

BULLETIN  
of the  
BRITISH INTERPLANETARY SOCIETY

PRESIDENT  
P.E. Cleator.

VICE-PRESIDENT  
C.H.L. Askham.

November, 1934

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BRITISH INTERPLANETARY SOCIETY

TODAY FANTASY ----- TOMORROW FACT

EDITORIAL

By Leslie J. Johnson.

'Scientifiction and Interplanetary Travel'

In April, 1926, was started, in America, a unique magazine. Its very descriptive name was that of "Amazing Stories" -- "The Magazine of Scientifiction"---"scientifiction" being a coined word for scientific fiction. The publisher of this amazing periodical was one of America's foremost scientific writers and publishers -- Mr. Hugo Gernsback.

The influence of "Amazing Stories" in the growth of the interplanetary idea all over the world can hardly be ~~estimated~~ estimated. Percolating throughout the world with its prophetic type of fiction, this magazine stimulated the imagination of thousands of scientifically-minded men and women, and has continued to do so for the past eight years or more.

In June, 1929, were started the twin magazines "Science Wonder Stories" and "Air Wonder Stories", the publisher, and Editor, being once again Mr. Gernsback, as, for some obscure reason, he had severed all connection with his original scientifiction publication. These new monthly magazines carried on the interplanetary tradition of the older publication and it was in the earlier issues of "Science Wonder Stories" that was published the translation of Herr Hermann Noordung's "Problems of Space-Flying". Later on Gernsback also published articles by some of America's leading scientific men on the important question of the conquest of gravitational attraction.

In June, 1930, "Science Wonder

Stories" and "Air Wonder Stories" were amalgamated to form "Wonder Stories" which, despite many vicissitudes and financial troubles, has survived to the present day.

"Amazing Stories" and "Wonder Stories" were later (in 1930) joined by another magazine "Astounding Stories". This, also, was devoted to scientific fiction, but, in this new publication, the adventurous side of the stories was, at first, given the more prominence. Nevertheless, interplanetary themes were afforded greater attention than any other. "Astounding Stories", under new ownership, in October, 1933 changed its policy, and is now a serious rival to its contemporaries, in view of the daring nature of its scientific speculation.

The Spread of Science Fiction.

So these three magazines have spread throughout the world, and, especially in America and Great Britain, have fostered the interplanetary idea, and have also attempted to break away the minds of the people from the fixed everyday conventions with which the majority are permeated.

"The Imagination is one of the greatest factors in human progress, and this, coupled with a scientific mind, can produce results which, today, are only just beginning to be apparent".\*

Thus I wrote on the appearance of the first British science fiction publication, which has, alas, long

\* "SCOOPS", Vol. 1 No. 5 - Page 143.

since vanished into the limbo of forgotten magazines. Before the end, however, "Scoops" published numerous articles on space-travel, and featured several articles by our President, Mr. Cleator, as well as running a series called "To the Planets", which was a weekly department devoted to the latest news of developments in the study of interplanetary travel.

On June 23rd., 1934, was published the last issue of "Scoops". My statement, however, can still be applied to the three American magazines, which are all, happily, still obtainable in this country.

These magazines are slowly, and almost unobtrusively, educating a large section of the community (both in this country and abroad) to a realisation of the possibilities of future scientific developments, and their effect upon human progress.

Tales of scientific fiction are not, however, a development of the Twentieth Century. They can be found amongst the literature of the Seventeenth Century, and probably at an even earlier date. Truly may it be said that "there is nothing new under the sun." It was not until the advent of Jules Verne, however, that were laid the foundations of modern scientific fiction. Many of my readers will, no doubt, be familiar with "From the Earth to the Moon" which was one of the earliest literary attempts at a really scientifically explained moon voyage. The faults of this narrative will, of course, be immediately apparent to the majority of the members of this Society. Nevertheless, with this book, the ball had been started on its way--- and the path, broken though it may be, lay downhill!

#### More Recent Science Fiction.

Wells followed Verne with his

"First Men in the Moon" in which he employed the famous anti-gravitational substance, Cavorite. His story was interesting, but has long since been surpassed by many writers using much greater scientific accuracy. Amongst the greatest stories of interplanetary (and, indeed, intergalactic) exploration are what have become famous as the "Skylark" epics\* by E.E. Smith, Ph.D. These narratives truly portray interplanetary travel par excellence. The mighty engines of space, the incredible speeds, and the alien civilisations--all imagined by Dr. Smith--almost beggar description, and yet are all scientifically explained in a manner which is really most convincing!

John W. Campbell, Jr., alone, can fairly claim to represent Dr. Smith's only rival. His "Islands of Space" and "Invaders from the Infinite" are masterpieces of scientific imagination and description which will long be remembered. His "lux" and "relux", light-photon metals, and his "molecular drive" space-distortion units are possibilities which the readers, under Campbell's hypnotic flow of explanation, have only to retire to their laboratories to bring to practical perfection.

#### Spreading Scientifiction.

These writer-scientists are doing perhaps far more than they realise to shape the world of tomorrow by influencing the thoughts of today. Without doubt, the future is built upon the past, and the seeds sown today will bear fruit tomorrow!

I wonder how many members of the British Interplanetary Society were first introduced to the idea of space travel through the medium of scientifiction? I wonder how many

\*"Amazing Stories"--Aug. to Oct. 1928

"Amazing Stories"--Aug. to Oct. 1930

"Astounding Stories"--Aug. to Dec. '34

thousands more will be? For the literature is steadily assuming a position of <sup>importance</sup> in the modern book-world, and I can foresee the time when it will be the main reading matter of humanity. We must look into the future with scientific imagination; we must plan it, and we must do our utmost to shape those events which are actually interwoven with those in which we, ourselves, take a part.

Without the influence of scientific fiction, I very much doubt if the British Interplanetary Society, or the many similar organisations throughout the world, could ever have come into being, for, by means of the three magazines of scientific fiction, those interested in scientific possibilities have been bound together in the readers' departments in a close bond of mutual interest.

Through the kindness of the Editors of these prophetic publications, the Society has added considerably to its membership. This helpful spirit of co-operation should be repaid whenever possible! I would suggest, therefore, that, to aid the Society to increase its membership, and as an acknowledgement of the part played in the spread of the interplanetary idea by "Amazing Stories", "Astounding Stories", and "Wonder Stories", our members should do their utmost to spread amongst their friends the "doctrine of science fiction" ---and simultaneously, those ideas which, sooner or later, will result in the accomplishment of interplanetary travel.

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The "Skylark" epics consist of :-  
1) "The Skylark of Space".  
2) "Skylark Three".  
3) "The Skylark of Valeron".

These three novel-length stories are published in serial form as listed in the footnote to page 3.

#### INDIAN ROCKET MAIL

In the lower reaches of the River Hooghly, India, has been inaugurated the first ship-to-shore rocket mail in the world. To obviate the delay of the mail boat in dangerous shoal-infested waters, the letters are fired, by rocket, 1000 yards beyond the estuary of the river.

The experiments are being conducted by the Port Commissioners in co-operation with the postal and military authorities, the latter, naturally, being interested in the rocket's potentialities as a weapon.

The Post Office, by means of the rocket mail, hopes to expedite delivery of letters in certain river-bank areas, where, at the moment, many days are wasted owing to the circuitous course of the rivers.

-- --K.W. Chapman.

#### SOCIETY ADDRESS IN FUTURE

Will all members, and others interested in the British Interplanetary Society, please note that the official address of the Society is now 46, MILL LANE, LIVERPOOL, 13, ENGLAND.

#### WANTED

"AMAZING STORIES" for February, 1929.

If not for sale, I would like to borrow a copy, and will pay registered postage both ways.

FRANCIS H.P. KNIGHT,  
152, HARDEN ROAD,  
LEAMORE,  
WALSALL.



THE GROWING INTEREST IN MATTERS INTERPLANETARY

by C.H.L. Askham.

(Vice-President & Radio Director of the B.I.S.)

Have you noticed how much more interest is now being shown by the public in matters pertaining to interplanetary travel? Eighteen months ago one rarely came across any such items in the newspapers, and, even if an occasional item did appear, it was put in some obscure corner of the paper. But how different has it been during the past twelve months! Probably members of the Society will have, themselves, noticed a growing interest amongst their friends. How many of us have been asked for information as to how a rocket could get back to Earth after landing on the Moon? Or why -- if we think that there are intelligent beings on other planets, --- have not these beings tried to communicate with the Earth? Or how is it possible to calculate that a spaceship from Earth could reach Mars when that planet is so far from the Earth?

These were some of the questions put to me recently, and I have been at great pains to supply the information--if I could not, then and there, answer them. Sometimes, I must admit, I have suspected that the question is put purely as an attempt to catch me, but, even then, I have taken great care to see that my questioner received a correct and speedy reply. I have done so because I believe that anyone who asks a question, even in a facetious manner, must be interested, and that, no matter how slight their interest, given a correct answer, they will, in time, become still more interested.

Ultimately they may become so enthralled at the possibilities of interplanetary travel that they will

enter the body of students of the subject, and may even become useful members of our Society.

I was encouraged to write this short article by seeing and eagerly reading the wonderful series of articles by Sir James H. Jeans now being published in the "Sunday Express". A great man, and a fine paper! How wonderful it must seem--even to non-members of the British Interplanetary Society--for someone to be able to write authoritatively on the vast phantasmagoria of subjects relating to the exploration of interplanetary and intergalactic space, and to be able, with authority, to dispense information on the multitudinous subjects concerned with even our own solar system. Would that we had more supermen like Sir James! Let us all, therefore, do our best to encourage interest in interplanetary travel (even if, occasionally, we do suspect the motives actuating questions!) and try to stimulate, to our utmost, the growing public interest.

-----oOo-----

The Editors would be grateful if members would submit articles etc. for publication in the Bulletin. All matter received will be considered strictly on its merits, and on its suitability for inclusion in this publication. Items of news concerning Rocketry, etc. will be very acceptable.

THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE SOCIETY

Naturally, to be able to conduct experiments, and to become a force in the world of science, the Society's membership must be as large as possible.

The Council is willing to consider any suggestions that members may put forward with a view to increasing the numerical strength of the only organised body, in this country, that is interested in the accomplishment of interplanetary travel.

Would you please address any suggestions you may have to the Hon. Secretary of the Society?

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THE LIBRARY OF THE SOCIETY

As the Society is trying to form a library of all literature relating to interplanetary travel, we would appreciate any contributions of either books or magazines from any of our members.

Matter should be addressed to the Hon. Librarian at the official address of the Society.

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QUESTIONS & ANSWERS DEPARTMENT

In future issues of the Bulletin questions concerning any of the problems of the conquest of space will be answered in this Department.

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SOCIETY NOTEPAPER FOR MEMBERS

The members' notepaper (a sheet of which is enclosed with this issue of the Bulletin) is now ready for delivery.

The price of this is as follows:-

Per 100 sheets (post free) . . . 2/6

Per 200 sheets (--- do ---) . . . 4/9

This price applies only to the British Isles (excluding Irish Free State Duty).

For the Colonies and Overseas the price is as follows:-

Per 100 sheets (excluding postage  
and any Duties there may be) . . 2/-

Larger quantities pro rata.

This notepaper is, of course, supplied only to members of the Society.

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FUTURE SOCIETY MEETINGS

During the winter session, Meetings will be held at 7.45 p.m. at McGhie's Cafe, 56, Whitechapel, Liverpool, on every other Friday from November 30th.

Accordingly, the next two Meetings will take place on December 14th. and 28th. respectively.

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A ROCKET TO THE MOON

According to PRACTICAL MECHANICS Messrs. Max Cosyns and Neree Van der Elst, the Belgian scientists, are contemplating an interesting experiment which is to take place during their next stratosphere ascent. A powder rocket will be released, and it is claimed that this rocket, starting from the low atmospheric pressure of the stratosphere, will have a good chance of reaching our satellite.

THE ASTRONAUT  
by E.F. Russell.  
(Member-Liverpool)

Let me burst the Earth-bonds as a soul that is freed;  
Let me roar thru' the roof of the night  
Like a man-conceived comet, competing in speed  
With the unsurpassed fleetness of light;  
E'er onward, aye onward, 'til I've become one  
With the most distant dots in the dawn,  
When each rumble of rockets marks many miles done  
And each planet a day newly born.  
Let me pass thru' the aeons of light-years that bar  
All the knowledge of kin from their kind;  
Let me meet them and greet them as one from afar  
Who has proved that the seeker shall find.  
Let me quest an oasis in star-spangled space  
Where the sun and the nether-suns burn;  
If I can find "Welcome!" on one alien face  
I care not if there be no return!

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INTERESTING LITERATURE

"The Windsor Magazine" for November, 1934. Price One Shilling.  
Page 785

"Is There Life on the Planets?"

by Dr. Walter S. Adams.

(Director of the Mount Wilson Observatory of the Carnegie Institution)

This is a short article discussing the possibility of the existence of life on the various planets of the solar system. The article is illustrated with many fine photographs taken at the Mount Wilson Observatory.

Whilst very ably presenting the case for the absence of human life on any of the planets (perhaps excluding Venus) Dr. Adams does not lay sufficient stress upon the very great possibility of the planets possessing their own kind of intelligent life, specially adapted to the particular environment.

Although Earth's satellite, the Moon, is mentioned, no comment is made on the possibility of life existing on any of the larger satellites of Jupiter and Saturn.

+ + + +  
Mr. Harry W. Bull, of the American Rocket Society, has (according to ASTRONAUTICS) just written and published an interesting booklet entitled "How to Build and Run a Rocket Ship". Copies may be obtained for fifty cents (about 2/6) each, directly from Mr. Bull, 326, Hickock Avenue, Syracuse, New York, or from the Librarian of the American Rocket Society, 147, West 86th. Street, New York, U.S.A.

+ + + +  
PIONEERS OF SPACE

PERSUADE your friends to join us in our attempt to promulgate the idea of interplanetary travel by joining

THE BRITISH INTERPLANETARY SOCIETY.

MEETINGS OF THE SOCIETY

Meetings of the Society were held on Friday, November 2nd., and Friday, November 16th. 1934.

\* \* \*

November 2nd.

THE CHAIR was taken at first by the President, Mr. P. E. Cleator, but, as he was compelled to leave before the end, the Chair was then taken by Mr. T. E. Ashcroft (Member-Liverpool).

\* \* \*

The Minutes of the Meeting held on Friday, October 19th. were read to the Meeting and were signed as correct by the Chairman.

\* \* \*

The Journal of the Society.

A discussion was held as to the number of back issues of the Journal that could be made available to Mr. B. K. Goree, Jr. (Member-Texas).

A number of copies of the different issues could be spared, but, on the whole, the stock of these issues was lamentably low. A price was fixed for the numbers that could be spared, and a quotation from the Publishers would be furnished for those editions that were out of print.

\* \* \*

Appointment of Hon. Librarian.

The presentation to the Society of copies of the various scientific magazines by Mr. F. H. P. Knight (Member-Walsall), the Vice-President, and the Hon. Secretary drew attention to the need for a Librarian for the Society. Mr. Norman Weedall (Founder Fellow-Litherland) kindly consented to fulfil this office.

\* \* \*

It was decided, in view of certain difficulties, to confine the borrowing of the scientific magazines to those members who can attend the Meetings.

(This arrangement is only provisional, and may be extended to outside members when the problems involved have been investigated more fully. -- Hon. Secretary).

\* \* \*

General Notes.

The Hon. Secretary announced that he had written to the Secretary of the American Rocket Society to solicit information with regard to their recent change of name. Such information may be of use to this Society in considering a similar step.

Mr. J. Laffan (Associate Member-Dublin) had suggested that a Dublin newspaper be approached with a view to the publication of an article on interplanetary travel. It was decided that the Hon. Secretary should write to discover if such an article would prove acceptable.

In a similar manner a proposal was made by Mr. E. F. Russell (Member - Liverpool) to obtain a broadcast for the Society. Investigations were to be made as to the practicability of this.

It was reported that a notice about the Society had appeared in "Astounding Stories", one of the American scientific magazines. This had brought a number of enquiries from the U.S.A. which may result in increased membership.



A leaflet had been received from the Peoria Rocket Association, U.S.A., together with a promise of co-operation.

\* \* \*

The Society Lapel Button.

It was reported that a number of members were interested in the proposed lapel button. Sufficient replies had not been received as yet to warrant the execution of such an undertaking. However, as most of the members had not had time to consider the matter, no definite decision was made.

\* \* \*

"The Temperature of an Object in Space".

The above title, indefinite though it may be, provided the basis for a free discussion which lasted for about an hour and a half, and which embraced in its scope almost every modern conception of the Universe.

(Such discussions seem to be an excellent feature, and will be continued in the future. --- Hon. Secretary.)

-----OOO-----

November 16th.

THE CHAIR was taken by the President, Mr. P.E. Cleator.

The Minutes of the Meeting held on November 2nd. were taken as read.

\* \* \*

The Bulletin of the Society.

The members were informed that, as decided at a Council Meeting on Thursday, November 8th., the Bulletin for November (this issue) would be produced in the new large size. The publication of future issues will depend upon the course to be followed in the coming year with regard to both the Journal of the Society and the Bulletin. A decision will be made by the Council in the near future.

\* \* \*

Borrowing of Scientifiction Magazines.

No decision was made as to whether the scientifiction magazines, now in the possession of the Society, would be available to members residing outside the Merseyside District. Mr. Knight (Member-Walsall) one of the donors of the magazines, was making certain enquiries which should throw some light upon the difficulties that may be encountered in the operation of such a scheme.

\* \* \*

Society Notepaper for Members.

It was reported that the Society notepaper, that had been specially designed for members' correspondence, was now available at the price of 2/- per hundred sheets (plus postage).

(A notice about this notepaper appears on page 6 of this issue of the Bulletin. --- Hon. Secretary).

\* \* \*

Rocket Experiments in the U.S.A.

Mr. P.E. Cleator (President of the Society) read from ASTRONAUTICS (Journal of the American Rocket Society) an account of recent experiments by our contemporary American organisation. A speed of about 600 mph. was reached by one of the model rockets.

(We hope to be able to publish an account of these experiments in some future publication of the Society. --- Hon. Secretary).

Free Discussion.

A free discussion was held on the subject, "Can We Plot a Path for a Spaceship from the Earth to One of the Planets?", suggested by Mr. C.H.L. Askham (Vice President & Radio Director of the Society).

This proved a source of valuable information to the members, and was instrumental in giving to many a clearer view of the intricate problems involved in the conquest of space.

\* \* \*

Future Meetings.

It was decided that, in the future, Meetings would commence at 7.45 p.m., in place of 7 p.m., as at present.

\* \* \*

'Rocket v Interplanetary'

A letter had been received from Mr. G. Edward Pendray (President of the American Rocket Society) in reply to the Hon. Secretary's letter re their recent change of name. The information so kindly supplied will be useful to the Council in considering such a change in the title of the British Interplanetary Society.

\* \* \*

NEW MEMBERS

The following new members were elected to the Society during the month of November:-

Fellows.

Mr. Richard C. Abel .. .. . Hove, Surrey.

Members.

M. Jaroslav Marcha .. .. . Prague, Czechoslovakia.

Mr. Anthony Standen .. .. . Stockton-on-Tees.

Associate Members.

Mr. T. Lutwiniak .. .. . Jersey City, U.S.A.

The annual subscriptions for the three classes of membership are:-

Fellowship--£2-2-0; Membership--10/6; Associate Membership--5/-.

All classes of membership are open to both sexes, and all members receive free copies of both the Journal and the Bulletin of the Society.

Meetings.  
Ordinary Meetings of the Society are held in Liverpool every fortnight, in the winter, and monthly in summer, at which times addresses on all phases of the activities of the Society are presented by members and invited speakers.

For full particulars and membership application forms, address all enquiries to:-

Leslie J. Johnson,  
Hon. Secretary,  
The British Interplanetary Society,  
46, Mill Lane,  
Liverpool, 13,  
England.