

Birmingham Science Fiction Group

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



NEWSLETTER 184

THE BSGF MEETS ON THE
THIRD FRIDAY OF EACH MONTH
MONTH IN THE LADBROKE
INTERNATIONAL HOTEL
NEW STREET BIRMINGHAM.
DETAILS OF THIS MONTH'S
MEETING ARE GIVEN BELOW
(FOR DIRECTIONS TO THE
HOTEL SEE LAST MONTH'S
NEWSLETTER PAGE 2).
MEMBERSHIP OF THE GROUP
COSTS A MERE £5.50 PER
YEAR FOR ONE PERSON
(£8.00 FOR TWO PEOPLE
AT THE SAME ADDRESS).
ALL CHEQUES AND POSTAL
ORDERS PAYABLE TO BSGF
AND SENT TO TREASURER
CHRIS CHIVERS AT 51,
BOUNDARY ROAD, STREETLY,
SUTTON COLDFIELD, WEST
MIDLANDS.

The meeting will start at 8.00pm prompt
and is the AGM.

The meeting will start with a presentation
of a £200 cheque to the NSPCC by the
Chairman of Fifteencon on behalf of the
group.

As you can see from the Agenda for the
AGM on page 4, that the Committee have
not yet received nominations for the
posts of Secretary and Publicity Officer,
if you feel that you could do either
of these jobs (and do it well), then
find yourself a proposer (or if that's
not possible ask one of the Committee
for help) and notify the Legal Officer-
Tim Stannard BEFORE the start of the
meeting.

After the AGM there will as usual be

A GRAND AUCTION

Now we would like you to bring along
any books, magazines, posters or SF
trivia you no longer want, and Rog will
auction it.

This newsletter was produced by Carol
and Tony Morton 45, Grosvenor Way,
Quarry Bank, Brierley Hill, W. Mids.
DEADLINE for next month's newsletter
5th February.

INCREASE IN SUBS

Our Treasurer has recommended and the committee has approved an increase in subscriptions. Therefore, as from January 1st the new membership sub will be £5.50 per person or £8.00 per couple at the same address. It should be noted that this is an increase of 50p only and is the first increase for over three years.

This increase is NOT because of our move to the Ladbroke. Money taken on the door at each meeting covers us for the small increase in room hire. The increase is to cover the cost of newsletter production, postage, advertising and, most importantly, speaker's expenses.

It has become increasingly obvious that the Group gets the best support from the membership when we have BIG NAME guest speakers. Obviously we can't have a BIG NAME every month and we need to have lesser-known authors, publishers, scientists, etc., in order to give variety. But, guest speakers cost the Group a lot of money. Although we've never been charged a fee by a speaker, most expect (quite rightly) to be refunded for travelling and overnight stay. It has also been usual for the Group to pay for an evening meal after the meeting.

We have managed to reduce these costs as much as possible by agreeing special reduced rates for overnight stay at the Ladbroke Hotel, by sharing costs with ANDROMEDA BOOKSHOP when authors are here for a signing and occasionally getting publishers to pay costs from their promotion budget.

To continue to have these guest speakers we have to increase the subscription.

Clive Barker has sold his next two books to Grafton for £250,000 EACH!! This means that Grafton need to sell 500,000 copies in the UK alone to break even.

Mythago Wood has been released by talking books for the blind, and by strange coincidence it was Andromeda's best seller in 1986.

The Committee were highly amused to read the following newspaper article.

Officers were short-served

A barmaid who gave short measure drinks and the licensee of Birmingham's New Imperial Hotel were ordered to pay more than £900 between them by city magistrates.....

Now for the good news tis rumoured that the BBC are going to re-run Blake's Seven in April right from the start of series one. Anyone got some spare videos...?

DAVID BRIN SIGNING SESSION.

There will be a signing session by David Brin to sign copies of The Postman at Andromeda on 17th January 1987 at 12 noon.

THE CHRISTMAS PARTY

The current committee are unanimous in their opinion that there shouldn't be any more Christmas parties after the pathetic support given this year. The committee originally wanted a sit-down meal which we considered would be better value than a buffet. In the summer the membership outvoted the committee after certain members said they knew of places where a good-value buffet could be obtained. Those members not only never came back to the committee with the prices and menus they'd promised but then had the bad manners not to attend the Christmas Party they'd voted for!

As it happened, the committee were let down badly by the Ladbroke. We are still arguing about the cost and we do promise a partial refund to all those who paid for tickets. Thank you to those members who had the integrity to abide by a majority decision, even though they would have preferred a sit-down meal.

Quiz Results

Last month - it being christmas - we had two quizzes the results and answers are below.

In A Further Adventure of Captain Red Flame, a sort of mathematical puzzle by Stan Eling; we were asked to discover what was unique about the number 9,549,176,320. Well, the Digits it seems are in alphabetical order!

In the crossword-type quiz you were asked

1. "Chtorran" Hero - McCarthy.
2. Cooper's Walker - Cloud.
3. Tarod's Brother?- Yandros.
4. Jenny Waynest's Lord and lover - Aversin.
5. Bester's Tiger's Destination - The Stars.
6. Biggle's musical instruments - Trumpets.
7. Gramayre's Warlock - Gallowglass.

The name of the character spelled out was RDaneel, a robot
This Character featured in The Caves of Steel, The Naked Sun, The Robots of Dawn and Robots and Empire. And of course Isaac Asimov wrote them.

The winner was...wait for it,Rog Peyton.(Well we did say the first person to come to us with the answer, and he was infact the only person to come to us).



ANDROMEDA'S TOP TEN FOR DECEMBER.

1. Dr Who - Seeds of Death by Terence Dicks.
2. Damnation Game by Clive Barker.
3. Artifact by Greg Benford.
4. Wizards and Warriors by Hugh Cook.
5. The Vampire Lestat by Anne Rice.
6. The Light Fantastic by Terry Pratchett.
- 7-. Silverthorn by Raymond E. Feist.
- 7-. Golem in the Gears by Piers Anthony.
- 9-. Anthontology by Piers Anthony.
- 9-. Colour of Magic by Terry Pratchett.

THE BIRMINGHAM SCIENCE FICTION GROUP
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - 16th JANUARY 1987

AGENDA

Meeting to be chaired by Tim Stannard - Group Legal Officer.

1. Group Chairman's opening remarks.
2. Treasurer's Report.
3. Publicity Officer's Report.
4. Novacon 16 Chairman's Report.
5. Adoption of Reports (items 2 to 4 above
(Proposer and Seconder required for each item)
6. The 1986 Committee will stand down
7. Election of Group Chairman. (Dave Hardy stands for election)
(proposed by Rog Peyton)
8. Election of Committee members:-
 - a) Secretary (No nomination received)
 - b) Treasurer (Chris Chivers stands for re-election)
 - c) Newsletter Editor (Tony Morton stands for election -
proposed by Bernie Evans)
 - d) Publicity Officer (No nomination received)
 - e) Ordinary Committee Members (2) (Carol Morton - proposed by
Tony Morton - 1 vacancy)
9. Confirmation of Novacon 17 Chairman (Bernie Evans has been appointed
to this post by the 1986 Committee).
10. Appointment of Legal Officer.
11. Any other buidness
12. Vote of thanks to our presidents
13. The 1987 Annual General Meeting will be concluded.

STANDING ORDERS FOR GENERAL MEETING OF THE
BIRMINGHAM SCIENCE FICTION GROUP

1. THE MEETING SHALL BE CHAIRED BY THE LEGAL OFFICER OR HIS APPOINTED DEPUTY.
2. THE WORD CHAIRMAN IN THESE STANDING ORDERS SHALL REFER TO THE CHAIRMAN OF THE MEETING, NOT THE CHAIRMAN OF THE GROUP.
3. ALL MOTIONS SHALL HAVE SPEECHES FOR AND AGAINST UNTIL IT IS DEEMED BY THE CHAIRMAN THAT THERE HAS BEEN PROPER DEBATE, AT WHICH TIME THERE SHALL BE A VOTE OF MEMBERS PRESENT.
4. AN AMENDMENT TO A MOTION SHOULD BE PROPOSED BEFORE THE SPEECHES ON THE MOTION CONCERNED BUT MAY BE PROPOSED ANYTIME BEFORE THE VOTE AT THE DISCRETION OF THE CHAIRMAN. THERE WILL BE ONE SPEECH FOR THE AMENDMENT AND ONE SPEECH AGAINST, FOLLOWED BY A VOTE OF THE MEMBERS PRESENT ON THE ACCEPTANCE OF THE AMENDMENT INTO THE MOTION.
5. ALL CANDIDATES FOR COMMITTEE POSTS SHALL HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY OF ADDRESSING THE MEETING BEFORE A VOTE IS TAKEN, AT THE DISCRETION OF THE CHAIRMAN.
6. QUESTIONS MAY BE DIRECTED TO THE SPEAKER AT THE END OF HIS SPEECH AT THE DISCRETION OF THE CHAIRMAN, THROUGH THE CHAIR.
7. THE CHAIRMAN MAY RULE THE MEETING CLOSED AT ANY TIME, AT HIS DISCRETION. ANY BUSINESS REMAINING WILL BE DEFERRED TO THE NEXT APPROPRIATE MEETING, THE DATE OF WHICH TO BE ARRANGED BY THE COMMITTEE.
8. A CHALLENGE TO A RULING OF THE CHAIRMAN MAY BE MADE BY ANY MEMBER AND WILL TAKE PRECEDENCE OVER ALL OTHER BUSINESS. THERE WILL BE ONE SPEECH FOR THE RULING BY THE CHAIRMAN, AND ONE AGAINST BY THE CHALLENGER, FOLLOWED BY A VOTE OF MEMBERS PRESENT.
9. THE CHAIRMAN MAY PLACE A TIME LIMIT ON ANY SPEECHES, INCLUDING THOSE BY NOMINATED CANDIDATES.
10. THE ORDER OF PRECEDENCE OF MOTIONS IS:-
 - 1) A CHALLENGE TO A RULING OF THE CHAIRMAN.
 - 2) AMENDMENT TO A MOTION.
 - 3) THE BUSINESS IN HAND.

THE BIRMINGHAM SCIENCE FICTION GROUP

CONSTITUTION

(as approved by the Annual General Meeting of 21 January 1983 and amended at the ExtraOrdinary General Meeting of 11 March 1983).

- 1 THE NAME of the society is to be THE BIRMINGHAM SCIENCE FICTION GROUP, (hereinafter called 'the Group').
- 2 THE AIMS of the Group will be to further the interests, knowledge and social activities of readers of Science Fiction, and the promotion, encouragement and participation in writing, publishing and producing books, magazines, films and any other projects connected with Science Fiction, and in particular the management of a yearly convention known as 'Novacon'.
- 3 THE GROUP will consist of the elected Committee, the Chairman of Novacon, the Legal Officer and the Ordinary Members. The Committee will consist of the Chairman, the Treasurer, the Secretary, the Publicity and Recruitment Officer, the Newsletter Editor, and not more than two Ordinary Committee Members, who shall be elected at the AGM. The Chairman of Novacon, appointed by the Committee, will automatically be a member of the Committee for the year in which his convention falls. The Legal Officer shall be a supernumerary member of the Committee, who shall appoint him.
- 4 THE OFFICE of Treasurer and Secretary may be held by one member of the Group, at the Committee's discretion.
- 5 THE COMMITTEE will be the governing body of the Group and will have full power:-
 - (a) To manage and control the finances of the Group.
 - (b) To suspend any officer or member of the Group, upon such cause being shown as they may deem sufficient.
 - (c) To fill such vacancies as may occur.
 - (d) To manage the Novacon Convention.
- 6 THE WHOLE COMMITTEE stands down at the AGM and can stand for re-election.
- 7 RESIGNATIONS from the Committee must be made in writing to, and submitted for acceptance at the next Committee Meeting by the Treasurer.
- 8 A QUORUM of the Committee shall be four (4) members.
- 9 A FINANCIAL YEAR of the Group will commence on 1st January. Membership will run for 12 months from the date on which payment of subscription is due. The amount of the subscription will be reviewed at each AGM.
- 10 CHEQUES drawn on the Group account must be signed by the Treasurer and by one of two other appointed officers of the Committee.
- 11 THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of the Group will be held in January each year.
- 12 THERE WILL BE at least one Committee Meeting per quarter.
- 13 THERE WILL BE one ordinary meeting of the Group per month, at the Committee's discretion.
- 14 THE COMMITTEE can convene an ExtraOrdinary General Meeting at any time with a minimum of 14 days notice.
- 15 ANY MEMBER can call an ExtraOrdinary General Meeting at any time when so petitioned by at least one-third of the total paid-up membership of the Group, and at such EGM there must be a quorum of at least 15 members in addition to the Committee.
- 16 AMENDMENTS to the Constitution shall only be made at the AGM or at an EGM, and a member calling such EGM shall give 21 days notice in writing to the Committee of the suggested amendment.
- 17 THE CHAIRMAN of the Group shall have served on the Committee of the Group for at least one full year.
- 18 Acceptance of these rules is a condition of membership of the Group.

Typed and issued, January 1987

BOOK REVIEWS...

BEHOLD THE MAN by Michael Morcock, Grafton, £2.50, 157 pages. Reviewed by Tony Morton.

Re-issue of the 60's classic and Nebula winning novel and one of my favourites. The ingenious storyline and plot has Karl Glogauer transported through time to find if an 'historic event' actually occurred, but ends by him becoming trapped in the era and event he seeks. Recommended reading if you haven't already.

DIMENSION OF MIRACLES. by Robert Shackley, Grafton, £2.50, 188 pages, reviewed by Tony Morton.

Another Grafton classic re-issue - and another favorite. I love the humour in this novel which finds our hero (?) Carmody transported through the galaxy to collect a prize in the Intergalactic Sweepstakes and then finds he doesn't know how to get back! This leads to some tremendous escapades through uncharted space as he tries to get home before something catches up with him (and eats him). If you like Douglas Adams then read this and see where the galaxy is really at! A must to read.

ROBOTS AND EMPIRE. by Isaac Asimov, Panther, £2.95, 508 pages, reviewed by Tony Morton.

Asimov writing a love story? Some interesting ideas float through this (rather long) novel in which old favourites Daneel, Giskard and Gladia resume the story 160 years after the death of Elijah Bailey. This time the robots take the story by long dialogue interplays which conclude with two results- a new law of robotics (Zeroth Law) and laws of humanities (Psychohistory?) is Asimov trying to tie his novels together? Will it be revealed that in fact all his books are one series released separately over 50 years? Why try to write ideas from the Foundation Trilogy (I don't count Foundation's Edge) into this separate series? Confused - well so was I. In itself, this novel is not bad (though slow in places) and doesn't end in the expected way. If you are a fan obviously one for you, if not I suggest you borrow it from a fan before deciding to buy it.

VOYAGE TO THE CITY OF THE DEAD by Alan Dean Foster, NEL, £2.25, 243 pages reviewed by Carol Morton.

This is not one of Foster's SPELLSINGER novels but an intriguing tale of exploration and discovery on an alien planet. Lyra and Etienne Redowl have been waiting for months for permission from the native government to explore upriver. Permission was not forthcoming until a dying native approached one of the village councils with a tale of a "City of the Dead" upriver where there is untold wealth. The council then agrees to the Redowl's journey as long as they take two native guides. What follows is a tale of adventure and betrayal as they follow the river to its source. This is a nice change from Foster's Spell singer novels and in fact the only fault I can find is that the ending seems to be rushed and contrived.

A CLOSER LOOK At The Art Techniques of PATRICK WOODROFFE.
Paper Tiger, £7.95, 127 pages. Reviewed by Dave Hardy.

Patrick Woodroffe was included in Paper Tiger's GUIDE TO FANTASY ART TECHNIQUES, but this is a vastly more detailed book, written by the artist himself. Frankly, I'm amazed that any artist would want to give away so many of his hard-won secrets (unless he is about to retire, and doesn't need them any more!). In the 30-odd years since I illustrated my first book, I have developed several techniques: I taught myself to use the airbrush, I've used marbling, and I've experimented with combining photography with artwork, for example. But when anyone asked me "How do you do that?" I would usually wink and change the subject...

Well, it's all here. Materials, paints, techniques, with sections on Drawing, Etching, Mixed Media, Oils, and Tomographs. The latter are the very interesting painted cut-outs, photographed against a 'real' background, which Patrick developed in the late 70s, and which feature in his book HALLELUJAH ANYWAY. His extremely detailed and useful text is complemented by numerous illustrations of his sketches, drawings, paintings, and even materials. These, I would think, make the book of interest even to the non-artist; to the young artist just starting out, it must be a goldmine of information, and should save years of trial and error - and a lot of expense and frustration.

PASSING FOR HUMAN by Jody Scott, The Women's Press, £2.50, Reviewed by Donald Thompson.

Around a cliched plot - aliens visiting Earth incognito for different reasons Jody Scott has written a highly entertaining novel. Of the two groups one is an anthropological mission sent to decide on the collective sanity of Homo Sapiens; failure to obtain a positive judgement will result in the disintegration of all members of the species. The other is a freelance criminal bidding for world domination and collecting a few (thousand) specimens/slaves for torture and other fun games to pass the time. The two sides clash of course, but the whole affair has more to do with slapstick and custard pies in the face rather than Rambo or Smiley. It also has enough death and destruction to supply Death Wish IV and Rambo III whilst not losing its fast, slightly giggly 'golly gee what fun', tone. It also includes a transvestite Abraham Lincoln clone, a female protagonist whose speech patterns are largely muddled on the 'ripping yarns'/Bunty tradition, and an underlying seriousness that only twice breaks the surface. Its rather as if STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND were re-written as a cross between THE HITCH-HIKERS GUIDE and THE ROCKY HORROR PICTURE SHOW. Highly recommended.

Thankyous this month go to :-

Rog Peyton, for his articles.

Dave Hardy and Donald Thompson for their reviews.

Tim Stannard for letting us use his photocopier to print this.

And a final big thankyou to all those who have helped us over the year with reviews, articles, artwork and advice.