of his writing. The overall effect clearly gave the viewer an understanding of the depth of Ken's imagination and creativity, a credit to Ken's speaking given the limited time available.

Ken also fielded some considerably difficult questions ranging from his inspirations in Icelandic mythology through a cross-examination of the difficult subject of ethics in respect of different species at vastly different stage of development!

After this exhaustive grilling as usual the group retired for the fetching of drinks and usual ruminations. Ken was keen to involve himself in the conversations, and I found him to be a generally quiet, considerate man, very happy to listen to the opinions of others and give a thoughtful answer to any question.

In all I found the evening valuable and interesting. Ken was an excellent guest, and I hope he will be so again sometime. I was able to indulge in my favourite past-time; asking an author which of their books I should buy as the first one (they seem to like being asked which volume they are most proud of!). The scale of ideas Ken demonstrated in his talk makes me look forward to reading it with great anticipation!

P.S. Greetings to any new members and looking forward to seeing you at future meetings! DC

AUTUMN MEAL by Vernon Brown

As usual a table has been booked for August 10th to let everyone, not on holiday in the South of France or further afield, to enjoy a convivial meal with other members in a similar situation. The table seats twelve and we have paid a deposit so would anyone interested in going let Pat, Vicky (by post) or me have a £5 deposit for their seat as soon as possible. We usually fill the table but if more than twelve members are interested AND we know soon enough, we can probably add a few more seats. But this will have to be done VERY soon, the Black Eagle is a small but popular restaurant and it's usually booked well ahead. There's a varied and reasonably priced menu so the final cost will depend on what you eat - and drink because the restaurant is part of, but separate from, a pub famous for its excellent beer.

More details, including how to get there with others or alone (it's about ten minutes by bus or Metro from Snow Hill Station), will be given later, or speak to Pat or me.

VB

2006 NEBULA AWARD NOMINATIONS

Novel

FROM THE FILES OF THE TIME RANGERS by Richard Bowes (Golden Gryphon Press)

THE GIRL IN THE GLASS by Jeffrey Ford (Dark Alley)

THE PRIVILEGE OF THE SWORD by Ellen Kushner (Bantam)

TO CRUSH THE MOON by Wil McCarthy (Bantam)

SEEKER by Jack McDevitt (Ace)

FARTHING by Jo Walton (Tor)

Novella

“Sanctuary” by Michael A Burstein (Analog Sep 2005)

BURN by James Patrick Kelly (Tachyon)

“The Walls of the Universe” by Paul Melko (Asimov’s Apr-May 2006)

“Inclination” by William Shunn (Asimov’s Apr-May 2006)

Novelette

“The Language of Moths” by Chris Barzak (Realms of Fantasy Apr 2005)

“Two Hearts” by Peter S Beagle (F&SF Oct-Nov 2005)

“Little Faces” by Vonda N McIntyre (SciFiction 23/Feb 2005)

“Journey Into the Kingdom” by M Rickert (F&SF May 2006)

“Walpurgis Afternoon” by Delia Sherman (F&SF Dec 2005)

Short Story

“Helen Remembers the Stork Club” by Esther M Friesner (F&SF Oct-Nov 2005)

“Pip and the Fairies” by Theodora Goss (Strange Horizons 3/Oct 2005)

“Echo” by Elizabeth Hand (F&SF Oct-Nov 2005)

“Henry James, This One’s For You” by Jack McDevitt (Subterranean Oct 2005)

“The Woman in Schrodinger’s Wave Equations” by Eugene Mirabelli (F&SF Aug 2005)

“An End to All Things” by Karina Sumner-Smith (CHILDREN OF MAGIC)

2007 HUGO AWARD NOMINATIONS

The 2007 Hugo Award Nominees to be presented at Nippon 2007 – the 65th World SF Convention in Japan – have been announced... The main fiction categories are:-

Novel

EIFELHEIM by Michael Flynn (Tor)

HIS MAJESTY'S DRAGON by Naomi Novik (Del Rey: Voyager 1/06 as TEMERAIRE)

GLASSHOUSE by Charles Stross (Ace)

RAINBOWS END by Vernor Vinge (Tor)

BLINDSIGHT by Peter Watts (Tor)

Novella

"The Walls of the Universe" by Paul Melko (Asimov's April/May 2006)

"A Billion Eyes" by Robert Reed (Asimov's October/November 2006)

"Inclination" by William Shunn (Asimov's April/May 2006)

"Lord Weary's Empire" by Michael Swanwick (Asimov's December 2006)

JULIAN: A CHRISTMAS STORY by Robert Charles Wilson (PS Publishing)

Novellette

"Yellow Card Man" by Paolo Bacigalupi (Asimov's December 2006)

"Dawn, and Sunset, and the Colours of the Earth" by Michael F. Flynn (Asimov's October/November 2006)

"The Djinn's Wife" by Ian McDonald (Asimov's July 2006)

"All the Things You Are" by Mike Resnick (Jim Baen's Universe October 2006)

"Pol Pot's Beautiful Daughter (Fantasy)" by Geoff Ryman (Fantasy and Science Fiction October 2006)

Short Story

"How to Talk to Girls at Parties" by Neil Gaiman (FRAGILE THINGS)

"Kin" by Bruce McAllister (Asimov's February 2006)

"Impossible Dreams" by Tim Pratt (Asimov's July 2006)

"Eight Episodes" by Robert Reed (Asimov's June 2006)

"The House Beyond Your Sky"" by Benjamin Rosenbaum (Strange Horizons September 2006)

Related Book

ABOUT WRITING: SEVEN ESSAYS, FOUR LETTERS, AND FIVE INTERVIEWS by Samuel R. Delany (Wesleyan University Press)

HEINLEIN'S CHILDREN: THE JUVENILES by Joseph T. Major (Advent: Publishing)

JAMES TIPTREE, JR.: THE DOUBLE LIFE OF ALICE SHELDON by Julie Phillips (St. Martin's)

COVER STORY: THE ART OF JOHN PICACIO by John Picacio (MonkeyBrain Books)

WORLDCON GUEST OF HONOR SPEECHES by Mike Resnick and Joe Siclari, eds. (ISFiC Press)

2007 LOCUS AWARD NOMINATIONS

Locus has announced the top five nominees in each category of the Locus Awards, based on the magazine's readers' votes. Winners will be announced in June at the Locus Awards Ceremony in Seattle, June 16th. The main categories are:-

Best Science Fiction Novel

BLINDSIGHT by Peter Watts

CARNIVAL by Elizabeth Bear
FARTHING by Jo Walton
GLASSHOUSE by Charles Stross
RAINBOWS END by Vernor Vinge

Best Fantasy Novel

THE JENNIFER MORGUE by Charles Stross
THE LAST WITCHFINDER by James Morrow
THE PRIVILEGE OF THE SWORD by Ellen Kushner
SOLDIER OF SIDON by Gene Wolfe
THREE DAYS TO NEVER by Tim Powers

Best First Novel

CRYSTAL RAIN by Tobias S. Buckell
THE GLASS BOOKS OF THE DREAM EATERS by Gordon Dahlquist
THE GREEN GLASS SEA by Ellen Klages
THE LIES OF LOCKE LAMORA by Scott Lynch
TEMERAIRE: HIS MAJESTY'S DRAGON/THRONE OF JADE/BLACK POWDER
by Naomi Novik

Best Young Adult Book

THE KEYS TO THE KINGDOM: SIR THURSDAY by Garth Nix
MAGIC LESSONS by Justine Larbalestier
SPIRITS THAT WALK IN SHADOW by Nina Kiriki Hoffman
VOICES by Ursula K. Le Guin
WINTERSMITH by Terry Pratchett

Best Novella

"Botch Town" by Jeffrey Ford
"Lord Weary's Empire" by Michael Swanwick
"Map of Dreams" by M. Rickert
"The Mars Girl" by Joe Haldeman
"Missile Gap" by Charles Stross

Best Novelette

"I, Row-Boat" by Cory Doctorow
"The Night Whiskey" by Jeffrey Ford
"Pol Pot's Beautiful Daughter (Fantasy)" by Geoff Ryman
"The Singularity Needs Women!" by Paul Di Filippo
"When Sysadmins Ruled the Earth" by Cory Doctorow

Best Short Story

"How to Talk to Girls at Parties" by Neil Gaiman
"In the Abyss of Time" by Stephen Baxter
"Nano Comes to Clifford Falls" by Nancy Kress
"Sob in the Silence" by Gene Wolfe
"Tin Marsh" by Michael Swanwick

Best Collection

THE BEST OF PHILIP JOSÉ FARMER by Philip José Farmer
THE EMPIRE OF ICE CREAM by Jeffrey Ford
FRAGILE THINGS by Neil Gaiman
GALACTIC NORTH by Alastair Reynolds
THE LADIES OF GRACE ADIEU AND OTHER STORIES by Susanna Clarke

2007 SIDEWISE AWARD NOMINATIONS

The Sidewise Award for Alternate History nominations have been announced. Given each year since 1995, this award recognizes excellence in alternate history writing. This year's awards are expected to be presented at Tuckercon, the NASFiC in St. Louis.

Long Form:

1862 by Robert Conroy (Presidio Press)

THE TOURMALINE by Paul Park (Tor)

THE FAMILY TRADE, THE HIDDEN FAMILY, THE CLAN CORPORATE by Charles Stross (Tor)

THE DISUNITED STATES OF AMERICA by Harry Turtledove (Tor)

FARTHING by Jo Walton (Tor)

Short Form:

“The Pacific Mystery” by Stephen Baxter (THE MAMMOTH BOOK OF EXTREME SF)

“O Pioneer” by Maya Kaathryn Bohnhoff (Paradox 8)

“Counterfactual” by Gardner Dozois (F&SF, June 2006)

“History Lesson” by Chris Floyd (Moscow Times, February 22, 2006)

“Palestina” by Martin Gidron (Interzone June 2006)

“The Plurality of Worlds” by Brian Stableford (Asimov's August 2006)

“The Meteor of the War” by Andrew Tisbert (Paradox 9)

VERY interesting that in the novel category not one book is up for the Hugo and the Nebula. Jo Walton's novel FARTHING is up for everything, except the Hugo. Looking at the other categories in the Hugo and Nebula Awards, there are only two stories to appear on both lists – both in the Novella category. *RGP*

HELP WANTED by Vernon Brown

No, it's not a job advert, more a plea for assistance.

Organising the BSFG involves a lot of behind the scenes work, usually running to deadlines, so anything that reduces timewasting is of great benefit. One area of current difficulty is the transcription of signatures in the Members Book at Group Meetings, which is necessary to produce the monthly financial report to the Committee. To say that they are often illegible is an understatement, some sprawl so far that sometimes its difficult if not impossible to tell how many there are.

So in future the Members Book will have a new format! Instead of blank pages it will contain an alphabetical list of member's names, each with a space beside it for that member's signature. Please sign WITHIN the allotted space, even if signatures are illegible at least we will know how many there are. And as a bonus members membership renewal months will be next to their names to remind them if they have not renewed (or to let them renew in advance if they wish). As usual renewals will be entered into a separate book.

I would also be grateful if members would pay when they first enter the room. Sometimes, with hands full of drinks or other paraphernalia, this is difficult but returning to sign frequently causes congestion at the door and makes things difficult for whoever is behind the table. And occasionally a member forgets to do this and pays at the next meeting. This rarely happens but when it does it means that two months financial/attendance records are not as accurate as they should be. There will be, I hope, extra table space by the door to put your stuff while you sign. *VB*

NOVACON 37 UPDATE by Steve Green

Membership of the Brum Group's annual convention hit three figures just before Easter, and we expect another wave of registrations now the first of our three progress reports has been distributed. As well as details on joining and a profile of our guest of honour, Charles Stross, this includes a lengthy article by Peter Weston on the birth of the British convention scene.

Have you checked out our website yet? In addition to background history on Novacon, you can now download our publications, wander through our art gallery, peruse the current Nova Awards listings and read the latest Novacon news (including a link to an online version of Charles's novella "Missile Gap").

Rates rose to £38.00 on 1st May, but we're holding registration at £35.00 for any Brum Group members who get their money to us before 1 June (just write "BSFG" on the reverse of the cheque). If you've never attended the major event on the group's calendar, why better time to give it a whirl?

Novacon 37, Quality Hotel, Bentley, near Walsall, 2-4 November, 2007.

Cheques to "Novacon 37" c/o 379 Myrtle Road, Sheffield, S2 3HQ. Visit the Novacon 37 website: <http://www.novacon37.org.uk/>

Download our first progress report: <http://www.novacon37.org.uk/prs.htm>

Download the registration form: http://www.novacon37.org.uk/membership_form.htm

SG

NEWS IN BRIEF . . .

.... Author **Kurt Vonnegut** (b.1922) died on April 11th, a couple of weeks after suffering a brain injury in a fall. Vonnegut was a highly acclaimed writer who wrote several science fiction novels, including SLAUGHTERHOUSE FIVE, based on his experiences as a prisoner of war in Dresden in World War II, and THE SIRENS OF TITAN. One of his most enduring characters was science fiction writer Kilgore Trout, who appeared in multiple books. **Philip José Farmer** wrote the book VENUS ON THE HALF SHELL using the Trout name as a pseudonym. Once Vonnegut achieved mainstream recognition, he adamantly denied being a science fiction writer Congratulations to **Sir Patrick Moore**. April 24th was the 50th anniversary of his SKY AT NIGHT TV programme, which has gone out every month since 1957. And he only missed presenting one, thanks to a dodgy goose egg which gave him food poisoning! The winner of this year's **Philip K. Dick Award** for best paperback original has been announced as **Chris Moriarty's** SPIN CONTROL The BSFA Awards presented at Eastercon in Chester were – Best Novel: END OF THE WORLD BLUES **by Jon Courtenay Grimwood**; Best Short Fiction: "The Djinn's Wife" by **Ian McDonald**; Best Artwork: "Angelbot" by **Chris 'Fangorn' Baker** Paizo Publishing has announced a new line of science fiction and fantasy novels, to be called Planet Stories. The line will focus on reprinting classic novels in trade paperback, priced at \$12.99. The first two titles, to be launched in August, will be **Robert E. Howard's** ALMURIC and **Gary Gygax's** THE ANUBIS MURDERS. After the two book launch, Planet Stories will publish a book a month. Currently planned titles

include **Michael Moorcock's** CITY OF THE BEAST (aka WARRIORS OF MARS) and **C.L. Moore's** BLACK GOD'S KISS **Ray Bradbury** was the recipient of a Special Citation from the Pulitzer Committee for his distinguished, prolific and deeply influential career as an unmatched author of science fiction and fantasy The inductees into the Science Fiction Hall of Fame, housed at the Science Fiction Museum in Seattle, have been announced. The induction ceremony will be held on June 16 in conjunction with the presentation of the Locus Awards. This year's inductees include: **Gene Wolfe, Ridley Scott, Ed Emshwiller** and **Gene Roddenberry** To celebrate the 30th anniversary of the release of **STAR WARS**, the US Post Office will be releasing a set of fifteen commemorative stamps with images from the original trilogy. The stamps will each have a value of 41c. As a tie-in to the release, some mail boxes around the country are being replaced with a design reminiscent of R2D2.... *RGP*



BOOK REVIEWS



(**REVIEWERS** please note:- all reviews should be emailed direct to me at rog@rogpeyton.fsnet.co.uk) Deadline for each issue is 14 days prior to the date of the monthly meeting. *RGP*

ROADSIDE PICNIC by *Arkady & Boris Strugatsky*

Gollancz SF Masterworks; / 145 pages / £6.99 / paperback

Reviewed by Dave Hardy

Star rating: * * * *

This is particular, enigmatic type of science fiction, and one that I like; in some respects it reminds me of ROGUE MOON by Algis Budrys. At some unspecified time aliens have landed on Earth and then left – it's known as the Visitation – at six Zones, regularly spaced around Earth's globe. The story takes place 30 years later, in a place called Harmont. The International Institute is responsible for making trips into the dangerous Zones, which seem to be full of traps for the unwary (or even the wary), but thieves known as stalkers also risk their lives in an attempt to bring back mysterious artifacts or technological wonders worth massive amounts of money. The most common of these are known as 'empties': two copper discs the size of a saucer, about a quarter-inch thick, with a space of 18 inches between them; nothing else, but you can't press them together, or pull them apart. Nobody knows what they're for or what they do, but everyone wants to know. Someone likens the Visitation to a party of picnickers, who get out of their cars, spread their belongings on the grass, and depart, leaving their litter behind; hence the title.

Red Schuhart is a stalker, and he knows where to find a 'full empty', known as Object 77b, which has some sort of blue material between the plates. The Zone somehow affects the genes of anyone who enters or gets too close, and

Red's daughter, known as Monkey, is a mutant, covered in soft fur. His life is dominated by the Zone, the thriving black market which supports him and his daughter, but he resolves to stop endangering his life by entering the Zone – after one last foray. . .

The writing is brilliant, the descriptions vivid, and the overall sense of alien weirdness well evoked. Only the ending disappointed me slightly, because I turned the page expecting to find more, and there wasn't any! I can see now why the authors did this, but I generally prefer a somewhat neater ending than this, which leaves too much unsaid that I wanted to know. But nonetheless, a very worthwhile read *DAH*

***BONE SONG* by John Meaney**

Gollancz / 346pgs / £10.99 / trade paperback

Reviewed by Pauline Morgan

Star rating: * * * *

This is a book very difficult to categorise as it takes elements from a number of different genres. Is it science fiction or fantasy? The story is set mostly in the city of Tristopolis. It has many of the technological trappings that society in modern America is cursed with. – cars, pollution, phones, surveillance, guns, gun-crime. It could be a colony world as the majority of the population is human but there is no suggestion of interstellar space flight. Though the electricity the city is run on is generated from the bones of the dead. Bones have a psychic energy which can be put to use. Many of the machines are operated through the service of enslaved wraiths – sentient beings that appear to exist mainly in another dimension.

BONE SONG is also a crime thriller. Donal Riordan is a police officer. He is charged with the security of an operatic Diva who will shortly be performing in the city. It has been noticed that a number of other exceptionally talented performers around the world have been killed during performances and their bodies stolen. It is believed that their bones are being stolen for sale to wealthy collectors. As Donal discovers, touching these bones transports a person into a world encompassed by the talent. Unfortunately, the Diva dies and Donal barely escapes with his life. He is recruited into a special squad whose current job is to track down the bone collectors.

Meaney has done an excellent job in creating this world. Although the reader is dropped straight into it, the familiarity of the crime genre and the clarity of the writing means that there is no confusion as new concepts are introduced. Donal's character is well drawn as are some of the others. Some members of the team he becomes part of, tend to remain sketchy as there are perhaps too many to develop within the fast moving story. There are plenty of plot twists and surprises. Hopefully there will be other novels set in this world and the opportunity to explore the more bizarre aspects of it, along with the people who inhabit it.

PM

***NOVA SWING* by M. John Harrison**

Gollancz / 246pgs / £17.99 / hardcover

Reviewed by Pauline Morgan

Star rating: * * * *

To say that this book has already been nominated for the Arthur C. Clarke Award is merely to state that Harrison is a critically acclaimed writer who writes original science fiction. For some, this accolade is the SF equivalent of the Man-Booker prize. In some minds, nominated books for both these awards are unreadable. They would be wrong. Any book that gets onto such a short list has to be well written, original and to excite the critics. This latter is the hardest thing to do. Harrison does it on a regular basis. His books are never easy to read. They have dimensions that often need to be teased out; ideas that have to be actively pursued through the text but reading thoughtfully can be very rewarding.

The setting is a seedy area on a distant planet. With its bars and rundown apartments it has a Chanderlesque feel. Vic Seratonin, though, is not a private eye. He is a tourist guide. The place the tourists want to go is into the event site. At some time in the past, part of the Kefahuchi Tract fell onto the planet's surface. This is an area of distorting space where the usual laws of physics do not apply. Venturing into the event site is to enter a surreal landscape where nothing can be trusted. Vic claims to have been in many times. Elizabeth is a client who wants Vic to take her in. More often those who go in do not return or do so after a very long time. Emil Bonaventure claims to have maps showing the way to the centre of the event site. Now close to dying, he resists revealing his notebooks in which he claims the secret is written. Vic would like those diaries.

Bringing anything out of the affected area is strictly forbidden, though every evening a steam of black and white cats leave, and return each dawn. Aschemann is a policeman whose job is to stop artefacts being removed from the area as they can be extremely dangerous in unexpected ways. He has also set himself up to explore the strange phenomenon at the Café Surf. Here people emerge from the toilets in a steady stream over an evening g, yet hardly anyone seems to go it.

All these aspects of life in Saudade are skilfully interwoven. This is a difficult book to understand fully but at the same time it is worth persevering with. Do not expect a quick, easy read but a volume with a lot of depth packed with characters and ideas.

PM

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

The Central Library SF and Fantasy Reading Group meets on Thursdays at 5.45pm to 7pm monthly, in GP5 on the 5th Floor at the Central Library, Chamberlain Square, B3 3HQ. It's a small friendly group meeting to discuss SF & fantasy books. Contact person is Pam Gaffney on (0121) 303 3398.

Books to be discussed:-

May 17th June 14th July 19th (All to be announced)

THE DOCTOR WHO UP-CLOSE EXHIBITION at the Museum of Science and Industry in Manchester is the largest Doctor Who exhibition in the UK. It is now open and will run till November 5th. Visitors will be able to get Up-Close to actual props, costumes and monsters from the hit BBC programme, including the Empress of Racnoss from the Christmas Special, The Runaway Bride. The exhibition coincides with the start of the new, third series starring David Tennant and Freema Agyeman and will feature exciting new items from the latest programmes once they have been seen on TV. Season Passes to Doctor Who Up-Close are only available from the Museum Information Desk. Prices are as follows: Adults £15.00, Concessions £10.00 and Family Season Ticket (4 people - max 2 adults) £35.00. More info at <http://www.msim.org.uk/index.asp?menuid=723>.

THE TOLKIEN WEEKEND AT SAREHOLE MILL 2007 - 19th & 20th May in Sarehole Mill, part of the Shire Country Park

Birmingham City council, The Tolkien Society and local community groups are pleased to be associated with the return of the Tolkien Weekend this year, celebrating the writing of J R R Tolkien in and near the childhood haunts that inspired him. This year the theme of the event is 70 years of The Hobbit, having originally been printed in 1937. This year the event includes tours of the working mill itself, guided tours of local areas, craft marquees, the Farmer's Market, children's activities, The Tolkien Society Archives, Guided Walks, Woodland Crafts, a miniature railway, re-enactment groups, music and poetry and Shire Productions' well liked production of FARMER GILES OF HAM, as well as many other attractions too numerous to list.

As usual Admission is totally free, with visitor parking £1. The event is open from 11:00 until 5:00 on both days. Sarehole Mill is located on Cole Bank Road in Hall Green, on the number 11 bus route. For further information or to book for Saturday morning events telephone: 0121 464 6633

FANTASYCON 2007 will be held over the weekend of September 21-23 at the Britannia Hotel, 1 St James Street, Nottingham. Guests of Honour are Steve Jones and Michael Marshall Smith. Full details from their website <http://www.fantasycon.org.uk/>

NOVACON 37 – the Brum Group's own convention – will again be at the Quality Hotel, Bentley, Nr Walsall, W Mids. It's the weekend of 2-4 November and the Guest of Honour is Charles Stross. Registrations are currently £35. Cheques to 'Novacon 37', Steve Lawson, 379 Myrtle Road, Sheffield, S2 3HQ Email: x15@zoom.co.uk Website: www.novacon.org

WAR OF THE WORLDS Returns - Following a hugely successful and critically acclaimed sell-out UK tour in 2006, the award-winning Jeff Wayne's Musical Version of THE WAR OF THE WORLDS is set to head back to The

NEC Arena in December 2007. For 2007, the production will be boasting a raft of exciting new features, including new innovative technology by Californian company EON Reality who will create a new Richard Burton 'head'. With 3D GGI photo-real holographic imagery it aims to take the replication even further than last year's tour and to set the bar for all theatrical technology in the future. Tickets now on sale priced at £39.50 plus booking and transaction fees.

All details are correct to the best of our knowledge, we advise contacting organisers before travelling. Always enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope when writing to any of the above contact addresses.

Any information about forthcoming SF / Fantasy / Horror events are always welcome - please send to me at rog@rogpeyton.fsnet.co.uk

FUTURE MEETINGS OF THE BSFG

Jul 13th - tba

Aug 10th – **Summer Social** – a meal at the Black Eagle

Sep 14th – the group of fantasy writers, **The Write Fantastic**, now numbering eight – **JAMES BARCLAY** and **DEBORAH MILLER** have joined since their last appearance - will be visiting us.

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Thanks to all the named contributors in this issue and to William McCabe who sends me reams of news items every month which I sift through for the best/most entertaining items.

*** * * WE ARE PLEASED TO INCLUDE IN THIS MAILING A DISCOUNT CARD FOR 'FORBIDDEN PLANET' – THE PLACE TO GET ALL YOUR TOYS, COMICS, MASKS, DVDs – AND MAYBE EVEN BOOKS!**

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 Secretary, 5 Greenbank, Barnt Green, Birmingham, B45 8DH