

# 20 TWENTYCON 20 P.R.1

WHERE: TWENTYCON will be held at the HOLIDAY INN, BIRMINGHAM

WHEN: JULY 19th - 21st 1991

HOW MUCH: Attending membership £12 upto and including April 1st  
£15 from April 2nd  
Supporting membership £6

ROOM RATES: single £28 per night  
double £22.50 per person per night

NB: THERE WILL BE A MEMBERSHIP CEILING OF 250 PEOPLE AND HOTEL BOOKING FORMS  
NEED TO BE WITH THE HOTEL BY THE END OF MAY therefore return your form to  
CAROL MORTON (address below) by MAY 20th or be disappointed!

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## COMMITTEE

HELENA BOWLES.....Chair.  
RICHARD STANDAGE.....Treasurer.  
CAROL MORTON.....Registrations/Membership Secretary.  
address: 14 Park St  
Lye  
Stourbridge  
West Midlands  
tel.no. 0384 897206 (BEFORE 8pm ONLY)  
ANDREW WRIGHT.....Programme  
address: 7 Grove Ave.  
Acocks Green  
Birmingham  
tel.no. 021 707 6606

## STAFF

MARTIN TUDOR.....Hotel Liaison and General Good Advice  
ROG PEYTON.....Souvenir Book  
021 643 1999 (during shop hours FOR ADVERTISING RATES )

BOOKROOM TABLES £15 each - limited space so BOOK SOON with CAROL MORTON

Also Thanks to TONY BERRY for kind use of his Amstrad, without which...

WELCOME TO TWENTYCON PR#1

TWENTYCON is the Birmingham Science Fiction Group's Twentieth Anniversary Celebration. IT'S PARTY TIME!!!!!!

The Brum Group's own joint Honoray President HARRY HARRISON has agreed to come and join in the fun as one of the Guests of Honour. There will be a second Guest whom we, unfortunately, cannot announce as we are awaiting confirmation. Sadly our other President BRIAN ALDISS has prior commitments that prevent him from joining us.

We are not going to announce anything to do with the programme as very little has been finalised and we prefer to keep you in suspense for a while! However if you wish to offer (constructive) suggestions please 'phone or drop a line to ANDREW WRIGHT (see front page for address).

YOU MUST REMEMBER THIS...have you got Brum Group/Novacon memorabilia? We want newsletters, personal records, photos (especially photos) from the last twenty years, if you have anything we could exhibit at the convention Andrew's your lad, again

Last but certainly not least we have an article from one of the BSFG's founding fathers, a little stroll down memory lane we hope you will find interesting...

IN THE BEGINNING . . .

Late one Wednesday evening the phone rang and a voice, all sweetness and light, greeted me. I was therefore not unprepared to hear Helena ask me for an article on the early history of the BSFG, deadline a week hence. Finagles' 4th or 5th Law states that: "Events all happen at once," and mine were happening over the next few days so this is a rather hasty piece of zork, complete with nostalgic memories and moan of how fans ain't what they used to be! Perhaps you had better turn to the next page now.

An Xxxxxman is reputed to have said when asked directions: "To be sure and here is not a good place to start from, you'd best start from another place entirely, begorrah!" and similarly the Birmingham Science Fiction Group has its origins some distance in time and space from its birth. In fact, it was in 1967 that a notice appeared outside the students' Common Room at Aston University, advertising the proposed formation of the Aston Science Fiction Group. I duly turned up, met Bob Rickard, the advertiser, and found myself on the ASFG committee where I stayed for 9 of its 10 years of its existence. Bob was a student at the Polytechnic next door, went to conventions and knew fans both locally and nationally. Through him I met Peter Weston and Roger Peyton, thus laying the groundwork for the BSFG, but other things happened first.

Over the next few years the Group flourished, within its university limitations, and many people joined who have gone on to become well-known fans. In those days (sobs/cheers) to admit to a mundane that one read SF was to invite sidelong looks and pointed comments; "2001" had only just

started to open the floodgates of film SF, fiction had to be looked for and, of course, video did not exist. So, to meet like minded people took more of an effort and it was more of an event when they were found. And only one con a year - at Easter- did not help. The SF scene nowadays is totally different, with Cons every weekend, Groups everywhere and the market flooded with SF, SF related and, more usually, so-called "Sci-Fi" material. Everyone considers themselves a Fan and "well-known authors in the Genre" state casually that the only Sci-Fi that they had read before writing their blockbuster trilogy was "Lord of the Rings". But I digress.

In 1969 many Group members attended the Easter convention and decided to run another convention at the other end of the year. Thus NOVACON was conceived and took place in 1971. Just after the same Easter convention Peter Western pressganged Bob, Roger and myself onto a committee to run the Eastercon 22 in 1971. As Peter was still producing his fanzine SPECULATION and I had started organising trips to Continental conventions the first years of the 70s saw Birmingham fans organising most British fan events, or, as Pete put it: "Birmingham is the centre of the universe." Alas, the Glory that was...!

So 1971 saw Brum fans at fever pitch and, as so often happens with fevers, rationality was lost and another event proposed - The Birmingham Science Fiction Group. Peter, Roger and I were the organisers and, although preliminary work had been done before Eastercon it was only after that things got underway and our first meeting was held at the Imperial Centre Hotel in July of that year. NOVACON was also to be held there in November and at times the management, who were very good in those days, were driven up the wall trying to remember who did what, where and when, particularly as I was also NOVACON chairman. To say nothing of the bank where, for a while, NOVACON, and the BSFG accounts were both held. Apparently the staff could not conceive of two separate bunches of SF idiots in the same city and so tended to amalgamate the paperwork, resulting in some weirdly titled and totalled statements.

At first the BSFG drew on the same type of Fan as had the ASFG - keen to find others and do things - although with Peter's and Roger's connections we could run more meetings with guest speakers of note! As with the ASFG, many of whose members had also joined the BSFG, extra meeting events were a regular occurrence. As SF was by now becoming more marketable and therefore "acceptable", membership started to include more "non-Golden Age Fans", followers of 'Dr Who', 'Star Trek' and 70s authors. Difficult to describe but the atmosphere of meetings changed over the years and by the 80s many of the earlier members no longer attended meetings which were now becoming much less traditional and more market SF.

But returning to 1971 the final "root" of the BSFG was established when it was decided at NOVACON to make the convention an annual event. For logistic reasons the ASFG could not organise such a continuing event so its "ownership" was given to the BSFG although there was continuity between NOVACON and NOVACON II as the latter was chaired by Pauline Dungate (now Morgan) who had been a committee member of NOVACON. Thus, the origin of the BSFG. An era difficult to imagine for fans brought up over the last decade; but to many of us, preferable.

VERNON BROWN



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