

BRUM GROUP NEWS

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE

BIRMINGHAM SCIENCE FICTION GROUP

JULY 2018

ISSUE 562

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ANNA STEPHENS

July 13th

This month we are really pleased to welcome local Fantasy author, Anna Stephens.

Her first novel, *GODBLIND* was published last year and the second, *DARKSOUL* will be published in August this year. They are the first two books in her gritty epic fantasy series, the *Godblind* trilogy. *GODBLIND* was on the Booknest Debut Novel Award shortlist for 2017 and the longlist for the David Gemmell Morningstar Award for Best Debut.



August 13th - Summer Social Meal at the Black Eagle. Places still available - email Pat or see her at meeting if you want to attend.

She is a literature graduate from the Open University and a member of Birmingham Writers' Group. She loves all things speculative, from books to film to TV, including classic Hammer and Universal horror films, as well as the chameleon genius of David Bowie.

As a beginner in Historical European Martial Arts and a second Dan black belt in Shotokan Karate, she's no stranger to the feeling of being punched in the face, which is more help than you would expect when writing fight scenes. More information can be found at her website <https://anna-stephens.com> or on Twitter at @AnnaSmithWrites

CG

(Biographical details courtesy of Anna Stephens)

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.

LOCUS AWARDS 2018

The winners of the Locus Awards were announced at the Locus Awards Weekend in Seattle from 22nd to 24th June.

Science Fiction Novel: THE COLLAPSING EMPIRE by John Scalzi (Tor)

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

Horror Novel: THE CHANGELING by Victor LaValle (Spiegel & Grau)

First Novel: THE STRANGE CASE OF THE ALCHEMIST'S DAUGHTER by Theodora Goss (Saga)

Young Adult Book: AKATA WARRIOR by Nnedi Okorafor (Viking)

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

Novelette: “The Hermit of Houston” by Samuel R Delaney (in *F&SF* 9-10/17)

Short Story: “The Martian Obelisk” by Linda Nagata (*Tor.com* 19/7/17)

Anthology: THE BOOK OF SWORDS edited by Gardner Dozois (Harper Collins)

Collection: THE HAINISH NOVELS AND STORIES by Ursula K Le Guin (Library of America)

Non-Fiction: LUMINESCENT THREADS: CONNECTIONS TO OCTAVIA E BUTLER ed by Alexandra Pierce & Mimi Mondal (Twelfth Planer)

Art Book: THE ART OF THE PULPS: AN ILLUSTRATED HISTORY ed by Douglas Ellis, Ed Hulse & Robert Weinberg (*IDW*)

Artist: Julie Dillon

Editor: Ellen Datlow

Magazine: *Tor.com*

Publisher: Tor

Special Award for Community Building & Inclusivity: Clarion West

HARLAN ELLISON 1934 - 2018



The hugely influential though often controversial author, **Harlan Ellison** died in his sleep on June 28th at the age of 86. He was a prolific writer with over 1800 short stories, screenplays, novels, critical essays etc to his credit. Some of his most famous short stories were “”Repent, Harlequin!” Said the Ticktockman”, “I Have No Mouth and I Must Scream” and “A Boy and His Dog” which was made into a film. His scripts were used by many television shows including *The Outer Limits*, *The Man from UNCLE*, and famously the *Star Trek* episode, “City on the Edge

of Forever”. He was also creative consultant to the 1980’s *Twilight Zone* and 1980’s *Babylon 5* series. He was part of the New Wave SF movement of the 60’s/70’s (which promoted more literary and experimental works) and edited the *Dangerous Visions* anthologies which were enormously significant in the field. He won seven Hugo Awards, four Nebulas, and Lifetime Achievement Awards from the World Fantasy, Bram Stoker and International Horror Guild. He was named a Grandmaster of Science Fiction and Horror and was inducted into the Science Fiction Hall of Fame in 2011. CG

NEWS IN BRIEF ...



Artist and puppet-maker, **Peter Firmin** has died aged 89 after a short illness. With his co-creator, Oliver Postgate, he was responsible for creating many memorable and classic children’s shows, many with fantasy or SF themes. Their creations include *The Clangers*, *Bagpuss*, *Pogles Wood*, *Ivor the Engine*, *Basil Brush* and my personal favourite, *Noggin the Nog*.

He received a BAFTA Lifetime Achievement Award in 2014 in recognition of his outstanding contribution to children’s entertainment The 2018 winner of the **John W Campbell Memorial Award** (for best SF Novel) is David Walton for *THE GENIUS PLAGUE*. The winner of the **Theodore Sturgeon Memorial Award** (for Best Short Fiction) was Charlie Jane Anders for “Don’t Press Charges and I Won’t Sue” *Tor.com* will open to novella submissions for two weeks from July 30th to August 13th. Novellas must be SF/Fantasy and between 20,000 to 40,000 words. Submission guidelines and further information at www.tor.com The **Royal Society of Literature** has appointed 31 new Fellows. Authors of SFF included were **Naomi Alderman**, **Neil Gaiman**, **Adam Roberts** and **Frances Hardinge** The 2017 inductees to the **Science Fiction and Fantasy Hall of Fame** have

been announced as Stan Lee (comic book author and publisher), J K Rowling, the *Buffy the Vampire* TV series and *The Legend of Zelda* videogame series The Horror Writers Association (HWA) have announced that there will be a new **Bram Stoker Award** category for Short Non-Fiction A **Japanese spacecraft, Hayabusa 2** has successfully arrived at an asteroid (Ryugu) 180 million miles from Earth. The spacecraft aims to deploy several landing craft, including rovers and to collect samples for return to Earth in 2020 To mark the 20th anniversary of **HARRY POTTER AND THE CHAMBER OF SECRETS**, seven models of the spiders will be on display at bookshops around the country from 30th June. Each spider will have a “skin” made from pages of the book. The nearest bookshops to Birmingham are the Waterstones shops in Nottingham or London Piccadilly. *CG*

FORTHCOMING BOOKS

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

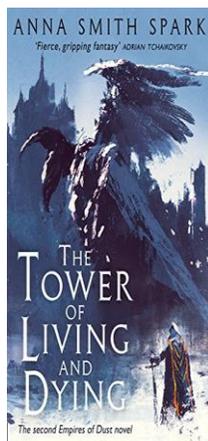
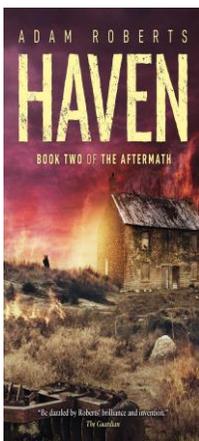
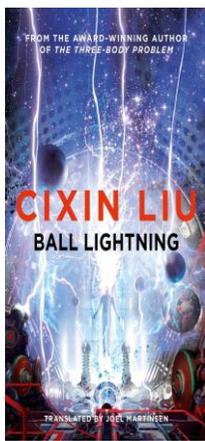


SPINNING SILVER by Naomi Novik / Macmillan / 480 pgs / £16.99 hardback / ISBN 978-1509899012 / July 12th. The Fairy King kidnaps a moneylender, believing she can turn silver to gold.

RECORD OF A SPACEBORN FEW (Wayfarers 3) by **Becky Chambers** / Hodder & Stoughton / 368 pgs / £14.99 hardback / ISBN 978-1473647602 / July 24th. SF. Many citizens of the original Exodus Fleet have left for galactic civilisation; now the remaining few must cope with a disaster.

REDEMPTION'S BLADE by **Adrian Tchaikovsky** / Solaris / 520 pgs / £7.99 paperback / ISBN 978-1781085790 / July 26th. The wicked demigod is dead. Now the heroes who defeated him must rebuild the shattered world, as earlier alliances break due to greed and mistrust.

EARLY RISER by **Jasper Fforde** / Hodder & Stoughton / 416 pgs / £20 hardback / ISBN 978-1473650220 / August 2nd. SF. Every Winter, most humans hibernate except a few guardian Consuls. Now viral dreams are killing the sleepers and Consul Charlie must find the truth behind this threat.



KING OF ASSASSINS (Wounded Kingdom 3) by **R J Barker** / Orbit / 528 pgs / £9.99 paperback / ISBN 978-0356508580 / August 9th. Twenty years of intrigue and murder culminate over the battle for the empty High King's throne.

BALL LIGHTNING by **Cixin Liu** / Head of Zeus / 384 pgs / £18.99 hardback / ISBN 978-1786694683 / August 9th. SF.

Trying to understand the ball lightning which destroyed his parents, Chen uncovers new laws of physics which have deadly real-world ramifications.

HAVEN (The Aftermath 2) by Adam Roberts / Solaris / 320 pgs / £7.99 paperback / ISBN 978-1781085660 / August 9th. SF. In a post-apocalyptic world, a boy with visions of flight attracts dangerous attention.

THE TOWER OF LIVING AND DYING (Empires of Dust 2) by Anna Smith Spark / Harper Voyager / 528 pgs / £14.99 hardback / ISBN 978-0008204082 / August 9th. Two women are the only ones able to stop an army and a powerful dragonlord. *CG*

NEW CINEMA FILM RELEASES

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

HOTEL ARTEMIS - Release date July 20th. In a near-future Los Angeles, Hotel Artemis is a secret emergency room for criminals.

ANT-MAN AND THE WASP - Release date August 3rd. Superhero Ant-Man is joined by another superhero, the Wasp.

THE DARKEST MINDS - Release date August 10th. SF. Teens with mysterious abilities are interned by government but some escape and form a resistance. *CG*



BOOK REVIEWS



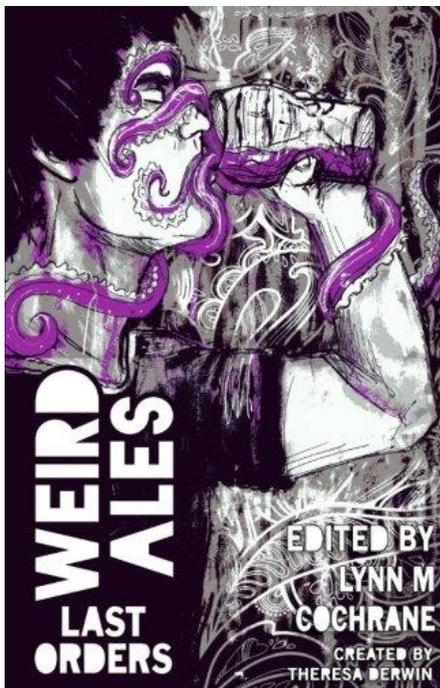
(REVIEWERS please note: - all reviews should be emailed direct to me at goodwinced@yahoo.com Deadline for each issue is 14 days prior to the date of the monthly meeting)

WEIRD ALES: LAST ORDERS edited by Lynn M Cochrane
Quantum Corsets / 164 pgs / £9.99 paperback / ISBN 978-1547194049

Reviewed by Pauline Morgan.

The effect of alcohol, or more exactly the after effect of too much, often leaves the imbibers with the intention of never again. This might just be because the body rebels and the horrible feeling of systems shutting down. Alternatively, there is the horror of finding out what you did while you were out of your skull. These days you can view it on social media to the embarrassment of yourself and family. It is worse when the actual drink is the source of the nightmares.

This is the third anthology that has alcohol at the heart of all its stories. In some cases, it is the secret ingredient that makes it special. In ‘Tenebrae Dark’ by Josh Reynolds it is the blood of a creature out of nightmare that is distilled to make that sought-after spirit. To get the best flavour the beast needs to be fed blood and human is best. (It is a pity that the title is spelt differently from the text of the story.) ‘The Master Brewer’ in Daniel Hall’s story uses the essence of young women as the



magical ingredient for the brew they come for miles to sample. E M Eastick’s ‘Yeast Beast Bitter’ also uses bodies as an ingredient, but in this case, it is the yeast that does the work, and it is a useful way of disposing of obnoxious men.

Once you have made your brew, you need a place to consume it. Roger Harris frequents ‘The Queen’s Head’ described by Calum Chalmers in his story. Arrayed behind the bar are half-finished bottles of spirits, and Roger covets one of them. When he steals it, he gets more than he bargained for. In

‘Alcoholiches Anonymous’ by Marc Kadushin the bar in question is the Arcane Toddy. It is frequented by supernatural beings. When a paladin is killed in the bar, Greg, the owner finds he is on the wrong side of an avenging angel.

A pub or bar is not the only place to find an unusual tippie. The narrator in ‘Uncle Bertie’s Liquor Cabinet’ by James Newman finds a strange bottle tucked at the back of his late uncle’s drinks cabinet. The effect of sampling it is to make visible the invisible. This story owes much to Lovecraft, as does ‘The Dunwich Cold One’ by Stuart Conover. Here, the bar owner makes the mistake of buying a brew made from ingredients growing along the Miskatonic River.

Once you have had your fill of alcohol, you can look forward to the hangover. Jonathan Butcher’s ‘The Last Hangover’ is the ultimate one, except the bigoted narrator has to live his last night alive over again, and again and for ever. Hell is a permanent hangover.

These aren’t the only stories in this volume but all point out the perils of imbibing too much, all have their own brand of nastiness. Lynn Cochrane (a Brum Group member) has done a good job of editing this book – any problems are the authors’ fault rather than hers. Praise too, to Theresa Derwin who concocted the idea and persuaded others to swallow these cocktails of lethal drinks.

PM

(Review copy kindly donated by Theresa Derwin)

FOR LOVE OF DISTANT SHORES (Tales of the Apt 3) by

Adrian Tchaikovsky

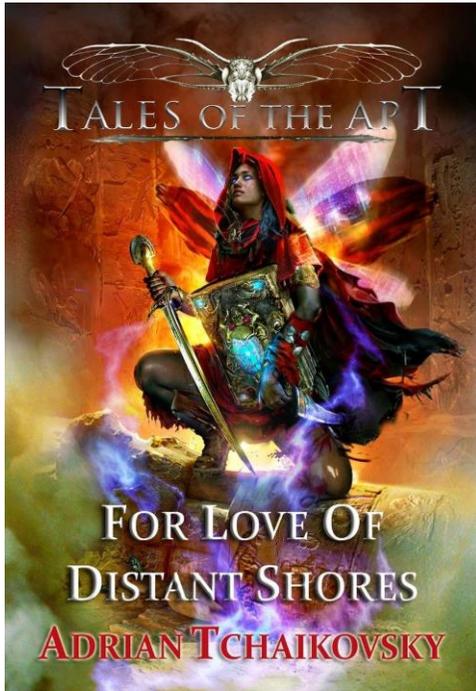
NewCon Press / 274 pgs / £12.99 paperback / ISBN 978-1910935712

Reviewed by Carol Goodwin

This collection of four novella length stories concerns the adventures of the scientist and explorer, Dr Ludweg Phinagler as recorded by his faithful-ish (!) chronicler and assistant, Fosse. They are set in the world of the **Kinden** established in the author’s *Shadows of the Apt* novels, but again other than understanding

the central concept of different types of people with abilities related to a particular animal (usually, but not exclusively, insects) no other knowledge of those books is necessary to enjoy these stories.

They are written in a style that is an obvious allusion to late 19th/early 20th century SFF classics and will be recognisable to anyone who has read for instance, Jules Verne or Arthur Conan Doyle. As Doctor Phinagler searches for the elusive archaeological/historical find that will earn him respect from his less colourful academic colleagues, his singlemindedness and unwillingness to acknowledge danger signs leads him and his



unfortunate amanuensis into four perilous, thrilling and utterly entertaining adventures – the latter from the reader’s point of view at least! The four novellas all have their own strong individual and often humorous identities and also incorporate the author’s inventiveness in designing new “kinden” based on his love and knowledge of biology

In the first novella, **CITIES OF SILVER** the intrepid pair find themselves in an underwater dystopia, complete with technologically superior overlords and an oppressed underclass who help the interlopers in their attempts to escape. Anyone who has seen the 1978 film **WARLORDS OF ATLANTIS** will recognise the plot but it is skilfully reworked and given its own unique flair to make an excellent story that is great fun to read.

The second novella, **WRITTEN IN SAND** sees the protagonists explore ancient ruins in the desert, rumoured to be protected by shadowy forces. I found myself thinking of this story as “He Who Must be Obeyed” (to misquote from H Rider Haggard’s *SHE*) crossed with **THE MUMMY** films.

The third novella, **MASTERS OF THE SPIRE** is probably my favourite. In this we see the Doctor and Fosse encountering lost tribes in the jungle (as beloved of many earlier writers such as Edgar Rice Burroughs etc) where the story hinges on a very effective use of the particular abilities/biology of the insects that the tribes are based upon (to say more would be a spoiler) and there are some nice macabre scenes and “body horror” in this story which works really well. Add in an Indiana Jones style rival to the Doctor (and potential love interest for Fosse) and I found a lot to like in this story in particular.

The final story, **FOR LOVE OF DISTANT SHORES** sees the pair embark upon a voyage into uncharted waters. This has three major events including an exciting and gripping battle with a sea-monster (shades of **MOBY DICK** or **JAWS** spring to mind) but also tangentially examines some more serious themes such as slavery and the disastrous ramifications of badly handled first contact between indigenous and outsider cultures. For those readers who have read more of the author’s work, this story also links with his *Echoes of the Fall* series.

As with much of the author’s work, a major strength throughout is in characterisation. The pompous, vainglorious but often charming beetle-kind, Dr Phinagler and his long-suffering, pragmatic and occasionally manipulative fly-kind companion, Fosse both have many faults but are also in their own individual ways often admirable as well. The author is clearly relishing the chance to explore aspects of the world on a smaller scale than the grand, world-changing events of the novels. The tone is for the most part much lighter and often tongue in cheek and the prose and comedy are a delight. Like Pratchett, the author excels at the art of effective but affectionate character assassination in a single sentence. Finally, as an unashamed homage to early pulps, a great

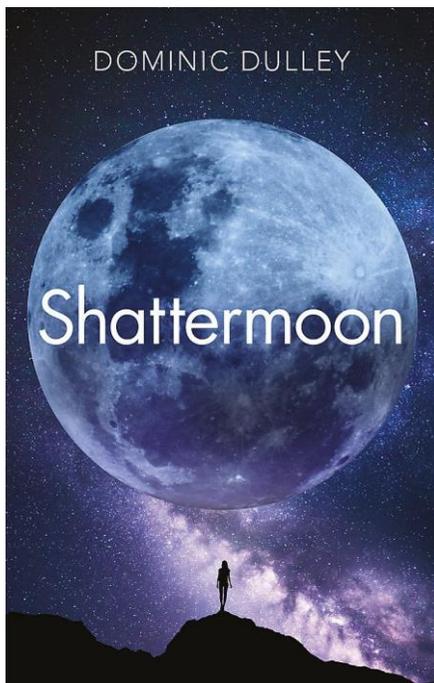
part of the fun in reading these novellas is in trying to identify and enjoy all the influences and references that have shaped them. An absolute pleasure to read from start to finish! CG

(Review copy kindly donated by NewCon Press)

SHATTERMOON (The Long Game) by Dominic Dulley
Jo Fletcher Books / 448 pgs / £16.99 paperback / ISBN 978-1786486035

Reviewed by Carol Goodwin

Orry and her family are space grifters, moving from one con to the next, targeting the rich aristocracy of the Ascendancy worlds. When the latest heist goes drastically wrong, Orry is left alone to try and pick up the pieces and rescue her brother and the family spaceship from the murderous Morven Dyas. Pursued by the authorities, who blame her for a murder she didn't commit, she has only the help of an old spacehand, an antiquated spaceship and a young, naïve noble. Together they must out-run and outwit all the forces pitted against them in a race to retrieve a mysterious pendant that in the wrong hands could destroy the fragile peace between the Ascendancy and the belligerent, alien Kadiran.



This is a very fast-paced novel as the heroes race from one crisis to another. While some will find this exciting, I found after a while that it became exhausting and felt that the story would benefit from more “breathing spaces” for both the reader and the characters. The breakneck pace to me felt that there was not

enough time and space to concentrate on character development. Because of this, I felt that although Orry, the main protagonist had some depth, other characters would have benefitted from more exploration and fleshing out. As it is, it feels that characters are often dropping in or out as required to drive the plot and the reader doesn't get long enough to get to know them. This fast pace also means that the set-up of the society, which has some interesting potential, is also too much in the background for my liking and the reader doesn't get a detailed sense of place from the various locations in the book.

As far as I am aware, the book is marketed for adults, but it read very much to me as an YA book, with its young, feisty heroine who consistently outwits the bad guys. Also, the clear division of people into either good or bad with little shading would be a better fit and my concerns about depth would be less of an issue. The couple of things that sway me away from that classification though are one scene of graphic violence (which to me felt that it didn't fit with the more light-hearted tone of the book) and the use of "quim" by a character about and addressed to Orry. This is a very misogynistic and offensive, albeit archaic, term and given that it is used to describe a young girl, I felt that in this day and age, the author could have found a better alternative.

At the end of the day I am sure that many people will enjoy this cheerful space romp but it was not one that really suited my tastes.

CG

(Review copy kindly donated by Jo Fletcher 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

ADAM CHRISTOPHER signing, 14th July, Birmingham.
Author Adam Christopher is signing his latest robot detective

novel, **I ONLY KILLED HIM ONCE**. Forbidden Planet, 74 Bull Street, B4 6AD, 1 - 2 pm. Free.

2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY 50TH ANNIVERSARY screening, 14th - 16th July, Birmingham. Various venues; Electric Cinema (15th) Tickets from £10.50; The MAC Centre (14th & 15th) Tickets £9.50; Mockingbird Cinema (16th - 19th) Tickets £5.

THX 1138 screening, 18th July, Birmingham. George Lucas pre-*Star-Wars* SF film. At the Electric Cinema. Tickets from £10.50. www.theelectric.co.uk or 0121 643 7879

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF TIME TRAVEL launch, 26th July, Birmingham. Author Kate Mascarenhas launches her time travel murder mystery. Waterstones 6pm. Free but booking advised. At 0121 631 4353 or instore.

SHOCK AND GORE FESTIVAL, ELECTRIC CINEMA, 27th July - 2nd August, Birmingham. Includes *Buffy & Angel* Crossover (27th - limited tickets), A *Prisoner* celebration (28th), **BLADE** (28th), **NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD** (28th), **THE DARK CRYSTAL** (29th), **THE MASQUE OF THE RED DEATH** (31st) & **CARRIE** (2nd). At the Electric Cinema. Tickets from £10.50. www.theelectric.co.uk or 0121 643 7879

AN EVENING WITH CHRISTINA HENRY & SARAH MARIA GRIFFIN, 30th July, Birmingham. An evening with two SFF authors, Christin Henry (**THE MERMAID**) and Sarah Maria Griffin (**SPARE AND FOUND PARTS**). Waterstones 6pm. Free but booking advised. At 0121 631 4353 or instore.

AN EVENING WITH TOMI ADEYEMI, YOMI ADEGOKE & ELIZABETH UVIEBINENE, 7th August, Birmingham. A rare chance to see award-winning fantasy author, Tomi Adeyemi. Waterstones 6pm. £3 (deductible from book purchase on night). At 0121 631 4353 or instore

DISEASE, DEATH AND STATISTICS, 7th August, Birmingham. Dr L Brierley discusses risks of individual mortality, the future of the human race & the role of modern statistical methods. Café Scientifique, Purecraft Bar, B2 5TJ. 7 - 9 pm. Free.

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 £119 at <https://nineworlds.co.uk/>

BRISTOLCON, 27th October, Bristol. Guests of Honour Joanne Hall & Dave Hutchinson. Doubletree Hotel. £25. Details at www.bristolcon.org

FANTASYCON, 19th - 21st October, Chester. The Queen Hotel. Tickets £61.50 + £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 £52. 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

August 10th - **Summer social at Black Eagle (please book)**
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