

# BRUM GROUP NEWS

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE

## BIRMINGHAM SCIENCE FICTION GROUP

MAY 2016

ISSUE 536

HONORARY PRESIDENT: **BRIAN W ALDISS, OBE**

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WEBSITE: [www.birminghamsfgroup.org.uk/](http://www.birminghamsfgroup.org.uk/)

EMAIL:

[bhamsfgroup@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:bhamsfgroup@yahoo.co.uk)

FACEBOOK:

[www.facebook.com/groups/BirminghamSFGroup/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/BirminghamSFGroup/)

TWITTER:

@BirminghamSF



## **DAVID A HARDY** *13th May*

Our guest this month will be presenting a highly illustrated talk on “My Life as an SF Artist”. David is well-known to many of us;

as a long-standing member of the Birmingham SF Group, he has at various times been Chairman, Secretary, Newsletter Editor and Publicity Officer.

In his professional life, he is an accomplished and

**June 10th - SF writer, editor and publisher Ian Whates.**

internationally respected space artist. He illustrated his first book at the age of 18, *SUNS, MYTHS AND MEN* for Patrick Moore. Since then he has illustrated and produced covers for dozens of books, both fact and fiction including for Patrick Moore, Arthur C Clarke, Isaac Asimov and Carl Sagan. He has also provided covers for magazines such as *Analog*, *Interzone*, *New Scientist* and artwork for many other media including television, films, computer games and Record/CD art. He exhibits internationally and two of his paintings are owned by the National Air & Space Museum in the USA.

As well as his artwork he is also an author, having written a number of non-fiction books and has published a SF novel, *AURORA*.

He was President of the International Association of Astronomical Artists in 1996 and is still a Fellow and Vice-President for Europe. He has been honoured with their Lucien Rudaux Memorial Award. He has also been nominated for the Chesley Award (given by the Association of SF & Fantasy Artists) and for a Hugo Award. Lastly, he has even had an asteroid officially named after him (1991 SB 32 is now called “David hardy”). Further details including many images of his artwork can be found at his website, [www.astroart.org](http://www.astroart.org) CG

*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.*

***NOVEMBER MEETING – FILM NIGHT? Dave Corby***

This November 4th the Committee are proposing to resurrect the old BSFG tradition of the film night. A glance at the website

suggests this hasn't happened since Christmas 1978 where we showed LOGAN'S RUN, a personal favourite of mine. Clearly there has been much cinema since then, whether you believe any was SF or not! We have picked November as this is just before Novacon and can be tricky for prospective guests.

But - what shall we show? A film should not be much longer than two hours as if we start prompt at 8 pm. it would be good to be done not long after 10 pm. I would like to know if the membership would like a classic movie, a modern movie, something well-known or unusual, or if it should be strictly SF or maybe Fantasy elements are allowed?

In May 2003 the group debated "SF Movies - are there any good ones?" My opinion is that there certainly are - but what do you think? Send your suggestions to myself at [David.Corby@Nationalgrid.com](mailto:David.Corby@Nationalgrid.com) and I will publish the ideas in the newsletter. I suspect we shan't all agree, so why not be as controversial as possible??

*DC*

### ***SPACE CENTRE VISIT- UPDATE by Carol Goodwin***

Based on the responses I have received so far, it looks like there will be enough people interested to organise a visit to the Space Centre. I am therefore willing to try and organise this.

However, when I contacted the coach company they informed me that as June and July is their peak season they charge an additional 20% premium on top of the normal price during those months. Therefore, to minimise costs, I propose that we try and organise a trip for a weekend in August. I have talked to the Space Centre and they tell me that although it is in school holidays, things tend to quieten down during August.

I would suggest we avoid Saturday 13th August as this is the same weekend as the Summer Meal. If anyone has any preferences or objections regarding dates, please let me know before 20th May. Further details will then be given in the next (June) newsletter. *CG*

## ***CLARKE AWARD NOMINATIONS - SHORTLIST***

The nominees for the Arthur C Clarke Award have been announced:

THE LONG WAY TO A SMALL ANGRY PLANET by Becky Chambers (Hodder & Stoughton)

EUROPE AT MIDNIGHT by Dave Hutchinson (Solaris)

THE BOOK OF PHOENIX by Nnedi Okorafor (Hodder & Stoughton)

ARCADIA by Iain Pears (Faber & Faber)

WAY DOWN DARK by J P Smythe (Hodder & Stoughton)

CHILDREN OF TIME by Adrian Tchaikovsky (Tor)

## ***HUGO AWARD NOMINATIONS***

The finalists for the Hugo Awards and the John W Campbell Award for Best New Writer were announced on 26th April. This year there are also Retrospective Hugo Awards for 1941. The final nominees for Best Novel are given below. (Full details of all categories are available at [www.thehugoawards.org/](http://www.thehugoawards.org/)).

### **BEST NOVEL NOMINEES**

ANCILLARY MERCY by Ann Leckie (Orbit)

THE AERONAUT'S WINDLASS by Jim Butcher (Orbit)

THE FIFTH SEASON by N K Jemisin (Orbit)

SEVENEVES by Neal Stephenson (Borough Press)

UPROOTED by Naomi Novik (Pan)

### **BEST 1941 NOVEL NOMINEES**

GRAY LENS MAN by E E "Doc" Smith (*Astounding Science Fiction*, Jan 1940)

THE ILL-MADE KNIGHT by T H White (Collins)

KALLOCAIN by Karin Boye (Bonnier)

THE REIGN OF WIZARDRY by Jack Williamson (*Unknown*, Mar 1940)

SLAN by A E Van Vogt (*Astounding Science-Fiction*, Dec 1940)

## **NEWS IN BRIEF ...**



**Gareth Thomas**, star of the 1970's TV series *Blake's 7* has died aged 71. He was also an accomplished stage actor who appeared in several Royal Shakespeare Company plays .... UK Special Effects artist **Kit West** has died. He was responsible for the mechanical special effects in films such as **RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK** (for which he won an Oscar) and **RETURN OF THE JEDI**. He also worked on **YOUNG SHERLOCK HOLMES**, **DRAGONHEART** and **DUNE** .... As with last year, there was some controversy over the **Hugo nominations**. The right-wing "Sad Puppies" and "Rabid Puppies" pressure groups again organised bloc voting with slates of suggested nominations. It has been reported that roughly 80% of the Hugo ballot was dictated by the Rabid Puppies slate. This year they included selections that could probably have reached the final stage on their own merits, such as **PENRIC'S DEMONS** by Lois McMaster Bujold and **SLOW BULLETS** by Alastair Reynolds. The authors' requests to be removed from these slates were ignored. In protest, Tom Mays withdrew his short story "The Commuter" from consideration and *Black Gate* has withdrawn from the Best Fanzine category. A new system (called E Pluribus Hugo) which is specifically designed to reduce the effect of such bloc voting is expected to be ratified at this year's World Con and would then be in place for 2017 .... The winner of the 2016 Robert A Heinlein Memorial Award is **Jerry Pournelle**. The award is for individuals deemed to have made significant contributions in promoting a spacefaring civilisation .... The winners of the **James Tiptree Award** (for works addressing gender issues) are Eugene Fischer ("The New Mother") and Pat Schmatz (**LIZARD RADIO**) .... In honour of the **Science Fiction and Fantasy Hall of Fame's** 20th Anniversary, the public have been invited to vote in 2016. There are two categories, Creators and Creations. The deadline for voting is May 11th. Anyone may vote for the

potential inductees shortlisted on the website (<http://empmuseum.org/vote>) .... The winner of the **2016 TAFF** competition to send a European fan to this year's Worldcon in Kansas City is **Anna Raftery** .... **DEFYING DOOMSDAY**, an anthology of apocalypse fiction featuring disabled and chronically ill protagonists (featuring stories by Seanan McGuire and BSGF member, **Janet Edwards**) is available from May 30th. The book is published by Twelfth Planet Press (an Australian publisher) after a successful crowdfunding campaign raised over 13,000 Australian dollars .... The longlists for voting on this year's **David Gemmell Awards for Fantasy** will be available from 13th May until 24th June. Voting is open to anyone at [www.gemmellawards.com/](http://www.gemmellawards.com/) .... SFX Magazine will no longer feature **Dave Langford's** column. An ebook of many of his articles is available as **THE SEX COLUMN AND OTHER MISPRINTS** (via <http://news.ansible.uk/>) .... Hachette Books are releasing a new app called **Bookshelf**. It will offer free samples of over 100 of its books, with an option to buy the full versions. Users who register will have opportunities to get the full ebooks for free as part of monthly bonus incentives. See [www.welcometobookends.co.uk/blog/2016/04/introducing-bookshelf-our-very-own-app/](http://www.welcometobookends.co.uk/blog/2016/04/introducing-bookshelf-our-very-own-app/) .... Scientists have named a newly discovered Papua New Guinea weevil as **Trigonopterous Chewbacca**, after the *Star Wars* character *CG*

### ***NEW CINEMA FILM RELEASES***

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

***THE DARKNESS*** - Release date May 13th. Horror. A family returns from a Grand Canyon vacation followed by a supernatural presence.

***KILL COMMAND*** - Release date May 13th. SF. In the near future, humanity is pitted against killing machines.

***X-MEN: APOCALYPSE*** - Release date May 18th. *Marvel* superhero film. The X-Men must unite to defeat the first mutant, Apocalypse.

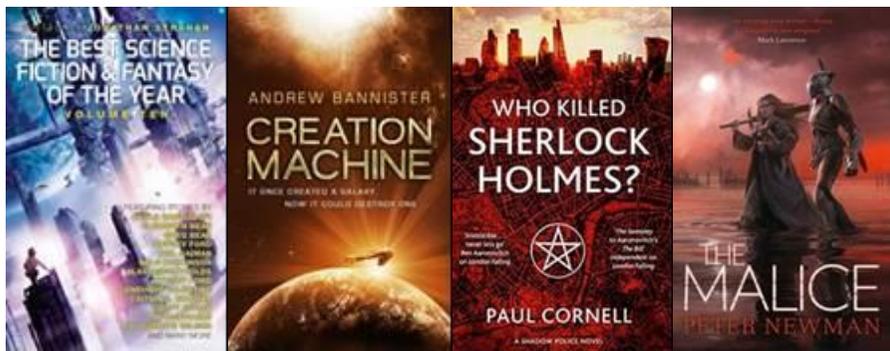
***THE CALL UP*** - Release date May 20th. Online gamers testing a virtual reality game discover they are fighting for their lives.

***ALICE THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS*** - Release date May 27th. Alice returns to the land of Wonderland to save the Mad Hatter.

***WARCRAFT*** - Release date May 30th. Orc warriors fleeing destruction come into conflict with human civilisation (director Duncan Jones). CG

### ***FORTHCOMING BOOKS***

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



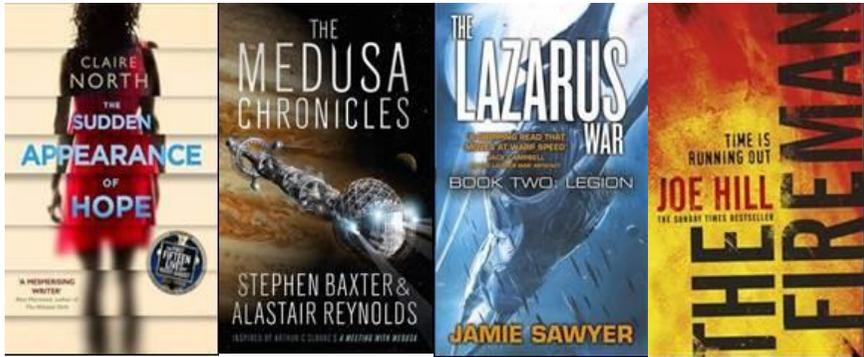
***THE BEST SCIENCE FICTION & FANTASY OF THE YEAR*** Vol. 10 edited by Jonathan Strahan / Solaris / 606 pgs / £13.99 paperback / ISBN 978-1781084373 / May 16th. Anthology featuring Neil Gaiman, Alastair Reynolds, Kim Stanley Robinson etc.

***CREATION MACHINE*** by Andrew Bannister / Bantam / 336 pgs / £14.99 hardback / ISBN 978-0593076484 / May 19th. SF. The Spin, a vast area of planets and stars, was constructed by a

long-vanished race. Now one of their mysterious machines has been found.

***WHO KILLED SHERLOCK HOLMES? (Shadow Police 3)*** by Paul Cornell / Pan / 368 pgs / £8.99 paperback / ISBN 978-1447273264 / May 19th. Fantasy. DI Quill of the Shadow Police must investigate who has destroyed the ghost of Sherlock Holmes.

***THE MALICE (Book 2 in series)*** by Peter Newman / Harper Voyager / 464 pgs / £14.99 hardback / ISBN 978-0007593163 / May 19th. Years ago, destruction emerged from the Breach. Now the Breach is again active and to combat it, an ancient weapon, the Malice wakes and calls for a new bearer.



***THE SUDDEN APPEARANCE OF HOPE*** by Claire North / Orbit / 480 pgs / £16.99 hardback / ISBN 978-0356504520 / May 19th. Hope is the girl that no-one remembers. That makes life hard but also makes her dangerous.

***THE MEDUSA CHRONICLES*** by Stephen Baxter & Alastair Reynolds / Gollancz / 336 pgs / £16.99 hardback / ISBN 978-1473210189 / May 19th. SF. Continues the story of Commander Howard Falcon, first introduced in Arthur C Clarke’s story “A Meeting with Medusa”.

***THE LAZARUS WAR: LEGION (Legion 2)*** by Jamie Sawyer / Orbit / 512 pgs / £8.99 paperback / ISBN 978-0356505473 / May 26th. SF. The Lazarus Legion use simulant bodies to fight the

alien Krell. A newly discovered Artefact may help humanity but recovering it will be perilous.

***THE FIREMAN*** by Joe Hill / Gollancz / 768 pgs / £20 hardback / ISBN 978-0575130715 / June 7th. SF. Nobody knows where the virus came from. But infected people burn. This is one woman's story of survival at the end of the world. CG

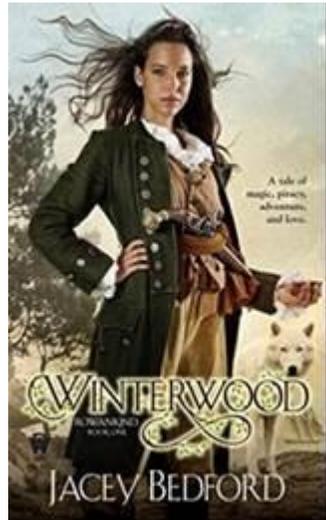
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(**REVIEWERS** please note: - all reviews should be emailed direct to me at [goodwinced@yahoo.com](mailto:goodwinced@yahoo.com) **Deadline for each issue is 14 days prior to the date of the monthly meeting**).

***WINTERWOOD (Rowankind 1)*** by Jacey Bedford  
DAW Books / 432 pgs / £5.64 paperback / ISBN 978-0756410155

Reviewed by Theresa Derwin.

The year is 1800. Mad King George is on the throne. Rossalinde returns to Plymouth after seven years of sailing the seas as a privateer. Her mother is dying, but even on her deathbed she still calls her daughter a pirate's whore, and won't forgive her for her elopement. But she does leave her one gift; a small box of ensorcelled Winterwood, alive with promise. And Rossalinde needs to keep it safe, as the only permitted magic is that licensed by the Mysterium.



Rossalinde is a strong female character, not because she wears men's clothes, fights or uses magic, though these are all an integral part of her character. She is strong because of her attitudes, her empathy for those abused or in need, her reliance and her fortitude.

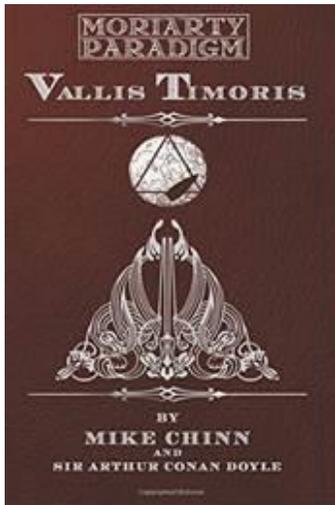
Amidst the adventure is the story of the Rowankind, who are bonded to families for life, much like slavery. This analogy is explored in depth, so as well as getting pirates, magic and pulse-pounding adventure, you get lots of buckle for your swash and morality to boot!

Bedford is a gifted storyteller, an experienced Milford SF writers' conference organiser and participant, who can turn her hand to multiple genres with skill and depth. Her expertise in writing is apparent throughout the novel, which is crisply written, easy to engage with and vibrant with its descriptions and environment. The end promises much for the future of the Rowankind and I can't wait to read what happens to everyone in book two; **SILVER WOLF**, out in 2017. Piratical Perfection!

*(Review copy kindly donated by the author)*

**VALLIS TIMORIS** by Mike Chinn and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle  
Fringeworks / 289 pgs / £11.99 paperback (Kindle edition £3.86) /  
ISBN 978-1909573246

Reviewed by Pauline Morgan.



Copyright is a tricky minefield to navigate. Different countries interpret it differently. Once an author dies, there is a period of time before their works become out of copyright. It means that the publications can be reprinted without any royalties paid or permission required from the estate. It also means that characters created by the out-of-copyright author become available for further adventures involving them to be penned. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle is out of copyright and his most celebrated character, Sherlock Holmes, is in the public domain. As a result, the BBC have created a modern version of Holmes which worked brilliantly.

Adrian Middleton has taken advantage of the situation by creating a series of books under the general heading of the “Moriarty Paradigm”. The brief for his authors includes using the original Doyle text and not only adding to improve the flow for a modern reader but to place the story in a parallel universe. The basis for this treatment by Mike Chinn is **THE VALLEY OF FEAR**.

The first thing to note is that this alternative Holmes is set against a steampunk background with a network of aerostats (dirigibles) across the world. Man has also reached the moon. Otherwise, it sticks very closely to the original concept for the first two sections of the book.

In both **VALLIS TIMORIS** and **THE VALLEY OF FEAR**, Holmes receives a mysterious letter from one Porlock. This is a coded warning which actually arrives too late since Holmes and Watson are shortly summoned to investigate the death of John Douglas of Birlstone Manor House. In both books, this investigation takes up the first part of the book. Chinn, however, deviates from the original script by adding a race across the English countryside between a train and an aerostat.

The next section in both is an account of how Douglas made the enemies who pursued him from America to his English retreat in order to seek revenge for a perceived betrayal. While Doyle’s account is set in a god-forsaken corner of America, Chinn has transposed the action to the moon. Same story, different place. Doyle finished his short novel with an epilogue. Chinn takes that and folds inside it an expedition by Holmes to the moon to seek the missing pieces of the puzzle.

The question is not whether this book is well written – it is – but whether it enhances the body of work that already surrounds Doyle and Holmes. The steampunk development works well and since the movement has its roots in Victorian technology it is entirely possible to envisage Holmes and Watson inhabiting this universe. For those who are not intimately familiar with Doyle’s stories, then this version is enjoyable. The purists may wonder why, since almost the whole of Doyle’s text has been incorporated

into this volume. I have yet to be convinced that this is a worthwhile approach. Having said that, I did enjoy Mike Chinn's additions.

*(Review copy kindly donated by the author).*

***EMPIRE OF DUST (Psi-Tech 1)* by Jacey Bedford**

**Daw Books / 544 pgs / £5.64 paperback / ISBN 978-0756410162**

**Reviewed by Carol Goodwin.**

I am sure we all know the saying that you should not judge a book by its cover and I think this is very true for this book. I know that the fashion in book covers is different in the US compared to the UK market (and this book is published by an US publisher) but the dull colours and too small details would not have attracted me to this book. Unfortunately, that does a great disservice to this book as the story within the cover is excellent.



In the future, humanity has spread to many solar systems. Huge unscrupulous mega-corporations, more powerful than individual governments, control and compete for resources. In particular, they hunt for Platinum which is used to power the “gates” which access “fold space” and allow interstellar travel. Each company uses “psi-tech” agents, implanted with technology to boost their natural mental abilities including telepathy. Viewed as expensive assets, any psi-tech who tries to leave is usually hunted down and their abilities and often their sanity are destroyed.

Cara is one such psi-tech. Escaping with damning evidence, she is on the run from Ari van Blaiden, a powerful executive and former lover. Cornered on a small spacestation, she escapes with the help of Ben, a psi-tech navigator for a rival mega-corporation. Masquerading as his wife, she joins an expedition to establish a new colony planet. Initially released for colonisation by

a “back to basics” group, the discovery of resources coveted by the mega-corporations means she is in a far from safe haven. Added into that, tensions between some of the technophobic colonists and the psi-tech supporting crew erupt into violence. Ben, Cara and the small team of psi-techs have to use their wits and abilities to survive all these threats and protect the fledgling colony.

This is a superb adventure story with well-maintained pace and tension. The plot structure is excellent as the reader sees the various threats develop and converge to a thrilling climax. To balance this, a lot of thought has also clearly gone into the construction of the characters. In particular, I liked the development of Cara, as she struggles to escape (both physically and psychologically) from what has clearly been an abusive and controlling relationship with Ari van Blaiden. I also appreciated the considered and slower growth of the bond between Cara and Ben.

This is a book that yet again proves that women can and do write first-rate science fiction. Now all it needs is a British publisher to sit up and take notice!

### ***FORTHCOMING EVENTS***

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

*Any information about forthcoming SF/Fantasy/Horror events is always welcome - please send to Carol at [goodwinced@yahoo.com](mailto:goodwinced@yahoo.com)*

**LAUNCH of CREATION MACHINE by ANDREW BANNISTER, 20th May, Leicester.** Bantam Press launch of SF debut novel. Readings, Q&A and fizz(!). Author, literary agent John Jarrold and Transworld Editorial Director will all be present. Waterstones Highcross Shopping Centre, LE1 4JB from 6:30pm. **RSVP:** to Andrew at [fictionalfutures@gmail.com](mailto:fictionalfutures@gmail.com) if attending.

**BIG BOOKISH BIRTHDAY BASH, 21st May, Walsall.** Southcart bookshop celebrates 2nd Anniversary with Authors, Readings, Food etc. Southcart Books, 20- 21 Lower Hall Lane, WS1 1RL from 10am - 4pm.

**FANTASY MINI-FAIR, 27th May, Birmingham.** Join Theresa Derwin & other fantasy authors, including Stan & Anne Nicholls, James Brogden and Mike Chinn at the Briar Rose for workshop, panels, readings and books. From 7:30 pm to 10pm. Tickets £4 at [quantumcorsets@gmail.com](mailto:quantumcorsets@gmail.com) via PayPal.

**BLURRING the BOUNDARIES of GENRE FICTION, 4th June, Derby.** Authors Jenny Colgan and Claire North discuss their writing and interests. (Part of Derby Book Fair). From 4 - 5pm at Derby Quad. £10 [www.derbybookfestival.co.uk](http://www.derbybookfestival.co.uk) or 01332 290606.

**MEET JOE HILL, 11th June, Derby.** SF/Horror writer is launching his latest book, THE FIREMAN. From 7 - 8:15pm at Derby Quad. (Part of Derby Book Fair). £8 [www.derbybookfestival.co.uk](http://www.derbybookfestival.co.uk) or 01332 290606.

**BSFA/SFF MINI-CONVENTION & AGM, 25th June, London.** Special guests are Liz Williams and David A Hardy. At Imperial College London, SW7 2AZ. Entry free from 9:30 am to 4:30 pm. See [www.bsfa.co.uk/bsfasff-mini-convention-and-agm-saturday-25th-june-2016/](http://www.bsfa.co.uk/bsfasff-mini-convention-and-agm-saturday-25th-june-2016/)

**STAR WARS & BEYOND, 2nd July, Birmingham.** A selection of SF-themed music with lasers and fireworks. Symphony Hall. 7:30 pm. £16.50 - £44.50 plus transaction fee. February performance sold out early hence early notification. Book at Town Hall/Symphony Hall Box Office (0121 780 4949) or [www.thsh.co.uk](http://www.thsh.co.uk)

## **CONVENTIONS**

**SATELLITE 5, 28th - 29th May, Glasgow.** Guests of Honour Jaine Fenn & Ed Buckley. At the Marriott Hotel, Glasgow. Attending £55. Details at [www.satellite5.org.uk/](http://www.satellite5.org.uk/)

**EDGE-LIT 5, 16th July, Derby.** Literary SF/Fantasy festival. Guests of Honour M John Harrison, Emma Newman & Alastair Reynolds. Tickets £30 at [www.derbyquad.co.uk/special-event/edge-lit-5](http://www.derbyquad.co.uk/special-event/edge-lit-5)

**NINE WORLDS GEEKFEST, 12th - 14th August, London.** Multi-media with strong literature strand. Tickets £100 at <https://nineworlds.co.uk/>

**ANDROMEDA 2, 9th - 10th September, Moseley.** SF/F convention organised by Theresa Derwin. Guests of Honour: David A Hardy, Sam Stone. Master of Ceremonies: Jasper Bark. Moseley All Services Club, 91 Church Road, Moseley, B13 9EA. Tickets: £25 (Saturday only) or £30 (weekend ticket including Friday night buffet dinner). Details at <http://ac2.greatbritishhorror.com/>

**FANTASYCON BY THE SEA, 23rd - 25th September, Scarborough.** Guests of Honour Adam Nevill, Frances Hardinge and Scott Lynch. At the Grand and Royal Hotels. Tickets £50 + £35 Awards Banquet. <http://fantasyconbythesea.com>

**BRISTOLCON, 29th October, Bristol.** Guests of Honour Ken MacLeod, Sarah Pinborough and Fangorn. Doubletree Hotel. £20. Details at [www.bristolcon.org](http://www.bristolcon.org)

**NOVACON 46, 11th - 13th November, Nottingham.** Guest of Honour is Juliet McKenna. The Park Inn, Nottingham. Tickets £46. Details at [www.novacon.org.uk](http://www.novacon.org.uk)

**INNOMINATE (EASTERCON), 14th - 17th April 2017, Birmingham.** Guests of Honour are Pat Cadigan, Judith Clute and Colin Harris. To be held at the Hilton Metropole, NEC, Birmingham. Membership £60 at [www.eastercon2017.uk/home](http://www.eastercon2017.uk/home)

***FUTURE MEETINGS OF THE BSFG***

June 10th - author, editor and publisher **Ian Whates**  
July 8th - SF fan and convention organizer **Dave Lally**  
August 12th - **Summer Social Meal** - venue tbc  
September 9th - **tbc**  
October 14th - astronomer and lecturer **Andy Lound**  
November 4th - **tbc**  
December 2nd - **Christmas Social**

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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. Cheques should be made payable to "The Birmingham Science Fiction Group" and sent to our Membership Secretary, 10 Sylvan Avenue, Northfield, Birmingham, B31 2PG