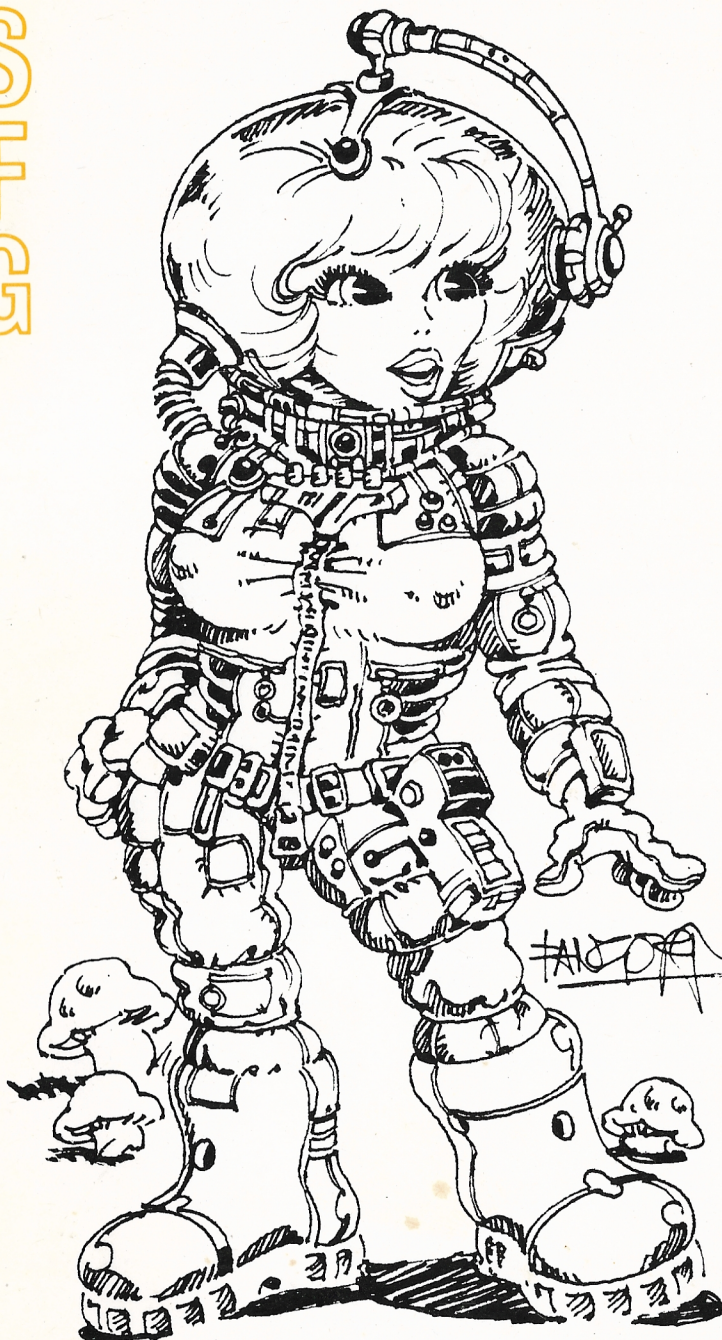


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1971-1981

# FACTS AND FALLACIES

Chris Morgan and David Langford

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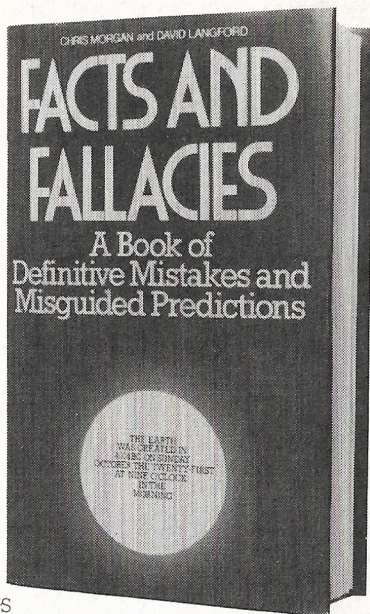
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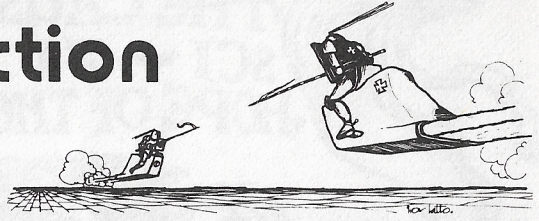
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# Birmingham Science Fiction Group

June 1971 - June 1981



HONORARY PRESIDENTS: BRIAN W ALDISS and HARRY HARRISON

## 10th ANNIVERSARY SOUVENIR BOOK

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THE CAUSE OF  
SCI - FI IS THE  
HOPE OF THE WORLD



In Brum, speaks the drum, of science -  
fiction dom, go Brum, many speakers  
come, and talk of SF makes a mighty  
hum, of all SF groups, surely Brum,  
is the plum, Ian Watson 22. 3. 81

# WELCOME...

Welcome to the Birmingham Science Fiction Group's 10th Anniversary Party.

In the latter part of 1980, realising we were approaching that magic figure, the BSFG Committee started thinking about some kind of event to celebrate this historic occasion. Many ideas have been thrown around - "Get a Big Name author for our June meeting!", "Let's have a disco!", "Invite non-Brum fans!", "We must get our Presidents along!", "Yes, get them to talk or throw pies at each other!", "Get special rates from a hotel for those travelling some distance!", "Why not have the whole event at the Angus?", "Move it to Saturday, instead of Friday!", etc.

You can see where it was all leading - we started off thinking about something special for our monthly meeting and ended up with almost a convention! A special committee under the guidance of Pauline Morgan was set up to organise the event. The organising committee has been Vernon and Pat Brown, Mike Field and Alan Cash. In addition there is the special birthday cake made by Pat Brown and iced by Jackie Miller. Transport of said cake courtesy Chris Morgan. Thanks to all those people who contributed to the organisation of this event.

To get to this moment in time (I was going to say 'point in time' but Stan started jumping up and down saying "There's no such thing!") has taken 20 years. Yes, 20 - all will be revealed later. During those years many people have contributed to the growth of the BSFG and the SF scene in Birmingham - far too many to list though past Brum Group and NOVACON committees are detailed herein. Without those people you wouldn't be here in sunny Brum today. Also detailed in this book are all the meetings ever held under the banner of the BSFG - to all those speakers who took time off from their normal routine to travel to Birmingham, we thank you.

A special thank you to our two honorary Presidents, Brian Aldiss and Harry Harrison, who have allowed their names to be used on our letterhead, have come and spoken to the Group on several occasions, and have come along this weekend to join in the celebrations. Two great guys - thanks.

Finally, thank you to all of you - the members of the Group and the non-members who make the monthly BSFG meetings and the annual NOVACONS possible by giving your support and attending.

Pauline and her committee have collected articles from past BSFG and NOVACON chairmen, artwork from artists, and bits and pieces from all over. Then they dumped the lot onto me and said "Here - produce the Souvenir Book!" I've sifted through everything and attempted to put everything into some sort of chronological order, but memories jump and overlap and some of us have been so involved that it has been virtually impossible to remember who did what when or where. Thanks to the Group's Historian, Stan Eling, some records have been kept and these have helped considerably. We've even included some of those records in this book.

But enough of all this - the bar is now open and....

Rog Peyton  
BSFG Chairman

This 10th Anniversary Souvenir Book is  
Dedicated to the Memory of

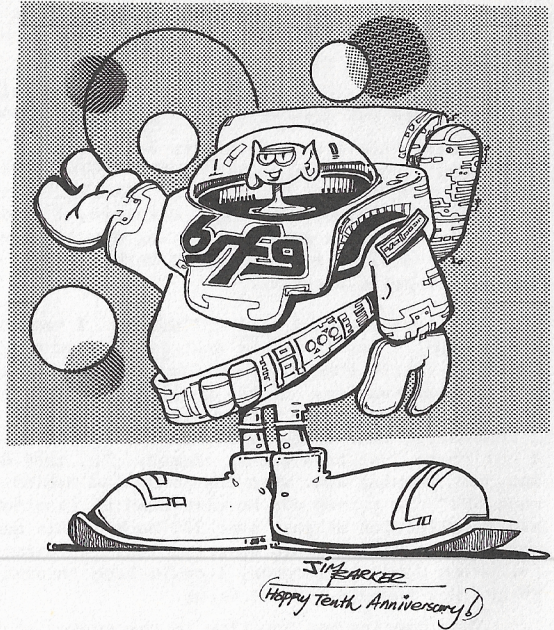
GILLON FIELD  
( ? -1974)

We Space Pirates  
never use 'tha' door! Happy  
10th Anniversary B.S.F.G.

VOTE  
DAVE HOLMES  
KING



# THE HISTORY OF THE B.S.F.G.



BEING A SHORT, INCOMPLETE AND INFORMAL HISTORY OF THE BIRMINGHAM SCIENCE FICTION GROUP AS SEEN THROUGH THE BIASED AND NOSTALGIC EYES OF SEVERAL BSFG BIG GUNS.

## EARLY DAYS

*Rog Peyton*

Arthur Sarsfield Ward was born in Ladywood (Birmingham suburb) in 1883. He's probably better known to you as Sax Rohmer, the creator of that mad scientific genius Dr Fu Manchu. 20 years later, John Wyndham Parkes Lucas Beynon Harris, was born in Edgbaston, less than a mile away from Sax Rohmer's birthplace. Tolkien spent many years in south Birmingham - an area that was, then, totally unspoilt by the industrial ravages in the north-west of Birmingham - and used much of it as the basis of Middle Earth in *THE HOBBIT*. Michael Coney was born and educated in Birmingham before moving to Canada. Up-and-coming fantasy writer Adrian Cole was born here and only moved south a couple of years ago. To my knowledge there is not, and never has been a science fiction writer who was born in Brum and stayed here!

I give the above information not because it has anything to do with the BSFG but simply to record it here as part of the history of SF in Birmingham.

The first SF group in Birmingham was formed, as far as we can tell, in 1949. We've known there was an active group way back then but it was only recently we got any facts concerning this group. Alf Dean, a regular customer at *ANDROMEDA*, revealed that he had been a member - his first contact was seeing a write-up in the old *EVENING DESPATCH* stating that the Birmingham Science Fiction Circle had been formed and welcomed new members. Alongside the article was a photo of the organiser, Bert Barton, posing with an old pulp-mag. Needless to say, at the request of the reporter the magazine used sported a cover showing a half-clad female being menaced by an alien! (Reporters don't change much do they?)

The meetings of this early group were held in a pub somewhere in Digbeth and anything from 6 to 20 members would be present. The meetings were informal and were held weekly. Occasionally, the really keen members would organise a trip to

London to coincide with the regular meetings at the White Horse where they would get the chance to speak to such famous authors as Arthur C Clarke, John Wyndham, John Christopher, etc.

The pub meetings ceased in 1953 and several members started meeting at each other's homes but gradually these petered out and the group folded in 1955.

During this time, of course, I was a young lad at school whose introduction to SF (not counting DAN DARE, JOURNEY INTO SPACE, etc) occurred in the last term when THE TIME MACHINE was required reading. Rapidly going through Wells, Wyndham and then onto Asimov, van Vogt, Heinlein, I suddenly found myself obtaining publishers' advance news and looking out for every new SF paperback to hit the shelves as well as mooching round market stalls and grotty back-street newsagents for out-of-print material.

So there I was, a real collector. I had the biggest SF collection in the world - well, was it likely that anyone had more than 192 books! Then someone burst my little bubble. Four Square books had announced publication of THE 27TH DAY by John Mantley. On the publication day, a Thursday, I went round every book shop in Birmingham for a copy without luck. At 6.30 in the evening in desperation I remembered that there was a bookstall on New Street Station. Running all the way I got there just before they closed. No, they didn't have it either. Crushed, I was just turning away when the young lad behind the counter said, "Do you read much SF?" It turned out he also read SF (another one, here in Birmingham!) and he had a collection of just over 300 books. His name was Cliff Teague and we chatted until about nine o'clock that evening. We agreed to meet at his place the following Sunday afternoon, I could look through his collection and we'd plan how to get new members for the Group.

That meeting was sometime in the summer of 1961 - virtually 20 years since the start of the Group that grew into the present BSFG. That Sunday afternoon I was introduced to new SF books, SF magazines (I'd never noticed magazines in my travels) and to pineapple and melted ice-cream - Cliff's favourite meal.

Getting new members was a very slow process - the first was Dave Casey who became a hermit, never leaving his room at home even when his parents were rehoused - he just sat in his room, refusing to talk to anyone, re-reading his Eric Frank Russell books over and over again. Then came Mike Higgs who was more of a comic fan than an SF fan - he later became a professional cartoonist. King of the anthology collectors Jack Pickering followed but he gave it all up in favour of collecting antique pop-bottles. A few more came and disappeared. Then Tony Ventris-Field turned up at a meeting at the end of 1962. He was a reporter with the local ERDINGTON NEWS and we lost no time badgering him to get us some exposure in that paper. He was all for it but there was a snag. His editor would only publicise local groups, i.e. specifically Erdington, not the greater Birmingham area. We weren't missing this chance so we quickly closed down the BSFG and started the Erdington SF Circle (for a few months, anyway). Little slips of advertising inserted in books at the local rag market and public libraries were quickly changed to the Erdington SF Circle to help cover up this gigantic con-trick. His editor was satisfied, the article was written, a photo was taken and the whole thing appeared on the centre of the front page of the first issue of 1963.

About 4 or 5 new members came in from that publicity but it was the little advertising slips in the rag market that brought us Pete Weston. Within a few months Pete had decided to do a fanzine, Cliff had attended his first convention, spending the night in a broom closet, several of us had joined the BSFA and the whole thing was looking good.

In early '64 Charlie Winstone, Ken Cheslin, Rod Milner and I took over four of the 5 positions on the BSFA committee. Ken had also volunteered to organise the following year's Easter convention and Mike Higgs, Charlie and I somehow ended up on that committee too.

For 2 years, the Brum Group virtually ran the BSFA. My life consisted of producing VECTOR, BSFA committee meetings, a convention committee interspersed with weekly Brum Group meetings. At the end of my two year stint I wanted a change and took up ten-pin bowling seriously. This later led (in a round about



## Science Fiction club formed in Erdington

Reprinted from THE ERDINGTON NEWS  
January 1963



**I**NTRODUCING Erdington Science Fiction Club, which was formed in a small way in the district about a year ago, and which now has about 10 members. The club is anxious to attract more people, and meets every Tuesday and Sunday evening at 35, Hunton Road.

One of the founder members of the club, 20 years-old Mr. Clifford Teague told the "News" that he had been interested in science fiction for more than four years.

Said Mr. Teague: "If we get a big enough membership we eventually hope to hire a hall."

The club is trying to publicise itself, and draw in all people in North Birmingham who are interested in the subject. Notices are being placed at various points in Erdington, including the public library. Also members are advertising in several magazines—including the science fiction magazine "New Worlds."

Emphasising that the group is not solely a book club. Mr. Teague said that those interested in space stamps and records would be made most welcome. In the above picture enjoying a meeting are left to right Mr. Jack Pickering (26), Mr. Roger Paton (20), Mr. Teague and 18 years-old David Casey.

→ TAFF — the TransAtlantic Fan Fund — now approaching its 30th great year ←

If you're at this supercolossal party you've probably heard of TAFF and its mad plans to send all the best British fans to the USA whilst bringing all the best US fans, well, here. It's now time for a British fan to travel to the Chicago Worldcon next year—or rather, it's time for us to start deciding which one to send. I should know the candidates by the time of the party (stop me and ask), and shortly after will flood Known Space with millions of voting forms. If you don't get one, please write and ask! Anyone who's been in fandom for a year or two can (on payment of a small fee—we have to buy the plane ticket somehow) vote in the TAFF ballot. Also I will have goodies to sell you at this very event, such as snazzy Friend of Taff badges (be the first on your block, etc.), copies of the famous Nova-winning, Hugo-nominated fanzine *Troll-Dou*, and—if plans go according to plan, as planned—other things of a strange nature. Even TAFF flyers with lists of oddments you can order by post—the flyer costs nothing! And if by some strange quirk of Rog Peyton there's an auction at this party, rare and valuable lots will be sold in aid of TAFF as always. Your own gifts and donations of auctionables are always very welcome, too; the blessing of TAFF upon all donors past and future. (We also take money. We're not proud.)

I seem to have some space left, so I'll throw in a plug for *Ansible*, the fanzine of British news, gossip, misprints and lies. Reckoned indispensable by numerous paper-recycling plants, this appalling scandal-sheet comes out six to twelve times a year and costs a mere £1 for six issues at the time of writing. (£1 gets you 5 issues in Europe, 4 elsewhere.) Stop me and subscribe—now! †

Write to DAVE LANGFORD, 22 Northumberland Avenue, Reading, Berks, RG2 7PW, UK.

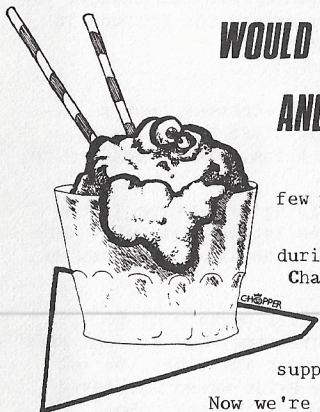


way) to joining the Young Conservatives, getting involved in their committee meetings, getting married, selling my collection of SF and then starting ANDROMEDA. During this period the BSFG faltered to a halt - after we'd all come off the BSFA committee together, there seemed little to focus the Group's attention on.

Although I still attended conventions and read SF, other things became more important and it wasn't till 1970, when Pete and I took on the '71 Easter convention that I realised I'd missed out on many things happening in Birmingham. But others can fill in that gap.

Rog Peyton

## WOULD YOU LIKE ANOTHER HELPING OF PINEAPPLE AND MELTED ICE-CREAM? Peter Weston



Some might say that all the Brum Group needs now is a few years of poverty, hardship and persecution!

Looking around Ray Bradbury's plush upstairs bar during the last meeting I realised how far we'd come from Charlie Winstone's front room; even further from the grubby bed-sit Cliff Teague shared with us, his collection and the International Socialist who would sometimes come in and lie on his bed, or cook a rough supper of beans and dripping during our meetings.

Now we're respectable, I somehow miss those rows with the landlady, the mad dog that attacked us when we went to the toilet, and the wonderful warm feeling that our little circle shared something special and exclusive.

Of course, not everyone saw things in quite the same light.

"It's a mug's game," opined Fred Peyton, around the time we were plotting to take over the BSFA. "Getting into science fiction fandom is like digging a hole and pulling the sides down on top of yourself."

In one way, I suppose Fred had a point. While other people were out drinking, dancing and watching football matches, there we were, two or three nights per week, talking about SF, playing 'Risk', and doing whatever else it was we did so enthusiastically. And in between, typing stencils, duplicating, collating, publishing our fanzines and making friends (and a few enemies) all over the country.

Yet it was, for a while, the most important thing in my life, a few years of close friendship and excitement that led directly to the BSFG in its present form.

It all began for me in January 1963 when I found a little pink slip in an old paperback at the Birmingham Rag Market; "Are you interested in SF?", it asked. "Join the Erdington Science Fiction Circle".

After six years of solitary reading it was my first indication that others like me existed, and I needed something like this. Since moving out to the council estate I'd lost my old pals, and at 19 you don't easily make new friends, particularly when you spend most Saturday afternoons hunting for old GALAXY and ASTOUNDING magazines. I knew, too, that I'd gone about as far as I could go on my own; sometimes it seemed I'd never find those back issues I needed to complete my set!

Two weeks later I made my first visit to the Group, walked down wet and windy Hunters Road to Cliff's digs in a tall, redbrick Victorian house.

"Quick, come in before she catches us," he said as he opened the door, ushering me into a dismal hall redolent with the smells of cabbage and washing.

"In here," said my host furtively.

BOOKS!!! More than I'd ever seen outside a library! Shelves and shelves of them, all around the walls; and all science fiction.

Vaguely I noticed we were in a large bare room, with two unmade beds, some dirty crockery and a few sticks of broken-down furniture. And two other people.

"This is Dave," said Cliff. "And this is Rog Peyton".

We went on from that, and the next two years flew past in a timeless jumble. Somewhere in there we moved half-a-mile down the hill to Charlie Winstone's Lovecraftian home, contacted fandom, and discovered fanzines. The Erdington Circle grew, attracted new recruits like Geoff Winterman, Beryl Henley and Rod Milner. We attended the 1964 convention at Peterborough; the group organised the Brumcon in 1965, and held most of the BSFA Committee posts in the same year.

And then somehow, it fell apart.

I'm not sure quite what went wrong. Certainly, Charlie Winstone took a hammering at Yarcon in 1966, and in reaction threw us out. Cliff had a lot of trouble with his mother and his girlfriend. Rog and I, I think, simply got fed up and joined the Young Conservatives where we had more fun.

There was a brief, doomed attempt to keep the group going by meeting in the 'Old Contemptibles' pub in town, for which I produced a newsletter that was a pale forerunner of the present sophisticated publication. After the landlord threw us out - we didn't drink enough - the Group just faded away.\*

The Interregnum lasted 4-5 years, though there were still pockets of SF activity here and there. I was producing SPECULATION, my fanzine, and through this met Bob Rickard, an artist/writer who was living in Shirley at the time. We met occasionally in the 'Temple Bar', and were later joined by Wylde Green fan David Pringle (chairman of the recent Yorcon), who put us in touch with Jack Cohen.

Bob Rickard started the Aston University Group at Gosta Green, in the Autumn term, 1967; I went along to their fourth meeting and met a quiet young man in a navy blazer (Vernon) and a slightly nervous young woman (Pauline) who thought I was John Brunner's secretary because I scribbled down his speech (actually I was collecting material for my fanzine!).

Rog Peyton still read science fiction, but spent most of his time with the YCs and married Arline in 1968; "I'll soon cure him of SF", she declared!

Rog missed the Buxton con in 1968, but I took Eileen (who thought it was all very strange). All four of us went to Oxford in 1969 and had a fine time, despite the Transylvanian decor of our hotel; but 1970 was a major disaster, and largely on the spur of the moment we volunteered to run the 1971 Eastercon at Worcester, to show how it really should be done.

Everything was more-or-less inevitable from then onwards; Bob and Vernon joined the Eastercon committee, the Aston Group came in force, people turned up from all over the Midlands. It was a huge convention, the biggest-ever in Britain (over two hundred attended!) and to be honest, I don't think we quite knew what to do with ourselves when it was all over.

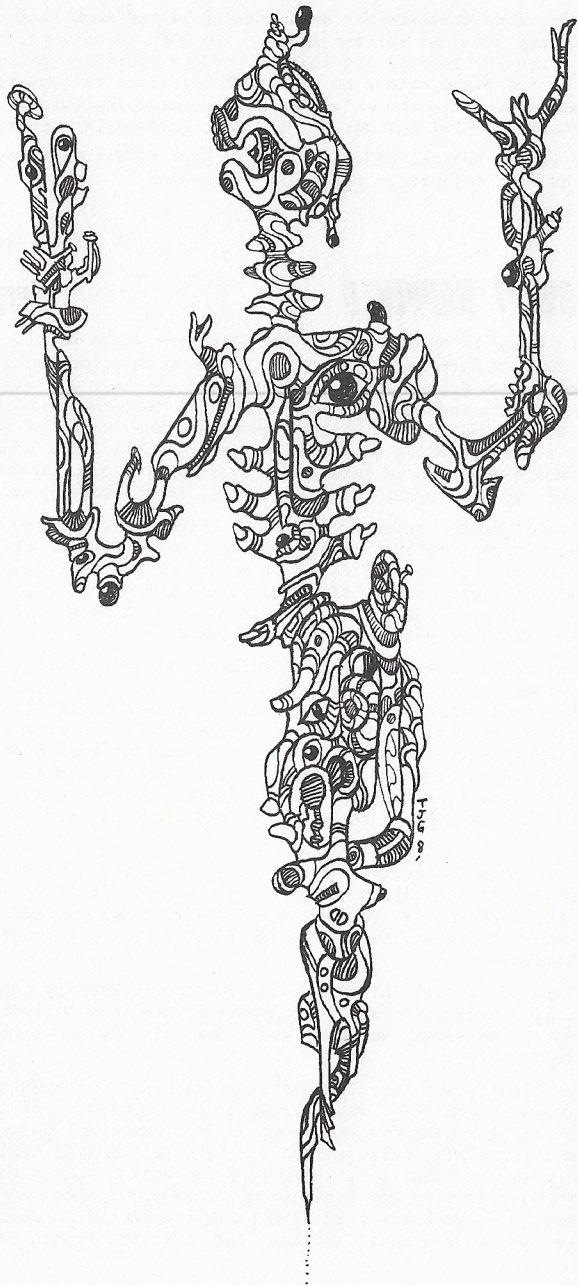
Worcester had been so much fun, and we'd contacted so many people, that we wondered whether we could get some sort of group going again...

We were more ambitious this time - front rooms were definitely out - and we wanted to try and capture a little of the atmosphere of a convention, potted, on our own doorsteps every month. I'd found the Imperial Hotel during my reconnaissance for the Eastercon, and it seemed just the right sort of friendly, slightly shabby meeting-place (with a manager, briefly, who was a keen SF reader, and helpful with late-night bar extensions).

It was a bold innovation but we decided to try and arrange some sort of programme every month; we'd have a regular newsletter, and a committee, and a constitution, and elections. Secretly, too, I hoped we had set up a sort of

---

\* Darrol Pardoe informs us that he and Martin Pitt officially declared this phase defunct on H G Wells's birthday in 1967.



training programme for fandom - and my own hope for the new, improved BSFG was that it would breed actifans who would happily pub their ishes and recreate in some measure that happy idyll of the mid-1960s.

And now here we are, in the future, ten years after the first hesitant meeting. Has the experiment worked? Have we succeeded in bringing newcomers into SF fandom, in developing a true 'group atmosphere'?

I think we've done tremendously well, having lasted much longer and been far more active than any previous British group. The BSFG is solvent, eagerly courted by managers of expensive hotels, and able to produce ambitious printed souvenir brochures. We've had Isaac Asimov to tea and Larry Niven to supper; Birmingham has the UK's leading SF bookshop and we've spawned half-a-dozen spin-off groups, a top-rate fantasy artist, several authors and our own, enormously successful NOVAICON.

I'm sorry, you'll have to excuse me, but I have to sit down for a while and recover. This is most definitely not where I came in.

'Risk' anybody?

Peter Weston

## **NOVAICON: HOW IT HAPPENED**

**Vernon Brown**

A favourite theme of SF authors is the alternate world story, wherein some event in 'our' history happened otherwise, resulting in a 'present' more or less removed from the one we know. Not only SF authors either - Sir Winston Churchill, G K Chesterton and Emil Ludwig all wrote stories of 'alternate worlds'. The non-writer too has his speculative or wishful moments - the 'what if' or 'if only I'd done otherwise' times. Looking back over my fannish life I can pinpoint one such event, without which there would have been no Aston SF Group, no NOVAICON, no BSFG as such and certainly no anniversary booklet for you to be reading now.

In 1967 a small poster appeared on the 6th floor notice board at Aston University, asking anyone interested in forming a university SF group to meet at an appointed time and place. About fifteen of us did so and were greeted by Bob Rickard, a small effervescent type studying in the College of Printing. His enthusiasm got the Aston SF Group off the ground and, although Bob moved on some years later, the ASFG kept going for over ten years.

Bob had many contacts with fans in Birmingham and elsewhere, and it was through him that I met Peter Weston, editor of SPECULATION, and soon the Group was holding regular collating sessions in one of my labs. In 1969 several of us attended the Easter convention in Oxford, from which we emerged hooked on such things. Then we attended a fantasy-type con in Leeds which was an unprogrammed session in a hotel hall for which we had to book our own rooms, etc. Then we thought "We can do better than this - a less structured affair than an Easter convention but still with basic con requirements such as a hotel to ourselves and a programme." We did nothing more about it.

Shortly after this I received a phone call from Peter - "How would you like to help organise an Easter convention in '71?" I thought, "The chap must be mad!" but allowed myself to be persuaded and soon found myself caught up in a round of committee meetings with Peter, Bob and Roger Peyton, to say nothing of endless one-finger typing sessions.

Later, things got worse! At one of the numerous collating sessions people were murmuring yet again about organising a convention when Peter's voice cut across the hubbub - "So why not DO something about it?" Dead silence for a moment or so and then, thus prodded, we did.

The main difficulty was that, as most ASFG members were students, there were University holidays to consider, which broke up the continuity of meetings. A difficulty which finally sundered the Group in 1978. However, being employed by the University, I was there all (well, almost all) of the time and could bridge the gaps. Thus being elected Chairman, I opened a convention bank account and we were off. NOVAICON (New, November) was intended as a one-off fannish affair of around 120/130 attendees, i.e. sufficient in size to enable people to circulate, small enough to prevent isolated groups forming. Not quite the annual polished do it has

grown into! We had committee meetings, contacted both fans and pros, had discussions with the manager of our chosen hotel - the Imperial Centre Hotel, which had just the number of beds required, and in general got things going. I must admit that I went round most of the time with my fingers crossed as the arrangements were all in my name, as was the bank account, and I was therefore effectively under-writing the whole operation, which could, heaven forbid, be a disaster. James White agreed to be Guest of Honour and other well-known British authors promised support.

It's interesting to look back at the programme we devised. After films on the Saturday morning we started the programme proper at 2.00pm and ran it, including a mini-banquet, until 10.00pm after which were more films. The Sunday programme started at 10.00am and finished at 4.30pm. We still managed eleven major programme items in that time, not counting films, as well as organising a First Day Cover service for philatelists, with a special postbox and hand-frank - the first, to my knowledge, of an SF nature in the world.

I don't remember much of the con itself as my bleeper seemed to be forever at work. I do remember practising my welcoming speech, all four sentences of it, several times in a deserted hall and being told afterwards that the mike had been hooked into the hotel PA system! The hotel staff were about the best I've known, the rest of the committee were as busy as me and the programme seemed to go off OK. So much so that the members present voted to make NOVACON an annual event - but that's another story. Suffice it to say that, due to the aforementioned enforced lack of continuity in the ASFG we officially handed over the reins to the then recently formed Birmingham SF Group, organised by, would you believe, Peter Weston, Roger Peyton and yours truly. Hectic and heady days to look back and speculate upon and I've still got the poster that started it all.

Vernon Brown

((Those three articles by the founder members of the current BSFG, bring us to the start of the the BSFG and the time NOVACON was taken over from the Aston Group. The story should be taken up here by the Group's first Chairman, Peter Weston, but he's still sitting down recovering. Peter was Chairman for the first 2½ years of the Group - the period covering the first 3 NOVACONS. - RGP))

## WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

*Pauline Morgan*

In the aftermath of NOVACON 1, a small group sat amidst the debris in the George Room at the Imperial - the scene of many Brum Group meetings. The con had been a success, Britain's second annual convention was, we decided, here to stay, but... It was a good idea to keep it in Birmingham... We wanted Brum Group members to run NOVACONS... We didn't want formal bidding as at Easter cons... We needed a mug to run it.

Foolishly, I said that if no-one else would I supposed I'd better. I had been to three Easter cons, I had been on Vernon's committee for NOVACON 1. I was, comparatively, a neo.

I assembled my committee. They had even less experience but, I hoped, had enough enthusiasm to carry us over the crises.

NOVACON was for fans, we wanted a Guest-of-Honour who was a fan. We chose Doreen Parker, a Big Name Fan who had been Secretary of the British Science Fiction Association for several years. Half-way to November she metamorphosed into Doreen Rogers.

We were not a very innovative committee - we were learning the game. The members now are scattered. Hazel Reynolds volunteered to organise NOVACON 3 and chaired the Brum Group before marrying and emigrating to Portsmouth. Meg Palmer was doctored and fled north with Gray Boak. Jeff Hacker abandoned the Group in favour of the nefarious activities of a Masonic Lodge, while Richard Newnham slipped quietly into obscurity and marriage.

I failed to learn by my mistakes and volunteered to run the 1977 Easter convention...but that is another story.

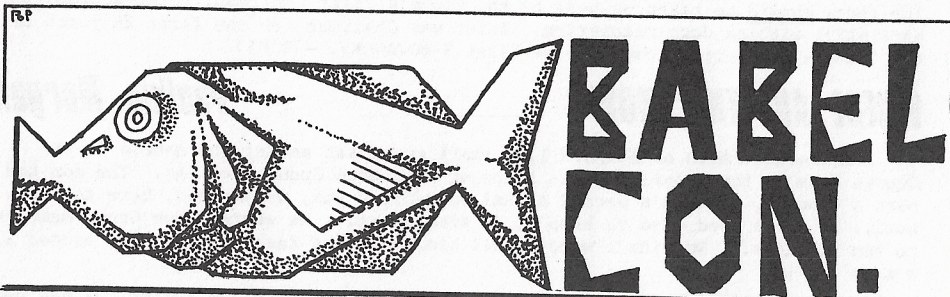
Pauline E Morgan

# Support GUFF

Somewhere around this rightly euphoria-laden celebration you'll find a fan looking a bit more shattered than most. No, it isn't the drink...it's the jet-lag, since he's just returned from a three-week holiday in Australia, courtesy of GUFF.

GUFF is the Get Up & Over -- or Going Under -- Fan Fund (the exact name depending on which way it's running), which links Britain and Australia, sending a well-known fan from each country to attend the other's national SF convention. John Foyster came to Brighton for Season 79, Joseph Nicholas went to Adelaide for Adventon 81; there are plans to bring another Australian fan here for Channelcon next year, and we want to be in a position to send another British representative to Australia in 1983 (to the Worldcon, if their bid is successful). And to do that we need money... because GUFF, like all other fan charities, survives on the generosity of fandom, and donations of items for auction at forthcoming conventions (and even of money!) are therefore most eagerly solicited.

So have a word or two with the current UK administrator -- the very same Joseph Nicholas currently engaged in propping up the bar in an attempt to rid himself of his jet-lag, and recognisable by flowing crepe scarf -- and get him to give you the lowdown on Australian fandom: the truth about Marc Ortlieb's amazing vanishing beard, Valma Brown's ashtray (visitors for the use of), John Foyster's psychedelically-striped blazer and the bed once slept in by Brian Aldiss....and why Australia is well worth a visit. Or, if you'd like to be kept in touch with the progress of the current and future races, write to him at his home address: Room 9, 94 St George's Square, Pimlico, London SW1Y 3QY. And have a good party!



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HITCH-HIKERS GUIDE TO THE  
GALAXY CONVENTION.  
GRAND HOTEL BIRMINGHAM  

---

7<sup>TH</sup> ↔ 9<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST 1981

---

Doug Adams, David Learner, Simon Jones and much more ! £6.00 Attending. Be hoopy and come along. Contact :- BABELCON, 11 Rutland Street, Hanley, Stoke on Trent, Staffs.

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# YOU VILL WEAR DE COSTUME!

Hazel Faulkner



I was walking upstairs toward the bar of the Imperial Hotel on the Saturday evening of NOVACON 2 when I stopped to chat to Pete Weston.

"Enjoying yourself?" he asked. Well, who doesn't on a Saturday evening at NOVACONS? "How about being chairman next year?" Somehow I ended up saying Yes to both questions and Peter gleefully made the fact well-known so that I couldn't back out of it. I played the same dirty trick on a few friends and ended up with what turned out to be one of the most imaginative committees anyone has ever had.

At that time the Brum Group was establishing itself as a home from home for a growing number of fans, Eastercons were getting 'big' and NOVACON was making its reputation as a fannish convention. Our first problem was to choose a Guest of Honour - so far NOVACONS had had one each of pro and fan and we wanted to keep the balance although no-one had yet had 2 GoHs. It soon became evident only one man would suit, so I phoned Ken Bulmer and invited him. He was, of course, a great success.

Next we needed ideas for programme, etc. Stan Eling said, "I'm tired of cold banquets, let's have a proper cold buffet!" So we did - fully equipped with a space-age menu that was later published in a catering magazine's rather posh 'specialist' menu section.

"How about a fanzine award?" asked Gillon Field. So the Nova was born. Gillon was an artist as well as a fan so she not only administered the whole thing but she made the trophy too!

We wanted a fancy dress parade. Was it worth it as so few fen could be persuaded to make costumes? Then GoH Ken informed us that conventions used to make it compulsory, so we announced that everyone had to come in costume (or pyjamas) in order to get in. Geoff Winterman had the idea of buying silly masks to sell to fans who turned up without any costume. I'm convinced we had the best collection of costumes that year.

Of the con itself, I remember getting ready for the opening speech and finding afterwards that I'd put on green eye make-up although I was wearing a blue blouse! On Sunday, the hotel forgot my alarm call. Not only did I miss breakfast but also the first programme item, arriving just in time to hear MC Ray Bradbury announce that coffee would be served, and someone in the audience pointing out that the hotel had served coffee 1½ hours early, had no customers and had cleared away! That was the last straw. Egged on by the cheers of fandom's caffeine addicts I went off to see the manager and demand that coffee be served. I think everyone drank coffee that morning, whether they liked it or not, just to prove that fans are not to be trifled with.

The film programme was memorable. What film programme, you ask? Well, it's like this. We'd chosen the films we wanted from the catalogues, and John Mansfield - Canadian fan and film-collector - was bringing another from Germany. Friday arrived and so did the projectionist and the equipment. Then John phoned from the airport. Customs wanted to inspect the film inch by inch to make sure it wasn't porn. Then, assuming it was clean, they'd charge him import duty by the foot. He left the film at the airport - film programme halved. Geoff called in to the Parcels Office at New Street Station - no sign of the other film. Saturday afternoon, still no sign. Geoff phoned the distributor. Yes, they'd sent it by British Rail. It hadn't arrived - film programme zilch. Geoff eventually found a film distributor in Coventry who had a copy of something awful, the title of which I have thankfully forgotten. He rushed over to collect it and it was eventually shown amongst gales of derisive laughter and extremely witty dialogue supplied by the audience's own fertile imagination!

The original distributor later tried to charge us for the film that had never arrived because, they claimed, it was returned to them having been shown. I often wonder whether there'd been a disappointed stag party somewhere in the depths of New Street Station that weekend.

I'm sure the committee's hard work paid off magnificently - we spent Sunday evening in a state of relief approaching euphoria.

The significant thing about NOVACON is that none of the committees ever get so disillusioned that they say "Never again" with any real conviction. It must be either a desire for power or a lunatic assumption that the committee members really do understand what's going on. For my pains, I served on Jack Cohen's committee for NOVACON 4. Of course, other chairmen end up having to write several of these articles, don't they? Fair exchange for their fun. On the other hand - I must disappear now - I can just hear Pete Weston muttering something about needing a chairman for NOVACON 13....

Hazel Faulkner

((So ended the first three years. Pete decided not to stand for re-election as Group Chairman. Yours truly became his successor and the committee meetings moved to my home, saving all that time-consuming travelling. But...as Chairman I also had to attend NOVACON committee meetings, resulting in something like up to 24 committee meetings in the year! No wonder Pete decided he'd had enough! - RGP))

## **THE END AT THE IMPERIAL**

**Jack Cohen**

NOVACON 4 was 1974, the year it wasn't in November - there was some possibility of a gang of American fen, and perhaps some pros, coming to Great Britain for a London event on the regular weekend. They didn't come but Isaac Asimov's Brum visit (indeed GB visit) arose from the didn'ting....

That was the year we took the Imperial up on their offer of Sunday lunch - Shepherd's Pie with a real dead shepherd - long dead - and the Committee actually had to eat some... Peter Weston had been to America, Wowie, and had slides to prove it. We had Tom Shippey, fascinating and pellucid as always, and John Fremlin on the horror of the Population Explosion (the horror was not that we might starve but that we might not... After the Sunday lunch this really had force!)

Ken Slater was our GoH and was as unruffled, jovial and friendly as always. Jim White and Bob Shaw were as dull, solemn and abstemious as ever, Harry Harrison his usual silent, dry... I can't keep this up (quite the reverse of the problem with Sunday lunch!)...

We were saddened by two tragedies. The death of Gillon Field, our Committee Secretary and loved friend, hit hard. Her eccentric humour, efficiency and friendly organising had kept us all in better spirits; we've all gained by her presence, but she'd not want us either to mourn her or to miss her. Jim Blish's illness prevented his coming along, too; we missed a trifle from one who has given us all very much.

NOVACON 4 went. As always the price we paid in organising it was amply repaid by our enjoyment of the next, and the next... At least we were the only one to have STAR TREK Bloopers! (PS What was the Special Item on the Programme??)

Jack Cohen

**Hazel Faulkner**

## **CHAIRMAN NO 3**

The BSGF had its second beginnings one Friday evening in the Imperial Centre Hotel back in the days when moon landings were only just real, and STAR TREK was in its first repeat season. I had been at the 'Speculation' conference when the Group's re-formation was announced and I was eager to see a viable club established. I became a regular attendee, and a committee member when I agreed to chair NOVACON 3, ending up as Chairman of the Group in 1975.

The committee usually met at Rog Peyton's house which was central. Actually it's more likely that this was because Arline could be relied upon to serve chocolate biscuits with the coffee! We spent hours planning meetings, programmes, publicity, etc., all the time trying to keep tabs on where the big names were and whether extra visits could be arranged. The impression we tried to create was that as far as SF was concerned, Brum was the centre of the Universe.

# ANDROMEDA

## BOOKSHOP

CONGRATULATIONS, BRUM GROUP, ON TEN SUCCESSFUL YEARS. ACTUALLY, IN TWO MONTHS TIME WE WILL BE CELEBRATING OUR TENTH ANNIVERSARY - PERHAPS NOT IN THE GRAND WAY YOU ARE BUT WE'LL WAIT AND SEE. OH, YES, IF YOU'VE FINISHED WITH HIM NOW AND HE ISN'T EXHAUSTED AFTER PRODUCING THIS SOUVENIR BOOK IN RECORD TIME, CAN WE PLEASE HAVE ROG BACK....WE NEED HIM FOR THE SIGNING SESSIONS ON THE 27TH - THOUGH THEY'LL BE OVER WHEN YOU GET ROUND TO READING THIS. BUT IF YOU MISSED IT, DON'T WORRY, THERE'S BOUND TO BE SPARE COPIES AVAILABLE AFTER THE SIGNING. THEN OF COURSE WE NEED HIM FOR THE FRANK HERBERT SIGNING ON JULY 3rd TO CARRY ALL THOSE COPIES OF 'GOD EMPEROR OF DUNE' UP FROM THE STOCK ROOM. WE SHOULD HAVE OTHER SIGNINGS BY BIG-NAME AMERICAN & UK AUTHORS IN THE NEAR FUTURE - KEEP IN TOUCH THROUGH OUR REGULAR CATALOGUES OF NEW ITEMS - IF YOU'RE NOT ALREADY ON OUR MAILING LIST, SEND AN S.A.E. (LARGE) FOR A SAMPLE COPY. DON'T FORGET WE HAVE A REGULAR STANDING-ORDER SYSTEM FOR MAGAZINES AND SERIES - GET YOU FAVOURITES SENT TO YOU AUTOMATICALLY ON PUBLICATION WITHOUT THE HASSLE OF HAVING TO WRITE AND ORDER EACH TIME.

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**57 Summer Row**  
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**NEWCOMERS AND B.**

April 1966

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Pete Weston. The  
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) and Charlie Winst  
rou Charlie ?). Rog  
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ce fiction, and GEOFF  
ad with HELEN FORTESC

# CLUBROOM AT LAST

AT LAST the Group may have somewhere better to hold meetings than in r  
of members houses. Not before time, the BSGF is going to meet in more sui

# STOURBRIDGE FANDOM IS NOT DEAD

r the first time, the  
ted into two uner  
and as Pete  
Helen abo  
write  
of

At a recent Sunday meeting at the home of Stourbridge fan Darroll Par-  
oe, the Group decided to hold future meetings in a Birmingham bar, for the next few months at least. A date was fixed and a place chosen, and it now only needs a big attendance to make a successful night.

FIRST MEETING in Stour  
far too long was held on S  
April. Most attendees had  
in finding host DARROLL P  
ode, but arrived & had e  
afternoon in The Man's

## ADVERTISE!

MEETINGS, etc.  
BIRMINGHAM SF Group  
now meets at 71 George  
Road, Edington, Birming-  
ham 23, on the first Tues-  
day evening of each month.  
New members very wel-  
come.

STOL and district SF  
Recently formed.  
warmly invites  
to this area.

The "Old Contemptibles" in Edmund Street, will be the meeting place, in the Lounge at 8.00 PM on Thursday the 5th of May. Circulars are being sent to all those in the City known to be interested.

Members will remember that meet-  
ings for the past year have been held  
in Charlie Winstone's house, in Erd-  
ington, on a sporadic monthly basis.  
More central meetings should bring in  
people not usually seen.

At the first of these 'new' meet-  
ings it is hoped to discuss the times  
places & frequency of meetings in the  
future.

Highlight of the d  
covery of a printing  
said attic. (no we ar  
Daxroll's first fanz  
momentarily.

The party were  
Ken Cheslin's hour  
PETE WESTON, and  
Midland fandom t  
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A good sig  
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10.00

At 10.35 the group disbanded,  
agreed to meet again, same place  
same time, in a fortnight. Fou  
ve more people are expected t  
d next time, including Martin  
, Mike Higgs, and possibly Ken  
in, Dave Ford, Charlie  
avid Smart

unofficial King of Hudson  
Rod Milner, Paperback room, announces to  
sympathetic friends that he's become  
to long-standing Birmingham  
engaged over Easter. Another  
girl-friend Bron. Another  
engaged - the first to be

# 3 NEWCOMERS AND BAD BEER!

## BSFG

Interested in S.F.?

**BIRMINGHAM SCIENCE FICTION GROUP**

meets 3rd Friday of each month  
Imperial Centre Hotel, Birmingham

Why not join us? 8.00 p.m.

THURSDAY MAY 19

Group meetings have been baptised in  
fire now that our first dispute with  
the bar-management has been smoothed  
over. In spite of two new girls att-  
ending the meeting held on May 19th,  
volatile ALAN ROBLIN lost his head  
when his beer lost its head!

Prolonged argument with the land-  
lord produced the threat to throw us  
out ("Just like a convention" quipped  
ROG PEYTON), and PETE WESTON summed  
up the situation when he said to Alan  
you stood up

Birmingham fan  
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# TRAVE AROUND



# BPSF/S

BIRMINGHAM POLYTECHNIC SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY SOCIETY

## Calaban

Our Newsletter

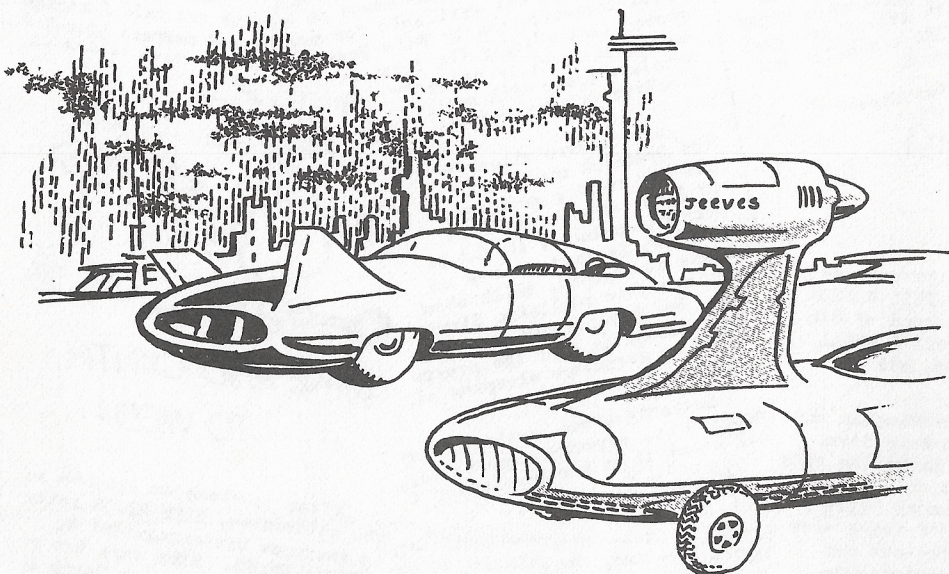
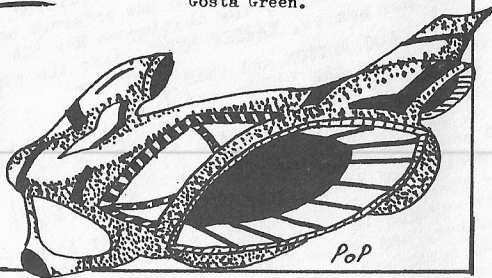
## ORKANNEWS

Should you want to contribute to 'CALABAN'.

Contact: Eunice Pearson, Students Union  
Office, Birmingham Polytechnic.

Talks, Debates, Quizzes and  
Workshops. Even a Fanzine!

We meet every other Tuesday  
Room 10/5, Commerce Centre,  
Gosta Green.



"Fifteen times round the Bull Ring and I still can't find the ROYAL ANGUS!"

Everyone who was around then will, of course, remember the special meeting when Isaac Asimov came. I remember sitting at his feet in the Holiday Inn, a position which he must have thought appropriate. For some reason the subject of limericks came up and perhaps considering my name was something of a challenge he came up with this:-

There was a young lady called Haze,  
Who was Birmingham's premiere craze,  
When I saw her my heart  
Felt Cupid's sharp dart,  
And I still walk around in a daze.

In those days we all had lots of fun safe in the knowledge that at last SF was becoming genuinely respectable for the first time and greatly relieved that we wouldn't have to spend the rest of our reading lives in hiding. Eventually I had to move, first to Leicester and then to Portsmouth, so I haven't been to a meeting in years. You know, Fridays just aren't the same any more.

Hazel Faulkner

## NEW PASTURES....

*Rog Peyton*

1974 as Chairman, helping out with NOVACON...and I was hooked. I had to chair a NOVACON! When I volunteered it was before NOVACON 4 and I hadn't counted on having to find a new venue for NOVACONS! We could have gone back to the Imperial but Russian-roulette with 5 bullets would have been the only programme item. I don't actually remember anything about choosing the Angus though I'm told we went looking round several hotels in Birmingham, rejecting all.

Apart from the amazing Ray Bradbury deciding to build the spaceship from the cover of the Programme Book, I remember very little about the con. I do remember the panic on the first night. I was due to open the proceedings at 7pm, make announcements and start the first film at 7.15. Sounds fine? One small snag - at 6.30 the screen still hadn't arrived. We chased after this invaluable item and I remember the thing being erected around me as I opened the convention on time at 7pm. Ye Gerbish was fiddling with the projectors and leads and getting everything ready his end. Screen erected...all stations go. I'd been filling in, waffling on about something and nothing...OK? - we should be ready. I gave the signal to Ye Gerbish - he yelled back, "OK now, but where's the bloody film?" It was still in the committee room. Oh well, we only started 10 minutes late.

One other thing that will remain impressed upon my memory - the Fancy Dress Parade on Saturday night. I'd done a radio interview that morning and mentioned there would be Fancy Dress, little thinking that anyone listening would come along and register for the con and enter the Fancy Dress Parade. If any would-be convention organisers out there get interviewed on the radio, stress that it is a Science Fiction Fancy Dress! Otherwise you too might find yourselves in the embarrassing position of having to announce entrants like 'Ena Sharples' and other TV personalities. I was doing the announcing and hadn't even heard of some of the characters. I still shudder at the memory of that evening.

After NOVACON 5, I was re-elected as Group Chairman in January 1976, a post I held for two years. Strangely enough, a radio interview screwed up one of the regular monthly meetings as well. In April 1976, David Hardy was interviewed a few hours before our Friday evening meeting on one of the local stations. He got the plug in that we had Professor John Taylor, he of Black Hole fame, that very evening. When I arrived at the Imperial about 8pm (admittedly a few minutes later than I'd intended), I discovered that the meeting was in process, Dave was in the chair and the room was 'Full'. The one and only time we've turned people away from a meeting - half the committee to boot!

Rog Peyton

## NOVACON 6... AND 7!

Stan Eling

Nostalgia adds wonderful colour and depth to events which would otherwise be quite grey and rather flat. Thinking now about the committee meetings of NOVACON 6, it seems that we really had it together then. The minutes produced by Arline on those occasions were a model of succinctness and have since served many times as a basic guide in the labyrinth of convention organising. All the members of the committee were eager to achieve another good NOVACON and they were full of lively ideas. Laurence managed the books expertly, Helen did a return of post service on the registrations, and Rog was always there, making useful observations and directing our feet back to earth if we ever began to drift etherwards. Rog also did an excellent job on the programme book, maintaining the high standard which he had set the previous year.

The con itself was not without headaches, chiefly because we knew nothing of gophers then (I wore out two pairs of legs and a walking-stick on the Friday alone) but I believe we all had a rare old time, with Guest-of-Honour Dave Kyle leaving no-one in doubt as to where he stood regarding standards in SF.

The mention of headaches reminds me of the unfortunate accident which befell Eddie Jones while walking through the Royal Angus restaurant late one night. Eddie stumbled and hit his head against the sharp copper edging of the meat display, opening up a gash which needed several stitches. Eddie is one of the most resilient fans, assuring me the following morning he felt none the worse for the adventure.

On the programme we had the films SOYLENT GREEN and WESTWORLD, also talks by John Brunner, Dr Jack Cohen and Tom Shippey, as well as the usual Quiz, Auctions and panels. An extra and unusual presence at this Con was the TV crew who were working on a programme about John Brunner and wanted to get his talk and the general atmosphere on film. One of the cameramen seemed fascinated with the back of Rog Peyton's head during the book auction, and must have got several hundred feet of that perspective!

Some time beyond the conclusion of the Saturday disco it would be fair to say we had surmounted the hump of all our difficulties - from then on we could free-wheel to the end of the convention, enjoying ourselves amidst jocular companions with the wine flowing freely. It was about this time that I was taken to a small room (I think it might have been a linen cupboard) where I was complemented, lionised, threatened; offered beer, women, books. I came out of the cupboard having 'volunteered' to chair NOVACON 7.

So here I was, chairman again, but this time without a committee, there being no volunteers forthcoming from the Brum Group this time round. Fortunately a committee was in the making to run the Easter convention in '78 (some 18 months hence) and part of that committee agreed to serve for NOVACON 7 as a warm-up for SKYCON in '78.

Martin Hoare was vice-chairman, Liese handled registrations and Ian Maule looked after film booking, while Janice took care of the money and Dave Langford the publications. Ian was the only one who had previous convention committee experience having chaired TYNECON, the Easter convention of '74.

Committee meetings were held at Martin and Liese's home in Pangbourne, this being the most central point from our various homes. Once again I had a committee that was a joy to work with and two good pubs within easy walking distance - what more could mortal man desire?

The preparations went like clockwork. Martin put all the names and addresses in store and we had computerised registration. This was the year we introduced the new method for selecting the Nova Award winner - it was while answering a telephone call on the subject of these new rules that I twisted my ankle so badly that I was off work for a fortnight!

The weekend before the con we all met in Pangbourne and spent many hours making badges, stuffing envelopes and getting all things together for me to run up to Brum on the Sunday. Hazel Langford was there, of course, and worked just as



hard as everyone else, although not officially on the committee. Another non-committee person who deserves a thank you is Kevin Smith for helping Dave in the production of a fine programme book.

The convention went off without a hitch. For films Ian had selected *THE DAY THE WORLD ENDED* and *IT CONQUERED THE WORLD* both directed by Roger Corman and *HEX* directed by Leo Garen. We had a writers' workshop, a talk on closed universes by Tom Shippey plus the now-standard disco, quiz and auctions. John Brunner was Guest-of-honour - this was the year he suggested, during his Banquet speech, that we should have closer ties with European fandom and that we should be looking in that direction for future G-O-Hs.

I think it was Peter Roberts who first said that there is only one NOVACON - we just add a little more to it each year. As true and as wonderful as this may be, it can cause difficulties when reminiscing.

Stan Eling

## **SERVING MY TIME**

**David Hardy**

"Yes, of course I'll write a piece for the 10th Anniversary Souvenir Book", I said blithely when they asked me, months ago. And then the deadline passed, and Vernon has been ringing me to ask (very politely) whether I've written it, and here I am with a piece of blank white paper in my tripewriter...

What can I write about my term of office as Chairman of the Brum Group? I was only Chairman once - but it was for three consecutive years (is that a record?): 1978, 1979 and 1980. Which at least proves that I have stamina (I prefer Kennomeat actually). No, that won't do - tear out paper and start again. Still, nobody actually reads this stuff - do they? Press on.

I only became chairman so that Committee Meetings could be held at my house and I wouldn't have to go out on cold, foggy nights, anyway. And I only 'retired' because we finally ran out of coffee and biscuits!

I don't know why I bothered really. After I'd been Chairman for some 18 months someone told Rog Peyton (my predecessor) at a meeting that he thought Rog was still Chairman and I was just the bloke who stood up at the start of meetings to announce the programme. As if Rog ever needed a mouthpiece!

I'm a relative newcomer to the Brum Group really. I joined in 1973, on returning to Birmingham - my birthplace - after several years in the wilds of Norfolk, and in 1975 found myself voted Publicity Officer. Thus initiated to Committee work, I became Chairman when Rog collapsed, exhausted in 1978. The rest is just a blur: *STAR WARS*, Bob Shaw, Anne McCaffrey, Fred Pohl, Joe Haldeman, Brian Aldiss and the 100th meeting, Ken Bulmer, Peter Nicholls (anyway Peter - why was I left out of *THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SCIENCE FICTION?* I don't remember saying anything to offend you...), Robert Lionel Fanthorpe, Philip Strick and the 10th Anniversary of Apollo, Jerry Pournelle, Larry Niven, Theodore Sturgeon, Nigel Kneale, the move to the Ivy Bush, Douglas Adams, Frank Hampson. Barge trips, beer and skittles, quizzes, open forums, closed bars....

David Hardy

## **SKINNIE-DIPPING, TOO!**

**Laurence Miller**

In response to public demand, past NOVACON chairmen write again but it has been so long ago that events, from the Holiday Inn and NOVACON 8, have faded from memory. The main things that tend to remain are the memories of carefully laid plans disintegrating into a carefully controlled mass 'don't panic' as we chased around cementing the pieces together. These are familiar memories for all con committees and chairmen as however carefully events are planned, something always seems to go wrong - half a quiz team suddenly develops double pneumonia (chickens out), the film case says 2001 but contains *THE BLOB* or the Guest-of-Honour disappears (is in the bar). This is the principal reason for convention traditions such as not starting on time.

This is the real meat of convention organising, seasoned by gentle assistance from hotel management who manage to mislay the detailed timetable which they have requested in the first place, to enable them to have all the rooms laid out correctly for the next event. More pleasant to recall are the actual members of staff (the ones that actually do the work) who proved very helpful in redeeming the management's mistakes. It's even nicer to remember all the complimentary remarks from attendees who thoroughly enjoyed themselves and glossed over the occasional glitch (if they even noticed any).

Most people seemed pleased with the wide range of alternative items offered in our programme, ranging from the main con hall to the video tapes available for viewing during most of the convention, not to forget the entertaining nude swimming display (I'm told it was entertaining but didn't personally see it...such is the life of a con chairman). Perhaps one day we'll have another suitable venue to provide as wide a choice for everyone.

Don't get the wrong idea from all the above as, apart from lots of hard work, it's still a very enjoyable experience to run a convention and you should try it before criticising the organisation at the next one you attend.

Laurence Miller

((During 1978, I'd tried my hand at producing the monthly BSG Newsletter and after one year I'd had enough - besides Stan had now been on more convention committees than I had - it was time to catch up. So I ran NOVACON 9 returning it to the Royal Angus. Chris Priest was a superb GoH, giving what I still consider the best GoH speech I've heard. We'd discovered gophers - thanks to SEACON '79 - and decided they were a Good Idea. The con ran without any hitches and I actually enjoyed it. So much so that I volunteered to chair NOVACON 10 as well - also Stan had done two cons in a row and I had to at least equal that. NOVACONS were getting bigger and bigger and it possibly wasn't the wisest of choices to have Brian Aldiss as GoH for NOVACON 10...Brian was guaranteed to increase the number of attendees. But things worked out fine and we had another successful event. This year I'm back in the chair at the Brum Group and Paul Oldroyd is finalising his plans for NOVACON 11 with the one-and-only Bob Shaw as GoH. We trust we'll see you there... - RGP))



## BIRMINGHAM SF WRITERS' MEETINGS

Chris Morgan

It all began some eleven years ago at Oxford University... Now that's a pretty elitist way to start an article, but it happens to be the truth. There was in those days an organisation called Oxford University Speculative Fiction Group, founded some decades earlier by Brian Aldiss. In 1970 those members of OUSFG who had literary pretensions (most people at Oxford University have literary pretensions; the rest are too busy rowing and playing rugger to think about cultivating any) decided not only to produce a little magazine of their own stories but to get together once a term and read such stories to each other.

The philosophy behind this was that it is virtually impossible for a writer to criticise his or her own work. From the start we were incisive - not just mutually congratulatory as are some writers' circles - though always constructive. It does no good to tell somebody that his story stinks; you've got to be able to say why and to suggest ways of improvement. In other words, the business of criticising other people's stories is at least as difficult as writing your own.

The attendees at those OUSFG writers' meetings included (besides myself) such undergraduates as Kevin Smith (who now edits VECTOR for the BSFA), Diana Reed (who produces things for BBC Radio, including SF, and will be speaking to the Brum Group on that subject in August) and Dave Langford (writer, superfaan and humorist extraordinaire). A post graduate who came along once or twice was Ian Watson (at about the same time as he was selling his first SF novel). From outside Oxford, by special invitation, came Robert Holdstock and Andrew Stephenson.

By the mid-1970s those OUSFG meetings had spawned the Pieria Writers' Meetings (Pieria being the land of the Muses). These continue still at approximately three-monthly intervals. There have been thirty of them, involving the aforementioned Kevin, Diana, Dave, Rob and Andrew, as well as Garry Kilworth and the BSFA's commandant of book-reviewing, Joseph Nicholas. Pierias are held at the residences of all these people by random rotation. (Pauline and I held number 30 in Birmingham in May this year).

During the early months of 1980 I came to realise that several (at least) members of the Brum Group were interested in writing SF. Not the least of these was Pauline, who persuaded me that we ought to organise an SF writers' group in Birmingham. This, I decided, should be based on the Pieria system (which itself was based on the OUSFG system). I put a note in the July 1980 Newsletter, and from the response to that the Birmingham SF Writers' Meetings were born. The first was in September 1980, hosted by Pauline and myself. The second was in January 1981, also at our place because of last-minute panics which caused a couple of changes of venue. The third was at David Hardy's in April and the fourth looks like being hosted by Alan Cash, in July.

Meetings occupy most of a Sunday, running from about 11am to 6pm, during which time about seven stories are read out and criticised. Everybody who has attended seems agreed that the meetings are helpful. In the first place, they provide a deadline for producing a story (entry to meetings is by story only). In the second place, the concerted criticism gives each of us suggestions for improvement and development which cannot normally be obtained from one's family or friends or even from publishers. Writing fiction is always hard, though; writers' meetings can offer feedback, motivation and hope, but they can't make writing easier.

We usually have more interested people than time available at these meetings. All the same, if you write SF or fantasy or horror and want to come along, drop me a line at 39 Hollybrow, Selly Oak, Birmingham B29 4LX.

Chris Morgan

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 GAITY pub, on the corner of Church Street and Barwick Street, Birmingham 3 (just round the corner from the Grand Hotel). New members are always welcome. Our Treasurer is Margaret Thorpe, 36 Twyford Road, Ward End, Birmingham 8. The 12-month subscription is £3.50 per person.

# THE TRUE HISTORY OF THE B.S.F.G. MEETS

BEING AN EXACT ALBEIT BRIEF ACCOUNT  
OF ITS DOINGS BY THE PEN OF A  
HUMBLE ARCHIVIST

## STAN ELING

The first meeting of the present BSGF was held on Friday 25th June 1971 and all meetings have been on the 3rd Friday of each month since then. There have also been special meetings from time to time.

Abbreviations:- (F) Film; (S) Speaker; (Ch) Chairman; (SM) Special Meeting; Months are denoted by number (1 is January; 2 February; 3 March; etc)

### 1971

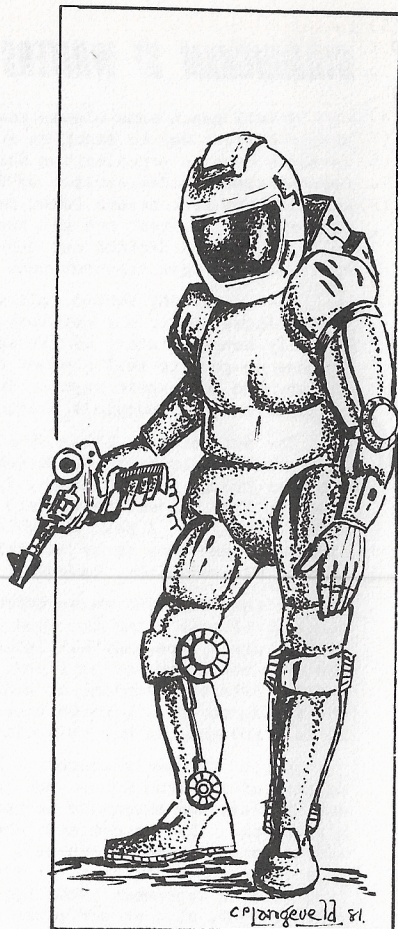
- 6 Introducing the committee.
- 7 (S) Dr Jack Cohen "The Possibility of Life on Other Planets".
- 8 Slides of EASTERCON 22 at Worcester.
- 9 Hugo & Nebula Awards discussion. Rog Peyton (Ch).
- 9 (SM) "History of Rockets" and "Apollo 14" films.
- 10 (S) James Blish "Science in SF".
- 11 NOVACON Post-mortem.
- 12 (S) Philip Strick.

### 1972

- 1 (SM) Annual General Meeting.
- 1 (S) Prof Fremlin "Limits of Population".
- 2 (S) Brian Aldiss "Tourist Class Utopias".
- 3 "50 Years of SF" Slide Show. Pete Weston.
- 4 Colour Slides of 3 Cons - Jeff Hacker.
- 5 (S) Diane Lloyd, editor of Corgi Books.
- 6 STAR TREK debate.
- 7 (S) Tom Shippey "End of the World in SF".
- 8 Isaac Asimov on film.
- 9 (S) Geoff Doherty "Myths, Dreams and Nightmares".
- 10 Quiz.
- 11 NOVACON Post-mortem.
- 12 John W Campbell on film.

### 1973

- 1 Annual General Meeting.
- 2 (S) Dan Morgan "Science in SF".
- 3 "Doom or Deliverance" debate.
- 4 (S) Bob Rickard "Oddball Stuff".
- 5 (F) DESTINATION MOON.
- 6 Brains Trust.
- 7 (S) Chris Brown "Make-up in SF Films".
- 8 No Meeting
- 9 (S) Jim Turner "Architecture in the Future".
- 10 (S) Ian Watson "Concept of the Alien".
- 11 (F) DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL.
- 12 (S) Dr Jack Cohen.



### 1974

- 1 Annual General Meeting & Auction.
- 2 (F) 2002: A SPACE ODDITY by Dave Hardy.
- 3 (S) Angus Wells, editor of Sphere books.
- 4 (S) Don Ryburn "Scientology".
- 5 (S) Brian Aldiss.
- 6 (SM)(S) Isaac Asimov. Arranged jointly with MENSA at The Holiday Inn.
- 6 (S) Samuel R Delany "Logic".
- 7 Quiz and Auction.
- 8 (S) Dr Jack Cohen.
- 9 Quiz.
- 10 (S) Peter Weston "Early Mags".
- 11 (F) APOLLO 14 - film by David Hardy plus CAPTAIN CELLULOID.
- 12 (F) FORBIDDEN PLANET and Xmas Party.

### 1975

- 1 Annual General Meeting and Auction.
- 2 (S) Anthony Cheetham of Futura Books.
- 3 (S) Harry Harrison.
- 4 (F) Russian and American Space Training.
- 5 (S) Bob Shaw "Getting and Developing Ideas for SF stories".

- 6 (S) Tom Shippey "Tolkien".
- 7 Quiz and Auction.
- 8 Two films on complex systems and Space-ship Earth idea.
- 9 (S) Dave Kyle "History of SF".
- 10 (S) Mat Irvine "Special Effects".
- 11 (S) Duncan Lunan "Alien Probes in the Trojan Position".
- 12 (F) SILENT RUNNING and Xmas Party.



#### 1976

- 1 Annual General Meeting and Auction.
- 2 Dave Hardy's Audio-Visual Evening.
- 3 (S) J F Young "Robotics".
- 4 (S) Prof John Taylor "From Black Holes to ESP".
- 5 Quiz.
- 6 (S) Christopher Priest.
- 7 (S) Edmund Cooper.
- 8 (S) Dave Hardy "Bits and Pieces".
- 9 (S) Philip Barker "The L-5 Society".
- 10 (S) Toby Roxburgh "Publishing SF".
- 11 (S) Peter Weston "History of Fandom".
- 12 (F) THE SLEEPER plus Xmas Party/Disco.

#### 1977

- 1 Annual General Meeting and Auction.
- 2 (S) Brian Aldiss.
- 3 (S) Christopher Priest.
- 4 Quiz.
- 5 (S) Peter Weston "The Last 10 Years in SF".
- 6 (S) Ian Ridpath "Life in the Universe".
- 7 Barge Trip.
- 8 (S) Brian Lewis "SF Art".
- 9 Pete Weston & Vernon Brown on the Miami World Con.
- 10 (S) Robert Temple "The Sirius Mystery".
- 11 Auction and SF Charades.
- 12 (F) DAY OF THE TRIFFIDS and Xmas Party.

#### 1978

- 1 Annual General Meeting and Quiz.
- 2 (S) Bob Shaw "Who Goes Here?"
- 3 (SM)(S) Anne McCaffrey.
- 3 (S) Dr Jack Cohen "Likely and Unlikely Aliens".

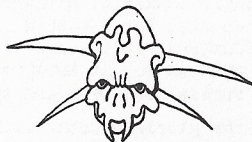
- 4 STAR WARS debate.
- 5 SF Call My Bluff.
- 6 (SM)(S) Frederik Pohl.
- 6 (S) Philip Strick with films.
- 6 (SM)(S) Joe Haldeman.
- 7 Barge Trip.
- 8 (S) Brian Stableford.
- 9 (S) Colin Kapp.
- 10 SF Charades.
- 11 (S) Nick Austin, editor Sphere Books.
- 12 (F) LOGAN'S RUN and Xmas Party.

#### 1979

- 1 Annual General Meeting and Auction.
- 2 (S) Ken and Pam Bulmer.
- 3 (S) Peter Nicholls "SF ENCYCLOPEDIA".
- 3 (SM)(S) Anne McCaffrey "THE WHITE DRAGON".
- 4 - 100th Meeting - (S) Brian Aldiss.
- 5 (S) Brian Ball.
- 6 (S) Robert Lionel Fanthorpe.
- 6 (SM) Beer and Skittles evening at the White Swan, Harborne.
- 7 Films to celebrate the 10th Anniversary of the Moon Landing.
- 8 (S) Jerry Pournelle.
- 8 (SM)(S) Larry Niven and Theodore Sturgeon.
- 9 (SM)(S) Nigel Keale "Quatermass".
- 9 (S) John Hammond of the H G Wells Society.
- 10 (S) Douglas Adams "Sans Towel".
- 11 Films by David Hardy.
- 12 Xmas Party & SF Charades.

#### 1980

- 1 Annual General Meeting and Auction.
- 2 (S) Dr John Barker "The Bio-Chip".
- 3 University Challenge. Chris Morgan (Ch).
- 4 (S) Les Flood "Being an SF Agent".
- 5 (S) Robert Holdstock.
- 6 Open Forum. Rog Peyton (Ch).
- 7 Barge Trip.
- 8 (S) Frank Hampson & Alan Vince "Dan Dare".
- 9 (S) Ian Watson.
- 10 Free Discussion. (S) Michael Guest - "Dowsing" and Quiz.
- 11 (S) Julian Isaacs "ESP".
- 12 Beer and Skittles at White Swan.



#### 1981

- 1 Annual General Meeting and Auction.
- 2 (S) Ken Slater - SF bookseller.
- 3 (S) Dr Jack Cohen "Sex and Aliens".
- 4 (S) Thomas M Disch.
- 5 (S) Garry Kilworth "In Praise of Aliens", plus panel discussion - Garry Kilworth, Di Reed, Dave Langford, Rob Holdstock and Chris Morgan (Ch).
- 6 (S) Hugh Walters.

# The NOVA Award

DAVE LANGFORD

The NOVA Award was established as a seal of ultimate excellence in British fanzines, as a mighty accolade ensuring that the name of each year's winning fanzine would live forever, graven upon tablets of imperishable crystal in fandom's lofty and jewel bedizened Hall of Fame (planning permission not granted). Luckily, before plans for the automatic canonisation of each award-winner could be finalised, the NOVA settled down as merely a hearty pat on the back for the editor of the fanzine chosen as Britain's Best in the given year. Each year Ray Bradbury - the Benvenuto Cellini of Birmingham - toils in his secret laboratory to construct a NOVA trophy which is sometimes unique and sometimes considerably more than unique; one year it might have hypersonic streamlining and a megadeath strike capability, next year a built-in cigar lighter.

From 1973 to 1976 the NOVA winner was decided by a select panel of judges chosen for their vast knowledge of fandom and ability to shout at one another late into the night. In order of appearance: Jim Linwood, Phil Rogers, Ina Shorrocks, Andrew Stephenson, Greg Pickersgill, Keith Walker, Malcolm Edwards, Peter Roberts, Graham Boak, Leroy Kettle, Mike Meara, Dave Rowe and Ian Williams. Thus at NOVACON 3 in 1973, the first earth-shattering event in the turbulent history of the NOVA Award took place: I attended my first convention. In addition and coincidentally, the first NOVA was posthumously presented to Peter Weston for his famous fanzine SPECULATION - not that Peter was particularly posthumous, but the fanzine was. Next year at NOVACON 4, John Brosnan's despicable scandal-sheet BIG SCAB tied with Lisa Conesa's ever so respectable ZIMRI, and Ray had to dash back to the workshop for an extra bout of Creation. Then Rob Jackson took the award with MAYA at NOVACONS 5 and 6, and went on to try for the Hugo (as had SPECULATION, only MAYA won the NOVA before losing the Hugo instead of after).

Not all was well: too many judges were turning up in cement socks at the bottom of the Angus lift-shafts after announcing their decisions. Drunkenly I suggested to Stan Eling that the NOVA could be awarded by popular vote if some idiot sprained his brain drawing up rules, and drunkenly he told me to go and draw up some rules. I asked for, and got, much advice: the result was, in Kevin Smith's words, the three volume presentation set of NOVA Award rules with the seven appendices. For reasons which no longer seem clear these provide for an Administrator (who fails to print the ballot forms) and a Committee (which fails to turn up and count them): the important thing was that anyone who'd published or contributed articles or artwork to fanzines in the previous couple of years could vote. Administrators to date: Liese Hoare and Coral Jackson. NOVA Committee members: Rob Jackson, Greg Pickersgill, Dave Langford, Joseph Nicholas and Harry Bell.

The embarrassing moment came at NOVACON 7, where under my foolproof rules and frighteningly impartial guidance the Award went to TWLL-DDU, edited by, well, um. Oops. Then Alan Dorey nabbed it at NOVACON 8 for his despicable scandal sheet GROSS ENCOUNTERS, followed by the ever so respectable SEAMONSTERS from Simone Walsh at NOVACON 9. At NOVACON 10 in 1980, the very strange Dave Bridges won with his very strange ONE-OFF: and there at present the matter rests.

For the glorious future...h'mm...I peer into my crystal ball...the mists clear, the snowflakes settle, the compulsory Peyton commercial break ends...yes, I foresee that in 1981, at NOVACON 11, the NOVA Award will be won! And by a fanzine, to boot!

The rest is up to you.

Dave Langford

# novacon 11

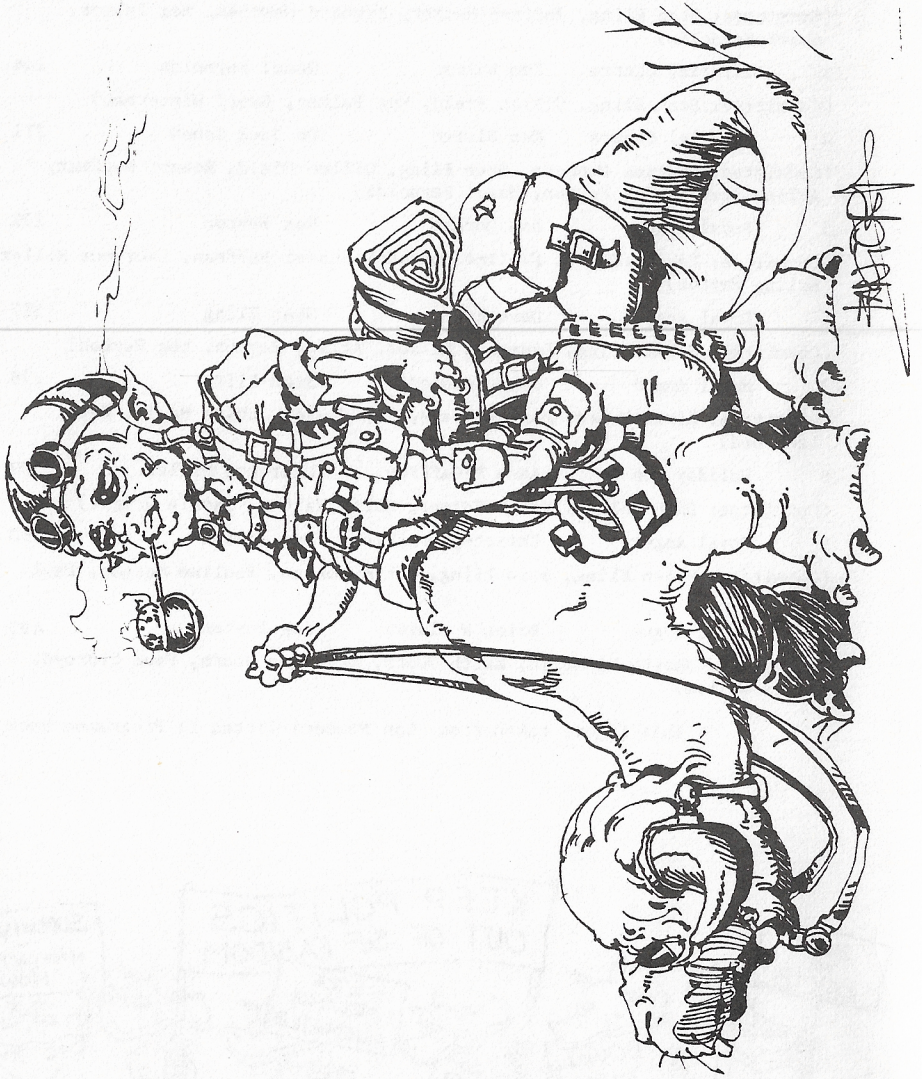
IS AGAIN AT THE ROYAL ANGUS HOTEL...  
OCTOBER 30/31/NOVEMBER 1 ARE THE DATES  
...GUEST OF HONOUR IS BOB SHAW...£5.50  
REGISTRATION...S.A.E. TO JEAN FROST,  
49 HUMBER TOWER, FRANCIS STREET,  
BIRMINGHAM 7.

# The History of NOVACON

NOVACON	HOTEL	GUEST OF HONOUR	CHAIRMAN	ATTENDANCE*
1	Imperial Centre	James White	Vernon Brown	144
(Committee: Ray Bradbury, Alan Denham, Alan Donnelly, Pauline Dungate)				
2	Imperial Centre	Doreen Rogers	Pauline Dungate	144
(Committee: Stan Eling, Jeffrey Hacker, Richard Newnham, Meg Palmer, Hazel Reynolds)				
3	Imperial Centre	Ken Bulmer	Hazel Reynolds	146
(Committee: Stan Eling, Gillon Field, Meg Palmer, Geoff Winterman)				
4	Imperial Centre	Ken Slater	Dr Jack Cohen	211
(Committee: Pauline Dungate, Stan Eling, Gillon Field, Robert Hoffman, Arline Peyton, Rog Peyton, Hazel Reynolds)				
5	Royal Angus	Dan Morgan	Rog Peyton	272
(Committee: Ray Bradbury, Pauline Dungate, Robert Hoffman, Laurence Miller, Arline Peyton)				
6	Royal Angus	Dave Kyle	Stan Eling	317
(Committee: Helen Eling, Laurence Miller, Arline Peyton, Rog Peyton)				
7	Royal Angus	John Brunner	Stan Eling	278
(Committee: Liese Hoare, Martin Hoare, Ian Maule, Janice Maule, Dave Langford)				
8	Holiday Inn	Anne McCaffrey	Laurence Miller	309
(Committee: Dave Holmes, Kathy Holmes, Chris Walton, Jackie Wright)				
9	Royal Angus	Christopher Priest	Rog Peyton	290
(Committee: Helen Eling, Stan Eling, Chris Morgan, Pauline Morgan, Paul Oldroyd)				
10	Royal Angus	Brian W Aldiss	Rog Peyton	495
(Committee: Joseph Nicholas, Keith Oborn, Krystyna Oborn, Paul Oldroyd, Chris Walton)				

\* This figure taken from Con Members listed in Programme Book







# THE BACK SIDE~EFFECT or, BEHIND THE BEYOND or, HOW THE EARTH WERE SAVED IN THE KNICKERS OF TIME, LIKE Brian Aldiss

People evolved and popular culture was forgotten along with Byzantium.

The last ten centuries BG (Before God) were spent arguing about whether it was possible to exceed the speed of light. People sat about in old breweries talking of nothing else. Some said Yes, some said No, and a tabloid newspaper ran a poll on the subject. Results were published under the headline, WOW, TRAVEL LIGHT, SAYS PROF, OR ELSE -

Professor Ormulu Rainosaur theorised that any object exceeding the velocity of light would transcend the universe and find itself outside the laws of physical space/time. When this was announced in public, there was rioting in the streets of Nicaragua.

Only two centuries later - by which time the rioting had died down - a ship was constructed which, it was confidently anticipated, would exceed the speed of light with knobs on. Not since the vindaloo butty had the world known such excitement. The vessel was built by a multi-national corporation established for the purpose, with components manufactured by British Leyland (or the Taiwan Sunlight Manufacturing and Innocent Friendship Society as it had then become). A special fuel was used to fuel it, and ten special stokers were trained to do the stoking. A special trade union was created to permit them to work beyond the Heavyside Layer without passports.

Before launch, and before lunch, the ship was inspected by all the heads of the EEC (Earth Ecumenical Council) and Gerry Webb. They pronounced it to be good, particularly the food in the canteen, provided by the Truss-Whore-Cyst-Farting Group.

While they ate their bindhi bargi and ratatouille, a comedian entertained them. "So I fell off the edge of this ninety-nine storey building, see. And at the last floor down there was a line of washing out, like, wi' a pair of girl's panties hanging out to dry. I fell into them and broke me fall - so I reckon I were saved in the knickers of time.... I took the subway to Grauman's Chinese Theatre in Hollywood, see, and it were so full, see, that I had to sit down in the cellar. But I had a lovely view up through a grating, like. Overhead, without any fuss, the starlets were going out, like."

Then the launch ceremony. In honour of the banquet that had preceded it, the ship was christened "The Stainless Steel Ratatouille". It immediately began to climb into the wild blue yonder, where the stars were flung glittering like jewels across the limitless black empyrean of endless infinity with all the magnificent prodigality of adjectives in a novel by E C Tubb.

Immediately, a strange side-effect was experienced on Earth. It began to shrink back to nothing. So did Birmingham, where the comedian came from. This was one of the effects of relativity which that idiot Albert Einstein had never considered. It had not entered his head; he had been too busy thinking of Mozart and some pusher at Harvard he had the hots for. OOPS, AL, MORE BOOBS, as the popular press put it.

What happened was clear. Under the terms of the Special Theory of Relativity the speed of light is constant regardless of any other motion, so that, for instance, a radio wave or a postcard travelling by first class mail in the direction of a hypothetical spaceship moving at the speed of light will overhaul the spaceship at precisely the speed of light, provided it is posted early in the

day. Thus, according to a clock on the ship viewed by an outside observer, a postman for instance, time will seem to crawl in respect to a similar clock on Earth viewed by a similar postman, whereas the Earth clock will appear to be going backwards with respect to the accelerating optic velocity of the clock on the ship. In other words, as the mass of the ship increases relative to its velocity, so the Earth's mass shrinks relative to the velocity of the ship, irrespective of however many postmen are observing it from a point near infinity. So in no time the Earth had disappeared entirely and was lost up its own dilation-effect.

To make the matter still clearer, I recommend a reading of REPORT ON PROBABILITY A (Granada, £1.50, available from R Peyton for cash only).

The ship, under Captain Poul Sanderson, forged on through an intense magnetic storm caused by the overtaking picture postcards, and burst through into another space-time continuum, such as has been visualised many times by the sillier science fiction writers.

"Jumping Jupiter," the Captain exclaimed, gritting his nose. "Is that God ahead?" Something had gone wrong. The croissants were cold. Where were the stars, the old ambitions, the lusty male companionship, the heady joys of execution? Gone, alas, all gone, and in their place - God... Sempiternal and holy as a hoot-owl. And reading HELLICONIA (Ad.)

It was extraordinarily difficult to focus on God, since he was multi-dimensional, with eighty-nine dimensions about his person at last count. The thing was getting out of hand, and he was filling all unknown space, while trying to pass it off as middle-aged spread. CAN IT, YOUR WORSHIP, as THE SUN put it. But God went on growing. He had to have a hobby. He kept thinking about inventing an intellectual but shapely female companion but never quite got round to it. He spent most afternoons talking to Freud and Jung about his problem.

Freud could do a fantastically funny imitation of Clement Freud.

The Earth ship buzzed close to God's left ear. He caught it and set it down on his hand. The crew poured out on his palm, led by Captain Poul Sanderson, and stood glaring up at the Almighty, their picnic baskets under their arms, their blasters in their hands, their subscriptions to ANALOG in their hip pockets.

"Humanoids, eh? Last week it was centaurs. Birdmen the week before, androids the week before that. What's the matter with you all, why can't you keep to your own enclosures? Did I ever bother you? No. Well, don't bother me. Get lost. Join the BSFA."

God's voice was amazingly loud. This could be explained under the Special Theory, since the speed of vibration of a tonsil travelling in the direction of a hypothetical aural labyrinth moving at the speed of light or beyond will increase in mass in inverse proportion to any after-shave lotion in the vicinity, leaving the space-time continuum as empty as a fanzine with no reference to Bob Shaw in it.

"We've lost Earth," said the bold Captain, drawing his sword and patting his pet telepathic dragon, McCavity, on the clavicle. "Please can we have our ball back?" Following the example of Captain Kirk, he never urinated.

The Almighty drew forth the Earth from his left nostril. To the Impossible all things are possible. He flung it hard in the direction of infinity, bogies and all, but just missed.

"Fetch!", he commanded, returning enraptured to his reading.

Easier said than done. Earth was travelling at almost the speed of light, and shrinking again under what was later to be termed the Ellison Effect. But the Captain jumped on his trusty dragon, goading it onwards. The telepathic beast used its ESPenis as an indicator, which twitched towards Earth, and rapidly overhauled it, so that once again Earth was saved at the eleventh hour - or 10.40 if you happened to be aboard a story passing in the opposite direction and written by Phil Jose Farmer at the speed of light.



This tale is presented to the Birmingham Science Fiction Group to dishonour their tenth anniversary, in the hopes that, as usual, they will be too busy swilling beer to read any nonsense written in their souvenir book - or come to that, any similar souvenir book passing in the opposite direction at optic velocity, such as Harry Harrison's eyeballs.

Brian Aldiss

"I do certainly send my very best wishes to the Birmingham SF Group because some of my best friends and staunchest supporters are among your members! May this only be the first of many decades in which to bring enlightenment to Brum!" - ANNE McCAFFREY

"My best wishes and warm regards to all present members of the Group." - BERYL MERCER

"You have my cordial good wishes and I hope the stimulus of the Party will in due course lead to even more science and even more fiction!" - Prof JOHN FREMLIN

"Warmest good wishes to the Birmingham Science Fiction Group. It was an honour and a great pleasure to visit you with Frank Hampson." - ALAN VINCE

"I wish the Group every success for the future and hope you will have another ten (at least) exciting years before you." - DIANE PEARSON

"I wish you all the best for an enjoyable meeting and for the next ten years." IAN RIDPATH.

"I hope the party will be a great success. My best wishes to the Group." ANTHONY CHEETHAM

"I hope everything goes with a swing! Here's a bit of nonsense you might find room for in the souvenir book:-

Sound the trumpet and bang on the Dirmingham!

Let the filksingers yodel and Stirmingham!

Saw on the fiddle and s-ay to the Midlands:

"Here's to ten-year-old Fandom in Birmingham!"

Best.... JOHN BRUNNER

"Congratulations and best wishes on the BSGF's 1/100th millennium!"

MAT IRVINE



"I would like to wish you every success and an enjoyable Party."

DAN MORGAN

"My best wishes to all for the next ten years." - DUNCAN LUNAN

# FILMCON 81

BIRMINGHAM 20th - 22nd NOVEMBER 1981

FILMS: GUESTS & PERSONALITIES: AUCTION: FAN ROOM:

SPECIAL V I D E O ROOMS

75 WILLOWS CRESCENT

CANNON HILL

BIRMINGHAM B12 9NE

# THE YEAR 2000 IN BIRMINGHAM

## Harry Harrison

I missed the chance to come back the first time around; 1000 was a very bad year. Nasty winter. Frost everywhere. Not my thing really. Floods in Egypt. While I was still making my mind up, time marches to the sound of a different drum here, all of a sudden it was 1001 and that was that. For another thousand years. Or a millennium as they call it. But I made a new year's resolution - really a new millennial resolution - not to miss the date the next time around.

I always keep my word, as they say. So here it was, the year 2000 and I took a deep breath and went to work. After all, I had promised. But, as I have said, time does tend to slip by and before I knew it it was June 27th not January 1st. Close enough. And it was the right year, I was sure of that.

Down through the clouds without hesitation, shoulders wide, beard curled, keeping my promise. I'd show all those sneerers!

But as I slipped down through the clouds I realised I hadn't decided on a drop area. Not that it was important, as long as I'd got the world right. I decided to let chance play its part. I closed my eyes, did two barrel rolls and an Immelmann turn - then looked up to see an island rushing at me. All of the roads were as crooked as a Pharoah's promise but I did see one, cutting straight across the green landscape. I followed it for a time until it passed through a rather complex bit, not unlike a bowl of spaghetti, where I lost my original road. I swooped lower, down through clouds of coal smoke that started me coughing. By the time I had recovered I was following a ring-type road that went on forever, never seeming to end. In desperation I listened carefully and heard the roar of the faithful chanting hymns. This was more like it; I zeroed in on the sound.

The temple was named The Royal Angus. A good omen, perhaps some connection with Bonny Prince Charlie, always a favourite of mine. I touched down, smoothed my robe and approached the portal of the temple that was guarded by a burly native.

"Bit early for the masquerade, mate," he said, eying me up and down in a not unfriendly manner. "Let's have your ticket."

"I have but to knock to be admitted."

"Not here, old son, not without a ticket, not even if you were Jesus Christ."

I smiled benignly at him and spoke, but my words were drowned out in a roar of sound from within the temple. The guardian of the portal beamed and pointed at a greyhaired man in a wheelchair being propelled forward by an even greyer, and fatter, man.

"Didn't think old Rog would make it," the guardian declaimed. "But old Dave just dumped him into the atomic wheelchair and drove him here. Had to come to pour the ceremonial pints."

A ceremonial libation, very good. "I have returned as well and will spake unto you...."

Once again my words were drowned out as the person referred to as Rog seized two gigantic drinking vessels from his followers and held them out before him in trembling hands. Two ancient individuals, trembling even more than he, rose from matched Bath chairs and tottered forward on crutches to clutch at the sacred potion. Their crutches rattled to the floor as they raised and drained the vessels.

"A couple of good old lads," the guardian observed benignly. "Both with cirrhosis yet they came here today to be at this twenty-ninth anniversary of the Brum Group."

"A cult?"

"We've been called worse. The tall one is Brian, the crunched over bald one is Harry."

"Local saints?"

"Some think so. But not me. But they are good old buggers."

"Entomologists?"

"None of that dirty talk. Now - out with your ticket or piss off."

"I have come here to save..."

"Bank is down the street. I'm missing the best part - they're on their third round of pints, neck and neck!"

"Millions alive today will live forever..."

"Those two old bastards probably will too, downing bitter like that at their age." Then his eyeballs bulged. "My God - look what they're doing now!"

But, after addressing me in person, he slammed the door. It was all quite confusing. So confusing in fact that I turned away, bemused, thinking hard, and walked in a direction whence I knew not. Then, before I realised it, I was back here again, with the clouds billowing around me and the harps playing on all sides. It had been a long walk I realised when I checked the time. Already May of 2001. I had missed the millennium again.

But - what is a thousand years in eternity? The year 3000 would do just as well. It would also mean that I would not have to witness that mystifying ritual again.

Or would I? No, it was impossible that the priest Rog would be pouring pints for Saints Brian and Harry for eternity.

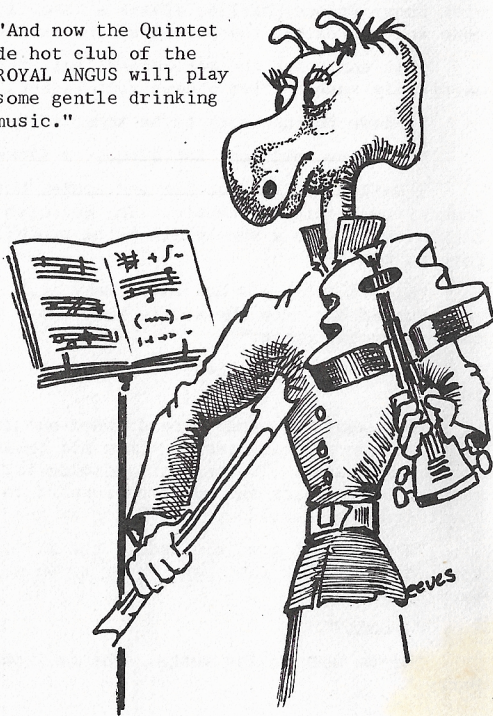
Simply impossible.

Then why was I marking my calendar for the year 3000 to look in at the Brum Tabernacle when the anniversary came round again?

Harry Harrison



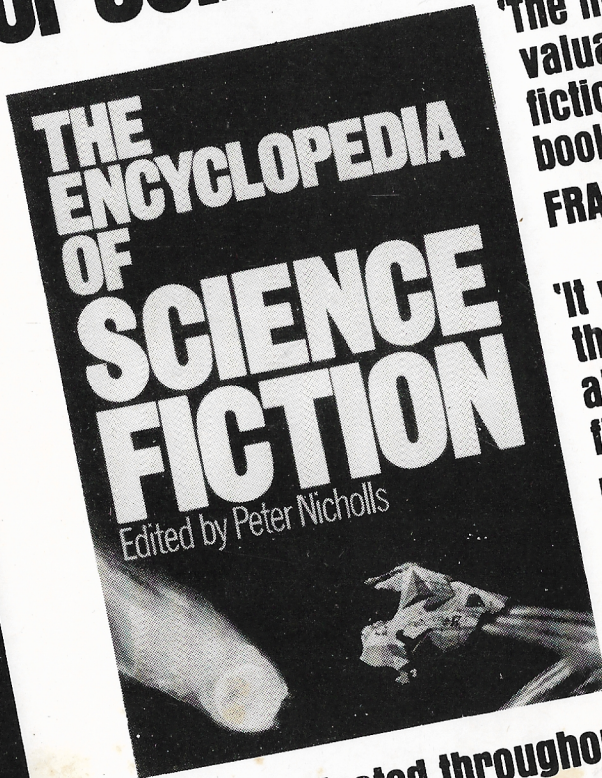
"And now the Quintet  
de hot club of the  
ROYAL ANGUS will play  
some gentle drinking  
music."



YEAR	CHAIRMAN	TREASURER	SECRETARY	NEWSLETTER EDITOR	PUBLICITY	NOVACON CHAIRMAN	OTHER POSITIONS
1971	PETER WESTON	VERNON BROWN	-	PETER WESTON	ROG PEYTON	VERNON BROWN	ROG PEYTON (Vice Chairman)
1972	PETER WESTON	GEOFF WINTERMAN	-	PETER WESTON (Jan - Apr) VERNON BROWN (May - Dec)	KEN EADIE	PAULINE DUNGATE	VERNON BROWN (Vice Ch) TIM STANNARD (Projects Off) GILLON FIELD (Asst Newsletter Editor)
1973	PETER WESTON	GEOFF WINTERMAN (Jan-Sep) STAN ELING (Oct-Dec)	PAULINE DUNGATE	VERNON BROWN	MICK ROWLEY	HAZEL REYNOLDS	ROG PEYTON (Vice Chairman Oct-Dec) GILLON FIELD (Asst Newsletter Editor)
1974	ROG PEYTON	STAN ELING	HAZEL REYNOLDS	VERNON BROWN	PETER WESTON	JACK COHEN	-
1975	HAZEL REYNOLDS	STAN ELING	CHRIS WALTON	VERNON BROWN	RAY BRADBURY	ROG PEYTON	-
1976	ROG PEYTON	CHRIS WALTON	ELAINE MILLER	VERNON BROWN	DAVID HARDY	STAN ELING	-
1977	ROG PEYTON	LAURENCE MILLER	LOIS WOODWARD	VERNON BROWN	DAVID HARDY	STAN ELING	-
1978	DAVID HARDY	DAVE COX	ARLINE PEYTON	ROG PEYTON	STAN ELING	LAURENCE MILLER	STEVE GREEN (Asst Newsletter Editor)
1979	DAVID HARDY	DAVE HOLMES	ARLINE PEYTON	STEVE GREEN (Jan-Jun) IAN WARNER (Jul-Dec)	IAN WARNER (Jan-Jun) EDDIE STACHELSKI (Jul-Dec)	ROG PEYTON	EDDIE STACHELSKI (Asst Newsletter Editor)
1980	DAVID HARDY	MARGARET THORPE	ARLINE PEYTON	CHRIS MORGAN	PAULINE MORGAN	ROG PEYTON	CHRIS SMITH (Film Society Chairman) PAULINE MORGAN (Asst Newsletter Editor)
1981	ROG PEYTON	MARGARET THORPE	ARLINE PEYTON	CHRIS MORGAN	DAVID HARDY	PAUL OLDROYD	CHRIS SMITH (Film Society Chairman) PAULINE MORGAN (10th Anniversary Officer)

In addition to the above, TIM STANNARD has been the Group's Legal Advisor from 1973-81 inclusive.

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