

THE BIRMINGHAM SCIENCE FICTION GROUP

Number 144

AUGUST 1983

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 Road, Birmingham 3. (Church Street is off Colmore Row.) New members are always welcome. Membership rates are £3.50 per person, or £5.50 for two people at the same address. The treasurer is Margaret Thorpe, 36 Twyford Road, Ward End, Birmingham B8 2NJ.

AUGUST MEETING.

Friday August 19 at 7:45 pm.

The starship 'Ivy-Bush' was on it's way to the planet Novacon, when it was hit by a stray asteroid. Now it's supplies of oxygen and beer are running out fast and there is only one spacesuit -- but the 'Ivy-Bush' carries three passengers. Two must take the long walk in all the best traditions of Cold Equation. Who will be the one who will get the suit and land safely on Novacon? Only you can decide. Phill Probert is the starship captain, safe within the control centre with it's own supply of booze, and oxygen of course. (Besides, he has the gun!) He will chair the debate to decide the fate of the hapless trio. Be there and see grown humanoids die! (No Venusians please.)

Afterwards there will be an auction to raise the cash for the 'Ivy-Bush's MOT. All donations of your unwanted books, fanzines, old spacesuits etc. will be gratefully received.

NEXT MONTH:

SEPTEMBER 16: Bob Shaw is our guest speaker this month. He will talk about his new novel Orbitsville Departure, amongst other things. Not to be missed!

OCTOBER 21: Our guest speaker is SHAUN HUDSON, who writes horror novels under five different names. He will be taking a tongue-in-cheek look at the mechanics of writing commercially successful fiction. His latest novel is The Spawn.

LETTERS

MALCOLM EDWARDS

28 Duckett Road, Harringay, London. N4

"I see the BSFG newsletter here at the office, and was interested to see poor old Peter Weston catching Joseph Nicholas's ire in the latest issue. I bet Peter didn't know he was revealing his attitude to the problems of the third world by enjoying Larry Niven's jacuzzi. Of course, his real offence is to have taken pleasure in a jacuzzi owned by a writer Joseph doesn't approve of, conceivably a somewhat right-wing writer. If it had been Tom Disch's or John Crowley's jacuzzi I doubt we'd have heard much protest. Still, it could have been worse; it could have been Robert Heinlein's jacuzzi."

PETER WESTON

72 Beeches Croft, Erdington, Birmingham.

"Far be it for me to mock the Social Conscience of Joe Nicholas, but he's way-off target this time. Me -- envy Larry Niven? Well, Larry and Marilyn are nice people, but I'd rather lead my own life. At the same time I don't backtrack at all on my admiration for Southern California -- I fell in love with the place during my brief stay!

I think almost any British fan would be similarly impressed. I mean, the climate has a lot to do with it, seems to cause a general relaxation in attitudes. Then there's the higher level of affluence; yes, it really is an eye-opener when you see it for the first time.

All of which has absolutely nothing to do with the problems of the Third World; to suggest otherwise is about as silly as to demand that I should have written about the artificial insemination of cows because I visited Iowa, a farming state!

Not that I'm insensitive to suffering; it's just that I can't do anything about it, and to me it seems better to try and convey my honest, personally-felt reactions rather than voice platitudes. And Joe is using one of the oldest tricks in the book, by pre-empting compassion for the poor and oppressed; anyone who disagrees with him is automatically an unfeeling and capitalist lackey, so goes the theory.

So let's take this thing to its logical limits. Joe, being an utterly Sincere person, has a chance to make his voice heard, in his forthcoming DUFF report (on his visit to Australia). May I hope he'll devote most of his space to a discussion of the social deprivation of the Australian Aborigines, rather than any account of romping in the surf? (After all, 1.1 million people in Birmingham don't have any surf!) And who wants to read about SF fans anyway?"

STEVE GREEN

11 Fox Green Crescent, Acocks Green, Birmingham.

"Couldn't agree more with Paul Vincent's support for a move back in the centre of Birmingham, a subject which I can reveal is under very intense discussion by the Brum Group committee at the moment and should come to fruition in the very near future. As most people who know me will testify, I've long been an advocate of a return to the town centre, a move originally forced upon the then-committee by the then-management of the former Imperial Centre Hotel (and not one we took lightly either), and if such an action brings active fans like Paul into the Group meetings, all the better.

As for Dave Hardy's slightly absurd comments, (a) recent newsletters have both included a marked improvement in sf news coverage and avoided a dubious bias in comment on events not to the editor's taste, something which cannot be said of Eunice's predecessor, though I have no real desire to dredge up old and somewhat pointless arguments; (b) by its chairman's own admission, Novacon 12 was far from perfect and the actions of several committee members (especially regards the art show prizes) far from praiseworthy. I do not snipe, Mr. H., but nor do I applaud blatant self-interest."

BOB SHAW

90 Albert Road, Grappenhall, Warrington, Cheshire.

"I don't understand the objection put forward by Paul Vincent to twinning with Birmingham, AL. If the area was full of the sort of people he describes that would be even more of a reason for showing solidarity with the fan group there. I've been lucky enough to have been there twice, and I can tell you they are one of the best and truly fannish bunches of people I've ever met. Here's an example of the sort of thing they do. Last time I was there it was the week before Thanksgiving, but I had commitments which meant returning to the UK before the occasion came round. Not to be thwarted in their hospitality by mere calendars, the group organised a Thanksgiving dinner a week early so that I could see what it was like. And it was bloody superb! I would be really pleased to see the two Brimings linking up. In my opinion you couldn't make a better choice, even though the idea arose from the coincidence of names."

GRAHAM POOLE

86 Berwood Farm Road, Wyld Green, Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands.

"Thanks for an interesting newsletter, which as Paul Vincent remarked lastish, "is almost approaching the standard of fanzine" and there's nothing wrong with that is there?

GOOD GHOD!
GRA POOLE'S
FIRST LETTER OF
COMMENT IN
SIX YEARS!



I'm sure Paul would be quick to rectify his statement in the July newsletter — the informal BSFG meetings are no longer restricted to an elite of four regulars. The July meeting featured nine or ten of us forcing our attentions upon the informalities; the August meeting featured eight merry souls. Not as many as we would like, mind you, but definitely an improvement. The venue,

in my opinion, isn't exactly a very salubrious one. It doesn't sell real ale, it hasn't got a tremendous atmosphere and it is in a fairly run down area where, unless you've got a car, you've constantly to look over your shoulder. However, it is central and it is convenient for parking and since I'm a newcomer to Brum I can't suggest any better places just yet.

As for the suggestion of moving the Friday group nights back to the city centre, I must admit the present venue is quite adequate as far as I'm concerned, but then I've got my own wheels. I've no idea what public transport is like but I would have thought that anyone with enthusiasm and enough initiative could easily contact a regular attendee and arrange a lift. Even if a non-mobile member manages to reach the venue under his own steam I'm sure he, or she, isn't going to be left stranded at the end of the meeting."

We also heard from DAVE LANGFORD, JOE NICHOLAS AND JOY HIBBERT. Thanks for your letters, keep 'em coming! However, please note that the attitudes expressed in the letters are not necessarily the attitudes of the editor, okay.



News~

The Australian film-maker Byron Kennedy, who produced the box office smashes Mad Max and Mad Max II, has died in a helicopter crash on the outskirts of Sydney.

Following Isaac Asimov's shock decision not to attend the 1984 Eurocon in Brighton, John Brunner is reported eager for a face-to-face discussion at the Baltimore worldcon, at which he is guest of honour. Asimov turned the invitation down (going back on a verbal promise to Brunner) after Doubleday offered him a two-book contract. The latest guest of honour is Philip Jose Farmer.

The Solihull SF group meets at the Red House, Hermitage Road, from 7pm on September 11. The fifth issue of the group's Twilight Zone is just out and includes a humorous article on pipe smoker by author Bob Shaw; sample copies are available for return postage from Steve Green at 11 Fox Green Crescent, Birmingham B27 7SD.

David Niven and Raymond Massey have both died recently. They were co-stars in the fantasy film A Matter Of Life And Death, which told of how, in the mind of a man undergoing a critical brain operation, a court trial took place.

Glenn Wilson is selling off his paperback collection. Sales-lists are available from him at Flat 2, 85 Westley Road, Acocks Green, Birmingham B27.

The Dragon songbook is to be published in 1984. It contains the songs by Anne McCaffrey in her Pern books, which have been set to music by Joanne Forman. The latest Pern novel, Moreta, Dragonlady Of Pern is due out from Del Ray in November, this year.

Fans of Mary Stewart's The Crystal Cave, The Hollow Hill and The Last Enchantment will be pleased to note that a new Arthurian novel is due out now. Morrow books have published Ms. Stewart's The Wicked Day, which tells of Mordred's role in the fall of Camelot. A calendar by Greg Hildebrandt, based on her books, will be issued for 1984.

FILM NEWS:

The finishing touches are currently being added to THE TWILIGHT ZONE, the cinema incarnation of the late Rod Stirling's justifiably applauded sf series. Four directors are involved; John Landis of American Werewolf In London, Joe Dante of The Howling, George Miller of the Mad Max series and Stephen Spielberg whose first assignment as a tv director was the pilot episode of THE TWILIGHT ZONE. Tragically, the actor Vic Morrow and two children were killed in a helicopter smash during the filming of Landis' segment, but the young co-producer (with Spielberg) is optimistic about the film's reception: "The aim of the movie is to recapture the atmosphere of eeriness and imagination the show so successfully created". TWILIGHT ZONE dealt with big theme --

love, hate, ambition, war, peace, fear and racism. The film is a homage to both the show and Rod Stirling.

Christopher Lambert and Andie MacDowell take the lead roles in Hugh Hudson's forthcoming GRAYSTOKE: THE LEGEND OF TARZAN, LORD OF THE APES, which opens later this year. Hudson, whose American credibility was established with CHARIOTS OF FIRE, appears to be keeping unusually faithful to the Burroughs novels, in contrast to such drivel as the recent Bo Derek vehicle.

Phil Kaufman will direct THE RIGHT STUFF, based on Tom Wolfe's novel on the early days of NASA. Kaufman's films include INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS (1978).

On release this summer will be WAR GAMES, a nuclear thriller which could well be this year's ET. A smash at Cannes, the film centres on a seventeen years-old computer buff who accidentally taps into the NATO defence system and unwittingly moves the world closer and closer to Armageddon.

APA-B NEWS

Editorial address: CATHRYN EASTHOPE.
113 Abbey Road,
Erdington.
Birmingham B23 7QQ.

Before I was 'asked' to do this job I'd always disliked apas as they just seemed to be inward-looking self congratulation societies which took fans away from the wider world of fan-publishing, and hid them away from the gaze of outsiders never to be seen again (at least, not by daylight).

Now though, at least as far as two apas in particular are concerned, I've changed my mind slightly because in all the time I've been a member of the Brum Group I've never seen more than two fanzines being produced at any one time from within the group.

Last month's mailing contained seventeen contributions!

Compared with past apathy is's absolutely staggering. I'd go so far as to say that seventeen fanzines produced simultaneously by different people in one fan group must be a record in British fandom. I'd hazard a guess and say that I very much doubt that we'd be producing seventeen fanzines were it not for the apa. Judging by the response there must have been an awful lot of people who would have liked to produce a fanzine, but who were perhaps put off by what might seem to be insurmountable obstacles. Fanzine fandom can sometimes seem a very daunting place, and if you've seen other people's first efforts torn into shreds it can dampen your enthusiasm.

This is why an apa such as ours is so useful. Most of

us know each other and you don't have (immediately) to put a lot of effort into building up an external mailing list if you don't want to. You can still publish and get a response, response, even if only in the form of mailing comments. I'd hope that eventually though, you would start to send your fanzine out into the great big world to seek it's fortune, since there's nothing nicer than to receive lotsa locs in the morning post. It's the sheer unpredictability of it that makes it such fun. You may get unsolicited fanzines, or letters from people requesting copies, or locs from abroad, and meeting your correspondents makes conventions far more fun than if you just went on your own. Many people have been put off conventions for ever by having no-one to talk to for the whole weekend. (Perhaps apa-B will promote convention-going as well!)

If you haven't yet produced your issue, remember that you'll be very welcome whatever the style or content of your fanzine is. Any means of reproduction you can lay your hands on (even carbon copies!) is fine, as long as you can produce twenty-five copies! Also remember that help is usually available with duplicating from one or other of the apa members. (If you would be willing to help people get their fanzines off the ground in this way perhaps you could let me know.)

The reason I want to keep apa rules to a minimum is bound up with this idea of offering minimum resistance to aspiring faneditors. To steal the title of Janice Maule's fanzine, it's really the Shallow End of fan publishing. We're performing the same sort of function as Janice's fanzine, in encouraging people to enter the microcosm of fanzine publishing and writing with minimal initial effort, and the hope that enthusiasm will thereby flourish.

(If you'd like to see a copy of Janice's fanzine, I'm sure she'd be pleased to send you one in exchange for trade (for your fanzine) or a subsequent letter of comment. Her address is; JANICE MAULE, Shallow End, 5 Beaconsfield Road, New Malden, Surrey KT3 3HY.)

And now a few practical points about the conduct of the collating session.

Once again we had a pretty chaotic time and the heat, combined with a mad scramble for mailings, my inability to keep control (no-one seemed to pay much attention to my pleas for order), and one or two ratty people shouting at me made me slightly fed up with the whole thing at one point. I had to go and sit on the stairs to recover as I was a little upset over everything and was on the verge of resigning. I'm glad now that I didn't do anything like that though, as I quite enjoy being involved in the apa as OE, and if only we could do things in an ordered way, I'm sure the meeting wouldn't be spoilt for me as it was last time.

I've talked to Darroll Pardoe about this (he very kindly helped with the collation last time when things started to get too much for me), and we've originated the following system. Please adhere to it strictly, as last time with the scramble I had absolutely no idea of who had taken a mailing and who needed one posting afterwards.

First of all, place your pile of 25 fanzines on the table in the same way as before. Now stand away, whilst chairs are

arranged so that a passage alongside the table is created. At the end of the row of fanzines will be placed a sheet of paper and a pen. The idea is to go along the piles of fanzines, picking up one of each and at the end, signing your name to say you've taken them. I'd be grateful if only one person went along the row at any one time. Even with this system it won't take long to distribute the mailing, and for once I'll have an idea of what is going on so please do follow this simple procedure.

Finally, it's a terrific bind to have to post out mailings and also quite expensive (the last one cost 33p to send each envelope by second class mail), and so if at all possible, please be at the meeting to collect yours in person. Of course if you live outside Birmingham, then that's a different matter, but this isn't really a postal apa and it would be nice if you could be there. Thanks.

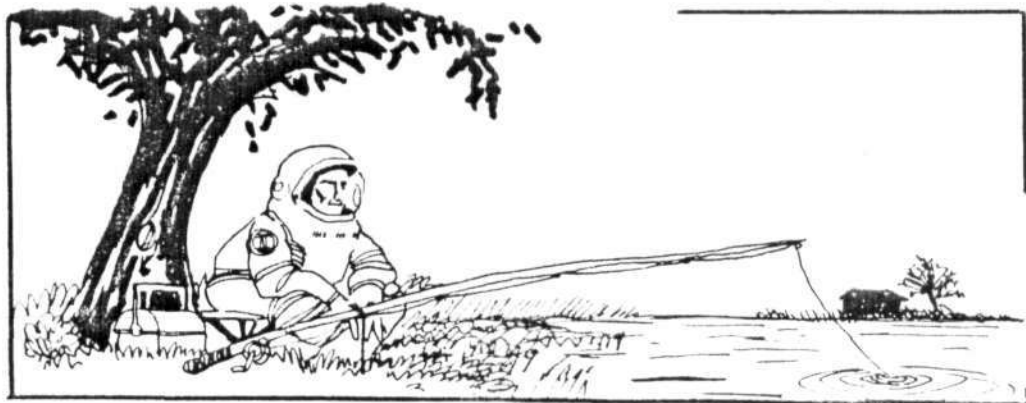
And that's all really, except to say that you can always show your deep appreciation to me for doing such a great job with the apa by buying me a drink at the meeting. (Hint.) I promise I won't refuse!

Love,
CATH.

Andromeda Top ten

1. Dr. Who: Four to Doomsday by Terence Dicks. (Star)
2. Helliconia Spring by Brian Aldiss. (Granada)
3. Psion by Joan Vinge. (Futura)
4. Return of the Jedi Storybook by Joan Vinge. (Futura)
5. Superman Three by William Kotzwinkle. (Arrow)
6. Undersea by Paul Hazel. (Sphere)
7. The Many Coloured Land by Julian May. (Pan)
8. Nor Crystal Tears by Alan Dean Foster. (NEL)
9. Downbelow Station by C. J. Cherryh. (Methuen)
10. Captive Universe by Harry Harrison. (Sphere)

Andromeda bookshop is at 84 Suffolk Street, Birmingham.



chairman's report

I'll keep it mercifully brief this time; only I've recently returned from the Basildon BECCON, and I'm tremendously pleased at the changed awareness of the Birmingham group, so far as the rest of fandom is concerned.

What struck me was the way in which several people, quite spontaneously, commented on our activities, almostadmiringly, is probably not too strong a word. They were really impressed at the evidence of life and activity during the last few months; notably because of the apa, but also thanks to reports of meetings and so on, which have filtered out through various means.

It's funny really, how little has actually changed; I mean, we're essentially the same people as we were a year ago, and yet perceptions of us have changed so much. Where they were saying "moribund", and "...a dying local group", we now have fans like Simon Polley, of the Leeds Group, confiding that they hoped to start an organised programme of meetings like ours. Or Judith Hanna (London), commenting that "you seem to have some very active people in Birmingham".

Of course, some of our members really distinguished themselves at BECCO . Martin Tudor and Paul Vincent, in particular, seemed to be everywhere, distribution fanzines, commissioning articles, and generally planning to take over the world. And Chris Suslowicz, too, was received extremely well with his work on the grand fireworks display, and sundry other bits of technical wizardry.

I think the apa has been the decisive influence though, and by a nice piece of timing we seem to have started this at just the right time. Things go in cycles, in fandom, and after a long arid spell we seem nationally to be moving into a fanzine-orientated phase; certainly almost everyone at BECCON seemed to be producing, or writing for a fanzine of some sort or other, and we are relating smoothly and naturally into this new, heightened level of activity. Eunice, Steve Green, Cath Easthope seemed to be well-known for their fanzine titles already.

I must say, it's all very encouraging. Now, if I can get around to writing something for my own fanzine, I might just get into the next apa mailing. Mustn't let the side down.....

PETER WESTON.

GROUP NEWS

THE VISUAL LIBRARY.

After many months of debate, the Group committee has unanimously decided to wind-up the Group's visual library. The reasons are many, but primarily involve lack of use, and recent changes in circumstance that have made it difficult to continue with present arrangements. In particular, Rog Peyton has strongly advised the termination of the project, and the committee is now making plans to dispose of any of the assets remaining. Should members have any comments they are urged to write in immediately; similarly, they should advise whether they are interested in acquiring any material from the library.

SPECIAL NEWS!! THE BRUM GROUP IS BACK IN TOWN!

Starting with the November meeting, the Group's regular meetings will in future be held once more at the Imperial Hotel, Temple Street, in the centre of the city. This move has been made in response to many requests, from members who have had difficulty in getting to the Ivy Bush venue. In many ways it will be a shame to leave our comfortable, friendly home, but this will also give the Group room to expand, and we think the new location will prove very successful. A grateful "thank you" is extended to our hosts for the past five years, Ray and Carol Bradbury.

THE CHRISTMAS PARTY.

Our Summer Special having been successfully concluded, (see report elsewhere) we're now looking forward to our other social highlight of the year, which will be the Christmas Party. Plans this year are already quite advanced -- and quite elaborate! There will be a sit-down meal (not the usual turkey-and-chips), with special guests Bob and Sadie Shaw, and a varied programme of events and entertainments. To say more would be to give too much away; suffice to say there will be 50 tickets only, on sale in November, and we do urge you not to miss this year's event.

Becccon 83

BECCON: 29 of July to 31 of July.
Guest-of-honour -- Ken Bulmer.

Despite being held in the Basildon Court, a hotel situated in the deepest, darkest depths of Essex -- miles from civilisation, this proved to be a fantastic convention. And despite the fact that I attended only one programmed item and didn't so much as set foot in the con hall, the Evil Insatiable Eunice still insists that I write this report.

Having battled bravely against the usual opposition from my employers -- the Post Office, and my mode of 'transport' -- British Rail, I eventually arrived at the con bar about 11pm. Here I encountered not only Ken "call me neo" Lake and Steve "but Joe, Paul can do it with one hand" Mowbray, but also the BaD "by name and nature" group (Bolton and Distruct) who were down in force. Ken was bemoaning the fact that here he was, a neo-fan, at his first convention -- and people refused to ignore him or snub him. While the BaD group discussed S&M fanzines and killing rodents!

During the course of the evening, Pete "I'm the leader of this gang" Weston retired early -- only to be awoken by four drunken fans whose names I temporarily forget -- at some ungodly hour, to discuss convention politics whilst drinking Paul "doesn't Steve Green remind you of Gimlet the Dwarf?" Vincent's beautiful brandy.....

The following morning arrives (as they are wont to do) and the day speeds by. Booze is purchased at a distant super-market (for consumption at the customary Brum Group Room Party) and transported with the aid of Trufan Martin "it's got electric windows as well" Hoare and Mike "gowan -- buy a kite" Molloy and soon that time arrives which is dreaded by almost all con-goers -- it is necessary to find somewhere to EAT. Despite the hostility of a certain Chinese restaurant, this difficult, and often dangerous task is eventually accomplished in a friendly Indian restaurant and we are back to the hotel in time for..... Armageddon. Actually this was listed on the programme as a mere 'firework display' and was perpetrated by the "only slightly insane" members of Los Alamos Fandom -- it proved an interesting introduction to the BSFG room party. This the (naturally) only important event of the con took place in the room of Chris "anyway it was fifteen inches.." Suslowicz and Paul "bullwhips are a bit expensive Elda, wouldn't you prefer a riding crop..." Vincent. (The latter, incidently, was seen in close 'conversation' with a certain reknowned member of Kent fandom -- I'm sorry but I can't disclose more as Paul is six inches taller and two stone heavier than I am.....)

Sunday sped by as swiftly as the rest of the con and soon it was time for me to leave. Unfortunately I'd left my jacket with my rail pass and ticket in it, in my now vacated room and as the off-duty housekeeper now had possession of it, I was forced to spend the rest of the night

at the hotel instead of retuning to work. Oh dear, never mind. The last night pool party proved to be fun (that's pool on a table, not with water) as the hotel kindly left the juke box and the necessary lights on all night. Paul's penlighter foiled fandom's finest brain (well Joe Nicholas anyway) while Chris popped down to buy fifteen pints of beer to aid a flagging room party, eventually though, morning arrived (again!) and I caught the 8.25 back to London..... and straight to work, yawn!

MARTIN "no I'm not Paul Vincent" TUDOR.

Bar-b-Que

"OFF WE GO, INTO THE WILD BLUE MALVERNS..."

Out of the east they came; Pete 'The Kid' Weston and his sidekick Suslowicz. They came in a Wells Fargo twenty-nine seater coach, guarding the booze. We were rounded up at the OK-Grand Hotel just before sunset and with a crack of a whip (well, the change of a gear lever) we were off -- to the Malverns.

The harsh desert of motorway service stations and contra-flows we ignored as people asked 'anyone seen the Big Bus?', 'where's da booze?'. However, we knew better than to tempt the wrath of 'the Kid' Weston. We were going into engine country. That's right, only the sound of the engine could be heard as the coach strained itself to climb the Malvern Hills. Soon after sunset, the Kid ordered the driver to stop and make camp (and set up the bar-b-que). Avoiding thoughts of singing "we're rideing along on a FTL light-ship, with doppler radiance" (to the tune of that well-known Scout gang show song) we watched Pete 'the Kid' go through the ancient ritual of all barbeques -- stamping his feet and storming around the campsite shouting "bloody fire won't start and where's the matches?!" All of this amazed our Swedish guests, who were here trying to understand us. However, Suslowicz came through and cast a spell with a cigarette lighter and the fire was alight.

Smoke soon belched from the fire as members took turns at contacting other barbeques and fanned the fire. This was all too much for some folk though, who stormed off to a local pub. When they were gone we cracked open the booze and started cooking the eats! The food was a combination of sausages and beefburgers, which you could have cooked in a various number of ways -- charcoaled, carbonised, or just bloody well burned through! Nonetheless, we ate the food with relish after a long day. We also ate it with salad and coleslaw.

Darkness was soon upon us and so Mike Millward summoned up the dark satanic powers of his car and switched his head-lights on so we could see what we were eating. After getting over the shock, we settled down to the time-honoured task with all fans -- drinking. Time passed quickly for us.

n the Malverns and soon enough all the food was eaten and all the booze drunk. Then there came the burning question of the day, "how the hell do we put the fire out?" The solution was obvious. The men had no need to get off the bus at a service station on the way home! Well, in the blink of a rattlesnake's eye, we were off home. Back on the trail of the M5. It was a good time it was. I am at a loss for words, as I left my dictionary up the Malverns. Seriously though, with my hand behind my back, held there by Pete 'the Kid', it was a very good time. I hope we will have another barbeque next year.

PHILL 'hoppalong' PROBERT.

Reviews

.....well, one anyway!

UNDERSEA by Paul Hazel, Sphere £1.69, 221 pp.

After picking up this volume with high hopes, I cannot deny the feeling of extreme dissapointment I felt after wading through 221 pages of a very pedestrian novel. Highlights in this book are, unfortunately, very few and far between. I say unfortunately because the characterisation and especially some of the descriptive passages, deserve better. In places the story-line is downright confusing. Often, fantasy novels use somewhat outlandish names for characters, but three variations of the hero's name within a couple of chapters is a bit excessive. The setting of certain passages within the framework of the novel also confuses. Is the hero recalling things from memory, or dreaming of what is to come? The most annoying to me, occured when one of the supporting characters is effected by events and is unsure of what has happened, the hero comments as if to the reader, "Nor did I tell him then the thing he had lost". The trouble here being nobody tells the reader what has been lost, nor was it possible to work it out from the rest of the book. Admittedly, this is only the second volume of the FINNBRANCH trilogy, perhaps the third, Winterking, will clear up some of the glaring anomalies. I hope so, the storyline and the Celtic Mythos which alledgedly supply the background to this book deserve better.

Reviewed by GEOFF KEMP.



NOVAACON

THIRTEEN

Art Show

Good news: starting with this year's Novacon, you won't have to descend into the underworld of the Angus to get to the artshow. We're relocating it in the three rooms next to the lifts, on the main con floor. (Where the committee room used to be.) These rooms are arranged in an alcove so that security can still be maintained by one person. There will be no segregation of professionals and amateurs into different rooms, so everyone will get an equal chance to be seen. I hope to have an artshow jam session, the products of which can be sold for charity.

Over the past few Novacons it has become apparant that there is no way that the art action can auction all of the art in the time available. Usually only about half to a third of the art is auctioned. What I propose, is that this year the artists may, only if they wish to do so, put a 'cash price' on their work, and there will be someone (trustworthy) on hand to collect the cash if people want to buy (subject to the 10% commission rate). There will still be an art action. "But wait" I hear you cry, "that will mean that all the best pieces will be sold early and we won't see them on display". Well, there will be a proviso imposed on the buyer that he/she pays his/her cash before Sunday morning and (unless he is leaving early) does not take it down until Sunday morning. The buyer will also be given a detailed receipt and will not be allowed to take any work on Sunday unless he can produce this receipt. If art with a 'cash price' on it is not sold then it will go into the auction as normal, the 'cash price' being taken as a reserve price.

All this means that (i) artists have a better chance of selling artwork and (ii) the artshow still stays intact until Sunday. The forms for artists will be sent out with PR3.

DAVE HADEN.



Last Month

There were two pleasant surprises about the July meeting. First, Pete Lyon's talent for interweaving light-hearted autobiography with genuinely illuminating discussion of the techniques utilized in his work. Second, that what I would have considered (with regret) much less of a draw than, say, an author like Barry Barley, in fact turned out to be one of the most successful meetings this year. (Which must have come as a large relief for Phill Probert, whose warped imagination spawned the suggestion in the first place.) An excellent evening, made even more memorable by Pete's justified sending-up of the group's current court jester.

STEVE GREEN.

End bits.....

Okay, that's it for another month. Thank you very much to everyone who responded to my nagging and came up with some excellent contributions to this issue. Artwork is by Matt Brooker, Dave Hardy and John Dell. Please hand in all contributions for the next issue by the deadline -- I will not print any late entries. I think it's time I put my foot down about that. Keep your letters coming, they're very welcome.

DEADLINE: MONDAY SEPTEMBER 5



COMING SOON

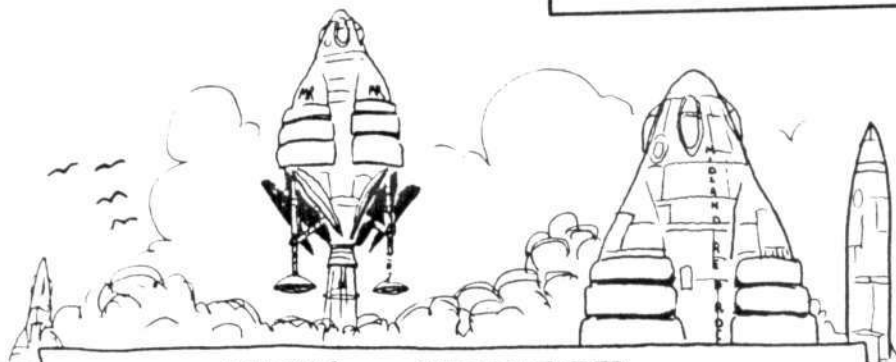


IT'S
FATAL...

...BUT
FUN!

DOUBLE CROSS

BY MATT BROOKER



NEW STREET REPORT

