



DEAD OF NIGHT MAGAZINE



Issue 10 October/November 1996 Price £2



When The Year Begins To Die.
Traditions And Beliefs From Halloween To Yuletide

Merseyside's Only Publication Dealing With All
Paranormal Phenomena!!!

Editorial



'The Martians could land in the car-park,
And no-one would care.'
'Nothing Ever Happens'
DEL AMITRI.

Tuesday, 8th August, 1996.

Sunrise over the city.

Daylight gradually steadies itself against the dark watches of the night. People awake to the sounds of the achingly familiar: The unconcerned twittering of birdsong. A dog barking. A football being kicked against a garden gate. A mother calling to her son to come in and get ready for school. The 7am factory whistle beckoning its workers to clock on. The distant droning of an aeroplane and the sweet, fragrant breath of a late summer breeze.

I awake too, less than eager to leap out of bed and play my role in the ritual of day-to-day normality. The previous night's encounter with several bottles of 'Budweiser' has left me feeling somewhat bereft of enthusiasm and the only thing I really want to do is crawl back under the covers and lie there at least until the room stops spinning like an out of control roulette wheel. Unfortunately, I have no choice in the matter. A rueful glance at the VCR clock reveals that it's already five to eight leaving me with less than an hour to get ready for another mind-bogglingly exciting day at the office. Heaving a world-weary sigh that would put a martyr to shame, I traipse downstairs with all the eagerness of Marie Antoinette on her way to the guillotine.

I switch on the TV, not because I'm particularly interested in watching it, but merely to provide some background noise as I go into the bathroom to get washed. I glance at the screen barely long enough to register that it's tuned into BBC1's 'Breakfast News' programme, and the North-West regional bulletin is just winding up. I'm mentally debating whether I should maybe try and eat something or whether that would incur the risk of it making an impromptu re-appearance later on, (all over my brand new shoes, for example,) when my attention is suddenly drawn back to the TV screen...

And my jaw drops open and my eyes bulge in their sockets and my hangover vanishes in less time than it takes to say 'Plink, Plink, Fizz.'

There on the screen, instead of the usual depressing as hell news reports from some far-flung war zone, is a picture of the Earth as seen from space, and then the camera pans back to reveal the planets with which it shares the Solar System, focusing on one planet in particular...

Mars.

And then, the newscaster proclaims, in perfectly sober tones, the tidings that I thought I'd only ever hear in some 1950's, sci-fi b-movie. '*Scientists in America think they nay have proof that life once existed on Mars!*'

No sooner have those words begun to sink in when things take on an even more incredible angle. There are shots of a meteorite, said to be of Martian origin, and thought to contain fossils of extra-terrestrial micro-organisms. Scientists are huddled together engaged in frantic discussions. Highly respected astronomers and astro-physicists voice their belief that we are not alone in the Universe alongside photographs of alleged UFO's: (the less than convincing George Adamski and Stephen Darbyshire ones amongst them) and clips of the arrival of the Alien Spaceships in 'INDEPENDENCE DAY'...

I can hardly believe what I am seeing and hearing and for a single endless moment, I thought I must be dreaming. A feeling of pure unreality washes over me. It's an odd sensation - One that makes me close my eyes and open them again slowly to bring things back into proper focus.

The implications of this news are astounding and I feel exalted, excited and not a little frightened. The rest of the morning doesn't merely pass by, it *floats!!!*

As I walk to work, the August sky is a deep crisp blue that is nearly autumnal, and I caught myself gazing up at the heavens, almost as if I expected there to be a fleet of Martian spaceships hovering above me. I can hardly wait to reach the office and share the sense of wonder that only a story like this can generate.

Twenty odd minutes or so later however, I find the earth-shattering news is greeted with at best, bland indifference and at worst, sheer boredom. Shaking their heads at my obvious enthusiasm, they force upon me a hard and brutal truth; Examples of the magic that surrounds everyday life fail to weave their spell upon most people. The average person is too wrapped up in their own concept of what life should be about to care much for anything they can't hold in their hands and claim for themselves.

The fact that something that means so much to me, to them means less than some half-heard fairy tale from some country far away, and that they openly laughed at my 'childish sense of priority' didn't anger me but filled me with a terrible sadness that made me feel a whole lot like crying.

I found it difficult to accept that most people, if afforded a glimpse of what lies beyond this Earth, would see only a cold, vast emptiness.

Whilst gazing at the splendour of the star-lit heavens the great philosopher Immanuel Kant, once wrote; 'The eternal silence of those infinite spaces frightens me.'

That the vast majority of the human race refuse even to *glance* skywards with open eyes and open minds frightens me a great deal more.

Lee Walker. 10th November, 1996
New Ferry, Merseyside.

Chasing The Unknown

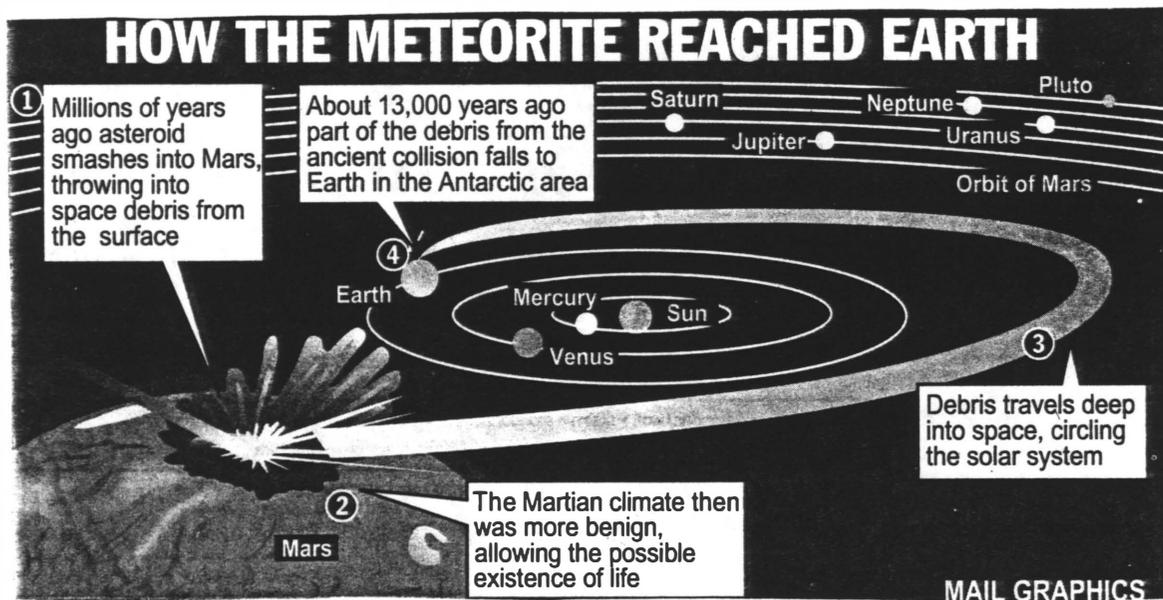
The Latest Weird And Wonderful News-Clippings From Around The World

Is There Life On Mars?

'The chances of anything coming from Mars, are a million to one, he said,
The chances of anything coming from Mars, are a million to one,
But still...
THEY COME!!!'

There's no doubting the Fortean story of the year so far. Indeed, potentially *the* most momentous story in the history of mankind. The discovery of what could be the first proof positive that we are not alone in the Universe and that life itself is not exclusive to Earth. True, we are not talking here about anything more substantial than a tiny fossil found on (what is presumed to be) a Martian meteorite in the white wastes of Antarctica. But it's implications and what it might herald were enough to inspire lurid headlines right across the globe. (for a personal account of the press, media and general public reaction, see this issue's typically rambling Editorial).

What follows here, is a general overview of how the tabloids and the so-called 'qualities' dealt with the revelations in an initial wave of high excitement and expectation.



'Experts' at NASA (presumably the same 'experts' who have been claiming for decades that extraterrestrial life was a physical impossibility) claimed that the meteorite was first found in Antarctica way back in 1984. It is said to have come from Mars, three and a half billion years ago (some papers said it was *four* and a half billion years ago. You'll have to decide which one's correct) and upon examination proved to contain crude fossils from primitive microorganisms no larger than a full stop. The large, orange circles visible in the colour photographs of the meteorite are organic molecules of carbon - the first ever found in rock. The largest are 200 microns...Less than one hundredth of an inch across. The smallest are less than 100th the diameter of a human hair. Inside them are even more microscopic nodules which are the carbonate traces of the bacteria that was alive 3.5 billion years ago. In appearance and size, the structures are amazingly similar to the microscopic fossils of the tiniest bacteria found here on Earth. Sceptics were quick to jump on this similarity and question the validity of the claim that the fossils originated on Mars. Perhaps it was contaminated by organisms indigenous to the Earth?

Dr McKay, who headed the study of the Meteorite (code named ALH 84001) was quick to stress however, that *'there is not only one finding that leads us to believe that this is evidence of life on Mars. Rather, it is a combination of many things that we have found including the unique pattern of organic molecules and carbon compounds that are the basis of life and several unusual mineral phases that are known products of primitive microscopic organisms on Earth. The*

relationship of all these things in terms of location - within a few hundred thousandths of an inch of one another - is the most compelling evidence.'

The meteorite may have lain beneath the ice, awaiting discovery for as long as 13,000 years, and news of its unearthing was enough to inspire tales of imminent space exploration and manned trips to Mars. President Clinton (taking time off from lobbing Cruise Missiles at the Iraqi's in a bid to get re-elected) was apparently pledging to launch a vast armada of spaceships to seek out 'brave new worlds'. He was quoted as saying; *'Its implications are as far-reaching and as awe-inspiring as can be imagined. I am determined that the American space programme will put its full intellectual power and technological prowess behind the search for further evidence of life on Mars. If this discovery is confirmed, it will surely be one of the most stunning insights into our universe that science has ever uncovered.'*

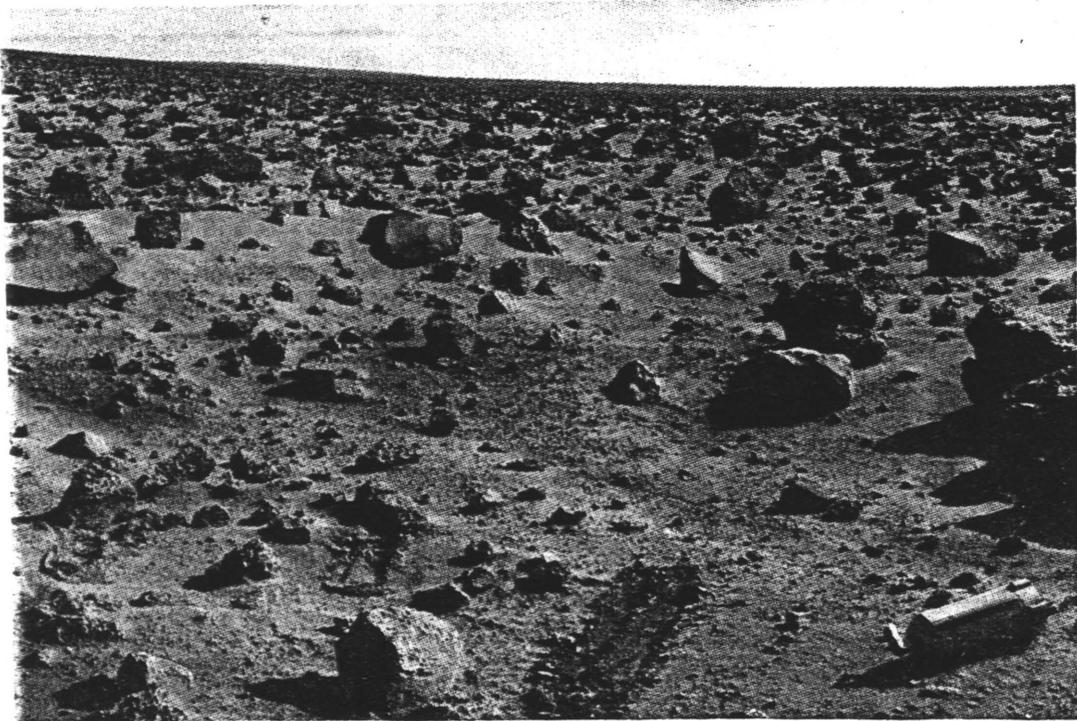
NASA were calling the news *'arguably the biggest discovery in the history of science.'*

Two unmanned spacecraft are due to lift off this coming November and according to reports in the press, another eight are on the NASA exploration programme. 'The Daily Mail' claimed that World leaders were being briefed in an attempt to pool their respective resources; financial and technological, with a view to building a 'Star Trek-type fleet. *'Already Russia and Japan are said to be interested in teaming up with NASA in a search to find other planets the size of Earth and within 150 million miles of it,'*

Interestingly, there was further speculation that life may still exist somewhere beneath the Martian surface, *(something we open-minded individuals have been considering for years - Ed).*

NASA's chief scientist Dr David Goldin McKay was quoted as saying; *'Although life can't live on the surface, there is the probability of life on the sub-surface. It may have retreated underground, drawing energy from the hot springs and thermal areas.'*

Even the normally coldly logical NASA administrator's were swept along by the wonder of the find. One such administrator, Daniel Goldin, was busy telling reporters that a micro-robot would soon be sent to Mars to dig for rock samples. *'This is as unbelievable day. We are on the doorstep to the heavens. We are now on the threshold of establishing; Is life unique to Earth?'*



Mars; a barren wasteland that looks uncannily like some great desert in the Mid-West Of America...And there are more than a few conspiracy theorists (who've maybe viewed 'CAPRICORN ONE' one time too many) who say that is precisely what it is.

'THE DAILY MIRROR' (known to everyone associated with this magazine as 'THE DAILY MANC' due to its ill-disguised love of all things Manchester-ish) ran a brief natural history of Mars amidst such sensationalist headlines as 'DON'T PANIC' NASA say Martians DO exist...But 100 of them could fit on a full stop!'

Four and a half billion years ago, they say, Mars was a wild planet, with enormous volcanoes spewing molten lava into raging seas.

It is possible that in this seething cauldron, the seeds of life, just as on Earth, may have been sown. *'Today, Mars's meteor-pitted plains are swept by violent dust storms. The volcanoes - the greatest Mount Olympus Mons, is more than 15 miles high, three times the height of Everest. But there could be huge hidden reserves of water, and the basic ingredients of life may still be there.'*

Billions of years ago, Mars was wet and mild, with temperatures a pleasant 22C. Huge quantities of rock and dust were blasted up from the volcano ranges into the dark skies. Rivers of red hot lava flowed slowly down into the pounding oceans. Astronomer Heather Couper says; 'It must have been spectacular. The lava must have evaporated huge amounts of water with a great booming noise. But despite the drama, conditions then would have been ripe for life. I can imagine little life forms bobbing about in the warm sea. This fossil that's been found could have started as a bacteria in the sea which was caught up in a lava flow. The rock cooled, the bacteria became a fossil, and long, long after, the rock found its way to Earth.'

When the volcanic activity died down, Mars gradually lost its atmosphere and turned cold.

Without its protective wrapping of gases, the planet was scorched by the Sun's ultra-violet radiation. It still has spectral scenery, with one gorge, the Valles Marineris, four times the depth of the Grand Canyon, and five times as wide.

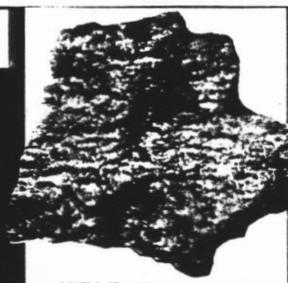
But the atmosphere is thin, made up largely of poisonous carbon dioxide and temperatures hover at minus 23C.

The air will probably never be breathable, but some scientists dream of transforming the planet, even creating oceans and giant forests. With low Martian gravity - about half that of the Earth - genetically engineered oak trees could grow phenomenally tall, up to a quarter of a mile high.'

The paper continues with this harmless speculation by suggesting that humans might comfortably live in transparent bubble domes, whilst especially hardy plants were left to thrive in the gradually warming world outside. 'One idea is to seed Mars with designer bacteria,' says Heather Couper. 'These could create gases and slowly warm up the planet.'

DON'T PANIC

NASA say Martians DO
exist...but 100 of them
could fit on a full stop



ALIEN: The Martian meteorite

From ALLAN HALL in New York SPACE scientists have seen life on Mars - and it's a hundred times smaller than the full stop at the end of this sentence.

Experts in Washington yesterday gave almost certain confirmation of "mini-Martian" life in the form of microscopic fossils discovered on a meteorite from the Red Planet. They also outlined plans for robot and spacecraft exploration of Mars starting within three months - and a possible MANNED mission early next century.

The fossils don't represent a major threat to man, though they are less than 1/100th the diameter of a human hair.

But, in appearance and size, the structures are "strikingly similar" to microscopic fossils of the tiniest bacteria found on earth.

Verify

NASA scientists were describing for the first time details of the meteorite formed 4.5 billion years ago.

Dr Everett Gibson said: "For two years we have applied state of the art technology to these analyses. We believe we have found reasonable evidence of past life on Mars."

"We don't claim we have conclusively proven it. We are putting this evidence out to the scientific community for others to verify, enhance, or disprove if they can."

President Bill Clinton last night hailed the find as a breakthrough. He said the US space programme would put its full "technological prowess" behind Mars exploration, and added: "If this discovery is confirmed, it will surely be one of the most stunning insights into our universe science has ever uncovered."

An example of the hysteria and sensationalism dreamed up by the vast majority of the British press in the immediate wake of the announcement. Talk about over the top. It could be Halloween, 1938 all over again.

All very well and good, you might think. Especially the way things are going on our own planet. But what has all this to do with Meteorite ALH84001? Don't worry, the 'DAILY MANC' is getting round to it.

They regale us with a whole list of (ahem) fascinating trivia and nonsense under the heading 'FOSSIL FACTS'.

'The 4.2lb fragment was formed more than 4.5 billion years ago in the seething cauldron of Mars. Then 16 million years ago the rock was blasted off Mars in a meteorite storm, carrying with it microscopic life forms. After travelling across space for millions of years, it smashed into Earth at a speed of up to 50,000 mph.

It was discovered in the Allen Hills region of Antarctica in 1984 during an annual meteorite hunting expedition. The rock was named after Alan Hills who discovered it and the area where it was found. It was stored in a NASA vault in Houston for nearly ten years before researchers began unlocking its secrets. Boffins compared the meteorite's chemical make-up with the data on the surface composition of Mars revealed by the Viking space probe 20 years ago and found

that they matched. The rock is the oldest of NASA's 12 meteorites. The others have shown no similar signs of carbon-based materials; the building blocks of life.

Oh, and there was the even more startling fact that pop star David Bowie was said to have raked in an unexpected windfall in repeat fees on 7th August (the day the news was first announced) as countless radio stations 'rushed to play his 1973 chart hit about extraterrestrial - Life on Mars.'

And, lest we forget, the odds on NASA confirming that intelligent life exists on Mars were predictably slashed from 500-1 to 25-1 by bookies. One William Hill's punter stood to win a huge £20,000 for a £40 stake. Maybe he was a friend of Allan Hills?

Various views from the assembly line of 'experts' were sought by just about every daily. The question of the possibility of ET existence was suddenly very real and everyone was keen to have their say. Here are just a sample of the views proffered; Arthur C. Clarke, the famous sci-fi writer believes that intelligent Alien life forms are hardly likely to be impressed with our civilisation...Or rather distinct lack of it.

'It's very likely intelligent life will be found elsewhere. I shall be disappointed if we do not find something in my lifetime. But will it be friendly. You could say that of intelligent then it is hardly likely to be friendly to man. And who could blame it? A promising theory suggests that any superior intelligence will probably be benevolent. If it was not benevolent it would have

destroyed itself...Just as we are in danger of doing. Of the Martian discovery he said; 'We always thought it possible that life might have evolved on Mars when it was warmer and had water.'

Dr Ian Wright, a UK scientist who actually studied the meteorite first hand said; *'The question that remains is whether life on Mars evolved or died out. Antarctica is the coldest, driest place on Earth - the closest we can get to conditions on Mars - but we won't find any Woolly Mammoths in the perma-frost of Mars. Life could exist still there, but it would be very, very primitive because there is no infrastructure to support it. The sample got to that stage, then it was downhill all the way. We're talking about bacteria - single-cell organisms. There are no bodies of standing water on Mars, so no food sources. That is judging by our own history. If they developed in a different way, that's a whole new subject.'*

Dr Chandra Wickrema Singhe, a leading physicist states that; *'This discovery changes the modern accepted notions on the creation of life. For the past 50 years, most of us have accepted the Big Bang theory about one explosion starting the Universe, and the other is the primordial soup idea, about the world being covered in nutritious broth or sea, and all life emerging from that. Both are now improbable. The Big Bang theory establishes that the age of the Universe is 12 billion years, but we know that there are stars which are 15 billion years old. You can't have that one contradiction within one Universe. The whole of cosmology is now in the melting pot. Both of these theories are linked with ideas about life in the Universe, and they must now be reconsidered. The Earth is too small to be the only planet to support life. The cosmic soup must have encompassed the whole Universe.'*

Looking at the matter from a religious viewpoint, the Venerable George Austin, Archdeacon of York, said; *Even if it was a bug-eyed monster like a slug, it could still be made in the image of God. It could still have love and compassion. Church Of England spokesmen were equally certain that the discovery did not necessarily kick holes in their beliefs. One was quoted as saying; 'We believe God created the whole Universe, so I don't think there could be a problem.'*

The Reverend John Polkinghorne, a theologian and physicist added his voice to the those who believe the discovery changes nothing about Man's inherent acceptance of God as Creator. *'Now we know that life will happen if you just wait long enough. All that means in theological terms is that God created a much more fruitful and more wonderful Universe than we'd thought before and of there is life elsewhere you can be sure He cares for that too.'*

The Genesis story is symbolic, not a scientific account of the Creation of life on Earth. The Devil may well be at work on Mars - there are Evil forces at work everywhere - and I don't think God is a craftsman who comes along and says "Today I will create the most perfect, wonderful human being." He allows life to develop without poking His divine finger in everywhere. I will be praying tonight for the whole Universe, as usual, for the fulfilment of God's will. I'm very excited by this new discovery because it extends the majesty and wonder of God's creation.'

Ghostly Tales

THE GHOST OF 1919

The picture reproduced below may, at first glance, look a whole lot like *any* other portrait of long-ago comrades-in-arms. But, according to an article in *'THE DAILY MAIL'*, the photograph has revived a 77-year-old Ghost mystery. If you look carefully, you can just make out the faint shape of a man, half concealed in the back row. That man is said to be Freddy Jackson, a Navy air mechanic on the HMS Daedalus who had been killed *three* days before this picture was taken. He died instantly on the same tarmac strip after accidentally stumbling onto a whirling propeller. Some of those in the official picture to commemorate the disbanding of the transport yard at the base, taken by Bassano's Photographic Company, even marched behind his coffin during the subsequent military funeral.

The shadowy figure has reportedly haunted Bobbie Capel, the widow of Air Vice Marshal Arthur Capel, ever since that far-off summer of 1919. Mrs Capel was then a Wren driver at the base, and she has no doubts whatsoever that the face peering out from the back row is Jackson.

She clearly recalls the collective gasp as the photo was pinned up. Soon afterwards the unit was disbanded and the 'Ghost Picture' of Mr. Jackson was allowed to pass out of sight and into the realm of memory.

It was recorded briefly in a book called *'Flight Towards Reality'* by Air Marshal Sir Victor Goddard, one of the founder members of the RAF. Sir Victor wrote; *'There he was, and no mistake, although a little fainter than the rest. Indeed, he looked as though he were not altogether there; not really with that group, for he alone was capless, smiling; all the rest were serious and set, and wearing service caps. What is somewhat unusual, to say the least, is that this was an official photograph...also the certainty there had been no hanky panky in the dark room. Not only would Bassano's not have dared to fake it; the negative was scrutinised for faking and was found to be untouched.'*



The crew of HMS Daedalus in 1919, and the spirit of Freddy Jackson smiling from across the great divide?

The HMS Daedalus mystery has been resurrected by Mrs Capel's neighbours, John and Jean Roberts, in the Somerset village of Chipstable.

They persuaded Mrs Capel to send the photograph to the Royal Navy newspaper *'NAVY NEWS'* with a plea for any other witnesses to come forward. Mrs Capel was quoted as saying; *'I cannot entertain the idea that this was a deliberate fake. For one thing, the photographer came from outside the base. He didn't know any of us and once he'd taken his picture he left immediately. He just would not have known about the accident. I have thought and puzzled over it for years but I can think of no other explanation other than that it is the picture of a Ghost. When we lined up for that photograph we all knew one familiar face would not be with us. Only later did we discover that, actually, he was.'*

1st July, 1996. Somerset, England. *'DAILY MAIL'*

The Phantom Groper

According to that bastion of honest and truthful reporting 'THE DAILY SLUR', a sex-crazed Ghost is currently terrorising a 34-year-old mother named Hazel Woodhams.

Hazel is supposed to have said the spirit has been in her bed every night for a whole year.

'He clambered under my duvet on my first night in the house and has been back every night since,' says Hazel.

'He climbs into bed when I'm asleep and snuggles up to me. I can't remember a night when he hasn't tried it on. Even though I'm asleep I can sense him lying next to me. I can hear him breathing and whispering gibberish in my ear. I freeze when he wraps his arm round me and cuddles me. I wake up in hysterics. Sometimes I see his bright yellowy-white eyes staring at me.'

A priest and a medium have apparently failed in their efforts to exorcise the spirit which haunts Hazel's Victorian home in West Yorkshire. The medium in question, Betty Lockwood, came up with the brilliant deduction that she 'sensed the spirit of a man.'

Hazel has reportedly begged to be rehoused and Kirklees council has given her priority on the housing list.

12th August, 1996. Deswbury, West Yorkshire. 'DAILY SLUR.'

Tales Of The Dibbinsdale Ghost



The local Merseyside publication; 'THE WIRRAL NEWS' recently carried a special feature called 'Haunted Wirral' and asked its readers for any information regarding ghostly activity.

As a direct response, several readers wrote in with their personal accounts of 'The Vanishing Hitchhiker' said to frequent Dibbinsdale Road in Bromborough, Merseyside (See #4 of DoN; 'Ghosts

And Devils Over Merseyside' for more information concerning this entity).

One witness to Ghostly phenomena; Mrs Eleanor Dunn of Prenton recounted that 'about 15 years ago (1981?), I drove along the road at about 10p to pick up my husband from work. My car suddenly stalled and I saw a young girl in the headlights. She wore a rusty-coloured long dress and she carried a small lamp. She seemed to be floating about 2ft from the ground. I opened the door thinking she would she would want a lift but at that point she sort of shimmered and vanished. I really didn't think she was a Ghost, but after seeing the picture of Dibbinsdale Road in 'THE WIRRAL NEWS', I know what I saw.'

14th July, 1996. Dibbinsdale, Bromborough, Merseyside. 'WIRRAL NEWS'.

Death Curse Of Ouija Boy

And here's a cautionary Halloween tale to add weight to all those whispered legends of how messing around with Ouija boards can only end in evil.

Canoeist Adam Holland drowned at the age of 26...Just as a Ouija board had predicted five years earlier.

The same seance session had also apparently foretold that his younger brother Terry would witness his tragic death. The chilling prophecy came true when the brothers' canoe overturned on a lake. Terry, 24, battled desperately to save his brother from drowning but had to abandon the struggle when he got into difficulty himself.

Adam's fiancée, Sonia Foor, 19, was quoted as saying; 'Adam never wanted to reach 26 - he was convinced that he was going to die.'

At their home in Loughborough, where Sonia lives with their six-month-old son, she added; 'After his 26th birthday he kept saying to me "it won't be long now. I am going to die but promise not to let me drown. I would rather be burned alive."

But Adam was doomed to his fate when he (some cynics might say foolishly) agreed to a canoeing trip with Terry at a local beauty spot called Charnwood Water.

Sonia concluded; 'Adam's life was blighted by that Ouija board prediction. People should steer well clear of them.'

9th August, 1996. Loughborough, Leicestershire. 'SUNDAY MANC.'

THE VOICE FROM BEYOND THE GRAVE

A missing prison officer is claimed to have spoken from the other side (wherever that may be) to tell the living how he was brutally murdered.

Peter Curran's distraught wife Christine has alleged that her husband's ghostly voice can be heard on tapes recorded by a psychic.

During one of the eerie recordings a voice is apparently heard saying; 'I was murdered,' before breaking down screaming. Peter, 38, vanished in May, 1995, after being accused of smuggling items to

an inmate at top-security Whitemoor jail in March, 1995.

Christine is now convinced that her husband was killed after threatening to reveal security breaches.

'I knew he was dead two days after he disappeared. Something inside just told me,' said the 36-year-old mother of two.

'Now I am 99.9 per cent sure he was murdered and I think another prison officer was involved.'

Peter disappeared two days after being suspended at Whitemoor. The was under fire for lax security after an officer was shot during a break-out by IRA terrorists in 1994.

Peter, a former Army corporal, left home with just £20 in his pocket after telling Christine he was going to play golf.

His disappearance has since baffled the police.

4th August, 1996. Whitemoor, Cambridgeshire. 'SUNDAY PEOPLE.'

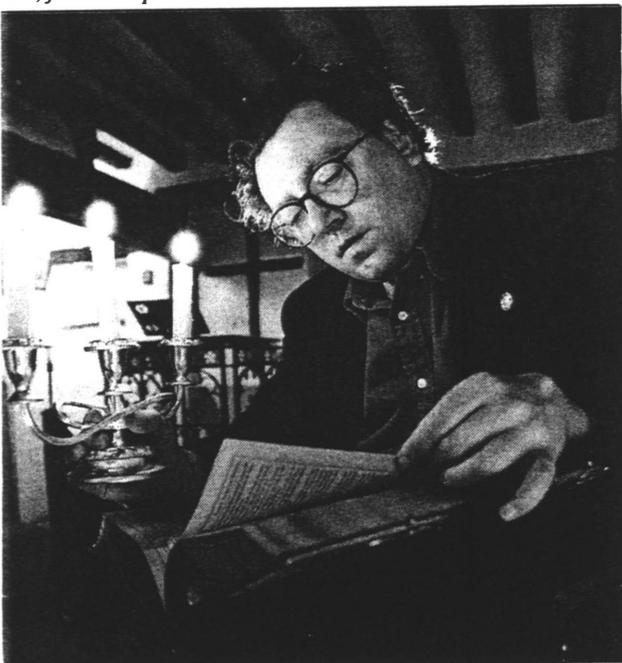
Psychic Sam On The Spectral Trail

The following account by Mark Porter originally appeared in the 'SUNDAY EXPRESS'. We've reprinted it here in its entirety for those of you who missed it first time round.

Flitwick Manor, Bedfordshire, Wednesday, 3.40 am.

There are beads of cold sweat on my brow and I am struggling for breath. Twenty minutes ago I heard a giggle and a panting sound, as a dog and a child twice jumped on me and scurried across my recumbent legs.

Lying on the bed beside me is a white Alsatian and standing to my right is a little girl holding a bowl. Suddenly, the bedding rises and slaps me in the face. I try to scream, but no sound comes. I fumble for and finally light the bedside lamp, but there is nothing to see, just crumpled linen.



I have never been afraid of Ghosts, nor even given them much thought. Not until now, that is. As I record this incident, there is a Bible beside me and a strange

noise, like a distant swarm of bees. It comes and goes, as does a gentle throbbing sound, reminiscent of a ship's engines. I dare not look in the mirror. I smoke a cigarette and turn out the lights. Within minutes (or is it seconds?) there is something rustling at the end of the room...and then the sound of howling wind from the far corner.

On go the lights. In a state of near panic I open the curtains. Beyond the firmly locked windows the moon reflects utter stillness. Terrified, I read the Bible until sunrise and then slip - bolt upright and bespectacled - into a fitful sleep.

I should explain here what is going on; Following widely reported manifestations at the Albert Hall, the 'SUNDAY EXPRESS'S Psychic Sam and I were dispatched to launch an investigation into Ghosts.

I was the sceptic, she the believer.

Our quest took me to, among other reputedly haunted places, the 400-year-old Flitwick Manor in rural Bedfordshire, where according to the Society for Psychical Research, there had been recent and convulsive supernatural activity.

To keep an open mind, I inquired no further, and sniggered at the thought of Poltergeists as I drove up the gravel path of the Jacobean pile. I assumed that the apparition was the dream of a public relations consultant, like all other 'Ghosts.'

The proprietor, Sonia Banks, showed me to my room at the epicentre of claimed activity, and promised to tell me everything in the morning. Tee hee!!! Newly refurbished, this bedroom looked about as haunted as an IKEA showroom. As I perused the menu over a glass of Madeira, I heard footsteps and a voice from the room above. No doubt the resident ghoul. I laughed.

The following day, after my psychic experience, I discovered there was no room above. Just the gabled rooftops. By now I had been joined by Tony Cornell, of Cambridge University's Society for Psychical Research. In the past, he had monitored the place with his SPIDER (Spontaneous Psychophysical Incident Data Recorder), his night-vision sights and other Ghost-busting equipment.

He had failed to register anything, but then, despite 50 years in the business, he has never caught on film or tape, the faintest frisson of the other side. Nor has anyone else.

Which is perhaps why I was so amused by this project at the outset; Ghost-busters must be like trainspotters on a disused line.

However, by the time he arrived, I thought of him as a heroic man with a mission, whose train was fast approaching. Like Psychic Sam, he was convinced of a presence; 'The sheer number of incidents here would suggest a definite presence. Your experience sounds genuine, especially as you were sceptical.'

Psychic Sam, unbeknown to me, had taken one look at Flitwick Manor, but refused to consider staying there. "There has been violence and bloodshed. I see a little girl whose death was shortly preceded by the death of her dog. I see overwhelming grief etched into its fabric," she says.

Last century, a Mrs Brookes, who owned the manor, lost her daughter at a tragically young age to tuberculosis.

Mrs Brookes, stricken with grief, was kept in a small attic room for much of the rest of her life.

Last year (1995) when the place was renovated and the attic discovered, things began to happen.

Company director John Hinds, who recently stayed there, says; 'I went to bed at 1 am and shortly afterwards felt something heavy land on the bed. There was nothing there. I thought to myself, "this is crazy, John. Go back to sleep. A few minutes later there was a shuffle at the bottom of the bed. I could plainly make out a silhouette staring out of the window.'

Mr Hinds did not sleep after that, and left in a hurry the next morning.

His is just one of many tales from Flitwick.

Duncan Poyser, the head chef, had his legs pinned down by a strange force one night, and has seen apparitions in the kitchen.

One weekend a newly married policeman, Derek Johashon, had a deeply alarming experience. His legs were pinned down and he couldn't move his tongue. His muffled screams awoke his wife, who saw him struggle to sit upright before he was forced violently backwards on to the pillow - after being hit in the face by a phantasmagoric medicine ball.

He described seeing a medieval courtyard at the end of his bed, and an agitated figure standing nearby.

Few of the staff are brave enough to spend the entire night at the hotel. One exception is Lydia Dawson, the 23-year-old restaurant manager, who stays on despite an ethereal episode.

She said; 'I slept over one night and heard someone walking around the bed. I looked up and saw an old lady. I panicked and couldn't find the light switch, and ran out, despite being naked.'

Mr Porter then went on with more Ghostly tales from other reputedly haunted sites in Britain...

Chingle Hall, built in 1260 on the Lancashire Moors, north of Preston, is said to be the most haunted house in England. (It's taken over the mantle of Borley Rectory then - Ed).

Now a private residence, it was once the home of St John Wall, canonised in 1970 but executed for his Catholic faith in gruesome fashion in the 17th century. The Franciscan was hanged, drawn and quartered, and his head was buried in the walls of Chingle.

He is often seen roaming the small manor and flitting through the tiny chapel where he preaches in times of extreme anti-Catholicism.

This place produced a shudder in Psychic Sam. One look at it was enough;

'There are many Ghosts here. The first is a crazy old woman. She had trouble with her legs. She was an alcoholic and I see sexual deviance in the air. Her name was Margaret and I don't like the feel of this at all.'

I spent a night there and saw white crosses moving across the wall of my bedroom at dawn. Entirely independent of Sam, I was told about the woman who owned Chingle after the last war; Margaret Howarth.

It was her old room that I slept in, but nothing more was said of her. When Sam told me of her strong

feelings, I telephoned Chingle to ask if there was alcoholic lunacy attached to the place.

'Yes,' said a friend of the family. 'Margaret was drunk all the time.' And what about the sexual deviance? 'We are not allowed to comment on that, and that is all I will say.'



Psychic Sam...The 'SUNDAY MAIL'S' resident Ghost-Hunter/Sensitive

The pair also paid a visit to the most haunted village in England...Pluckley.

I drove to Kent and booked a room at the Dering Arms, a wonderful old family-run inn, which has scarcely changed since it was built early in the 19th century.

As soon as Sam came in she said; "Wow, these spirits are peaceful and even lend to the ambience. I see a little girl and a woman of about 70, but they are both contented. Women have traditionally dominated this place."

Regulars have often seen a customer who is not in the habit of paying for her drinks. She sits at a corner table dressed like someone who has just walked off the Wuthering Heights film set. No one sits in her chair.

But landlord and chef Jim Buss, who has been there for 12 years, is coy about the ghoulish goings-on.

'I've seen nothing, and Ghost-hunters have caused trouble in this village, with gravestones being broken. It's all a bit tedious really,' he said.

I slept well in one of the three bedrooms. Not the slightest hint of a presence, despite Sam's strong instincts. The village has been haunted by The Highwayman, long-dead millers who visit the Old Mill, and the Water-Cress Woman who accidentally set fire to herself with her pipe. Not to mention the Colonel of Parkwood who hanged himself in penury in 1928, and who now appears and talks to woodland rambblers.

On our way to Pluckley, we stopped at The Harrow in Warren Street. Sam was drawn to the pub as we passed by.

'I see an old woman who died tragically here, and a young woman holding a bundle. There are more spirits in this village than inhabitants.'

Sam is right once again. Elise Burns, the landlady's daughter, told me the story - dating from the turn of the century - of an old woman who worked with the men in the field during the day, and drank beer in the bar with them at night. She even smoked a pipe.

But one day the men grew so fed up with this manly specimen that they murdered her and buried the corpse under the pub's flagstones.

The other local Ghost was a young woman holding a baby and apparently in search of the isolation hospital for the sick youngster.

Other ectoplasmic sightings in Pluckley have included a local schoolmaster whose grisly remains have been seen hanging from a clump of trees; the White Lady, whose tormented spirit has hovered around the church crypt; and the Red Lady, a grieving member of a wealthy family, who has been seen looking forlornly for the body of her baby.

5th May, 1996. Various locations. 'SUNDAY EXPRESS.'

The Ghost Of A Dead Hero

A 'NEWS OF THE WORLD' exclusive revealed how the widow of a have-a-go hero is still living happily with her the Ghost of her dead husband.

Diane Ryan and her new husband Simon have, according to the account, experienced strange phenomena at the home where brave Bob Osborne used to live.

He was knifed by a drug-crazed teenager only yards from the front door.

'Bob is here with us,' claims 41-year-old Diane. 'A lot of guys couldn't cope with living with the Ghost of their wife's former husband, but Simon can.'

Musician Bob, 41, was stabbed to death in 1993 whilst attempting to stop jobless Joseph Elliott from slashing car tyres near his home in Streatham, south London.

The case hit the headlines when 19-year-old Elliott - high in a combination of drink and LSD during the frenzied attack - walked scot free after pleading self-defence.

A shattered Diane went home to pick up the pieces. When she met and married printer Simon he had to be made to understand that she could never be without her beloved Bob.

'I'm happy with Simon, bit I'm still 100% in love with Bob - my husband,' says Diane. 'He watches over me and I will never let him go.'

Diane, who calls herself Ryan-Osborne to keep Bob's name alive - claims he speaks to her through a somewhat bemused Simon.

'Sometimes Simon says or does something, and I say, Bob would have done or said that. It's a great comfort to look at a door he'd varnished and hear his voice saying; "make us a cup of tea, Di."

Apparently Simon, who met Diane in her local pub, is not frightened by Bob's presence. *'I know what she's been through,' he said. 'Early on there were nights when I would come downstairs and find her sobbing, watching a home video of Bob. I'd gently pick her up*

and take her back to bed. I just want to be there for her.'

He's either the perfect gentleman, willing to sacrifice everything for love, or else he's extremely brave. *21st July, 1996. Streatham, South London 'NEWS OF THE WORLD'*

TOWERS OF TERROR

The Tower Of London is notorious for its bloody history and its attendant Ghosts. The story about the couple who witnessed a unearthly manifestation in one of the rooms...A weird cylindrical object that contained some kind of fluid gave me nightmares for weeks after I'd read about it in one of Peter Underwood's Ghost Books

The following article appeared in a recent edition of 'CHAT MAGAZINE' and seeing as how it's Halloween, I thought you might like to read this in its entirety too.

Tourists to the Tower Of London were enjoying a mild winter's day. One of them, American Shannon John, positioned her camera carefully. She wanted a good snap of Traitor's Gate to take back home to California. Suddenly, inexplicably, the temperature dropped and Shannon shivered violently. But she thought no more about it until the photograph was developed. To her amazement, a mysterious arm was clearly visible in the right-hand corner.

Shannon is convinced. 'It's a Ghost. There were only two people there, me and a friend. The hand doesn't belong to either of us.'



The alleged photograph snapped by Shannon outside Traitor's Gate. According to the account, Kodak have declared the picture to be genuine. You can decide for yourself as to the veracity of the picture.

Geoffrey Abbott, a former yeoman warder - or Beefeater - at the Tower, believes the picture, taken in 1994, is an apparition. He should know. He's investigated literally hundreds of sightings at the Tower Of London. 'It's the most haunted place in Britain,' he says. (The people of Pluckley might beg to differ on that one, Geoff - Ed).

The Tower, which covers 18 acres on the banks of the Thames, actually consists of 20 towers and other buildings, dating from 1066. It's been a fortress, palace, prison, arsenal, menagerie; now it's home to

the Crown Jewels, and attracts two-and-a-half million tourists each year.

Elizabeth I, Henry VI and Guy Fawkes are among its most famous phantoms. Lady Jane Grey is perhaps the saddest. She was executed at the Tower, aged 16, after being deposed from the throne by Mary Tudor. Jane ruled for just nine days.

Murdered archbishop Sir Thomas Becket is the oldest resident spook. He didn't die at the Tower but haunts Traitor's Gate, which kept collapsing until a stone was laid in his honour.

The newest Ghost wears a badly fitting brown suit. He may be a spy shot during the Second World War, and is believed to be the last man executed in the Tower.

Anne Boleyn was spotted in the Chapel Royal in 1995, close to the anniversary of her death. 'A young woman in a long, flowing black dress was staring intently at Anne Boleyn's grave,' says Beefeater David Chenier. 'She gave me a look that went right through me. Then she disappeared.'

Colleague Joe Hubble had an equally unnerving experience close to Traitor's Gate. 'I saw what looked like Sir Walter Raleigh's face at a window,' he says. Raleigh spent years on death row inside the Bloody Tower, so called because so many atrocities were committed there.

Tales of Tower Ghosts may sound far-fetched, but animals, said to be sensitive to the supernatural, hate certain spots.

David's Jack Russell, Judy, refused to enter Martin Tower. 'She used to lie down outside and refuse to budge.'

Here prisoner Thomas Percy dabbled in Black Magic, and the spectre of an enormous bear scared a sentry to death in 1871.

Some Ghosts are heard but no seen. Ghastly screams are often heard around the Tower. Perhaps some of these are the terrified pleas of the young child princes Richard and Edward, as they begged their cruel uncle for their lives. In 1483, he murdered them and became King Richard III.

As well as screams, the shadow of a swinging axe has been seen on Tower Green. In fact, it's hard to think of any paranormal activity which hasn't been reported. 'Kettles and radios in a White Tower staff office turn on and off, even after the switches are taped down,' says Abbott.

'There was a smell of incense in a chapel which hadn't been used for many years.'

Abbott's apartment at the Tower was used during the war to hold German spies, the night before they were shot.

'I would hear footsteps on the stairs when no-one was there,' claims Abbott. More recent tenants have been woken with a start at 5 am - the time the prisoners were taken to be shot.

It's easy to scoff, but Geoffrey says the spectres at the Tower are often seen by trained observers like wardens and sentries.

'You can't discount that,' he says. 'They are not the sort to imagine things.'

June, 1996. Tower Of London, England. 'CHAT MAGAZINE'.

The Haunted House Of Horror

One of the scariest things I have ever seen on British TV was the inaugural episode of the BBC's 'OUT OF THIS WORLD', screened throughout the month of August.

The segment featuring the hapless family who inhabited a house in the midst of the Brecon Beacons proved enough to give me a week's worth of sleepless nights and made me the laughing stock at work. My colleagues line of sarcasm went something like this; Lee, the Editor of 'DEAD OF NIGHT MAGAZINE' terrified out of his wits by a mere Ghost story???

And the truth is, well yes, actually. I was so affected by the reconstruction of events said to have taken place in that house that I refused to turn the light off at night and slept with a horseshoe, a cross made of Rowan wood and tied with red ribbon and a copy of 'The Key Of Solomon', open at the anti-night terrors protective amulets page beneath my pillow. Sad, I know. But even writing this mini-piece now gives me a good dose of the shivers...

Liz and Bill Rich have endured six awful years at Heol Fanog in Mid-Wales. The cottage itself is idyllic looking and I guess they must have thought they'd struck gold when they first moved in. Not long after they did settle down however, Liz was awoken one night by the sound of something growling in the bedroom walls. Something that chose initially to remain invisible, but which nevertheless exuded pure evil.



Bill claimed that the house seemed to 'exercise a control over us so that we could not leave.'

The couple later discovered that the building had been erected upon an old graveyard and that Druids had Satanists had performed their arcane ceremonies there. Worse still, a man had been found murdered sometime in the 1950's within the house. He'd been hacked to death by axe-wielding Black Magicians after he had the misfortune to stumble upon one of their obscene rites

Subsequent events read like a British equivalent of Jay Anson's 'AMITYVILLE HORROR.' Liz encountered a giant hooded entity waiting for her in the hallway after she returned home from a shopping trip with her two young children. An Exorcist sat Liz in a chair and began asking her questions; 'Do you believe that Jesus Christ is your Lord and Saviour?' A hate-filled voice grated back and did not seem to belong to Liz. 'No. Nothing to do with me.' it sneered.

Liz claimed she was 'clawing at my eyes because I could see the face of Satan in front of me. All I remember are horns and those terrible bright eyes.'

Their dog went mad, the pig died and the cats refused to come off the shelf in the kitchen. They both saw a giant figure with a horrible beak in broad daylight and on several occasions the 7ft tall, black cloaked figure appeared in the kitchen. The couple called in more than 30 different mediums, clergymen and Ghost-busters...All to no avail. One of the Exorcists had the less than joyful task of informing them that their house was a kind of spiritual gateway to the dark side.

Of course, sceptics will say, why the hell didn't they just move out if things were half as bad as they claim. The fact is though, as Liz, 37, has said 'We did not leave because we could not afford to...Looking back now, whoever, I guess we should have just moved into a tent.' The couple have finally been ordered out by their landlord and they will be moving into another rented home nearby. Their story is told in a forthcoming book (it may actually be out on the market by now) called 'TESTIMONY' written by Mark Chadborn and published by Gollancz.

May, 1996. Brecon, Mid-Wales. 'SUNDAY PEOPLE'.

Witchcraft And Demonology In The 20th Century



TOWN OF THE DAMNED

Various newspapers have carried the story of the town of Lewes in Sussex, and how it has been inundated with Demonic manifestations. The tabloids, as per usual, were at their hysterical, sensational best...Check this out for example, from the 'SUNDAY MANC;'

The body at the foot of the cliff was bad enough. But what they found back at his flat was far, far worse. Pages from the Bible plastered to the walls (Echoes of the repentant priest in the film 'THE OMEN' - Ed). Black crosses daubed across the doors.

And painted on the wall in 12-inch letters the plea; 'Please God. Somebody save me. Protect me from Black Magic.'

It didn't work. Convinced he was being stalked by Demons, Nic Gargani, 26, plunged 300 feet to his death off the steep cliffs overlooking the town of Lewes. And the shockwave from his death has lifted the lid on a serpent's pit if Satanic practices, church desecration, animal sacrifice and ritual burning. Local clergymen and Nic's friends and relatives are united in their belief that the Devil is at work in Lewes.

His girlfriend Luisa Serricchia, 20, was quoted as saying; 'Nic tended to keep his worries to himself so even his closest friends never knew how bad his troubles were. That's why my last meeting with him was so terrifying. I was entertaining friends when he knocked on my door. He was hysterical and kept saying someone was trying to kill him. He said he had been sent a Voodoo doll and that morning a cow's heart with nails in it had been delivered to his home. He never behaved like this and I knew something was terribly wrong. He kept apologising for disturbing me, yet he was so distraught. He never had an enemy in the world and he kept saying; "What have I done to deserve this?"'

He said photos and property had been taken from his flat and a caller said there was a curse on him and Demons were after him. Before he died, he wrote me a note saying he had been through a lot of worry and he was having nightmares about a black apparition. He posted it through my door before going up to the cliff. As soon as I got it I phoned his home but the police were already there. The Nic I knew would never have killed himself. We had so many plans - I still can't believe he's not here.'

Nic's sister, Nadia, 28, said; 'Someone out there is guilty of my brother's death. They drove him to his death by their actions and that's as bad as physically pushing him over the cliff.'

An inquest into his death recorded an open verdict.

As the 'SUNDAY MANC' was quick to point out, the death of one deeply disturbed young man, as undeniably tragic as it was, could hardly be construed as a Satanic conspiracy against the people of Lewes. But The Reverend Anthony Hindley, 54, would be to differ;

He was inspired to hold a prayer morning to help fend off the sequence of attacks on St Michael's church in South Malling, a mere mile from the cliffs where Nic died.

In the idyllic churchyard surrounding the 17th Century chapel, seven stone crosses have been smashed and some have been turned upside down in a gesture that mocks the Christian religion and Christ's crucifixion.

One grave had a trench dug around it before being set alight in a form of ritual burning.

The Rev Hindley said; 'I have never known anything like this. It has all the hallmarks of people involved in occult practices.'

At nearby St Anne's Church in Lewes itself, on land just off the main street, the Rev Barry Keeton found the sickening remains of animal sacrifices.

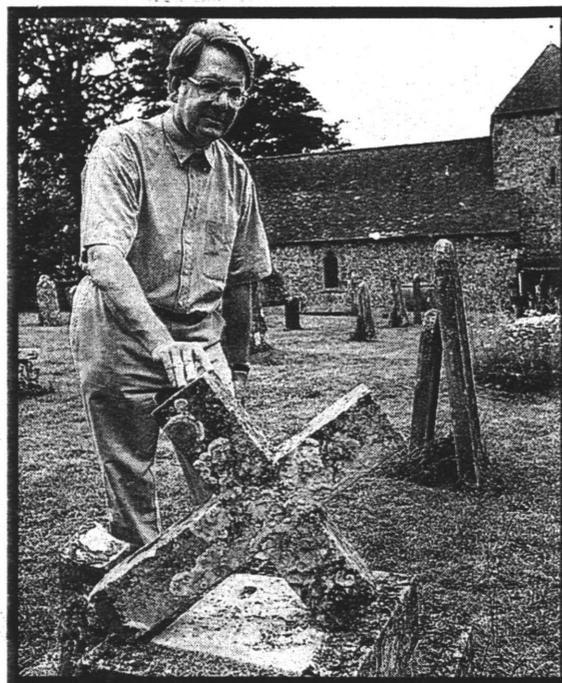
'I found one cat on the vestry steps with its throat slit,' said the 56-year-old rector. 'Two days later, I found another cat in the same spot, this one was beheaded. Figures on the crib have been smashed and Christian ornaments have been destroyed. This is evil beyond words.'

There was further desecration reported from St John Sub Castro Church that lies in the shadow of Lewes Castle. An altar Bible had pages ripped out of it and scattered all across the floor, curtains were torn and the front ripped off the pulpit.

The Rev Robert Hall, 61, who has been at the Church for 18 years, said; 'It must be the work of someone with

an unhealthy fascination for the occult. It's been deeply upsetting for everybody.'

The question that springs readily to mind however, is why has the sleepy town of Lewes been singled out for these spate of occult-inspired attacks (if that is indeed precisely what they are - You'd admittedly be struggling to come up with any feasible alternative motive for these desecration's, but there may be one - Ed).



Desecrated graves and inverted crosses litter the cemetery of St Michael's Church in South Malling, near Lewes. A sign of Black Magic rituals?

The Sunday papers believe that the answer may well lie in the annals of the town's history. The picturesque high street of tea rooms and book shops, antique dealers and book shops was apparently once the scene of a mass killing, gruesome even by the bloodthirsty standards of the Middle Ages. During a 'Witch hunt' (actually more of a religion-inspired persecution) by Catholics, 17 Protestants were burnt at the stake in 1555. Lewes's shame is commemorated by a plaque on the spot where they died. Throughout the centuries since, covens of Witches are reputed to have been secretly active in the vicinity, utilising the dense woodland that surrounds the town. Even the normally austere police force admit there is a problem on the area.

Inspector Chris Pascoe said; 'We are investigating several incidents at Lewes. A meeting of clergy and police has been held from which a list of actions has been agreed, and these are being implemented.'

The Right Reverend Eric Kemp, Bishop of Chichester, whose diocese includes Lewes, was (ahem) slightly more forthright;

'The occult is psychologically and spiritually damaging. Anyone who takes delight in causing another person mental anguish is wicked, nasty, sick and perverted.'

9th June, 1996. Lewes, Sussex. 'SUNDAY MANC.'

A Grave Offence

Vandals reportedly dug up the embalmed corpse of a woman buried in 1976, and hammered an upside down cross into her chest, according to French police. A religious plaque was broken across the face. The body was discovered out of its coffin in the main cemetery in the town of Toulon on the French Riviera.

10th June, 1996. Toulon, France. 'LIVERPOOL DAILY POST'

The Witchfinder General

A witch hunt left 11 people dead in Cameroon, including three unfortunates who were cruelly burned to death by hysterical mobs.



Five suspected Witches, actually committed suicide and the remainder were starved to death.

Newspapers in the West African state said the deaths had divided the community of Nijkwa between those who wanted to punish the modern-day 'Witch-Finder General', Didi Mukalu, and those who wanted him back for more.

The Witch-hunter was invited to Nijkwa after several people in the region died of fell ill.

Some superstitious residents blamed the misfortune on the evil spells and curses of Witches within the community.

12th August, 1996. Nijkwa, Cameroon, Africa. 'LIVERPOOL ECHO.'

TOWN HAS GONE TO THE DEVIL

There was hell to pay when a phone firm made the 'Number Of The Beast/Anti-Christ' 666 a town's code.

Frightened subscribers were anxious to point out to the company chiefs that they may be tempting fate by giving them Satan's mark.

Now phone firm NYNEX, with 268,000 subscribers nation-wide, has hurriedly promised to change the number of anyone worried about the occult link.

The freaked-out phone-users live in Stockport, Cheshire, and housewife Jean Buxton said; 'I couldn't bring myself to use the phone with that number.'

4th July, 1996. Stockport, Cheshire. 'LIVERPOOL ECHO.'

Father Martin - Exorcist

An article in a Sunday supplement magazine (unfortunately I've mislaid details of the actual source - Ed), featured proof, if you needed it, that even in these cynical, irreligious times, belief in the powers of evil are as prevalent as ever....Perhaps even more so. After 30 years as a real-life Exorcist, Father Malachi Martin (like Father Merrin in William Peter Blatty's classic horror novel 'THE EXORCIST) has learnt to recognise the natures of the Demons he relentlessly pursues. He believes they may be ingenious or stupid, coarse of charming, brazen or craven. Hell, it seems, is no place for stereotypes.



'I need to know who they are,' says the Irish-born priest now living, not as you might half-expect, in Georgetown, Washington, but amidst the dark city shadows of New York. He continues; 'I need their names and their stories. They are a pestilence. They have to be countered and brought under control. People are possessed in the way that dogs are infested with fleas.'

According to Father Martin, we should all be on our guard, especially within the grey, concrete confines of the cities. 'Satanism is all around us., he assures the sceptical amongst us. 'We deny it at our peril. I could

could point out places all across New York, where Black Masses are being celebrated. I know of cases of human sacrifice - the sacrifice of babies. I know the people who are doing these things.'

The account takes us along on a trip to a real Exorcism. The reporter notices that the atmosphere in the afflicted person's apartment is close and sickly. Sometimes, the Exorcist says, the Demons can make the very air freeze or turn it unbearably hot and fetid. The duration of an Exorcism cannot be predicted. It can last for hours or in some cases, even whole days. The Bible says; *'Only by prayer and fasting shall these Devils be cast out.'*

Until it is over, the priest must go without food or sleep.

Although Father Martin is a slender man of 75, and of delicate health, he nevertheless performs at least one of these arduous ceremonies a month. *'I have never been busier,'* sighs the man who visited the cell of David Berkowitz - the infamous serial killer better known as 'Son of Sam' - to hear him confess to being a Satanist..

The Catholic Church's service of Exorcism is extremely ancient. It dates back hundreds of years to a time when Demonic possession was presumed to be responsible for many conditions that are now explained away within the realms of psychiatry. Although used less frequently or forcibly than in Medieval times, the procedure has remained essentially the same - the possessed person - who must have given prior consent to the Exorcism - is made to kneel in the middle of the room. Attending the priest are at least six laymen, usually selected more for their physical prowess than for their theological knowledge.



A scene from the classic horror movie; 'The Exorcist.' According to Father Martin, Demonic possession does not merely exist in the realms of fiction. It is real.

'Exorcism can be extremely violent,' explains Father Martin. *'It is often disturbing and always exhausting. I have seen objects hurled around the room by the powers of evil. I have smelt the breath of Satan, and heard the Demon's voices - cold, scratchy, dead voices, carrying messages of hatred. I've watched men*

writhing, screaming, vomiting, defecating, as we fought for their souls.'

The priest will always seek to gain an advantage by working the Demon into a position of vulnerability. He begins by demanding, with the authority of prayer, to know its name. The Demons, says Father Martin, somewhat predictably, are never too anxious to play long with the priest. They lie, silent, sullen and hidden. When this happens, the Exorcist must provoke them into blowing their cover.

'You have to tease them out,' he says. *'The Demon does not physically inhabit the body; it possesses the person's will. We have to compel the thing to reveal itself and its purpose. It can be slow and difficult, with Demon taunting, scorning, abusing you - speaking through the mouth of the possessed person, but not in his or her voice. In the end, though, it does come out - and when that happens, you experience the sensation we call 'presence.'*

At that moment, you know you are in the company of the purest Evil. I have felt the claws of invisible animals tearing at my face. I have been knocked off my feet, blinded and winded. But it is then, when you've sensed the 'presence', that the real attack on the Demon can begin.'

The theory of Exorcism holds that once the Demon has been drawn out of the body, it can be entirely vanquished by the power of prayer.

'The whole nature of the thing changes,' claims Father Martin. *'The Demon knows it's losing. Instead of screaming abuse, it begins to plead for mercy. It says it's sorry, it begs to be spared. It promises to go home. But the Bible says that only on the Last Day can the followers of Satan return to Hell. Where they go, I do not know. We don't destroy them. We drive them out. Sometimes I encounter the same Demon again. As the Demon disappears, the person it has possessed is 'cleared', and a wondrous wave of peace comes over them.'*

Malachi Martin was born in Kerry, in the west of Ireland, one of nine children of a gynaecologist. Like his three brothers, he had a vocation for the priesthood, and at 18, joined the Jesuits. He won a place as a professor of ancient scriptures at the Vatican's Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome.

In 1958, he travelled to Cairo with a Jesuit mission to study a newly-discovered collection of Hebrew writings from the time of Abraham. The trip had deep and ultimately profound consequences.

'I was asked to help with the Exorcism of an Egyptian youth who had got himself involved in Satanism to the extent of participating in the sacrifice of his own sisters. What I saw convinced me forever of the power of Evil - and of the need to fight it.'

Six years later he left the Jesuits and moved across to the States, aiming to follow the Gospels and pursue a writing career. *'America is the biggest battleground. There is a war of spirit going on. The possessed have almost invariably been involved with Satanism. They are not innocents selected at random by passing Demons. Most have made a deal with the Devil. Only later do they become aware of the Devil's asking price.'* Satanism is, he says, far more widespread than is commonly imagined.

'The cruelty of these practices puts them beyond the civilised pale. I am speaking of human sacrifice, cannibalism and the sexual abuse of children. Not in far away countries long ago, but right here and now in New York.'

The symptoms of possession are often confused with mental illness.

'Science spent a lot of time trying to prove that these people were, so to speak, loonies. Now most of my cases are referred to me by psychiatrists.'

Victims tend to undergo a startling change of personality. They may become unpredictable, violent and treacherous. They humiliate their families, plot against their friends, lie to their colleagues. *'They have become alien entities. They have surrendered their wills.'*

The most extreme state is 'perfect possession', when the Demon has taken complete control. *'The perfectly possessed person is totally lost. There is nothing I can do for them,'* laments Father Martin. *'The peculiar thing is that these people are usually highly sophisticated, and the last thing you would suspect is that they were in league with the Devil. But there is always something about them. It may be a look in their eyes, a tone of voice, a sense of coldness, of contempt. Something inhuman. When you encounter it, you know you have met the true enemy.'*

Father Martin cites David Berkowitz, the 1970's New York serial killer, as a classic case of perfect possession.

'I met him in his cell, at his request, He confessed that he had been, for many years, a member of a Satanic coven. This was the source of his Evil.'

The encounter with Berkowitz was light relief however compared to the time when he believed he came face to face with Satan Himself.

'I was standing on a stool in my apartment, reaching for a book, and I saw Him. He was crouched on the floor, looking at me. His body was like a muscular pit bull terrier, but his face was recognisably human. It was the Devil's face. I recognised the eyes. I had seen them in the people I had Exorcised. They were the eyes of the coldest, deadliest hatred. When the Devil sprang at me, I fell from my stool and broke my shoulder, but I felt fortunate. I had seen Satan and I had lived.'

Father Martin charges nothing for his services. He acts only with permission from his bishop, when all the medical options have been extinguished. After two heart attacks he often wonders how long he can go on.

'Every Exorcism takes something out of you that cannot be put back. The Demon goes, but it carries a part of you away with it. A little of the Exorcist dies each time. It's a permanent mental fight against a powerful, dangerous enemy.'

Vampires On The Prowl Once More

Following on from last issue's report from the USA that Vampire cults were springing up all over the place comes the tale of twisted killer Ibrahim Gadzhiyev, 35, the real-life Vampire of Russia.

He was charged with mutilating a teenage beauty queen before drinking her blood. He also hacked Lena Karaseva's head off and threw it into a nearby bin after his horrific attack. The ex-mercenary has confessed to 13 other murders in an appalling serial-killing spree. He reportedly told stunned detectives; *'I am a Vampire. I attack people because I want to suck their warm blood. I have been like this since I was a child. When I feel the need to taste blood I cannot stop myself.'* His victims included young Russian soldiers, two homeless women and a 12-year-old boy who was raped and suffocated before the 'Vampire' drank his blood.



Beauty queen Lena, 19, who was due to compete for the Miss Russia title, was Gadzhiyev's final victim.

After detectives matched his fingerprints to those at the scene, the killer began his sickening confession. He told police that he had sex with Lena while sinking his teeth into her neck and sucking her blood. And when her body wouldn't fit into a dustbin, he hacked off her head with a Swiss Army knife.

Gadzhiyev began his Vampiric killing spree while fighting as a mercenary for the Chechens against Russia. He would take his terrified and helpless victims, many of them wounded in the fighting, to trenches where he would force them to indulge in sex. After feasting on their blood, he would then shoot or stab the young soldiers.

A detective involved in the hunt for Gadzhiyev, was quoted as saying; *'This is the most sickening case I've had to deal with in my career. He cannot be human - he is like something out of a horror story.'*

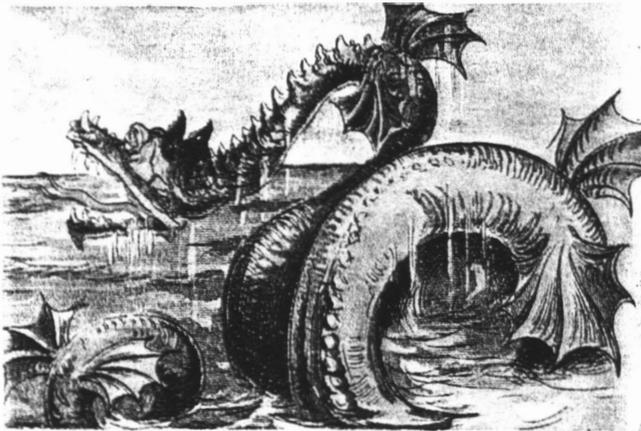
The officer added that when police asked Gadzhiyev to drink a litre of cow's blood to prove his twisted craving, he duly gulped it down in one..

He is, at the time of going to press, being held in hospital at the notorious Kresty Prison in St Petersburg after being attacked by fellow inmates.

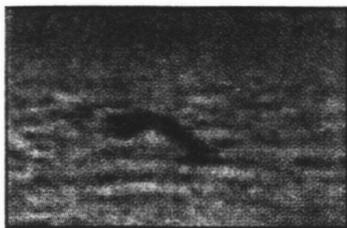
18th August, 1996. Russia. 'SUNDAY PEOPLE.'

SIGHTINGS OF RARE AND ALIEN ANIMALS

Yet More Tales From The Lochside



The ever-reliable *'News Of The World'*, published the photograph of 'Nessie' featured below, and wrapped it up within a typically juvenile article aimed at people with an IQ the size of Dudley Moore's shoe size. The only 'facts' to emerge from the account are that photographer Craig Kerr from Glasgow, was taking a picture of his daughter on the shore of the Loch Ness Caravan Park at Invermoriston (*the site we always stay at when we make our annual trek up to the Loch - Ed*), on a beautiful August day this year. Interestingly, he didn't actually see anything when he snapped the picture - a common feature of many photographs of alleged anomalous phenomena be it Ghosts, UFO's or whatever.



'I thought I had some nice snaps but nothing to get excited about. But when I saw the finished results, I noticed something strange looming up out of the water. It's not a flaw on the negative - and that neck is so distinctive. People must make up their own minds, but I'm heading right back there.'

8th August, 1996. Loch Ness, Scotland. *'NEWS OF THE WORLD.'*

****And back in June, 1996, a mysterious zig-zagging wake was spotted on the Loch. Its appearance reportedly baffled staff and guests at the Craigarroch House Hotel. For approximately 10 minutes they gazed in awe-inspired wonder, before it eventually disappeared.**

Kate Munro, who runs the Hotel said;

'We saw a disturbance on the Loch, a frothy disturbance with a wake trailing behind it. It would have been something large that was creating that disturbance, and it zig-zagged quite a few times as an animal would do. I haven't a clue as to what it was, although my husband and I have long believed there is some large aquatic creature in the Loch which would explain the Nessie sightings.'

Some of the guests had come here not believing in Nessie, but I think they have gone home thinking they've definitely seen the Loch Ness Monster.'

15th June, 1996. Loch Ness, Scotland. *'LIVERPOOL DAILY POST.'*

****Meanwhile, Richard Carter, a dedicated Loch Ness researcher who we've once had the pleasure of meeting up at the Loch, has decided to get together with fellow enthusiast Ian Kelloway, and form a society to collate, research and investigate the Loch Ness enigma.**

They hope to recapture the spirit and ideology of the now sadly defunct Loch Ness Investigation Bureau. (See back page for full details on the society's aims and how to set about joining).

22nd July, 1996. Loch Ness, Scotland. *'Scottish Daily Record.'*

The Loch Morar Hoax

Much to the chagrin of long-time investigator and scientist Adrian Shine, a hoax report of the bones of some strange aquatic animal being discovered on the beach of Loch Morar (where Adrian spent several years in the early '70's working with Project Morar). According to the subsequent press reports, an English sub-aqua team believed they had uncovered the remains of Morag, during an expedition to the remote West Highland Loch.

The divers handed apparently handed the bones to biologist Stuart Leadbetter, to see if he could identify the remains.

After painstakingly examining the bones, Mr Leadbetter had no hesitation in confirming that they had come from the backbone of a deer.

Although he was said to be deeply disappointed by the findings, the diver who first came across them, 60 feet below the surface, he was still convinced that the bones proved Morag's existence. Cameron Turner, 27, from Darlington, explained;

'The only reason that the bones could have been so deep in the water is if they are the remains of Morag's dinner. She is known to be much more predatory than Nessie, perhaps there are less scraps of food thrown away by humans there, and she may have to kill deer taking a drink at the water's edge to survive. I was amazed to see the bones lying at the bottom of the Loch.'

The only way they could have got there is if something big died on the water or if another animal had been dragged down there to be eaten. The water is very dark with peat (funny, I always thought Loch Morar was clear and free from peat - that's why Adrian and his team were so confident back then that they would achieve better success at Loch Morar - puzzled Ed)

'After I had collected as many bones as I could, I decided to get out of there quickly because I would not like to meet the Beast on my own.'

The field trip to the Loch was part of a two-week expedition by the newly formed (and from all accounts, highly spurious) Loch Ness Monster Fan Club. They were apparently engaged in scanning Loch Ness with sensitive sonar equipment and attempting to bait the legendary inhabitant using a specially-developed, 'extra smelly rotten fish paste,' which is dangled in the water in of all things, women's tights.

More seriously, according to an article featured in the *'THE SCOTSMAN'*, an angler reported a disturbance in the water of Loch Morar, and his bait and the majority of his fishing tackle was yanked off by something big below the surface. It was this account which lured the team from their base at Loch Ness and the group are said to be in the process of organising a return expedition to Morar sometime next year.

2nd August, 1996. Loch Morar, Scotland. *'THE SCOTSMAN'*

'Monster Carcass Washed Up On Benbecula Beach

NANNY Louise Whitts reckons she has found the remains of a close relative of Nessie washed up on a remote Scots beach.

Now her photograph of the 12ft (3.6m) long beast's body is baffling marine life experts.

Louise, 22, from Bedlington, Northumberland, found the moester during a family holiday to the island of

Benbecula six years ago. She said: "It had a curved back with a row of fins along it — similar to how I imagined the Loch Ness Monster."

She recently took the pictures along to the Hancock Museum in Newcastle but experts there couldn't identify the animal though curator Alec Coles admitted: "It certainly has the shape we associate with Nessie."



**I found the
Ness-door
neighbour**

The account featured above appeared in the Scottish edition of 'THE SCUM', on the 22nd August, 1996. Make of it what you will...

New England Investigators On The Hunt For Nessie

Charles Wycoff, 80, and Robert Rines, 73, a lawyer from Concord, New Hampshire, are the latest researchers planning to visit Loch Ness in an attempt to solve the mystery. They are planning their expedition for spring 1997, and are filled with the predictable high hopes and optimism that they will be successful in their ventures.

Wycoff was quoted as saying; *'I didn't believe in the damn thing. I thought it was a myth.'* His sceptical attitude has since undergone a radical transformation since visiting the Loch back in August, 1971. He believes that both he and his associate Rines, actually had a clear sighting of the Monster. According to Rines; *'We saw it for 10 minutes. It looked like the back of an elephant but we didn't see any neck or head. It moved out into the bay and then turned around and came back.'* They also reportedly obtained a *'wonderful picture of the front part of the body that has stood the test of time.'* He claimed it looked like a Plesiosaur and was maybe 45 feet in length.

Mr Wycoff believes that there has to be more than one enigmatic creature living in the Loch. *There has to be for them to have survived all these years. There haven't been as many sightings in the past few years and they may be dying out. I'm a scientist, and one of my ambitions is to find out what it is.*

To assist them in their search, they are taking with them specially designed dolphin cameras and other high-tech equipment. Time will tell if their joint optimism proves to be justified...

6th August, 1996. Boston, USA. *'THE STANDARD TIMES, Massachusetts, USA. Via COUD-I*

THE WILDCAT OF THE WOLDS

Evidence for the existence of a mysterious creature haunting the 'wilds' of East Riding has apparently been discovered in the shape of a set of uncommonly large paw-prints.

The prints were found at an isolated small-holding in the Walkington area of Yorkshire. Local wildlife expert Ernie Teal, who examined them firsthand, has said that they were not the tracks of any animal he could recognise;

'They are very unusual. In my opinion, they were made by a large cat.'

He further stated that the distance between the prints suggests a space of around 18 inches between the animal's front and rear legs, indicating a creature of substantial size.

A couple from the nearby village have come forward to describe a creature they encountered that resembled a huge cat - said to be the size of a Great Dane - as their car turned off the motorway at neighbouring North Cave. They added that it was brown in colour, with a white underbelly and bright green eyes. *(The almost supernaturally bright eyes are a commonly reported feature of encounters with these 'creatures', and to some investigators, suggest a paranormal origin rather than a flesh and blood animal)*

There have been several reports of attacks on animals, including horses, livestock and rabbits, by an unknown predator in the Holme-on-Spalding-Moor area, and according to the local press, the carcass of a 'mystery beast' had been found in Barnsley. It appeared to have the head and ears of a cat, the body of a dog and fearsome teeth and claws. At 3ft long, the 'beast' has baffled scientists and tests were being carried out at the time of going to press, on the rapidly decomposing body.

A major lion hunt was sparked following reports that a lioness was on the loose in the sleepy hamlet of Ruston Parva, near Bridlington. Police with the usual tranquilliser guns and an RAF helicopter joined in the search which predictably, uncovered absolutely no trace of a big cat. Zoo experts were quick to point out however, that there did appear to be *'fairly strong evidence'* that a number of exotic cats were at large in the countryside. Some experts have claimed that the first sightings came from way back in 1975, when legislation made it compulsory to have licences for

wild animals, and some owners simply release their pet big cats out into the wild.

Descriptions of the 'Wildcat Of The Wolds' vary, but the vast majority of reports state that it is the size of a large dog, and it stalks around like a cat, with a tail almost as long as its body. Other witnesses have described seeing large animals which are either black, or extremely dark in colour.

Mr Sean Drayton, acting zoo curator at FlamingoLand Zoo near Malton, said animals such as pumas could survive in this region in the wild, but he remains very sceptical; *'It is not beyond the realms of possibility, and a puma could certainly scavenge by catching small mammals, but I am doubtful. I would have thought remains would have been found.'*

27th August, 1996. East Riding, Yorkshire. *'HULL DAILY MAIL.' Via COUD-I.*

'TIGER' ON THE LOOSE IN CHESTER

A police air search failed to find any trace of a creature said to resemble a tiger in the Moston area on the outskirts of Chester.

The search was initiated following a report by a man who claimed to have seen an animal about two-and-a-half feet tall similar to a tiger, at the Moston traffic lights on the A41, as he drove to work early in the morning.

The animal, whatever it was, calmly sauntered across the road directly in front of him. An immediate check was carried out at Chester Zoo, but no tiger or any other big cat for that matter was reported to be missing.

Inspector Geoff Williams said the reason that the aircraft had been used was that it carried thermal-imaging equipment, ideal for this type of operation. He added; *'A search of the area was made and we found a large dead fox by the side of the road. But the driver is insisting that this isn't the animal that he saw, which he described as being tiger-like. The animal just sauntered across the road whilst he was travelling to work, according to the witness. But we've had no other reports and none previously.'*

18th May, 1996. Chester, England. *'LIVERPOOL DAILY POST'.*

A REAL-LIFE 'CHESHIRE BIG CAT'

And, just down the road from Chester, a large black cat-like animal has been reportedly sighted around the picturesque town of Knutsford.

A woman driver spotted the creature as she was passing Toft Cricket Club in Knutsford, and she contacted local councillor Bill Davies. She was driving along the outskirts of the town when she saw the animal slinking away from the roadside.

Police were quick to point out that there had been no further sightings of a big cat in the area, but a spokesman did say; *'If anyone does spot such an animal we would advise them to keep a safe distance and call us.'*

The cricket ground is close to Booths Hall, headquarters of the National Nuclear Corporation,

and their closed-circuit TV is being closely monitored for a sighting of the mysterious animal.

A spokesman from Chester Zoo said the animal sounded a whole lot like a black panther and added; *'It is not impossible that she saw a big cat.'*

25th July, 1996. Knutsford, Cheshire. *'LIVERPOOL DAILY POST'*.

'The Goat Sucker' Claws Its Way Into Miami And Texas

The state of near hysteria that has accompanied the reports of 'Chupacabras - The Puerto Rican 'Goat-Sucker', has it seems manifested itself right across Mexico and has now crossed the border into the heart of both Miami, Florida and the lone-star state of Texas.

According to press reports coming out of Donna, Texas, Sylvia Ybarra, 19, found her six-year-old pet goat, Nena, dead with three puncture wounds in its neck. It was lying in front of its flimsy shed. Recalling the images she'd seen on the TV increasingly sensational news bulletins and realising the carcass bore all the hallmarks of an attack by Chupacabras, she quickly became terrified, convinced that her pet had been the latest victim.

'It might happen again,' she told reporters. *'We never know when it's going to come back.'*

An examination of the corpse was carried out and revealed that it was probably attacked by a dog and the bites had become infected. At least that was the theory proposed by veterinarian Steve Edelstein. As investigators and sceptics alike adopt their firmly entrenched stances, both sides could at least agree on one thing; It had only really been a matter of time before Chupacabra fever quite literally took a bite out of the Rio Grande Valley, after sweeping like wildfire across Latin America from its point of origin in Puerto Rico. The mysterious entity has become such a well-established icon of popular culture that it even has its own folk song, video game and an Internet Web Page.

Tony Zaveleta, an anthropologist based at the University of Texas at Brownsville, states that such media hype is *'typical of hysteria. In the technical world it spreads almost instantaneously. I would call it pop hysteria.'*

Veteran, or well-read Fortean will recall that the last time such apparently paranormal activity/hysteria cropped up in the Valley was in the mid-1970's, when sightings of what many sceptics believe to have been a stray condor were linked to a rash of mutilated cattle. *'It was real weird,'* Brownsville rancher Sam Martin had stated at the time he found one of his bulls dead in the early 1970's. *'There was no blood around it. No tracks.'*

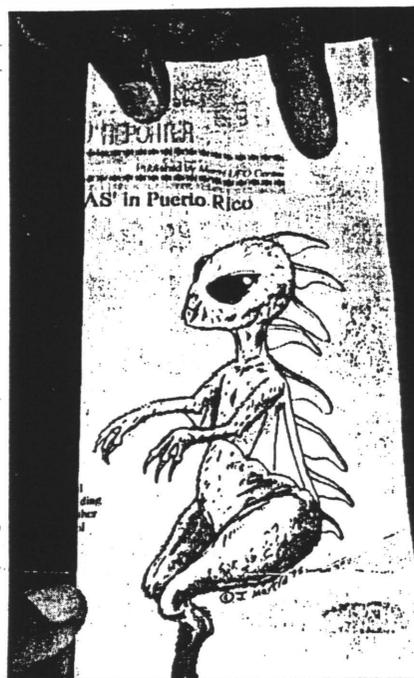
These cases have very similar echoes to the current wave of mutilations taking place across the plains of New Mexico and Texas...

Meanwhile, in Florida, Chupacabras has been the talk of Miami's Spanish radio stations and one Latin TV station has even been carrying regular news

updates on the mysterious entity...And, only in America, as the saying goes, they've actually gone as far as naming a sandwich after it.

Back in April of this year, surrounded by photographers and reporters eager for a world exclusive, a University of Miami veterinary professor sliced open a dead female goat in a bid to prove the victim was simply bitten, not sucked dry of blood. Dr Alan Herron told anyone willing to listen that *'a pack of wild dogs did it. The bite wounds are suggestive of a predation that is most likely a dog.'*

Predictably however, such statements of facts did little to dispel the growing sense of hysteria.



An artist's impression of the Chupacabras based on various eyewitness accounts.

'It's like a UFO,' said Nestor Miranda, who owns a Laundromat in Sweetwater, a Miami suburb where the Chupacabras is reportedly slaughtering chickens by the dozen. *'Everybody claims to see it, but nobody has proof. Everybody wants to believe in it. I personally believe it's all a bunch of bull.'*

With those pearls of insight and wisdom ringing in our ears we move on to Ron Magill, spokesman for Miami's MetroZoo. He has investigated many of the alleged Chupacabras attacks. Part Cuban himself, he believes that the frenzy has its roots in Afro-Caribbean culture, which is rich in superstition and exotic religious practices.

Just last year, janitors at Miami's courthouse had to deal with a rash of dead chickens and other Voodoo sacrifices left on the sidewalk by defendants hoping for a little divine intervention into their upcoming cases (*See issue 7 of DON for further details*). And Cuba's Santeria religion, which uses live animal sacrifices, has a firm foothold in South Florida. One local priest has endured arrest and gone to court to obtain permission to conduct his sacrifices in public.

The rumour-mongers have also helped propagate the theory that the creature was spawned from the union of a human woman with an extraterrestrial who makes regular checks on its offspring. Another story has the Chupacabras floating off the Straits of Florida on a raft, like a latter-day Cuban refugee. Approaching an unsuspecting fisherman, the creature turns down the offer of water, but asks to suck the blood from the angler's catch.

If nothing else, the stories of the monster have provided the public at large with an amusing diversion from everyday reality and the pressures that can bring to bear upon their often humdrum existence. Amusing, at least, for those who don't believe in Chupacabras.

That far too many people do believe inspired Magill to perform the live necropsy.

'I just finally had enough with the calls on this,' he said. *'I kept telling people it's nothing but a dog killing their animals, but they just wouldn't believe me. They call and tell me I've been bought off by the CIA, that I'm lying for the US Government to cover this up. What can you do?'*

15th May, 1996. Donner, Texas 'USA TODAY' 19th April, 1996, Miami, Florida, 'THE ATLANTA JOURNAL' Via COUD-I.

IN SEARCH OF BIGFOOT

The following article appeared in the May 24th Edition of 'USA TODAY.' We reprint it here for your delectation....

Mount Hood, Oregon. Vultures take to the sky, and in an instant, Peter Byrne turns off the engine of his red jeep and lets it glide to a silent stop. He steals into the forest, sniffs the air, tosses dry grass seeds to check the wind's direction, and then walks a hundred yards to what he hopes is a life's dream - A corpse belonging to a 600 pound, 7ft tall Bigfoot.

Alas, it's not Bigfoot. It's a beaver.

'This time it's not Bigfoot,' he says, leaning over the freshly dead beaver's body and trying not to appear disappointed. *'Next time it could be. You can never ignore any lead when you're looking for a Bigfoot.'*

Byrne runs the nation's most intensive high-tech, well funded search for Bigfoot. The Bigfoot Reset project is financed through a grant from the Academy of Applied Science, which supports research outside the scientific mainstream. The five-year project, which ends next year (1997), has won praise from some university anthropologists impressed by its scientific rigour.

The man leading the search is a cross between Don Quixote and Indiana Jones. Byrne, 70, a native of Ireland who speaks with a refined English accent, has a penchant for khaki clothes and silk ascots. For the last two decades, he has leapt out of many a jeep in pursuit of a Bigfoot.

'Bigfoot is out there. Of this, I am certain,' says Byrne, who's spent his life leading safaris in Nepal, searching the Himalayas for the Yeti and looking for Bigfoot. *'We just need proof.'*

In June of 1996, his search added an expensive night-vision, heat-sensing system. When a big animal triggers infrared sensors and automated cameras,

phones were able to alert Byrne. Bigfoot scouts were also prepared to be swiftly deployed.

The public co-operated too. The project's hot line rang constantly. In April, 1996, the four-person project staff fielded some 4,000 calls. Calls to the hot line often go something like this;

'Agghhhh! I'm being eaten by Bigfoot!' In the background, adolescents guffaw.

Byrne and his staff listen patiently to every call. *'We are waiting for the one call that will lead to the big find,'* he says. *'That's how we wade through the hoaxes.'*

The Bigfoot search faces widespread scientific scepticism. *'I don't believe the thing exists,'* says Daris Swindler (*now, there's a name you can place your trust in!!!-Ed*), professor emeritus of anthropology at the University of Washington.

Byrne knows hoaxes are plentiful. He keeps a photo on his shelf of an artificial-looking furry creature with no neck. *'The man who sent us this has sent us five pictures, all fake. Some people want attention; others want money.'*

Ecologist Robert Michael Pyle says most cultures have human-like giants in their folk history. *'We have this need for some larger-than-life creature,'* says Pyle, author of *'Where Bigfoot Walks.'*

Pyle is sceptical about whether Bigfoot exists but hasn't ruled it out. *'This could be a case where mythology and biology correspond.'*

For 200 years, reports of immense, dark, hairy bipeds have circulated in North California, Idaho, Oregon, Washington and parts of Western Canada. Believers say as many as 2,000 of the creatures may live in the region.

Some think Bigfoot maybe descended from the extinct *gigantopithecus*, the largest ape that ever lived. Others think Bigfoot is a much closer cousin to humans.

But how could such a large creature elude humans in the most industrialised nation in the world?

Bigfootologists say the answer rests in Bigfoot habits. Bigfoot is a gentle, nocturnal animal who avoids people. In addition, forests in Bigfoot's habitat are so densely wooded and sparsely populated that some planes that crash are never found.

One day, Byrne hopes to encounter a Bigfoot in the flesh, so he can get a pellet-sized flesh sample to help prove his case through DNA.

Among the Bigfoot project's resources are a couple of helicopters and some special tissue sample guns to help with the task.

'I wouldn't want to hurt it. I'd love to go up to it and somehow communicate. It would be the culmination of a lifetime's work,' says Byrne, a far-off look in his intense blue eyes.

Interest in Bigfoot, as with most aspects of paranormal phenomena, is at an all-time high.

'People say "a Bigfoot in Kansas? Are you crazy?"' says Matt Dennis, who founded the Kansas Bigfoot Centre in 1995. *'But I'm almost willing to bet they exist here.'* Portland's 300-member Western Bigfoot Society is America's largest Bigfoot club.

Its newsletter, 'THE TRACK RECORD,' reports new sightings every month. But club founder Ray Crowe

warns members to wear their 'scepticals' when reading the reports. Bigfoot attracts its share of unusual fans. A San Francisco man is trying to start a Bigfoot/UFO museum. Others swear they converse with Bigfoot on a psychic basis.

'Some Bigfoot people are like Elvis people,' says Pyle. 'It's not a matter of them not having both oars in the water. They don't even have a boat.'

While some reports are kooky, Byrne says many credible witnesses don't tell anyone. *'They're afraid people will call them crazy; sometimes their families think they are.'*

D.W. Patino, a former forest ranger who is now a police officer, and his fiancée say they saw Bigfoot in 1995, when camping on the Oregon coast. He's reluctant to speak of his Bigfoot encounter for fear of losing his job. *'I don't want to be thought of as crazy.'* he says. He also says the creature walked along the beach without looking at him. *'I was terrified. It was something none of my training prepared me for.'*

The next day, he photographed 6-inch deep, 16-inch long footprints in the sand. He sent the photos to Byrne. *'I was so relieved to talk to someone who took my story so seriously and had such deep respect for the animal,'* he says. *'If I were Bigfoot and had to have someone find me, I'd want that person to be Peter Byrne.'*

24th May, 1996. Mount Hood, Oregon. 'USA TODAY.'

It's The McYeti...

According to an article in the 'DAILY SLUR', stunned witnesses have apparently encountered hulking 8ft tall humanoid monsters climbing trees, roaming hills and running at an incredible speed of 45mph.



We would normally have dismissed this report as being of no more substance than a Tory Government manifesto leaflet if it hadn't have been for the fact that the accounts *seem* to be endorsed by none other

than Jonathan Downes, editor of the excellent 'ANIMALS AND MEN.' (and a man for whom we have a lot of respect)

The article includes mention of a terrified witness who told of how a 'great hairy muscular figure' suddenly leapt up out of the undergrowth alongside an isolated road near Torphins, Aberdeenshire, and ran alongside his car.

'It did not seem out of breath as it reached speeds of between 35 and 45mph,' he said. *'It had red eyes (as with Alien Big Cat sightings, a commonly reported feature-Ed), and a body covered with hair.'*

Another man in Fife claimed to have seen two of the creatures in a wood. He described them as being 'very agile, being able to jump from a standing position to a height of 10ft or more into the branches of trees.'

A lone creature was also reported to have been seen on several occasions wandering on Dundonald Hill. And walkers around Torphins Forest have spoken of encountering a 'Neanderthal man' glimpsed between the trees.

Another anonymous female witness who lives in a secluded cottage, stated that she had twice seen a dark, hairy figure in the forest, watching her, before slinking away.'

The praiseworthy Mr. Downes was quoted as saying; *'There are certainly a lot of these sightings. My belief is that they are not flesh-and-blood creatures, but a paranormal phenomenon. I'm looking into similar reports from the West Country.'*

We'll keep you posted on any further developments regarding this fascinating phenomena, rest assured.

25th July, 1996. Aberdeen, Fife, Dundonald, Scotland. 'DAILY SLUR.'

NEW SPECIES OF MONKEY FOUND IN THE AMAZON

Who says there are no new, undiscovered creatures alive on the planet? Scientists in Brazil have reportedly discovered the sixth new species of Monkey in as many years.

Officially, it is called *Callithrix saterei*. But, not surprisingly, people in the Amazon jungle where the animal was found, forsake that little tongue-twister in favour of the easier to pronounce name of 'Zip.'

Although news of the orange-haired marmoset, no bigger than a squirrel, has been circulating among biologists for some time, its first full scientific description appears in the current issue of the Brazilian journal 'Goeldiana'

Scientist Mauricio de Almeida said; *'I don't know why they called it "Zip"....Maybe it's because the monkey is very fast.'*

21st June, 1996. Amazon Jungle, Brazil. 'LIVERPOOL ECHO'

From The Depths Of The Sea's They Came...

Reports of deadly, out-of-place sea creatures were once more making the news this summer...

Thousands of giant stinging jellyfish were said to be terrorising 100 miles of Norfolk coastline in mid-August.

Dozens of holidaymakers were attacked by their 9ft long tentacles and victims were ill for up to 48 hours. Marine 'expert' Percy Trett said the orange Compass Jellyfish had been driven onto the Norfolk Beaches by strong winds. He added; *'It stings like a nettle, but it can cause problems. They can still sting when dead and washed up.'*

That was bad.

Even worse, were the reports that *killer* jellyfish were heading for the shores and beaches of Britain. Sightings of the Lion's Mane Jellyfish - which has deadly stinging tentacles up to *ten* feet in length - had been made as far north as Blackpool.

And huge Portuguese Man O' War jellyfish were also said to be taking advantage of the summer's one true heatwave (the middle of August, in case it went by so fast you'd forgotten about it or missed it altogether) and left their usual sub-tropical waters to head for Britain.

Jellyfish 'expert' Ashley Ball, of Blackpool's Sea Life Centre said; *'Our own jellyfish are nothing compared to these species - they can be extremely dangerous. Even when a Man O' War is washed up dead its tentacles are still highly poisonous.'*

And if you think (like a certain Mr Vinny Jones) that jellyfish are not particularly fear-inducing, then consider if you will, the news that bathers were forced to race ashore in panic when a 10ft long *shark* skimmed into a bay and began marauding in the shallows. And this was not, as you may think, somewhere exotic, like Australia for instance. This was at Chesil Beach at Weymouth in Dorset.

The warm weather had lured the creature to the Dorset coastline and a coastguard said; *'The water emptied like a scene from "JAWS".'*

21st July, Chesil Beach, Dorset. 'NEWS OF THE WORLD'

STRANGE HUMAN BEHAVIOUR

Husband's Spider Revenge

A jilted husband named Tony Smith, decided to wreak his revenge upon the man he suspected of being his wife's lover...By threatening him with a giant hairy spider.

Tony, 45, was well aware that bachelor Kevin Knight, 50, was terrified of the creepy-crawlies. So he splashed out £16 at a pet shop for a Chile Rose Spider and then set off for Kevin's home address. Once there, he confronted him on his doorstep. Kevin wasn't to know, of course that Chile Rose Spider's are completely harmless, even though they look like Tarantulas.

Tony said; *'I wanted to make him confess to an affair with my wife Karen. As he lay on the floor, I threw it at him and he was absolutely terrified.'*

Tony, from Porton, added *'I was devastated when Karen left me after 17 months of marriage. I still love her.'* It is not recorded what, if anything, Kevin had to say about the whole affair...Perhaps it's just as well. It would no doubt be unprintable.

9th August, 1996. Porton, Wiltshire. 'DAILY SLUR.'

THE SPEARMAN OF IRONBRIDGE

A mystery spear-thrower has been causing havoc with the lighting above the Shropshire village of Ironbridge. For some unfathomable reason, the culprit has hurled 4ft wooden spears at high-voltage cables 20ft above the ground. In the past four months, 21 have been damaged. Charred remains of the weapons have been found alongside the disabled cables and a greyhound was electrocuted after it touched a live cable swinging near the ground.

Midlands Electricity fear someone could easily be killed if the incidents continue and offered a £5,000 reward to unmask the Spearman of Ironbridge. A million tourists a year visit the town to see the world's first iron bridge, built in 1779. But because of the blackouts caused by the Spearman, some traders have lost so much during the peak holiday season, they threatened to leave. More than 10,000 consumers were affected by the mysterious hit-and-run raids, all within five miles of the town.

'We have had calls from people who saw sparks and a big flash and heard a bang before the electricity went off,' said Police Sergeant Steve Rodgers. *'The way the power lines are being attacked suggests the person concerned knows how to cause maximum disruption and could be a disgruntled former electricity employee. It is possible the culprit will end up on a murder charge because there is a very real possibility that somebody will be killed, especially with children in the middle of their summer holidays.'*

8th August, 1996. Ironbridge, Shropshire. 'LIVERPOOL DAILY POST.'

The Ear-Snatchers

One of the most bizarre tales we've come across recently concerns the reports of drunks being terrorised by a bunch of unknown attackers in a grey car who slice off the ears of drinkers they find totally unconscious in the city streets of Honduras.

At the time of going to press, the mysterious assailants had cut ears from 12 drunkards in a series of weird crimes that have understandably rocked Santa Rosa de Copan. No motive has as yet been forthcoming but you can bet your last pound coin the conspiracy theorists are having a field day with this news.

5th August, 1996. Santa Rosa de Copan, Honduras. 'LIVERPOOL ECHO.'

...AND THE CAT- NAPPERS

Cat owners in the tiny village of Liverton, near Newton Abbot in Devon, are on the alert after the mysterious disappearances of 18 cats.

The Cat Protection League and the police have joined forces to try and prevent any further instances of 'cat-napping'. Theories as to why anybody should want to abduct cats range from the possibility that they are being used in Satanic rituals or for vivisection purposes, or that a predatory animal (maybe an alien big cat) has been targeting them.

28th June, 1996. *Liverton, Devon.* 'DAILY MAIL.'

Bite Yer Tongue

A woman angered by a boy foolishly spreading gossip about her in Egypt took revenge by tricking him into engaging with her in a kiss...And then promptly bit off his tongue. Talk about poetic justice.

2nd August, 1996. *Egypt.* 'DAILY MANC.'

**It's often said it's better to be safe than sorry, but nervous Waylon Lock was guilty of taking that maxim to the extreme. He made an incredible 926 emergency service calls in a year and once called an ambulance to his home because he sneezed...Twice in an hour!!!

23rd June, 1996. *Hannibal, Missouri, USA.* 'SUNDAY PEOPLE.'

THE REALLY BAD IDEA

DEPT

**Clive Denyer hit upon the less than bright idea of getting rid of a snake that had slithered under his floorboards, of pushing burning paper through a hole in the floor. Not surprisingly, he managed to get rid of the snake, but wound up burning down his house.

29th August, 1996. *Nebraska, USA.* 'SUNDAY PEOPLE.'

**A love-sick Shanghai man climbed into a tiger's cage at the city zoo, knelt in front of the beast - and begged it to eat him.

The doubtless bemused tiger knocked him down and duly took a bite out of his neck. But the man survived and was eventually rescued.

17th July, 1996. *Shanghai.* 'LIVERPOOL ECHO.'

**A Belgian with 138 rings through his body is claiming the world record for body piercing. Alex Lambrecht, aged 47, said he took up piercing after he got divorced and lost his job.

20th June, 1996. *Belgium.* 'DAILY MAIL.'

**Richard Hawes divorced his wife Candy because she ruined his attempts at love-making by laughing all the while. She told the divorce court; 'Well, he pulled such funny faces whenever we had sex.'

14th July, 1996. *Houston, Texas.* 'NEWS OF THE WORLD.'

**A man in Maharashtra in India is said to be surviving on a diet purely made up of raw snakes.

He reportedly eats up to 100 a month and the fad apparently started out when as a boy he was bitten by a snake...He promptly bit it straight back.

6th August, 1996. *Maharashtra, India.* 'MAIL ON SUNDAY.'

**A fisherman who planned a bumper catch by dropping a World War Two bomb into the sea was killed when it blew up as he tried to remove the detonator.

Two brothers died a month earlier in a similar accident in the region of the south-western Albanian port of Vlore.

Unexploded wartime bombs litter the country's coastline.

24th July, 1996. *Vlore, Albania.* 'DAILY SLUR.'

**Alice Cornyn-Selbery wore white when she decided to 'marry' the house she has lived in for 20 years in a wacky ceremony in Portland, Oregon.

31st May, 1996. *Portland, Oregon.* 'DAILY SLUR.'

**And finally, for this issue at least, a heated debate over the decorations for a Moslem festival triggered a raging gun battle that left 10 people shot dead and 24 bystanders injured.

3rd July, 1996. *Lahore, Pakistan.* 'DAILY MANC.'

WEIRD CRIME

And once again, we stand open-mouthed and wide-eyed at the sheer number of crazy crimes committed since our last issue.

Hopeless Burglars And Robbers

**A drunken burglar fell asleep in a house he had broken into. A boy of 13, who found the aptly named Tony Pratt, 22, dozing on his bed in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, called the police, who arrived to find him, incredibly, still fast asleep and dead to the world.

Pratt, unemployed, was jailed for four years by the city's crown court after admitting burglary.

18th July, 1996. *Scotswood, Newcastle-upon-Tyne.* 'DAILY MAIL.'

**A masked youth brandishing a gun held up a chemist in New York and ordered the assistant to fill up a paper bag with acne cream to treat his spots.

25th August, 1996. *New York, USA.* 'NEWS OF THE WORLD.'

**Shop girl Betty Charman, 19, refused to hand over any cash to an armed robber in San Antonio, Texas, so he bought three pairs of socks before making his escape.

21st July, 1996. *San Antonio, Texas.* 'NEWS OF THE WORLD.'

**A bungling mugger was nabbed after leaving his name and address behind.

He punched a woman and snatched her bag in Southampton, but left his own bag with his personal details inside.

25th August, 1996. *Southampton.* 'DAILY MANC.'

**A hatchet-wielding man held up a filling station in Tampa, Florida, and forgot to fill up his tank. He was arrested when his car ran dry.

13th August, 1996. *Tampa, Florida.* 'LIVERPOOL ECHO'

****Two heartless muggers beat up a 33-year-old man with an iron bar as he got into his car. They then fled without stealing anything other than his £18 Chinese takeaway.**
27th August, 1996. Coventry, England. 'DAILY SLUR.'

****Bank robber Hermann Kolthe wore a wet suit and dived into a river after holding up a bank in Germany. Police soon caught him however...They simply followed the trail of his air bubbles.**
23rd, June, 1996. Friedburg, Germany. 'SUNDAY PEOPLE.'

****And a bus thief picked up passengers and followed the timetable for over an hour before abandoning the vehicle. A police officer in Genoa, Italy, said; 'He was a better driver than the regular drivers.'**
4th July, 1996. Genoa, Italy. 'DAILY SLUR.'

****A man who lost an early-morning Bible-quoting contest killed the man who beat him by shooting him on the spot. Talk about over-reaction!!!**
19th July, 1996. Dadeville, Alabama, USA. 'LIVERPOOL ECHO.'

****A drink-driver trapped by police officers in Lake Oswego, Oregon, bit a police dog, which duly died from an infection caused by the wound.**
16th June, 1996. Oswego, Oregon, USA. 'DAILY MANC.'

****Medics had to free a man who had gotten himself jammed whilst having sex with his car. Amazingly, he got his penis stuck fast in the exhaust pipe of his motor in New Zealand. A cop said he was 'Verging on hysteria when we arrived.' Now, the man, who perhaps not surprisingly, wasn't named, faces a £500 bill from the emergency services - and his Honda needs a new exhaust.**
4th June, 1996. Napier, New Zealand. 'DAILY MANC.'

****A father has admitted to shocking his two sons with an electrical dog collar whenever they had the temerity to disobey him. The dad with all the heart of a character in a bleak Victorian novel, Jeffrey Hoveland, 50, now faces up to two years' in jail.**
30th May, 1996. St. Paul, Minnesota, USA. 'DAILY MANC.'

****Fireman Jacob Czarna has been sacked for actually starting fires in Poland. He was caught racing to a forest fire before it had even been reported.**
5th July, 1996. Poland. LIVERPOOL ECHO.'

****Bank robber John Pirece managed to lock himself in a safe during a raid in Dallas, Texas. Somehow his jacket had snagged on the door and pulled it shut.**
17th July, 1996. Dallas, Texas. 'LIVERPOOL ECHO.'

****Motorist Jose Ricco caused a collision when he slammed on the brakes and opened his door on a busy highway.**

His reason for doing this? Well, he didn't want to sneeze all over his brand new car. Cops in Madrid duly booked him.
12th March, 1996. Madrid, Spain. 'DAILY SLUR.'

****Fat robbers Gilbert Chaulk (23st) and Charles Wagner (24st) were caught by police after they predictably got wedged in the spin doors of a bank they tried to rob in Kansas.**
9th June, 1996. Pine Ridge, Kansas. 'DAILY SLUR.'

****A woman thief used a stick to hook five pairs of shoes through the letter box of a shop in Wales...But they were all right-footed.**
25th August, 1996. Caernarfon, Wales. 'NEWS OF THE WORLD.'

****And finally, a boy of 14, said to be influenced by an unnamed horror film, killed and skinned a young playmate, then cooked his victim's flesh on a stove. A court in Canada was told that Sandy Charles was acting the delusion that he would be able to fly if he drunk boiled fat from his 7-year-old victim. Charles was denying murder at the time of going to press.**
19th June, 1996. Saskatchewan, Canada. 'LIVERPOOL ECHO.'

UNCOMMON FORTUNE AND COSMIC JOKES



The Tragedy Of Mr. Luck

The death of Australian Richard Luck followed three rather mysterious events, indicating he was anything but Lucky, according to tabloid press accounts. He fell out of a train and over a viaduct. Whilst in hospital, recovering from that, he plunged from a high window and was left paralysed. Then an alarm failed when his life-support machine packed up...

And the kicker is, he had planned to get his name changed by deed poll!!!

13th August, 1996. *Australia.* 'DAILY SLUR.'

Money, Money, It's So Funny

**Jenny Shepherd burnt £180,000 that she'd found in her husband's safety deposit box.

Her husband was a police officer and she believed that there were was no way he could have acquired the money legally. Next day however, the bank rang and told her that they'd mistakenly sent her the wrong box.

4th September, 1996. *Tennessee, USA.* 'DAILY MANC.'

**On a more modest scale, but still doubtless galling to those concerned, is the following tale; Mother Alison Foster and her family took off their coats while helping at a busy village fete in Essex. They later found that all their coats had been sold for 10p each by a stall holder who thought they were discarded jumble.

27th August, 1996. *Great Maplestead, Essex.* 'DAILY MANC.'

Biting The Bullet

A man who slept with his loaded gun in his pocket woke up with a (ahem) shooting pain in his penis.

The pistol had accidentally fired, leaving the 24-year-old American with a wound needing 18 stitches.

29th July, 1996. *Sterling Heights, Michigan.* 'DAILY MANC.'

**And a police officer managed to shoot himself in the backside when he tried to remove from his neck a hot spent cartridge which had landed painfully from a fellow officer's pistol during firing practice.

13th August, 1996. *Berlin, Germany.* 'LIVERPOOL ECHO'

**Anton Barton faced a £175,000 bill after he forgot to raise the plough blades on his tractor...And wound up ripping up five miles of Carolina roadway!!!

2nd August, 1996. *Carolina, USA.* 'LIVERPOOL ECHO.'

**In a scene reminiscent of the beginning of Dorothy's adventures in 'The Wizard Of Oz', a tornado picked up Betty Pearce as she was having a bath and hurled her, tub and all, unhurt into a nearby wood.

8th June, 1996. *Carolina, USA.* 'SUNDAY PEOPLE.'

** A drunk who decided to commandeer a shopping trolley and collided head-on with a car was charged with careless driving. The youth was travelling downhill in Sweden, when the 30mph crash happened.

27th August, 1996. *Motala, Sweden* 'DAILY SLUR.'

**And last, but not least, we end this section with a slice of unusual, some would say miraculous, good fortune...

A paraglider plunged helplessly 200ft to the ground when his chute buckled...Yet he survived, because, would you believe it, he landed in a clump of lucky heather, 2ft thick.

Jeremi Zawadzki, 33, was able to leave hospital after treatment for mere bruises and a broken ankle.

20th June, 1996. *Middlesborough.* 'SUNDAY PEOPLE.'

STRANGE DEATHS



Killed By a Banana

Teenager Alison Apps, 18, collapsed and died after eating banana and custard, an inquest was told.

She suffered from a severe allergic reaction after eating the fruit, which, ironically enough, she didn't even particularly like, at the end of a family meal.

She was taken to hospital, but fell into a coma from which she never recovered.

The inquest was told that Alison died from anaphylactic shock - hypersensitivity which causes a severe allergic reaction.

17th July, 1996. *Abergavenny, Gwent, Wales.* 'DAILY SLUR.'

THE KILLER ROBOT

A factory robot killed an engineering whizzkid named Jonathan Howe, by firing a steel bar at his head.

Company director, Jon, 25, of Thornbury, near Bristol, died after suffering terrible injuries when the bar flew through a three inch gap in the computer controlled lathe's door.

Jon, boss of a family-run vehicle gear parts firm, was rushed to Frenchay hospital but was declared dead on arrival. A Bristol inquest heard that the computer had been wrongly programmed, making the door open.

Killed By Dung

A 60-year-old man trying to collect the fresh dung of an Elephant in Nigeria to help make traditional medicine, ended up being trampled to death by the animal. Five other people were also injured.

10th August, 1996. Nigeria, Africa. 'LIVERPOOL ECHO.'

**Popular Basilio Re, tripped, hit his head and died chasing his hat which blew off during his 100th birthday party in the Italian village of Vigogna.

14th July, 1996. Vigogna, Italy. 'DAILY SLUR.'

**After attempting suicide by setting himself on fire, Jacob Dellig drowned when he had a change of heart and jumped into a pond in a bid to put out the flames.

8th June, 1996. 'SUNDAY PEOPLE.'

**And finally, museum worker Andretz Spevitch was tortured to death by tourists in Romania, who thought his groans during a demonstration of an old stretching rack were part of the show. He was actually having a heart attack.

23rd June, 1996. Fagaras, Romania. 'SUNDAY PEOPLE.'

Strange Days In The Animal Kingdom REVOLT OF THE CREATURES: VII



Killer Elephant's And Rhino's

A rampaging Elephant dragged a sleeping 72-year-old woman from her bed and trampled her to death in a village near Katmandu. In the past two months Elephants have killed three people in Nepal.

30th August, 1996. Katmandu, Nepal. 'DAILY MANC.'

And a British zoologist was killed by a Rhinoceros whose life he was helping to save. Daniel Lipscombe, 22, from Guernsey, died instantly when the maddened four-ton beast charged, impaling his neck with its horn. The bull Rhino had been brought to the Khama Rhino Sanctuary in Botswana, from a wildlife park to save it from poachers.

Mr Lipscombe had worked at the sanctuary for almost a year. The local police say he underestimated their danger. 'The animal was very wild.'

10th June, 1996. Serowe, Botswana. 'DAILY MANC.'

BORED OF THE FLIES

Residents of a village in Wiltshire have become victims of a plague of flies.

Zeals, near Warminster, (an infamous paranormal 'Window Area' or 'Shadowland.') has become a mecca for the marauding insects for the last five years or so. Ever since, its 700-strong population has begun to dread the coming of summer and the return of the swarm.

Villager Jenny Jeans, 52, who sometimes kills as many as a thousand flies a day, said; 'It is a living nightmare. They are in your hair, in your food, everywhere.'

Environmental health officers have put the infestations down to the fact that nearby farmland could be the root of the problem. That's some explanation, don't you think?!

10th August, 1996. Deal, Wiltshire. 'DAILY EXPRESS.'

DAY OF THE SEAGULLS

A barrage of high-powered water pistols was employed to protect tourists from aggressive, dive-bombing gulls.

The seabirds were reported to have been stealing chips from visitors to Falmouth (also an infamous paranormal site), Cornwall. One man's head was gashed by a gull's beak.

Some other Cornish towns were said to be broadcasting seagull distress calls from loudspeaker vans in a bid to drive the birds away.

25th August, 1996. Falmouth, Cornwall. 'DAILY MAIL.'

REAL MAD COWS AND BULLS

A man had to be hospitalised after a cow had bitten off his ear. The freak attack happened when four cows suddenly set upon retired carpenter Robert Floyd, 66, as he was walking his dog through a field in Brailes, Warwickshire.

Villagers Jeffrey and Sheryl Beckett heard the noise and found him lying on the ground, blood pouring from his head.

Four frantic cows with their calves were encircling him. Mr Beckett held Mr Floyd's torn-off ear against the wound to stop the bleeding until an ambulance arrived.

Robert's wife Shirley said; 'The cows just went berserk. I can't imagine why. We all gave up eating beef when the BSE panic started months ago.'

April, 1996. Brailes, Warwickshire. 'DAILY MAIL.'

**And a farmer was gored to death by a bull while out repairing fences. George Beechey, 41, of Sheepy Magna, Leicestershire, was impaled and then trampled. He was found by his distraught wife and the bull was shot by a vet.

3rd May, 1996. *Sheepy Magna, Leicestershire. 'DAILY MANC.'*

Invasion Of The Terrapins

A new menace is lurking beneath the surface of ponds and waterways across the North West of England. Snapped up (no pun intended) in their thousands during the now all but forgotten 'Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle' craze, Terrapins are no longer regarded as the 'Heroes in a hard shell.'

They're difficult to keep, smelly, and can inflict quite a nasty bite, and many of them have been dumped by their former owners. Imported the size of a 50p piece, they can grow to the size of a dinner plate. They are native to the swamps of North and South America and Asia, and genetically speaking, they should not be able to adapt to the intense cold of British winters. However, they are now beginning to invade our ornamental ponds just the same. The one at Walton Hall in Warrington, is a prime example. There they have become a major headache for borough council senior ranger, Keith Webb.

'People have been dumping their unwanted pets in the pond, and we must have about 40, including some very young. It is becoming a major problem all over town. There are fears they are competing with other aquatic life so we are actively discouraging people from dumping any more.'

The problem has escalated to such an extent that a special National Terrapin Project has been launched. The public at large are being encouraged to report sightings for a national survey to their local council.

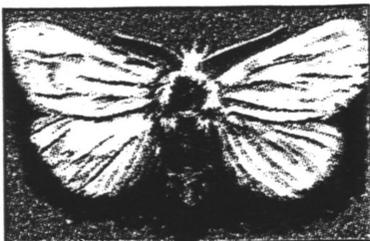
10th August, 1996. *North-West England. 'LIVERPOOL DAILY POST.'*

CATERPILLARS AND

LADYBIRDS ON THE MARCH

A very hungry breed of Caterpillar caused havoc in the financial heart of London during the height of the Summer.

The larvae of the Brown-tailed Moth - Latin name *euproctis chrysorrhoea* - is able to strip trees bare in days with their voracious appetite. And because of the minute hairs that cause severe skin and eye irritation, they pose a threat to humans as well as to plant life.



Property management company Broadgate Estates was forced to erect barriers around silver maple trees in Finsbury Avenue to protect workers on their way too and from the office. Notices pinned to the metal

barriers warned people to stay well away. The trees were also sprayed in an effort to keep the problem, blamed on a spell of unusually hot weather, under control.

The Corporation of London were keeping their fingers crossed that the pests - which grow in tent-like cocoons - would be confined to the cobblestoned avenue close to Liverpool Street Station.

Three years earlier, a plague of the brown-tailed moth caterpillar caused havoc throughout Southern England, with rows of hedgerows and fruit trees devastated.

The moths were first reported in London as long ago as 1722. In William Curtis's book, '*The Flora Londonensis*', authorities in Clapham offered a shilling for every bushel of cocoons brought in for burning.

21st June, 1996. *Clapham, London. 'DAILY MAIL.'*

**And right across England, as per usual, Ladybirds began biting people, because their normal prey, aphids, were killed off by the unseasonably chilly weather.

In desperation, they turn to you and I for food, but the 'experts' assured everyone that their nip is so gentle the chances were no one would even notice it.

27th May, 1996. *England. 'DAILY MAIL.'*

SQUIRREL SABOTEUR

A Kamikaze squirrel managed to black out an incredible 1,260 shops and offices in Stroud, Glos, when it was killed after jumping on to high voltage-overhead cables.

17th July, 1996. *Stroud, Glos. 'DAILY MAIL.'*

ANIMAL

INTELLIGENCE

A quiet market town is being driven to distraction by a dawn chorus that consists of...Car alarms.

The culprits are Blackbirds which have taken to mimicking the exact tone of the wailing sirens.

Journalist Mark Topping, 32, was at first mystified by the noise that kept waking him and his wife at 5am at their home in Guisborough, Cleveland. '*It seemed to be a car alarm, but there wasn't one close enough to be making that sort of row,*' he said. '*Then I saw this Blackbird in the tree right outside the bedroom window. I was amazed. It could hardly have chosen a more irritating thing to mimic* (save perhaps for that bloody annoying new single from 'The Smurfs' - Ed). '*After I had heard that one bird I began to realise others had picked it up in other parts of town.'*

When barman Donald O' Shea, who lives at the opposite end of Guisborough, first heard the wail, he thought it was his own car alarm.

'It took a while before I realised it was this Blackbird,' he said. '*It had the tone and the pitch just right.'*

David Hirst of The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds said; '*It is quite extraordinary. Starlings are normally the Rory Bremner's of the bird world. Often, one bird passes its song on to a neighbour so it may well become a lot more common in the area.'*

Scientists think they have discovered why some Great Reed Warblers are more successful than others is securing a perfect mating partner....They have all the best tunes. A study published in 'NATURE' magazine has found that males who sing the most songs attract more females.

Researchers from America's Cornell University suggest this is because the females instinctively know that stronger singers have the better genes, and that their offspring are more likely to survive. The magazine speculates that the example of the Great Reed Warbler may help to explain the legendary allure of human musicians, from medieval troubadours to modern rock stars.

16th May, 1996. *Guisborough, Cleveland. 'DAILY MAIL'*

LOVESICK ORANGUTAN

An Orangutan abandoned by its owner on a street in Taiwan, grabbed a girl and kissed her repeatedly before being restrained by police.

The ape, left chained to a tree in the capital Taipei, grabbed a high school girl as she attempted to pet it. It was subsequently tranquillised and taken to a zoo.

15th June, 1996. *Taipei, Taiwan. 'DAILY MAIL.'*

DOLPHINS SAVE SWIMMER FROM SHARK ATTACK

British holiday-maker Martin Richardson, 29, was saved from a man-eating shark by a school of dolphins. He was swimming in the Red Sea off the coast of Egypt, when he was attacked by the shark and as it tore into his flesh, a school of passing Bottle-nosed dolphins raced to the rescue. Three of them swam in circles around Martin, flapping their fins and tails to scare away the shark.

He was later given first aid by friends aboard his diving boat and was rushed to an Egyptian military hospital at el-Tur, 55 miles away with bites to his shoulder, stomach and back and a punctured lung.

Martin later described what happened; *'Something took a bite out of my side. I started panicking, then it took another chunk of my upper arm. I remember punching the shark's head to try and keep it away, but I had no idea who my real rescuers were. Something kept that shark away because I was in the water for two or three minutes.'*

Martin's friends later told shark experts how the three dolphins had circled until he could be brought aboard. A dolphin expert said; *'This defensive behaviour of dolphins is common when mothers are protecting calves.'*

25th July, 1996. *el-Tur, Egypt. 'SUNDAY MANC.'*

COWS TO THE RESCUE

Following on from our report that cows had bitten off a man's ear (see page 26), here's an account that restores our faith in all things bovine, (Whatever you may think about the dreaded BSE scare)

Farmer Donald Mottram, 54, had been knocked unconscious by a one-ton Charolais mad bull, and could well have been killed if his herd of cows hadn't have formed a protective circle around him. The bull had been about to charge when suddenly, Donald's favourite cow, Daisy, led 40 cattle to the rescue. When

he came round 90 minutes later, he found his herd shielding him from the bull which was still bellowing in frustration mere yards away.

They then managed to guard him as he crawled 200 yards in agony from broken ribs out of the field to safety. An eternally grateful Donald was moved to say; *'I am sure they saved me from being trampled to death. Some of my favourites were in the group. As well as Daisy, there was Megan, Amy, Bethan, Mary and Kitty. I'm certain they knew the danger I was in and protected me.'*

He'd been riding his off-road quadbike to inject antibiotics into a bull calf's poisoned hoof when the bull attacked, throwing him 40ft into the air.

Donald said; *'I didn't hear him over the noise of the bike's engine. He trampled me, then I passed out. The doctor says I'd have died without such a strong chest, but it was my cows that really saved me.'*

30th August, 1996. *Carmarthen, Dyfed, Wales. 'LIVERPOOL DAILY POST.'*

'JAYTEE'-THE PSYCHIC DOG

Pictured below is Jaytee, a dog who has prompted a scientist to accept that which many pet-owners have known all along: Pets can sense their owners movements.



Jaytee's abilities have so impressed biologist Dr Rupert Sheldrake that he has been inspired to initiate a two-year study on the psychic powers of pets.

'Jaytee,' a seven-year old terrier, jumps to the window in anticipation whenever his owner Pam Smart, leaves work for home. His behaviour can not be put down to routine because the 38-year-old secretary stopped working regular hours about three years ago. Even *she* does not know her own finishing times.

She leaves the dog with her parents, who live next door and who began to cross-check 'Jaytee's' schedule with Pam's whereabouts. Some times she would be 50 miles away. At others just down the road.

More than 150 tests under scientific conditions have since been carried out on the dog, who has reportedly scored an 80 per cent success rate.

July, 1996. Ramsbottom, Lancashire. 'DAILY MAIL.'

APES TO THE RESCUE

A toddler was rescued by a mother Gorilla called 'Binti' after the child fell 15ft into her pit at her zoo.

'Binti', who has an 18th-month old baby of her own, warded off other Apes from attacking the unconscious lad. Then she cuddled him to her chest and carried him to waiting keepers in Chicago. Zoo official Melinda Pruett-Jones was quoted as saying: 'It was real maternal behaviour.'

18th August, 1996. Chicago, USA. 'DAILY MANC.'

**Another recipient of simian kindness in a sticky situation was Cyril Jones, 81, of Snowdonia.

He recently told reporters of how he accidentally parachuted into a tree in Sumatra during World War Two. He was saved by a monkey who duly fed him bananas and fresh bamboo shoots.

25th August, 1996. Sumatra. 'NEWS OF THE WORLD.'

BADGER IN A SPIN

In a story that sounds suspiciously like it belongs in the annals of Modern Urban Folklore (alongside the references to 'Poodles And Babies In The Microwave'), housewife Mignon Muldoon claims she opened her washing machine and found a decidedly squeaky clean badger inside. The animal has been nicknamed 'Zanussi' and had, if you give any degree of credence to the story, been whirling around in the machine all night after Mrs Muldoon went to bed leaving the washer on a full cycle.



The six-month old cub, suffering from a bite from another animal, crept into Mignon's home. It is supposed to have climbed in through the machine's open porthole and snuggled down among the clothes. The creature survived although it emerged looking very soggy and somewhat confused.

Mignon was near to tears, but managed to call a vet to her home. The lucky animal was taken to Hydestile Wildlife Centre to recuperate.

31st July, 1996. Petersfield, Hants. 'DAILY SLUR.'

Caught On The Hop

An elderly couple were held hostage in their home by a sick Kangaroo. The animal flatly refused to budge from their porch after hopping out of the nearby forest.

An animal welfare officer did what most Australians seem to do best; he shot it dead.

'The couple said they were being terrorised by the Kangaroo. It blocked them every time they tried to get out of their front door,' said Pat Eaton, a wildlife worker in Port Macquarie, 220 miles north of Sydney. 'It was probably confused and in a lot of pain. It probably meant no harm.'

27th July, 1996. Port Macquarie, Australia. 'SUNDAY EXPRESS.'

Dog-Fisher's Put Angler's To Shame.

A couple of fishermen had the shock of their lives, when on two separate occasions last July, they were upstaged by their pets.

Glyn Sheppard's Cocker Spaniel Sweep leapt into the sea and promptly dragged out an 8lb Sea Bass. Stunned Glyn, of Christchurch, Dorset, hadn't managed to land a thing despite forking out over £200 in fishing tackle. 'Now I think I'll give it up,' he not surprisingly conceded.

24th July, 1996. Christchurch, Dorset. 'DAILY MANC.'

**And, just a few days later in Darlington, the roles were reversed when angler Darren Kirby managed to hook the catch of his life...His own pet Labrador, Max.

The dog had been eating away at the bait dangling from the end of the line as Darren, 21, cast his line.

27th July, 1996. Darlington. 'DAILY SLUR.'

Cat Chat Communication Claims

A university professor has gone on record as stating his belief that cats converse with each other about really important issues, such as mice and rats.

Paul Leyhausen, of Wuppertal, Germany, says that 'Mothers can tell their kittens what prey is on the menu by using different types of meows.'

28th August, 1996. Wuppertal, Germany. 'DAILY MANC.'

GENERAL WEIRDNESS (A Miscellany Of Curiosities)

Beer With A Mighty Kick

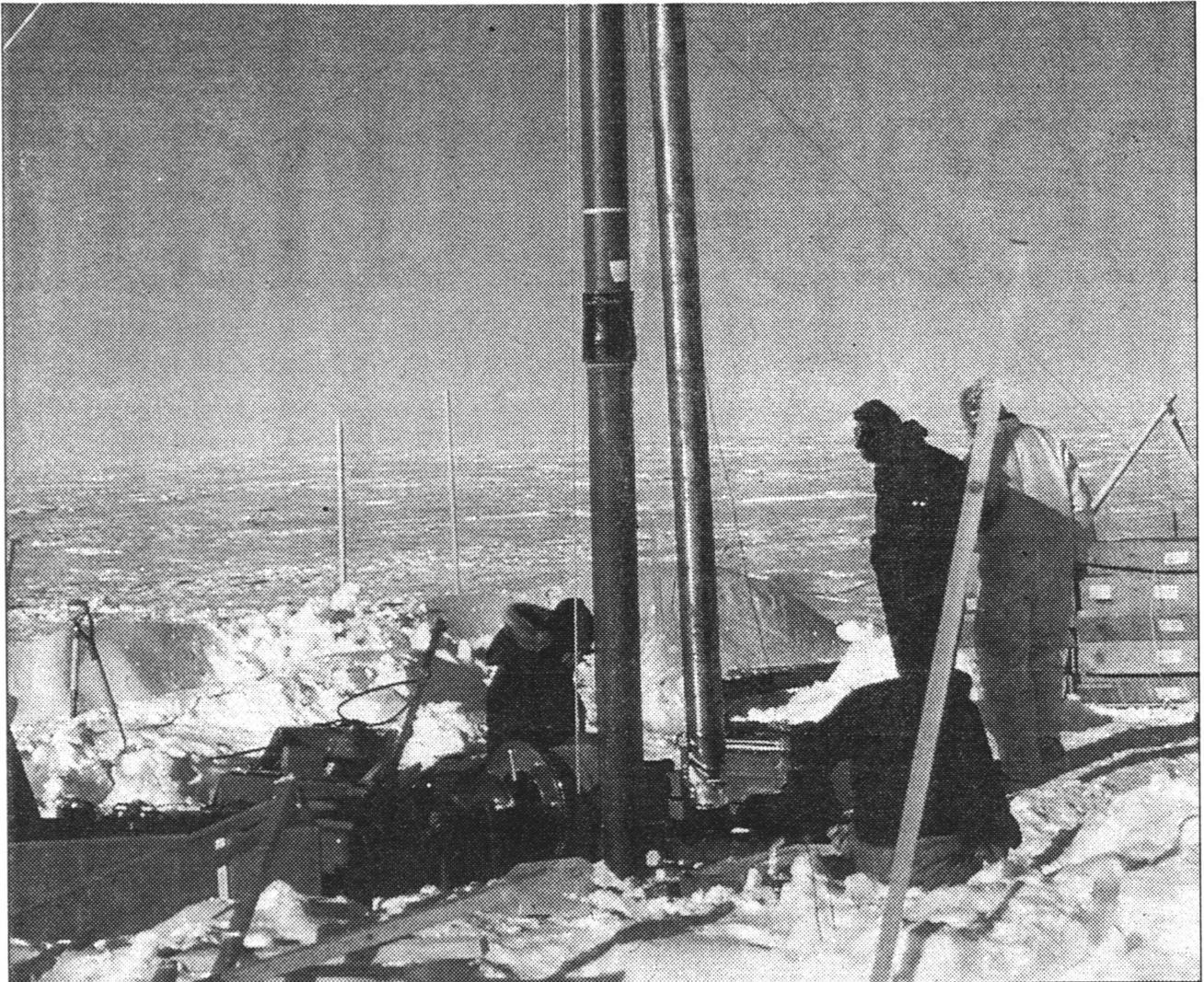
In China it seems, drinking beer can be decidedly bad for your health. According to reports coming out of

the country, at least 15 people have been injured by exploding beer bottles across 11 provinces recently. No further details at present.

9th August, 1996. China. 'LIVERPOOL DAILY POST.'

POLAR LAKE MAY HOLD 'LOST WORLD'

According to reports in the 'quality press', scientists have managed to map a real-life 'Lost World.' that may just contain life from a million years ago. It is four kilometres under the Antarctic icecap (coincidentally, the location of the 'Martian Meteorite' and its clues of possible *extraterrestrial* life, this news was first broken *two whole months* prior to the news about 'Life On Mars - Ed), where the average temperature is a decidedly chilly -50 degrees Centigrade.



Drilling for ice samples in the Antarctic. A Russian probe is now just 250 metres above the gigantic Lake Vostok

A Russian drill has recently paused for the onset of winter 250 metres above what is now called Lake Vostok - 200km long, 125 metres deep on average, and comparable in size with Canada's Lake Ontario. The lake's survival as liquid water in the Antarctic bedrock under the thickest depth of ice in the continent is a freak of physics. Creatures surviving in the lake open up the exciting possibility for the existence of life on other, equally inhospitable planets. British and Russian researchers say in 'NATURE', that there are 70 such liquid lakes at the bottom of the polar ice, but most are small. Vostok was detected in 1974 by airborne radar-echo, but its enormous size has only recently been confirmed by fresh studies and detailed sounding by the European Earth Resources Satellite ERS-1.

The discovery has excited microbiologists. In the last decade they have learned that microbes seem to be able to live everywhere; down volcanic vents, in salt lakes and acid pools, under the North Polar ice, even deep within the Earth's crust.

Russian scientists, drilling deep in the icecap to study annual snowfalls in the way other climate scientists study growth rings in trees, have found yeasts 3,000 years old, fungi 38,000 years old, and spore-forming bacteria covered by snow 200,000 years ago. So there is a realistic chance that life may exist within the sediments of a freshwater lake isolated from the atmosphere a million years ago.

'It's a bit like looking at somewhere like Mars,' says David Wynn-Williams of the British Antarctic Survey. 'It's a window into history as far as I am concerned. We can already go down through the ice core and find the story of climate change. We'd have a measure of what the Antarctic was like before the ice-sheet formed over it. That's why it is so special.'

The water has been undisturbed for so long that it is likely to be sterile, but the sediments below could yield lessons about evolution. It could also turn up microbes useful for antibiotic or industrial research. Biologists are recommending trial probes into smaller sub-ice lakes to develop technologies before touching the Vostok giant. *'The big one is unique. It is a one off. If we spoil it because of our ignorance that would be a tragedy,* said Dr. Wynn-Williams. *'It's a bit like contaminating the Moon, or Mars.'*

There is a geological overlap between Earth and Mars, and this Vostok story ties up with that. If we can find living organisms within those sediments that have just been on tick-over for a few million years, then the chances are the same sort of thing is going on on Mars.'

20th June, 1996. Antarctica. *'THE GUARDIAN.'*

Abandoned By The Gods, A Lost Tribe

The 'experts' have already called it the archaeological find of the century. A completely unexpected, rich and powerful lost civilisation, 3,500 years old, slowly being uncovered among the paddy fields in China's rural Sichuan Province. Its people were not the ancestors of those who inhabit China today. They apparently vanished without trace for reasons unknown and all memory of their culture and achievements was lost until recent excavations began in Sanxingdui.

'Whoever they were, wherever they went, they were a frightening, awe-inspiring people,' claims Dr Jessica Rawson, academic curator of an exhibition which opened at the British Museum on September 13th this year. *'They had heavy, slanting eyes, big ears, and broad, thin-lipped mouths clamped in a perpetual grin.'* It seems their rulers designed, and perhaps wore on religious occasions, strange bronze masks with curiously alien-Gray-type eyes projecting on stalks, massive elephant ears and what looked to be mechanised trunks where noses might have been expected. This is the first time that China has allowed these artefacts out of the country.

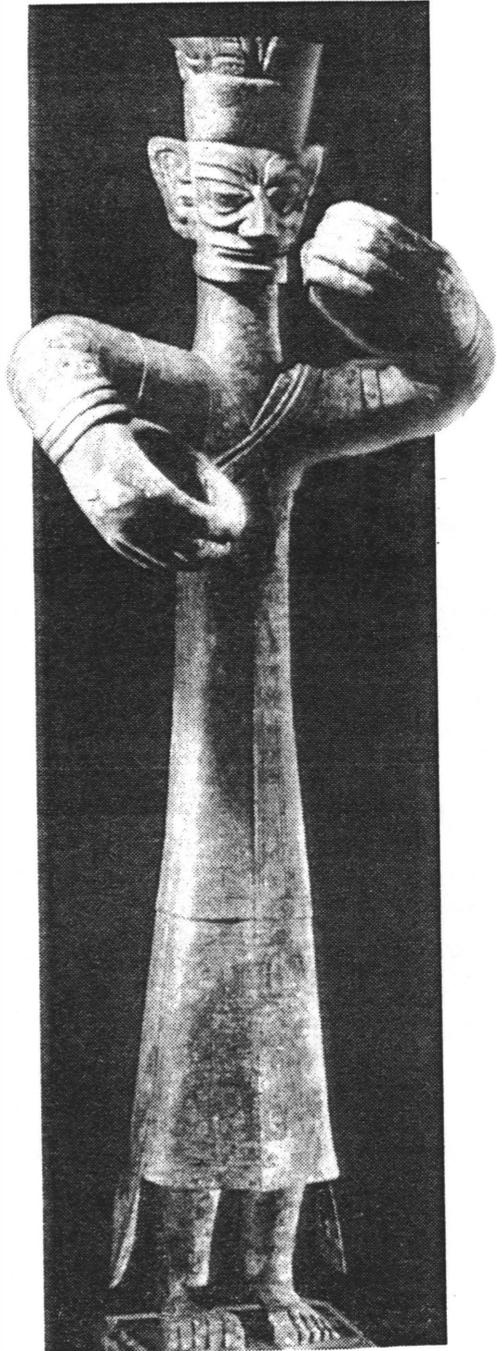
'It is hard to be sure about ethnicity, but you could hardly call them Chinese,' claims Dr Rawson. *'These people had a language, culture and belief system different to the Shang culture, which existed 800 miles to the north-east at the time. Although they don't seem to have invented any form of writing, this was a sophisticated, advanced people who will surely have left endless clues for future generations of archaeologists to uncover.'*

Some 'experts' have identified the advanced strangers as related to Tibeto-Burman tribespeople, while others suggest that they were Austronesian, similar to the Polynesians of the Pacific Islands. And yet other observers have drawn parallels between

their ritual masks and the so-called garuda masks to be found on Bali today.

But what were such people doing in great-walled cities, at least a mile square, in the middle of inland China? And where did they go when their powerful civilisation collapsed so unexpectedly?

'We have no idea, admits Dr Rawson. *'This is an utterly unprecedented event. As far as we know at present, they arrived with a bang and disappeared with a bang.'*



One of the intricately carved statues found at the excavation site of the lost civilisation in the midst of China

One clue to their fate might lie in the great sacrificial pits in which objects currently being shown at the British Museum were discovered.

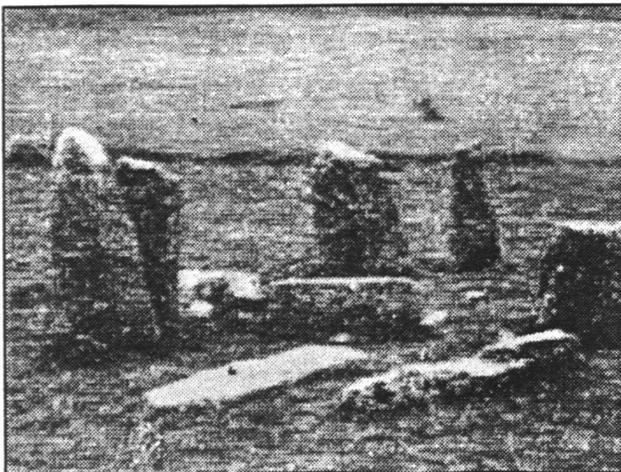
They stand next to what were apparently temples set on high mounds of earth. One pit alone contained more than 500 bronze, jade, and stone treasures. The top layer consisted of hundreds of elephant tusks, the next layer was composed of 41 bronze human heads, 15 bronze masks, a 7ft statue of a man on a 3ft pedestal decorated with images of elephants, and an extraordinary bronze tree complete with metal birds. Some claim this suggests increasing desperate appeals to the Gods to deal with some approaching catastrophe. But others say that it simply shows the growing wealth and power of the civilisation in the period before its unexplained demise. Dr Rawson sees the rise and fall of this lost civilisation as one of the great might-have-beens of prehistoric times. And intriguingly, this civilisation collapsed at just the time the pre-Classical civilisation at Knossos, Phaistos and Melia on Crete were destroyed, overwhelmed by massive tidal waves caused by the volcanic eruption of the nearby island of Thera, widely held to be the Atlantis of legend.

In recent years archaeologists have found elegant cities buried deep beneath the volcanic ash of Thera (now called Santorini). This catastrophe would have been accompanied by world-wide disruption of weather patterns for decades as volcanic ash darkened the sky, causing crop failures and droughts. Could the climatic changes produced by the disaster which destroyed Atlantis and set Western civilisation back a thousand years have caused harvest failures at Sanxingdui? Is that why these mysterious people made ever more generous sacrifices to their unknown Gods? And why they eventually disappeared from the face of the earth, leaving China to those we know today as the Chinese?

6th September, 1996. Sanxingdui, China. 'DAILY MAIL.'

The Rolling Stones

The mysterious disappearance of a circle of standing stones in the village of Reynoldston, near Swansea has reportedly left locals baffled.



For more than a century, the circle had been the focal point for the villagers. They were erected by landowner and archetypal Victorian eccentric John Lucas in the grounds of his country home Stout Hall,

and soon it was rumoured they were imbued with magical powers.

According to an account in the 'DAILY MAIL', 11 of the 12 rocks, each around 4ft high and weighing nearly half a ton, completely vanished. No one was seen or heard removing them and there was no clue as to how they had been taken away.

John Lucas's great, great grandson, Robert said; 'The stones have become very special to the people who live around here. Quite where they have gone is anyone's guess.'

Kim Driscoll, landlady of the local 'King Arthur' pub, said; 'I used to drive past the stones every day until suddenly they were gone. I couldn't believe it.'

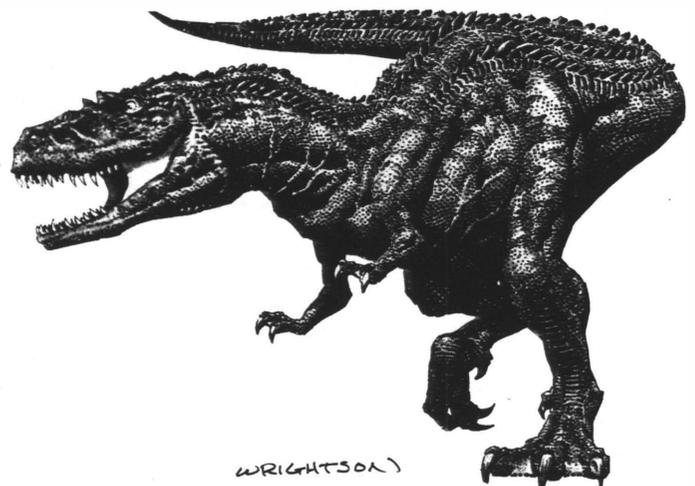
Local councillor Richard Lewis was said to be equally perplexed; 'The stone circle was of great historical importance and was used for all sorts of rituals in the past. I reckon there are strange forces at work around these parts.'

Howard Morgan, a Swansea magistrate and the owner of the land, predictably had a more down-to-earth explanation. 'I don't think it's much of a mystery at all - sadly someone has just decided to nick them. I haven't got any theories why they've done it, although it's more than likely that they're in someone's garden than being used for virgin sacrifices.'

10th August, 1996. Reynoldston, Nr Swansea, Wales. 'DAILY MAIL.'

Siam's T Rex Smaller But Older

French and Thai scientists have found the ancestor of Tyrannosaurus Rex. At 6'5 metres, half the length of the North American carnivore, the new discovery is possibly a damn sight meaner, certainly leaner, 20 million years older and it began hunting in Asia.



It is a Theropod, the latest in a string of bygone carnivores. In May of this year, a team of scientists from the US working in Morocco unveiled two 90 million-year old monsters, one to match the biggest T Rex, the other a smaller but more agile hunter.

But the recent finds still left the question of where the giant Tyrannosaurs actually came from. The latest discovery provides an answer. T Rex could have descended from a carnivore King Of Siam. The identity of Siamotyrannus isanensis, its discovery

reported in a recent edition of 'NATURE', is based on the discovery of a hip bone and part of a tail in red sandstone formations in north-eastern Thailand. 'It had been suspected already that that particular group of animals arose in Asia,' said Angela Milner of the Natural History Museum. The size was no real surprise, she added. 'It is one of those biological laws, that lineage's of animals tend to get larger through time.'

20th June, 1996. Siam, Asia. 'THE GUARDIAN'.

BOGUS SOCIAL WORKER ON THE PROWL AROUND MERSEYSIDE



Parents were being warned to be on their guard after the attempted abduction of a young child in Birkenhead. A bogus female official claiming to be a social worker, tried to gain access to the house where the child was living, but fortunately, the boy's mother grew suspicious about the woman, because a genuine health visitor had called the previous day. The woman asked about a baby girl, and when questioned by the mother she became flustered and left in a hurry. Wirral Community Healthcare NHS urged worried parents not to allow any person access without first asking to see specialist identity cards.

The female who tried to abduct the child was described as being white, 32-40 years old, medium build, with shoulder-length blonde hair.

The motive, as is ever the case in accounts of this type wasn't even speculated upon by the local press, nor did the police proffer any theory. Reports of bogus officials were once in the national news every other day it seemed. Check out back issues of 'THE FORTEAN TIMES' for a whole selection of accounts. Thankfully, the scare has subsided somewhat, but what is worrying to the staff at 'DON' is that

occurred so close to home. Let's hope it was just an isolated incident.

21st August, 1996. Birkenhead, Merseyside. 'WIRRAL NEWS.'

The Riddle Of The Painted Cows.

Police were equally baffled by the case of a herd of cows being daubed with blue paint in a field in Ayrshire, Strathclyde.

Farmer Marshall Veitch and the (ahem) boys in blue rejected the notion that the incident was the work of Scottish Loyalists on their way to Ulster for the July 12th celebrations.

11th July, 1996. Ayrshire, Strathclyde, Scotland. 'LIVERPOOL ECHO.'

A Body Of Evidence

Chinese scientists are said to be baffled by the body of an old lady which has still failed to decompose three-and-a-half years after her death.

The face of the corpse was still said to be radiant, many of the joints were still loose, and the head continued to turn, according to the China News Agency.

The body is that of a woman in the Xiang He area of China's Hubei Province, whose heart stopped in November, 1992. Her grandson said the body had not decomposed, despite temperatures ranging from 34 degrees down to freezing, and that rigor mortis had still not set in.

29th September, 1996. Hubei Province, China. 'DAILY EXPRESS.'

The Willy That Grew Six Feet

Wait. Hold on. This isn't quite as 'NATIONAL ENQUIRE-ish' a headline as it might first appear...

It is in fact, as with most headlines in the tabloid press, something of a cheat'

We're referring here to the allegation that the 'monster member' of the 2,000 year-old Cerne Abbas Giant, a 180ft tall naked man cut into a chalk hillside, was originally a whole 6ft shorter. Archaeologist Rodney Castleden says that his 18ft manhood had been extended sometime around 1908.

Told you it was somewhat misleading!!!

19th July, 1996. Dorchester, Dorset. 'DAILY SLUR.'

AND NOW...A MAN WITH TWO PENISES!!!

This time there's to be no degree of cheating, however. Jose Vasquez, 25, really *does* have two penises.

He has refused point blank to have one of them removed, not because he is any way vain about being so well-endowed, but because he reckons 'both are a present from God.'

One of the members doesn't actually function but Jose, who works as a radio announcer in Peru, has flatly rejected doctors' advice to for an operation to do away with the defunct member.

24th May, 1996. Peru, South America. 'DAILY MANC.'

ICE BOMB ESCAPE

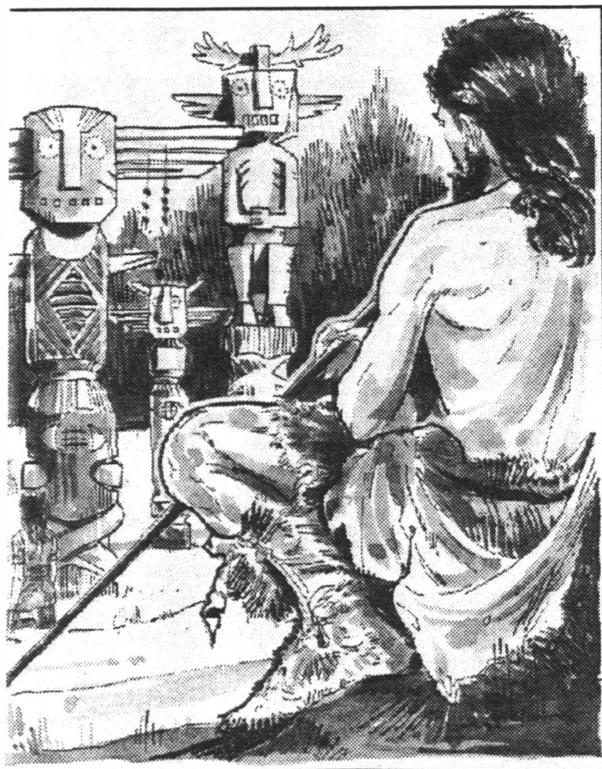
Eileen Norton, 60, and her 70-year-old brother Ted Murley escaped unhurt when a huge block of ice, thought to be from a plane's leaking plumbing system, (Oh, ain't it *always*. What's the bets if anyone had bothered to check, no aeroplane would have been found to have been on their flight path at the time of the 'accident?') crashed through the roof of their home in Hampshire.

It was stopped by a box containing the wedding dress Mrs Norton wore over thirty years ago.

12th August, 1996. *Bedhampton, Hampshire. 'DAILY EXPRESS.'*

Staking Out Stonehenge...

The latest theory as to the building of Stonehenge is that huge totem poles were worshipped on the site 5,000 years before the prehistoric monument was erected. The new discovery could possibly assist in the solving of the mystery of why the plain near Salisbury, Wiltshire, was chosen as the location for the great stones 2,500 years BC.



Clues to the existence of the poles, similar to those worshipped by the North American Indians, were first uncovered during excavations in 1964.

Archaeologists found several pits dug into the chalk subsoil, which contained charcoal, pollen and small snail shells. But these remains were dated accurately only after a new carbon accelerator was installed at Oxford University.

The charcoal came from pine trees and dated back to 8,000 BC. The poles would have been put up by Stone Age tribes who lived by roaming the area hunting deer and gathering food.

Dr. Mike Allen, project manager at Wessex Archaeology, said; 'Previously the pits were thought to be just holes in the ground. Only when the charcoal

was carbon-dated did we realise they had been dug for poles. We think one reason Stonehenge was built there was that its builders knew their ancestors would have been there before. Middle Stone Age, or Mesolithic man was remarkably sophisticated. Given a shave and dressed up in a suit he would he would look no different from anyone walking down Oxford Street. He would have been as intelligent as you and I, if not more so, otherwise we wouldn't be here.'

The totem pole theory was put forward in a thesis published by English Heritage last summer. The poles would have been 20ft tall and nearly 3ft across. They were probably decorated with tribal or ritual symbols, perhaps as a mark of respect for Gods or tribal chiefs.

The poles were definitely not used for any practical purpose. They would have been long gone by the time the stones were erected 5,000 years later, but the site was still identified as in people's minds as a special place. Carbon dating has shown that the site was continuously inhabited for 1,400 years.

It was mysteriously abandoned 1,600 years BC. It must have been a very powerful myth or legend to remain so strong for so long.

26th June, 1996. *Stonehenge, Wiltshire. 'DAILY MAIL'*

It's Raining Straw

Villagers stood by and watched in open-mouthed amazement as a freak storm sent a shower of straw raining down in East Mailing, Kent. Amateur weatherman Jamie Freeman said; '*It was a real mini-tornado.*'

2nd August, 1996. *East Mailing, Kent. 'DAILY MANC.'*

THE EXPLODING TV'S

Reports are still coming in of a curious phenomena taking pace across Russia...Cheapo TV sets in that country are inexplicably blowing up. In the last four years, exploding sets have caused more than 19,000 fires and 975 deaths.

8th June, 1996. *Russia. 'SUNDAY PEOPLE.'*

The Lass Dinosaurs

And finally, the latest theory as to how the Dinosaurs that once ruled the Earth died out, is that they may have become extinct after a rogue gene made them give birth to nothing but females...This theory has been proffered by a leading American biologist named Professor John Jaenike. One out of ten for originality, Prof.

4th September, 1996. *General. 'DAILY MANC.'*

Special thanks to Tommy 'Parachute Man' Brown, Jase ('The Top Jock'), Matt ('Independence Day'), and the one and only Ray Ivelke from COUD-I for their invaluable help in supplying this issue's clippings. Cheer's Chaps. 'We certainly won't go quietly into the night.'

Lee Walker, New Ferry Merseyside. 21st August - 5th October, 1996.

KEEP WATCHING THE SKIES!!!

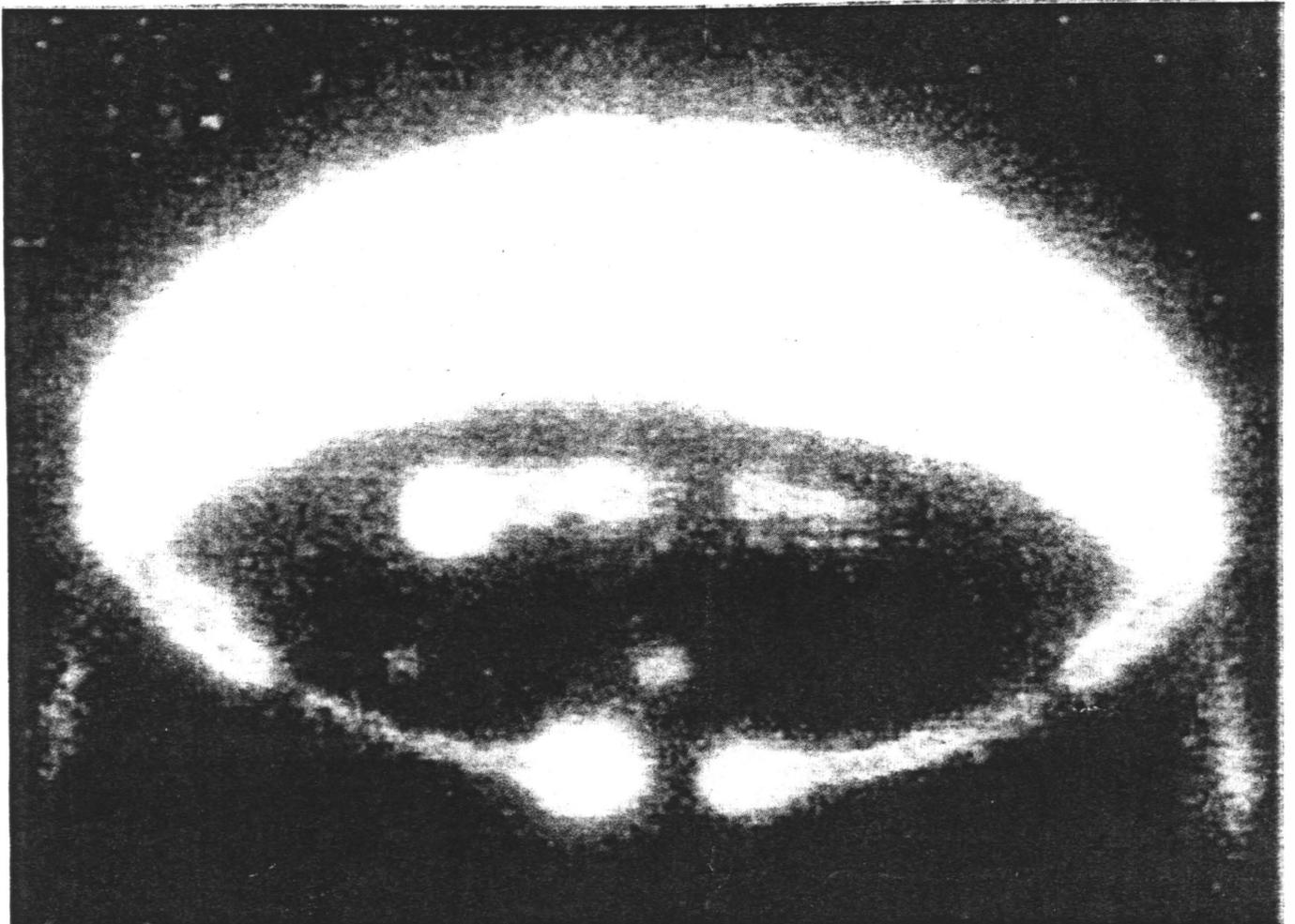
I Want To Believe!

The pictures featured here were allegedly taken by US astronauts during the Apollo Space missions of the '60's and '70's. They formed part of a dramatic centre-spread in *'THE DAILY MANC'*, and there's no doubting that they certainly *look* the part. It's also claimed that NASA have been involved in withholding these pictures from the general public. The account included references to the well-known rumour amongst conspiracy theorists that when Apollo 11 landed on the Moon, the spaceship was buzzed by aliens who'd already set up base on the bleak, crater-strewn surface.

The article assures us, as if we needed the confirmation, that NASA has officially dismissed the photo's as being nothing more than misrepresentations of meteors, clouds of debris, or even huge ice crystals. And with no further authentication, it's impossible to say that they provide that all-too elusive positive proof. They are undeniably fascinating, however. That much, no one can deny.

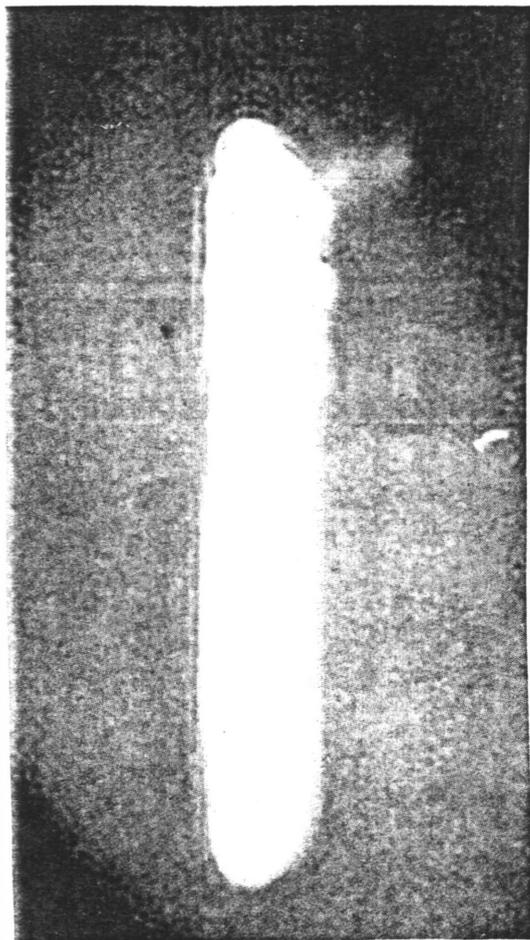
The article includes a quote from former Apollo astronaut Dr Brian O' Leary; *'There's plenty of evidence of scientific contact with aliens but NASA has suppressed it. There has been a lot of untruths and misinformation Any body with access to the truth has been sworn to secrecy. I'm convinced crashed alien craft have been discovered. The evidence is out there.'*

He goes on to claim that ancient alien constructions have been photographed on the surface of the Moon and that a NASA source at the Johnson Space Centre in Houston had admitted to him that he is guilty of 'airbrushing' UFO's from photos released to the media.



Maurice Chatelain, who designed and ran communications systems on the Apollo missions and passed away recently is also quoted as saying; *'All the flights were followed. Astronauts saw things during their missions that could not be discussed with anyone outside of NASA. Every time it occurred, they notified Mission Control who ordered complete silence. Walter Schirra aboard Mercury 8 in the early Sixties used the codename 'Santa Claus' for ET's. Chatelain wrote in a book; "James Lovell on board Apollo 8 came out from behind the Moon and reported back; "We've been informed that Santa Claus exists".'*

Chatelain also claims that Gemini 4 pilot James McDivott was the first to take a photograph of a UFO. Frank Borman and James Lovell, on board Gemini 7, also snapped UFO's following them at distances of just a few hundred yards. Chatelain; *'The UFO's looked like huge mushrooms with propulsion systems, and clearly showed a glow on their underside. When Apollo 11 landed on the moon in 1969, and just before Neil Armstrong set foot on it, two UFO's hovered overhead. Edwin 'Buzz' Aldrin took several pictures of them.'*



Dr Jack Kashner, professor of physics at Nebraska University, has studied video footage of the infamous UFO/Space Shuttle (flight STS 48) film shot in 1991. *'NASA claimed the objects captured on film were ice crystals,'* he said. *'We proved that was physically impossible. Ice crystals couldn't change direction the way these objects could. We managed to eliminate meteors, satellites and space junk. There were six to eight UFO's. We calculated that if they were ten miles from the Shuttle, the biggest went from zero to 2,500mph in one second.'*

And of course, it was inevitable that any article concerned with UFO's/Alien artefacts on the moon wouldn't be complete without a quote from the champion of the NASA conspiracy theorist; former NASA consultant Richard Hoagland. No one has done more to promote the Moon/Mars-based Aliens thesis than Richard. He was of course, head of the four-year study of the photographic evidence and

reiterates that which we've already heard a thousand times in magazine and on paranormal programmes such as *'SIGHTINGS.'*; namely, that *'NASA has been involved in a cover-up using misinformation and confusion. They've destroyed photographs and edited films. We proved they even issued 13 versions of what was supposed to be the same photo. NASA has been funded with billions of US taxpayers' dollars and this information should be in the public domain. It's time for President Clinton to bite the bullet, open NASA's files on all of this, and come clean.'*

(I think perhaps one day soon, he (or his successor), will do precisely that. Maybe even sooner than we imagine. But I wouldn't advise anyone to hold their breath -Ed).

August, 1996. General. 'DAILY MIRROR'

Colin Parry Interviews Nick Pope

Screened on 3rd September, 1996, by Granada, the following interview was aired with little advance publicity (*unusual, given the current UFO craze and those who, maybe rightly, claim that the whole upsurge in interest has been prompted by a Government-inspired media.*)

The interview only made up the first ten minutes (*ten minutes and nine seconds, to be exact. I'll get me anorak - Ed*) and Colin Parry winds up by saying that he finds the whole subject fascinating...Which kind of begs the question; why didn't he feature the entire interview then? It was quite obviously cut to ribbons and I'm sure that the editor's had more than enough material to fill a half-hour slot.

Anyway, what follows, for what it's worth, is the all too brief transcript of the 'cosy little chat' that took place in Colin's comfortable, Hobbit-like study.

COLIN: *'For three years, it was Nick Pope's job to investigate and analyse claims of UFO sightings and to assess their threat to national security. Nick, how do you react to being likened to the fictional Fox Mulder character in 'THE X-FILES?'*

NICK: *'I think it's very flattering, but I don't pretend for a moment that I ever ran around darkened warehouses with powerful torches and guns and things, but it's a piece of fun.'*

COLIN: *'Your job on the UFO Desk at the Ministry of Defence, has to be one of the most interesting jobs anyone could ever possibly be given. How did your appointment for that position come about?'*

NICK: *'In 1991, I was simply asked, out of the blue, how would you like to spend the next three years of your life investigating UFO sightings for the British Government? I knew nothing about the job. I knew nothing about the subject. But it sounded really interesting, so I accepted.'*

COLIN: *'So you really had a completely open mind about the whole business?'*

NICK: *'Yes. If anything I was probably a little bit sceptical. I really thought there isn't too much to all this. But I was wrong.'*

COLIN: 'Now, as time went by, you must have been inundated with bits and pieces of material and photographic evidence, and so on and so forth, which gradually made you begin to realise that perhaps there was more to this than you at first thought?'

NICK: 'My three year tour of duty was a literal voyage of discovery. I received several hundred reports each year, and of course, yes, a lot of photos and videos came my way. There is a lot of convincing evidence out there.'

COLIN: 'The general Ministry of Defence position was that of being sceptical. They presumably advised you beforehand that they had no truck with this business of UFO's, did they?'

NICK: 'The standard line is that they keep an open mind, but I think a lot of people have disputed that. I certainly took the view that I would do my best to investigate each and every sighting to the best of my ability.'

COLIN: 'Can we take a look at some sightings that we've put together here? First of all, there's a couple of photographs taken a couple of weeks ago by Steve Meade.' (Courtesy of Lancaster UFO Network - the pictures taken against a typically jet black night-time sky show a corkscrew-shaped light).

They seem to show strange zig-zag movements...Perhaps you could comment on them as to what they might be?'

NICK: 'Lights in the sky like that frankly, could be anything. There's only a limited amount that can be done with video enhancement and photographic analysis. So, it could be something interesting. On the other hand, it could just as easily be aircraft lights, meteorites, something like that.'

COLIN: 'So, this other photograph by Steve, which shows broken zig-zag lines, is as inconclusive as the first one, is it?'

NICK: 'Yes. Undoubtedly, there are many, many strange things going on over the skies of Britain at the moment. And there is a particular wave of sightings, I know, over the North West at the moment. There are some strange things being seen. But unfortunately, what I'm saying is that with the best will in the world, evidence like this (the two photos of lights in the sky) doesn't really prove anything one way or another.'

COLIN: 'When an incident like the Manchester Airport incident happened in 1995, where a Captain of an aircraft and his First Officer saw lights going by the aircraft, and they reported that, and these are men who wouldn't normally risk their reputations, presumably, that carries a great deal of weight with people like yourself?'

NICK: 'Absolutely. Cases like that are dynamite. You've got trained observers who are less likely to make mistakes about something more mundane. This is a case, which to me really makes the point that there is a defence and national security issue here. And I think it's remiss of anyone to suggest that this is all just nothing to worry about.'

COLIN: 'Perhaps the strangest case of all is the Rendlesham Forest incident in 1980, when events

which are now recalled by Charles Halt, the former U.S. Lt Colonel, made strange listening indeed.'

(A section of the now famous 'Halt audio Tape' is played).

NICK: 'This is fascinating. What we are hearing there is the actual tape-recording taken by the American military team as they went out into the forest to try and investigate and find this UFO. Now, this activity was seen over a series of nights, here and on the first night, a small, metallic craft was seen by the guard patrol. Subsequently, indentations were found in the ground in a perfect triangular shape. And when I checked, years later, I found that some radiation readings had been taken at the time by Colonel Halt and his team. It turned out that those radiation readings that were taken from the indentations where this thing had landed were ten times normal. So here, conclusive evidence that something quite extraordinary happened over those nights.'

COLIN: 'And this is the single, most compelling piece of information you think has happened in recent years in Britain?'

NICK: 'I think that's right. Although I had a case myself in 1993, involving a large, triangular-shaped craft flying directly over two R.A.F. bases. And there was a fascinating case in 1990, when the Belgian Air Force picked up a huge UFO on radar and actually launched jets to try and intercept it.'

COLIN: 'In actual fact, in this part of the world, in the North of England, the Pennine Way, by all accounts has been re-named 'UFO ALLEY' by ufologists.'

NICK: 'Yes, I've heard that. There certainly are a lot of sightings there at the moment. Although it is difficult to assess whether the media itself has a role to play here. I think when UFO's are sighted and reported in the media, that in itself encourages a lot more people to come forward. So I think we've actually got an ongoing situation all over the country. But yes, I'm aware that there are many interesting sightings here in the North-West at the moment.'

COLIN: 'Have you yourself had any personal encounters?'

NICK: 'Unfortunately, I've never seen a UFO myself. I do live in hope. But sometimes, it seems to happen to the people that don't believe in it. That's what's interesting about it.'

COLIN: 'Nick, there's a lady from Abergele in North Wales, who reports she has had frequent encounters with UFO's.'

(There then follows a short sequence featuring a brief resume of Margaret Fry's many UFO experiences)

NICK: 'Well, this is a fairly common thing. Many witnesses say that they have an ongoing experience. This applies to people who see UFO's and indeed to some people who claim to have been abducted. They seem to have experiences from a very early age, and this carries on throughout their lives.'

COLIN: 'What happens to the real "X-FILES" that you generate, Nick? Do the Ministry of Defence keep

them for a long time? Does it destroy them in time? What exactly goes on with them?’

NICK: ‘The real “X-FILES” are kept in a Ministry of Defence main building where I work. In due course, they will filter down to the Public Records Office at Kew, where members of the public can get those records thirty years from now. There are some, relating to sightings in the 1960’s, which are already there.’

COLIN: ‘Nick, clearly it’s a fascinating subject, and one that for years will present more questions I daresay, than answers. But for the moment, thank you very much indeed.’

‘News Of The World’ UFO Reports.

The following accounts appeared in the above named Sunday tabloid on July 21st. Make your own mind up about their veracity.

Laraine Davis is in no doubt that Aliens exist. She had her experience she opened her back door one ice-cold night to retrieve her washing from the line. Suddenly, ‘a blast of searing heat came from nowhere. It was like opening an oven door when your face is too close to it. It was eerie and silent as well. The hair rose on the back of my neck.’

A few days later, Laraine, 50, from Poole in Dorset, heard the contents of her neighbour’s greenhouse had been found incinerated...And yet, the structure itself remained undamaged.

She says; ‘The heat was so fierce it destroyed tools. Only two lumps of molten plastic, once a garden table and a wheelbarrow, proved there had been anything there at all. The glass wasn’t cracked and shrubs alongside were untouched. Even a small fire would have lit up the area and been visible to us all. But no one saw anything. I now have no doubt that ‘THEY’ are here.’

**This less than convincing UFO case (I don’t want to come across as Merseyside’s answer to the ultra-sceptical Stueart Campbell, but if no UFO was actually seen, then how can we say with any degree of certainty that this is a UFO case?), is followed up by the account of Wayne Bryant and his friends.

The encounter is said to have taken place when Wayne, now 31, was still a young lad. He was lazing in a wood in Chertsey, Surrey with his friends Mark and Rick, when; ‘We heard a strange sound. It took us a few seconds to realise it was grass being flattened by some kind of downward wind. We looked up and saw a figure about 6ft tall with red hair, bronze skin and huge eyes. It was in a long white gown, we don’t remember seeing any feet, and in its hand it held a rod. There was smoke coming from the rod. We sat gawping for about thirty seconds then scarpered. We raced home to tell our parents. They came out and were amazed to see a patch of flattened grass exactly where we said it would be. There were no footprints. It was just as if that horrible figure had come out of thin air. Kids have vivid imaginations, but nothing on earth could have prompted us to dream that up.’

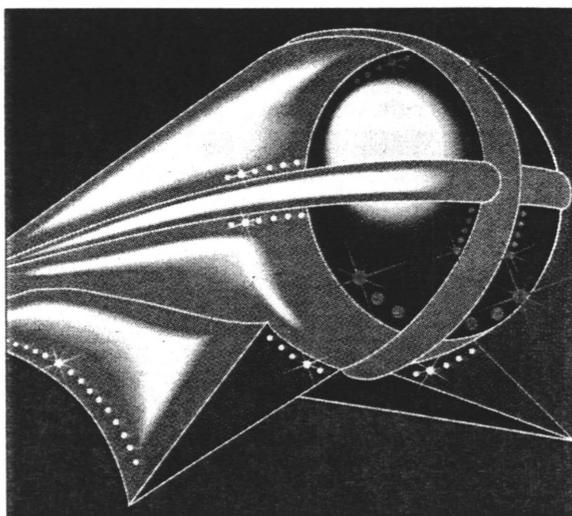
(Once again, this encounter has more in common with a supernatural experience than anything to do with the subject we’re supposed to be discussing. But hold fire. The trusty old ‘News Of The World’ is getting to it...

Louise Mijatovic apparently believes she has been part of an alien’s experiment. She was a young girl travelling in a convoy of family and friends on holiday when all three cars cut out at the same time. They were forced to watch in horrid fascination as a blinding white light descended from the sky. Writer Louise, 43, from Ormesby, St. Michael, Norfolk, said; ‘The white globe changed shape and looked like a rocket on its side. From behind it came a light show that every firework or laser display I have seen since could never compare with.’

A week later Louise began suffering from terrible nightmares.

She says; ‘One night I awoke to find a blister on my leg. Mum popped it and nearly fainted. I had a perfect hole nearly right through my leg. It took three years to heal and in the process turned into a black and green band around my leg. I’m pretty down to earth. If I can be convinced aliens exist, anyone can.’

The penultimate case featured here concerns a fish merchant named Stewart Bradley, 29, who thought he was being followed by a helicopter as he made a delivery in the early hours of the morning...Until he realised it was completely silent.



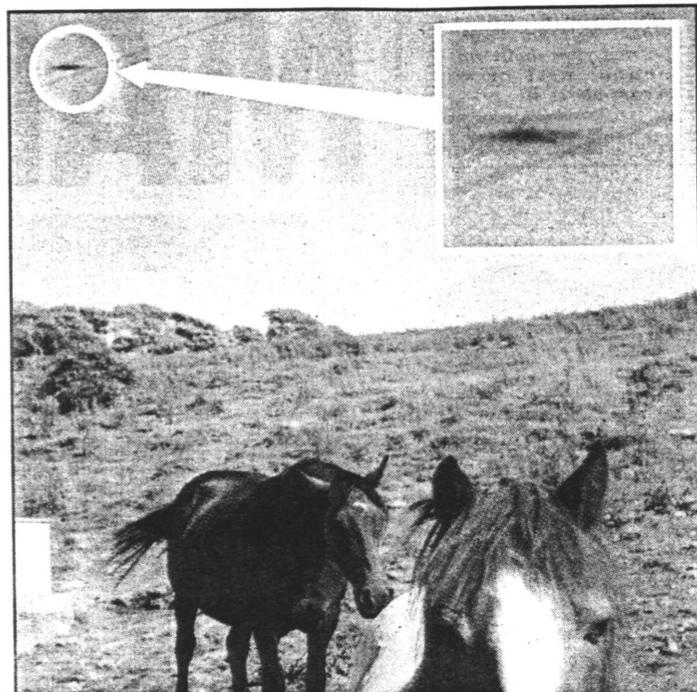
An artist's impression of 'The silent helicopter that stalked Stewart Bradley on a remote road in Surrey.

Stewart was driving along a lonely, deserted road near Cranleigh, Surrey, in November, 1991, when the craft appeared in his driving mirror.

He continued for a mile with it hovering behind. Stewart began to feel increasingly perplexed; ‘I couldn’t understand why a helicopter was following me. I pulled over, turned the radio down and stuck my head out of the window. It was then that I realised it was making no noise. It was quite eerie. I put my foot down and got out of there.’

A friend of Stewart’s confirmed that he and his son has seen the same thing a week later.

And finally, John Rosser from South London, took a photograph of the countryside in Abbotsbury, Dorset, and wound up with an anomalous, UFO-image taking centre stage.



John reportedly snapped the picture in 1994, and says; 'It is not a plane or a helicopter; So what on earth is it?'

4th August, 1996. 'NEWS OF THE WORLD'

TWA CRASH-UFO CONNECTION?

The terrible jumbo jet disaster over Long Island, on the eve of the Atlanta Olympics made headlines across the world and sparked a massive investigation into whether or not the crash was due to accident or design.

In the immediate aftermath of the crash, many eyewitnesses reported seeing a 'missile-type' object colliding with TWA Flight 800, causing a massive explosion.

Further evidence for this somewhat unlikely scenario was produced by Linda Kabot, who was attending a fund-raising party for her employer, a local Republican politician. She snapped a photograph of a unidentified flying object, flaming at one end like a missile.

The photograph was taken on the patio of the Docker's restaurant in East Quoge. It overlooks the Atlantic, about 15 miles from where the Paris-bound flight exploded on July 17th, killing all 230 people on board.

Mrs Kabot photographed guests for about 45 minutes, starting at 8pm - about the same time that the aircraft went down. In the sky, in one photograph of a group, is a long, cylindrical object, flying roughly horizontally, with a flame at one end.

'I don't know what it is,' Mrs Kabot was reported as saying afterwards. She first saw the cigar-shaped

object when her husband, Lance, examined the pictures six days after they were taken. The couple called the FBI, who sent a helicopter to ferry the pictures and the negatives to Washington for examination.

The FBI also asked Mrs Kabot for the party guest list and has interviewed many of the 270 people who were present at the fund-raising.

Although the UFO looks uncannily like a missile, some investigators have suggested that it could be the TWA jumbo jet exploding, or a completely unrelated object.

Investigators believe that a bomb ripped the TWA in two, but have not discounted the possibility that it was blown out of the sky by a missile.

28th August, 1996. Long Island, USA. 'THE TIMES.'

MORE VIEWS FROM THE PENDLE 'WINDOW'

The ever-reliable Jonathan Dillon has provided us with details of the following sighting from one of the current UFO hot spots.

At 10pm on 19th July 1996, a woman from Nelson, opened her back door to come face to face with a completely noiseless, jet black, wedge-shaped object roughly 30 yards away from her home.

It remained entirely motionless above a neighbouring building (which overlooks Pendle Hill, long associated with Witchcraft and other weird phenomena) for about a minute before moving away in silence, just clearing the row of rooftops.

It then turned sideways and headed back towards the awe-stricken woman. Once more it turned on its side and then began to increase altitude and finally disappear into the clear night sky. Further inquiry into this sighting is currently being undertaken by Jonathan.

UFO LANDING IN GREECE

Global UFO Investigations Systems have recently received news of a case from Greece which apparently involves a possible UFO landing.

According to David Bryan, head of Global's Manchester office, the UFO left behind a large cube-shaped object which is now in the hands of Greece's leading UFO research group.

A meeting has been arranged in London for this coming November, where both countries researchers will analyse the newly-found 'evidence.'

The Stings From Outer Space

According to a group of American biologists, the latest theory as to the identity of UFO's is that they are nothing more than swarms of drifting insects

In certain conditions, so the hypothesis goes, the swarms produce a radar echo strong enough for it to be mistaken for an aircraft or a unidentified flying object.

The thesis, featured in the pages of the tabloid press, states that the swarms are presumably carried out to sea by the wind and eventually plummet into the waves causing their radar echo to disappear - one of

the most common unexplained features of UFO sightings.

Well, yes...But we can't see how this explanation can possibly be made to fit all aspects of the UFO phenomenon. Judge for yourselves, though.

UFO's Over Merseyside

The Editor's home county has been in the news recently due to a spate of UFO sightings, and has sparked a resurgence of interest in the subject, in an area not renowned for its gullibility.

Mark Glover from Bootle, an accredited investigator for BUFORA, has decided to form a sister organisation with fellow ufologist Tony Eccles from Halewood, christened MARA (Merseyside Anomalies Research Association).

'Interest is growing because of the increasing number of cases being reported,' says Mark. 'We are also hoping to set up a Witness Support Group, which will enable people to share their experiences, whether it be of the paranormal or UFO's.'

He went on to tell *'THE LIVERPOOL ECHO.'* recently that *'Huyton and Wirral seem to be the counties' two main window areas. We don't yet know why there should be more sightings in these localities, but we think it could be because of geological reasons.*

I believe that 95% of the sightings can be explained away - they will actually involve things like aircraft or weather balloons. But mystery surrounds the remaining 5% because they could well represent a hard-core of real phenomena.

As for the eternal sceptics, I would ask them to look at the evidence. I accept evidence isn't proof, but we accept in courts of law anecdotal evidence to convict people of crimes, so why don't we accept anecdotal evidence from people who say they've seen something?

It's easy to be sceptical, but the sceptics should talk to witnesses and read about our cases. There's a saying; "Interpretation is free, but experience is sacred."

He also recounted the following tantalising snippets of news concerning recent UFO sightings in the region;

****Close to the Wallasey Tunnel, on Monday, September 4th, 1995, a family, returning from a fortnight's holiday in Wales, reportedly saw a disc-shaped object which hovered above them for an unspecified period of time before suddenly disappearing.**

****On Tuesday, February 13th 1996, in Knotty Ash, Liverpool, a student saw an oval-shaped bright light hovering in the sky. It remained stationary for approximately six minutes.**

****On February 24th, 1996, at Banks near Southport, a family was woken by a loud rumbling noise between 3am and 3:15 am. Fearfully glancing out of the windows they saw a huge, triangular-shaped object hovering in the sky for about 15 minutes. It was described as having a bright, white light at each corner and two central lights of red and green.**

****On May 17th, 1996, at Runcorn, sometime shortly after midnight, a woman from Warrington was driving towards the Runcorn Bridge when she**

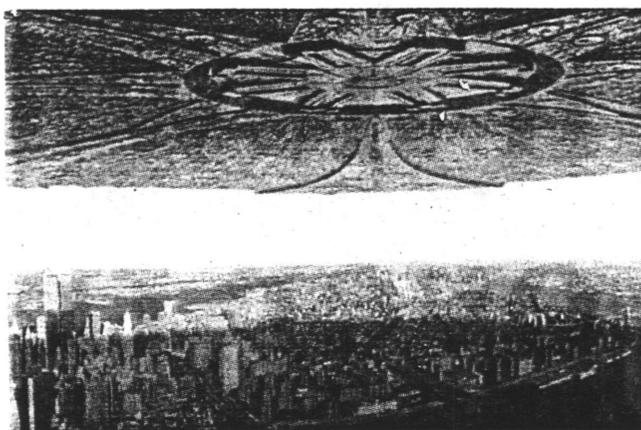
noticed a disc-shaped object above her car. The road was quiet and deserted and not suprisingly, she was terrified out of her wits. The object eventually disappeared.

****And perhaps most intriguingly of all, at New Brighton, (once a thriving seaside resort fit to rival Blackpool), on Monday, July 8th, 1996, two men reported seeing a strange jet black object suddenly rise up from beneath the depths of the River Mersey, at about 10:45pm.**

Even more amazingly, it then changed shape and disappeared into the night sky.

August 5th, 1996. Merseyside. 'LIVERPOOL ECHO.'

In The Wake Of 'Independence Day'



In the immediate aftermath of the release of, (in our opinion) one of the best sci-fi films ever, (*okay, so it was an essentially brainless, feel-good, American gung-ho type of movie with a plot ripped off H.G. Wells's classic 'WAR OF THE WORLDS', but that didn't make it any less entertaining...Did it?*) it was hardly surprising that speculation would be rife concerning the possibility of real life, indisputable Alien visitation and what such a momentous event would mean to mankind.

Would we regard their arrival with open arms or as a military threat. (One guess and no prizes awarded for working out the answer to *that* one). And what would be the reaction of the emergency services and the emergency planning teams at such a time of uncertainty?

'THE LIVERPOOL DAILY POST' recently carried an article which attempted to answer some of these questions, and others besides.... You may not be too amazed to find that, publicly at least, we don't seem to take the possibility very seriously, or if we do, we seem a trifle ill-prepared.

Harold Bough of the Merseyside newspaper, began by asking Eddie Hampson, the regions Senior Emergency Planning Officer what contingency plans they have drawn up...

'Well, we have plans for plane crashes, explosions, rabies, mishaps and disasters of different kinds. I don't think we have a plan for aliens landing!'

I think there would be a lot of panic. But our main reaction would be of curiosity. I do not think they would be here for aggressive reasons. We should not regard them as a threat. We might have taken that attitude 15 years ago. Now we accept people live different lives. So if we have progressed along the road to greater tolerance and peace and the aliens are obviously of far greater intelligence, they will be even more advanced in that direction. (Funny, that's virtually word for word, what one of the President's aides says with what turns out to be horribly misplaced optimism in 'INDEPENDENCE DAY' - 'ET' and 'CLOSE ENCOUNTERS' have a lot to answer for if 'They' turn out to be hostile).

He goes on to say; 'They would have recognised we have moved in this way too. It would be the reason they come, simply to talk to us. But while it is not in their thinking, they do have the technology to damage us. We would have to check on radiation, etc. Environmental health would need to know if any harm had been caused. This would be for the aliens sake too. There are things here which might be dangerous to them. It should be okay. They will know how to communicate with us. We just have to take care our body language does not look threatening...Or else. I tell you what would be terrible. Suppose they landed and did not want to communicate with us at all? Suppose they just wanted to communicate with, say ants. What a kick in the teeth for us humans!'

Across the county boundaries in Cheshire, Councillor David Lloyd-Griffiths, chairman of Environment Services and deputy leader of Cheshire County Council, somewhat facetiously hopes the new arrivals would respect the authorities efforts to avoid congestion in historic Chester. *'If they landed in the fields here we would send a highways engineer to tell them we have park and ride facilities outside Chester. More seriously, the reaction to the unknown is caution, about whether or not it poses a threat. Our emergency services would be at the fore-front of finding out.*

There would probably be a rush, panic, both to see them and to get away. I would take part in the administrative problems such as an arrival would create, help maintain order. I would not be in the fore-front of the crowd rushing to greet them. But I do not think they would be aggressive. If so, they would have the capacity to attack while airborne or spaceborne. But to avoid any risk of misunderstanding they would communicate with us first. We would be concerned about whether, through radiation or something else, they were unintentionally bringing harm to the environment or humans.

Robin Lindsey of BUFORA, finds all of the above totally irrelevant. He at least, is convinced that the aliens are already here.

'I am certain they have landed, certainly in the past thousands of years ago. If they landed now, the majority of younger people would want to know more. Perhaps the more elderly would be frightened. Some would panic. The Army and tanks might come in. But shooting them or trying to take them prisoner would be futile. Some may view them as hostile but I don't know why because if they wanted to take us over, use us as slaves, they could have done it ages ago.'

There are those who suspect that we may already have been taken over by aliens, and that they are in cahoots with the governments of the World forming a New World Order...Or perhaps the aliens already here are essentially friendly, but maybe they've come to warn us of the imminent arrival of another race intent on invasion?

A spokesman for SETI, in California, Seth Shostak believes that if the ET's did arrive at this point in our history they would likely *not* come in peace.

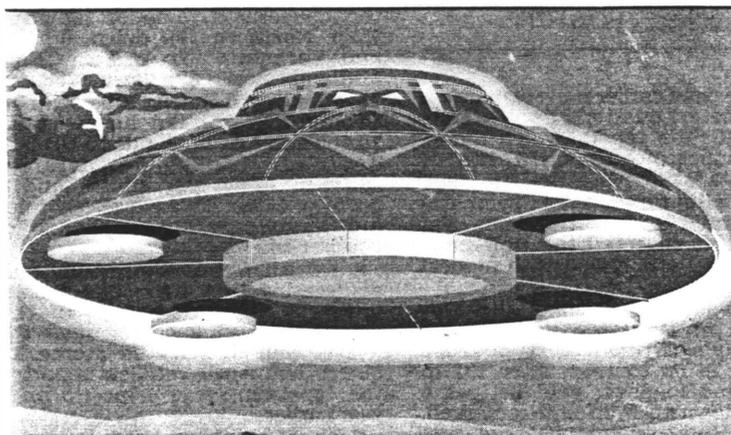
'If they have gone to the trouble of getting here their motives will probably be aggressive. They are definitely going to do you in, deliberately or not. History shows that when one culture comes into contact with a less advanced culture the less advanced does not come off well. Most Americans believe in ETs. More than half think they have landed and the Government is covering it up. And there is indeed life on other planets. But they are not coming. The distances are enormous. The nearest star which might support life would take millions of years to reach at the speed of our rockets. So they would not try to come here for trivial reasons, like making nifty patterns in the wheat fields of British farmers.'

Over in Wales, the prospect of beings from other planets landing in Anglesey is not something which has caused local officials too much concern. *'We have plans to deal with such happenings as an air crash, major rail or chemical disasters...But I can not foresee any authority having a written plan for something like this,'* says Dafydd Jones, Director of Public Protection for Anglesey County Council. *'In the event, the local authority would support the emergency services in issues affecting public protection, a flexible application of the contingency plans.'*

5th August, 1996. Merseyside/Cheshire/Wales. 'LIVERPOOL DAILY POST.'

'FLYING SAUCER SECRET IS OUT'

According to the tabloid press, scientists have worked out the process required to defy gravity.



American Space Agency NASA claim the new concept could perhaps explain the mystery of 'Flying Saucers' and make space travel a routine event in the near future. NASA plans to splash out on the discovery by 'experts' at Finland's Tampere University of Technology to design a new way of flying and

generating power. Their device, 12 inches across, creates a force field reducing the weight of anything suspended over it.

2nd September, 1996. Finland. 'DAILY SLUR.'

CHESHIRE AND MERSEYSIDE MAY JOIN SETI

Cheshire's Jodrell Bank radio telescope could soon be scanning the heavens for signs of extra terrestrial life, according to a report in the 'LIVERPOOL DAILY POST.'

Scientists at Jodrell are currently engaged in talks with colleagues from the US-based Search for Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence (SETI), who are hoping to use Britain's largest telescope as part of their quest.

If agreement is reached, Jodrell Bank, which has already been responsible for finding out much about the universe, could be looking for the signals that prove we are not alone.



Jodrell Bank in the midst of the Cheshire countryside

The American scientists, who separated from NASA to seek private funding for reproach, want to search for radio signals in the hope that intelligent life forms exist and are themselves trying to communicate.

Andrew Lyne, professor of radio astronomy for Manchester University, which runs Jodrell Bank, said they wanted to be part of a collaboration, but negotiations were still on-going.

'There is a lot of things we have to square away before we can get the experiment off the ground,' he said.

Jodrell, the world's third largest radio telescope at 250 feet long, will be able to search up to 100 light years into space under the programme.

SETI has sophisticated data processors equivalent to many millions of radio transmitters which are all tuned to different frequencies listening for morse code-type sound.

Scientists at Jodrell are currently investigating interference over the radio frequencies to ensure that conditions are suitable for the experiment as broadcasts on Earth can be picked up deep in space.

'We could only see signals from the nearby stars in the solar neighbourhood,' said Professor Lyne.

'Between 10 and 100 light years away.'

He added that Jodrell agreed in principle with SETI a year ago to take part in the experiment to search for intelligent life.

'In recent years the probability of there being life elsewhere in the universe has somewhat increased. Whether there is life nearby intelligent enough to build transmitters, I view that as being rather small. It is unlikely, but I am excited about the possibilities.'

Meanwhile, a high-tech telescope being built for Liverpool's John Moores University could also be used in the search for ET life

'Experts' keen to use the latest equipment in their hunt for the aliens have contacted leaders from JMU about taking a look at the universe through the new telescope, which is due to be completed in 1999.

They hope to discover new planets which could support life and prove that we are not alone.

The move comes, of course, as speculation about the possibility of extra-terrestrial life reaches a new peak among even the most respected scientists.

Mike Bode, professor of astrophysics at JMU, and based on the Canary Islands, said;

'We want to borrow the new Liverpool telescope to take advantage of the Island's clear skies, when it is built in three years time.'

This is not a core programme for the telescope at the moment, but it is possible that it could be used for something like this.

So far, we know of only seven planets outside the Solar System and there are probably many more but they are difficult to spot because of their small size compared to stars.'

13th August, 1996. Jodrell Bank, Cheshire/ John Moores University, Liverpool. 'LIVERPOOL DAILY POST.'

UFO's Over Australasia

Ufo's reportedly lit up the night sky over Australia in early May this year.

Police received several calls at about 9pm on the 19th May, 1996, reporting strange lights in the skies above Gladstone, Queensland.

An Air Services Australia spokeswoman said a rescue helicopter searching the ocean off Gladstone could have prompted some of the reports.

Meanwhile, New Zealand police were trying to unravel the mystery of a 'huge blue light' seen travelling across the sky north of the town of Napier, on the east coast of the North Island also on 19th May.

20th May, 1996. Gladstone, Queensland/Napier, New Zealand. 'LIVERPOOL ECHO.'

INVASION OF THE BODYSNATCHERS



A recent tabloid Sunday supplement magazine carried the following accounts of alleged Alien Abduction. We re-print them here, as per usual, for your own perusal.

Elsie Oakenson's journey home from Daventry Teacher's Centre in Northamptonshire should have taken no more than 15 minutes. But in the wake of her UFO sighting, it somehow took her *twice* as long to arrive at her home address.

She spotted two lights on a grey dumbbell shape over the A5 and that provided the signal for the start of an experience that has haunted her for over 18 years. The former teacher, since retired, explains what happened that fateful evening;

'The craft was about 100ft above the road and 50ft wide. It was just after 5pm in November 22nd, 1978, and I felt compelled to leave the car and watch the

object. It hovered, then a green light started flashing. I watched for a while before heading to my home in the village of Church Stowe.

My car, which had been serviced that day, suddenly stalled. I put it into first gear and it started again.'

It had been a bright day and the sky was clear, but 50 yards along the road, Elsie found herself in darkness.

'A circle of white light suddenly shone down by the passenger door. The next I knew, I was a hundred yards further on, out of the darkness and driving in third gear.'

When she got home, Elsie saw that it was 5:45pm. She'd lost 15 minutes. She told husband John, 70, a retired police inspector, what had happened to her, and the contacted BUFORA.

Under subsequent hypnosis, more details from the lost 15 minutes seemingly surfaced.

'I sensed a tight band around my head - I'd felt it earlier that day,' she says. 'A circle of white light came towards me, with white light pulsing from it. Ghost-like shapes came from the light. I got a terrific headache and was very frightened. I was brought out of hypnosis then.'

Intriguingly, Elsie has since become a spiritual healer and believes that her UFO experience gave her her powers. Eerily, 10 years ago to the day after the incident, Elsie's granddaughter Terri twice saw UFO's - and she had never been told of her grandmother's encounter.

******Aliens have reputedly visited student James Basil regularly for more than 10 years - and they've apparently left behind evidence of their presence.

James was six years of age when he awoke in the middle of the night to find an entity in his bedroom. Now 17, he recalls; *'The creature was 3ft tall, with green/blue scaly skin and lizard-like eyes. It was just staring, watching me, and I screamed out for my mum. It sort of floated across the room and disappeared.'*

Footprints were found on top of his wardrobe the following morning, and the incident proved to be the first of six that James can remember.

He also had a dozen UFO sightings.

On one occasion in 1992, seven years after that first incident, the visitors returned to his home in Bristol, and this time they apparently wanted James to go with them. He says; *'When I got into bed there was someone standing next to it who put a cold hand on me. Then I remember being floated across the room, out of the window and into an object. In no time I was back in bed and they were turning me over telling me to go back to sleep.'*

That encounter sparked off two or three memories of other abductions.

'Some of them have been like dreams or they've come back as memories. It's almost as if I'm watching a film. There are parts that I've blacked out on the craft, or with the creatures. The only Aliens that I see now are 2-3ft high, with yellow-orange shiny skin, big black eyes which cover most of their face, while their noses and mouths are just like slits. There are a couple of small ones as well as a tall one which is more human-like and is the only creature that communicates. It has

smaller eyes, and the head is more round like ours. It speaks in a deep, monotonous voice.

One time I saw a huge ball of white light behind my house. On another occasion, I was out at the back and saw some objects behind the trees. I saw a creature on one of the craft.

I was hypnotised and taken on board. One of the creatures put me to sleep. Then there were swirling colours on my face and I felt sick. I fell asleep, then found myself outside the back of house floating, with these three creatures in front of me. A beam of light was on my stomach. I didn't have any clothes on. Then they started putting thoughts and images inside my head. Everything kept going black so I wonder if something happened that I don't remember. They told me that I would forget but remember when I needed to.'

The article goes on to say that James believes that in the weeks that followed these 'encounters', he suffered aches and pains in his body. Once, he found six red dots forming a 1 inch x 3 inch rectangle near his groin. His mother Tracey, his grandmother and two of his aunts have all seen UFO's.

'Each time it begins, I'm afraid that I recognise that something is going to happen.' says James. *'When it's almost over I'm not as frightened, I even find it's a good experience and don't want it to end.'*

I feel as if I'm connected to them. I don't know where else I would get all the information from, even tiny details which you probably couldn't find in any book or on television, especially all the emotional, personal and spiritual aspects.

The final case features the story of campers James and Pamela Millen, who say they can't account for over 160 minutes of their lives.

The tale begins as James was making his way back from the campsite toilet block just before three in the morning. He suddenly noticed lights emanating from an adjoining field.

'There were golden balls of orange light going up and down in the sky, flickering on and off,' recalls James, who was holidaying in Dorset with his wife one night in September, 1990.

He called to Pamela to witness the spectacle.

'We watched for about two minutes. I was very, very happy and my wife, who would normally be nervous, said; "Shall I make a pot of tea?". I said, I'll take some photos.'

It wasn't frightening. We were just elated somehow. That was at five to three. My next recollection is of standing outside the tent, looking at my wife, who said; "Well, do you want this cup of tea?" and, "There's a light behind you."

When we realised that the dawn was coming up I checked my watch. It was 5:35!'

James then remembered lying in a circular white room with 'aliens'.

'They were dressed in white robes without any folds. There were five short beings and three tall ones. I couldn't feel what I was lying on, but it was quite cool. That's all I could recall. Later that morning we packed the tent and headed back to London.'

James says he suffered nosebleeds for two months and high blood pressure after his experience. And he

found a mysterious piece of metal in his mouth one night. They're not sure whether Pamela was 'taken', although she says; *'I have a feeling I didn't go anywhere.'*

We leave the last word to James; *'I don't know why it happened to us and I'm not particularly glad that it did. But such an experience certainly broadens the mind.'*

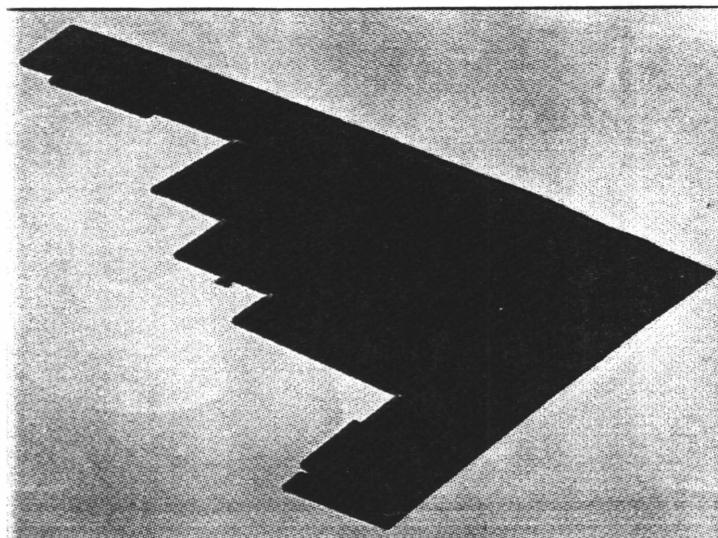
25th August, 1996. 'TV QUICK MAGAZINE.'

DISAPPEARING FAST...THE 'STEALTH'S' REPUTATION

Bad news for all those believers in the U.S military/Alien technology conspiracy theory...

One of the great shining examples of this so-called 'co-operation' between ET's and the good ol' US of A, is supposedly the Stealth Bomber...The invisible destroyer that can strike, as it did so effectively during the Gulf War, without being detected by radar. It's pretty obvious that we humans would never be able to build such a craft merely using our own primitive technology. Oh no. We had to seek ET's help.

Recently however, British scientists managed to blow a huge gaping hole in the super-plane's awesome reputation simply by tracking it as if flew over the Farnborough Airshow.



British missile manufacturers saw the flypast on September 1st, 1996, as the ideal opportunity to test their systems against the bomber, believed to be the most advanced (that we know about) in the world.

Experts operating a Rapier FSC system at RAF Honington in Suffolk managed the feat and later provided video evidence for the embarrassed Americans.

The Pentagon, never wishing to appear outdone, promptly hit back by saying that it had allowed the Stealth - known as the USAF Grumman B2 Spirit - to be tracked for safety reasons and that it could disappear off the screen whenever it wanted.

When The Year Begins To Die

(Popular Customs, Traditions and Beliefs
From Halloween to Yuletide)

Halloween: When The Spirits Walk

*'It's a Celtic word...Samhain. It means the Lord Of
The Dead.'*

The end of Summer.

The Festival of Samhain.'

Dr. Sam Loomis (Donald Pleasance).

'HALLOWEEN II.'



For most people, the night of October 31st, is synonymous with all kinds of harmless frivolity. A time of fancy dress parties and bouts of 'Trick or Treating.' Of the faintly fabulous smells of

roasted chestnuts and woodsmoke from the first bonfires of the season. Of cardboard silhouettes in shop window fronts, sharply defined outlines of cackling Witches on broomsticks. Of skeleton masks and ghostly white sheets and the cold, jagged grins of Jack O' Lanterns...

For others, concerned parents and teachers, (not too mention the clergy), it is a time of issuing fearful warnings of the dangers children face from innocently dabbling in the shadowy realms of the occult, the supernatural, and other darker practices.

And for still others, it is a time of high celebration. Of fire and festival. Of ritual and ceremony. Of sacrifices and invocation.

But no matter what the wildly differing views and perceptions of Halloween, one thing remains undeniable: Surprisingly few people are aware of its true origins. The vast majority don't even know how it came by its name or what exactly it is meant to signify.

And they are bemused still further by its long association with supernatural entities and the powers of darkness.

It is the hope of the author that this article will at least help clarify some of these points.

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

The true origins of Halloween, All Hallow's Eve, Samhain (pronounced something like 'Sowen'), call it what you like, has its roots firmly implanted in the dim traces of the now long extinct worship of the Babylonian God, Bel or Baal, the ancient Phoenician Sun God.

The Asiatic countries were deemed to be the Cradle of Civilisation, and they, not surprisingly, exported their customs and beliefs far and wide to the more barbarous nations of the world. The direct result of this was that, similar to the peoples of the Middle East, the Ancient Britons were persuaded to pay homage to the Sun and its heat giving properties.

This was exemplified by the lighting of what were known as Beltane Fires, kindled on the pinnacle of the highest hills.

The reason for igniting them was twofold; Firstly, the Celtic Religion doesn't hold with worshipping their deities in self-erected temples. The disciples preferred to venerate their gods in the open air. And secondly, they were not unreasonably supposed that the nearer they built

their fires to the heavens, the more effective would be its power in helping to regenerate the Sun's dying heat, thus ensuring its return at the end of the chill Winter months.

The conflagrations lit up the skyline three times a year. On May Day, Midsummer Eve, and on the last day of October.

The Spring and Summer fires were built to celebrate the rebirth of growth and the continuance of life. The Autumn flames burned in thanksgiving for the gathering in of the harvests and in honour of the God they believed to be looking after their interests and well-being. Samhain marked the last day of Summer and was therefore the time when the cattle were brought in from the fields to spend the Winter under cover in their stalls.

Also, in those far-off times, November was regarded as the beginning of a New Year, and because the Celtic day started at sunset and ran through to the following sunset, the fun and games would begin on the eve of November 1st.

The embers burned all the first week of November, and within their flames all the worries and heartache of the previous twelve months were symbolically consumed.

The priests in those days, the Druids, decreed that when all the fires in the locality had been extinguished, every head of every household should take a portion of the ashes to rekindle them anew in their home. This ensured that they would be prosperous and blessed with good fortune throughout the coming year.

With typical scant disregard for any alternative religions, Christianity tried its hardest to do away with Samhain.

When it was discovered that could never hope to be successful in this venture, they settled for second best; They duly tried to incorporate it into their *own* calendar.

They changed the name to All Hallow's Eve, the night before All Hallow's' or 'All Saints' Day.' (a commemoration of the saints and martyrs', first introduced in the 7th Century AD - Its date was changed from the original May 13th to November 1st so that it could conveniently coincide with the pagan festival of the dead...Samhain).

It didn't stand much of a chance of eradicating the festivals traditional ties with death and rebirth, however.

Winter, with its depressingly short quota of daylight and seemingly endless hours of darkness, conjured up obvious images of the cold, ebon blackness of the grave...And for this reason, right across Europe and beyond, it was believed that for this *one* night, the spirits of the dead were granted licence to walk the city streets and the rural countryside.

Sir James Frazer, in his excellent book, *THE GOLDEN BOUGH.* describes the occasion thus; *'It was the time of the year when the souls of the departed were supposed to revisit their old homes in order to warm themselves by the fire, and to comfort themselves with the good cheer provided for them in the kitchen or the parlour by their affectionate kinfolk. It was perhaps, a natural thought that the approach of Winter, should drive the poor, shivering, hungry ghosts from the bare fields and the leafless woodlands to the shelter of the cottages with its familiar fireside.'*

The origins of the modern custom of 'Trick or Treat' can be traced back to the old tradition of placing food and drink offerings outside for the spirits whose homes no longer stand, or whose family and friends have since moved away. These wandering bands of shuffling souls passed always to the west, the direction of the dying Sun as it sank towards the crimson horizon.

And they weren't the only things abroad. Nor were they the worst.



Faeries attempting to snatch a human child in a bid to replace it with one of their own...A Changeling. Faeries and their ilk are said to be particularly prevalent on the evening of Samhain

The denizens of Faerie were also given licence to cross the threshold between our world and theirs...And they did so in a multitude of guises. Hobgoblins and Spriggans. Boggarts and Brownies. Elf-Folk and Pixies. They leapt and danced from one Faerie Hill to another, accompanied by the sweet, hypnotic sounds of their music.

If you were unlucky, or foolhardy enough to wander past one of these hills on Halloween, you were running the risk of being sucked into a Faerie Revel. The Little People would likely welcome you warmly enough with gifts of wine and gold. But all too often, when you took the opportunity to look closely at their faces, their true nature was revealed...

They were usually the faces of neighbours and friends who had died over the years. When they saw that you recognised them, they would shriek with manic laughter and drag you into their whirling dance. You wouldn't be able to escape

their clutches until you fell unconscious and awoke inside a stone circle, your arms and legs heavily bruised from the endlessly grabbing fingers.

In Scotland, it was believed that anyone who had been kidnapped by Faeries could be brought back to earth on Halloween Night by the reciting of a suitable spell outside the entrance to their realm.

SATAN'S DISCIPLES

Of course, Halloween is well noted for its association with Witches...Complete with their ancient books of spells, black cats and proverbial broomsticks.

And not without good reason.

As we have already seen, Halloween is very much connected with death, and because Witches believe that death isn't the end, but is simply the door which leads through to another life, this date was considered on of the four Great Sabbats (the four great yearly feasts formerly celebrated by the Druids and our Celtic ancestors. The other three, are Candlemas; 2nd February, May Eve; 30th April, and Lammas; 1st August).

Because of this, the Church tried to render the festival obsolete.

They eventually succeeded, and it was only reintroduced in to the Church of England calendar as recently as 1928.

The fear of Witches and the magic they were said to practice was such that their effigies were being burned upon the Bonfires well before anyone dreamed up the idea of committing a 'Guy' to the merciless flames. At the aforementioned Sabbats, a gathering of Witches would pay homage to the Old Gods with much dancing and general merrymaking. The food and drink would usually consist of meat and cakes, washed down with wine and good beer. The meal was set out on a white tablecloth, and the Leader...The Man In Black (variously described as a man dressed entirely in black robes, a person in a ritual mask, or even the Devil Himself) would preside over the feast.



The Witches' Sabbat. The Great Ritual Gathering that inspired a continent-wide persecution with little or no mercy for those found guilty of participation.

At the conclusion of the meal, the Sabbat danced to pipe music or the strumming of a cittern (an old-fashioned type of string instrument, played like a guitar with a plectrum). The Man In Black would then teach the gathering the rudiments of the Black Arts, e.g. how to manufacture wax images and bewitch crops.

He would also provide them with a greenish coloured ointment, with which they anointed themselves on the forehead and wrists. It's very likely that this substance was a kind of 'flying ointment', made from concoction of narcotic herbs. One whiff of this combination and it's little wonder that some Witches believed they could fly!!!

HALLOWEEN GAMES AND CUSTOMS

The large orange pumpkins and purple turnips that ripen at this time of year have become extremely popular as a Halloween decoration ever since the ubiquitous Witches used it to frighten away prying eyes who'd come to spy on their secret meetings,

They are very easy to hollow out and cut a suitably scary, grinning face upon them. Place a flickering candle in its centre and you've got a visage that viewed from a distance, closely resembles the creatures that are said to stalk the hidden boundaries of darkness on this night.

In the past, these decorations served a double purpose. They were useful as lanterns to light the way across the wild fields and woodland, and they also helped keep at bay the 'terror by night' in much the same way that gargoyles perched above church roofs are said to banish invading Demons.

In Wales, Samhain was regarded as one of the 'Three Spirit Nights', when the wind, '*blowing over the feet of corpses.*' bore sighs to the house of those who were to die in the next twelve months. A ceremony known as 'Leeting the Witches' was common in the Pendle area of Lancashire. Basically, what it entailed was to take a lighted candle about the fields around the house between eleven and midnight. As long as the flame remained strong and constant then there was nothing to be afraid of, for it meant that the power of any Witches in the vicinity was fast waning. But if the flame should go out then the carrier was doomed. This ritual was therefore considered to be very dangerous because Witches would of course, do all they could to extinguish the flame. Only the very bravest (or foolish) people in the community would dare to volunteer for this nerve-racking business. In many parts of Cheshire, Halloween was known by another name; Nutcrack Night.

Girls who were desperate to know the outcome of their current romance would place two hazelnuts on the bars of a roaring fire and name one for themselves and one for their lover. If they burned away together, all was well. But if one fell off the hearth, she'd best start looking for a new partner. Alternatively, you could line the hot grate with the nuts, giving each one the name of a prospective husband, and reciting;

'If you love me, pop and fly...

If you hate me, burn and die'

There are several other methods of divining ones future love life on All Hallow's Eve.

You can light a couple of candles on a dressing table, place them either side of a mirror, and then, after making sure you're eating an apple whilst peering into the looking glass, the spectral image of you potential husband or wife will appear.

If you had the nerve, you could traipse up to the nearest churchyard, and once there, walk around its perimeter, carefully treading between the graves, a total of twelve times. After the 12th circuit, the double of the man/woman of your dreams will appear.

Less frightening by far, is the simple throwing of an apple peel over your left shoulder and seeing what letter it most closely resembled. The letter would be the initial of the future lover's first name. To ensure a dream of her intended, a girl can place her shoes in the shape of a letter 'T', that letter being a powerful talisman representing the Scandinavian Thunder-God, Thor. She is then to recite the words;

*'Hoping this night my true love to see,
I place my shoes in the shape of a "T"*

In Ireland, the Isle of Man, and Lancashire, a rather peculiar love ritual was played out by a man, who after obtaining some ashes, either from a bonfire or from a cremated body, would sprinkle the charred remnants along a quiet country lane, before concealing himself in some nearby bushes, or other convenient hiding place, and wait.

The first single woman to pass along the lane was destined to become his wife.

The origins of the popular game of 'Duck Apple' were also based on love ritual. You inscribe the letters of the alphabet upon the fruit and wearing a blindfold, and with your hands tied behind your back, the apple you managed to catch with your teeth would contain the initial of the person with whom you were fated to spend the rest of your life.

Both apples and hazels were once considered to be Holy trees. The Hazel signified wisdom, and the Apple was the Tree Of Paradise. So it was appropriate that they should both be used in divining the future.

DISPELLING A FEW 'BONFIRE NIGHT' MYTHS

At school we were taught the popular rhyme '*Remember, remember, the 5th of November.* It was also drummed into our heads that Bonfire's were built to commemorate the failure of the 'Gunpowder Plot' hatched by Guy Fawkes and his not-so-merry-men.

It was only in recent years that I learned the truth of the matter.

The fact is, King James the 1st, merely manipulated the abortive assassination of his regime so that it tied in neatly with the misleading concept that the common folk were burning effigies of Guy Fawkes, 'The Fenian Anarchist,' rather than (as the Pagans believed) The 'Spirit Of The Dying Year.'

Bonfires were originally called 'Bone-fires', for the simple reason that animals and even Human

beings were once sacrificed upon these pyres as thanksgiving offerings to the old Gods.

Once it was lit, the entire community of the town or village, town or hamlet, would dance around the fire in an anti-clockwise (or 'Widdershins') direction.

In North Wales and the Highlands of Scotland, every family built a Bonfire, and each person would throw a particularly marked white stone into the calcinated remnants. Prayers were then intoned around the fire and the next morning, if any stone was missing, it was said that its owner would be dead before the year was out. Also in Scotland, young boys out gathering fuel for their Bonfires would ask the people whose houses they called at for a 'peat to burn the Witches.' The same boys would then dance around the roaring flames chanting 'Fire! Fire! Burn the Witches!!!'

As soon as the inferno died down, the ashes were scattered and when the very last spark had blown itself out and the land was reclaimed by the impenetrable darkness of night, the boys would take up the cry; 'The Devil take the hindmost!'

They would then race off in every direction.

Bonfires too, were associated with the twin concepts of death and rebirth. The were kindled for the purpose of aiding their departed friends, whose souls were said to imprisoned in Purgatory.

A Brief Word About St Andrew's Day

Although nowadays generally celebrated by the Scots, of whom St Andrew is the Patron Saint, the origins of November 30th (the day held sacred to Him), have more to do with the Samhain slaughtering of livestock. Notoriously cool Summers north of the border meant that there was more often than not a late harvest and the number of beasts to be kept through the cruel Winter months ahead would depend upon the harvest fodder available. Obviously, this could not be worked out until all the crops had been cut, dried and threshed.

The Origins Of Yuletide

As with just about every other date in the Christian Calendar, the roots of the celebration of Christmas (now held in memory of the birth of Christ, whose *real* birthday nobody knows), can be once more traced back to the belief and customs of the ancient Celts.

The Druidic festival of the Winter Solstice was called by its Anglo-Saxon name; Yule. The word is probably derived from an old Norse word; 'iul', meaning a wheel, as in the ever-turning Wheel Of Life.

Doreen Valiente, in her excellent book; 'An ABC Of Witchcraft, Past And Present', concurs with this supposition very eloquently when she writes; 'In the old Almanacs, the symbol of a wheel was used to mark Yuletide. The idea behind this was that the year turns like a wheel; The Great Wheel Of The Zodiac, of which the spokes are the ritual occasions, the Equinoxes and Solstices, and the four

cross-quarter days of Candlemas, May Eve, Lammas, and Halloween. The Winter Solstice, the Rebirth of the Sun, is a particularly important turning point.'

Rites were held to honour the Sun, slowly reawakening after the dark, dead days of November. Yule Logs and Yule Candles were used by the Druids as symbols of Sun worship, fire and light, and they have, of course, since become an integral part of modern day Christmas decoration.

A large slice of the traditions we've come to regard as being part and parcel of the Christmas celebrations can be found to have originated within the customs of the Saturnalia, the ancient Roman festival of the Winter Solstice, which formerly took place in December.

Saturn was the god of a dim and distant 'Golden Age' when the planet was both fruitful and essentially peaceful, and when true contentment was more than just some unattainable dream. Therefore, at this time of year, the houses of peasants and gentry alike were bedecked with the boughs of evergreen trees and plants. Normality was temporality suspended. Masters and servants would change roles and social distinctions would be rendered obsolete. One of these servants would be crowned 'The Lord Of Misrule' and in an atmosphere of jubilation, people would exchange presents and engage in much feasting and general merrymaking.

A vestige of this role reversal lingers still in the British Army. NCO's continue to wait on the common soldiers and serve them Christmas Dinner.



The wonder and joy of the Christmas season: A time of carefree celebration and family gatherings. Of revelry and feasting and the giving and receiving of presents. Of forgetting petty hatreds and remembering the needy and destitute

Evergreen Light In The Midst Of The Bleak Season

The evergreens revered at Yuletide were Mistletoe, Holly, Ivy, Rosemary and Bay. They had to be gathered and burned by Candlemas (February 2nd) at the latest, or they would turn into evil Hobgoblins at dawn on this day. This was the origin of the custom of Spring Cleaning. The tradition of hanging Mistletoe in the house was also initially a Druidic custom. The chief Druid would cut a sprig of the flower from the Sacred Oak with a golden sickle, as it was believed to be the holder of life for the tree in the depths of Winter. Its pearl-white berries were said to contain the seminal fluid of the Oak, and therefore of the Oak Tree God Himself. It was regarded to as a fertility charm, hence the association it has for kissing under the Mistletoe. One of its lesser known uses is that it is believed to protect the house and its inhabitants from storms, bad luck and Evil Spirits. And it's also said to be a pretty good remedy for just about any illness you care to name...So effective are its curative powers that Mistletoe has been given the alternative title of 'All-Heal.'



Mistletoe, once the sacred plant of the Druids, now just another Christmas decoration to stick alongside the artificial pine trees and the plastic boughs of holly

In some places, Mistletoe is burned after Twelfth Night (January 6th) in case the couples who kissed beneath it do not later marry. To bring a bunch into the house before Christmas would incur a death within the family and because of its Pagan associations, Mistletoe remains banned from many Christian churches.

Holly was also considered to be a powerful talisman against all forms of Evil and was much sought after as an antidote to various poisons. Many gardens were fronted with a hedge made up of the plant for this reason, and even today, gardeners are extremely anxious about the consequences of chopping down a holly bush.

Cows were said to thrive if a sprig of Christmas holly was hung in the cowshed. It is considered to be unlucky to bring it into the house before Christmas Eve, or to take it down before Twelfth Night. In some countries, once the holly had been disposed of it had to be burned whilst, just to confuse matters, in other parts of Britain, burning was said to bring bad luck. Sometimes a sprig of holly was kept in the home to ensure the good luck it brought the inhabitants continued throughout the remainder of the year.

As for ivy, it too was much prized as a symbol of fertility, and as a protection against Witchcraft if you should be fortunate enough for the plant to grow against the walls of your house.

Ivy also played a part in Divination. To learn whether or not the year would be blessed with good fortune, you should place an ivy leaf into a dish of water on New Year's Eve, and leave it untouched until Twelfth Night. If it's green and fresh, the coming year would indeed be a happy one. If it is cursed with black spots, then that denoted sickness; In the feet and legs of the spots were near the pointed end, in the stomach if they were in the middle, and in the head and neck if they were near the stalk. General decay foretold the diviner's untimely death.

Bay was associated with Rosemary and like the Holy Thorn, was believed to bloom at midnight on Twelfth Night.

It is also a powerful talisman against the Forces of Darkness.

Bay was associated with Apollo, the Greek God of Medicine, and is said to be a great healer. It was a favourite decoration of the Romans during Saturnalia. The tree is never struck by lightning and can protect against all forms of plague of planted near the front door of the house. If bay leaves are thrown into the fire and crackle nosily, then good luck is in the way. But if the leaf merely smoulders, you'd best prepare yourself for a batch of ill luck.

The origins of the traditional, brightly-lit Christmas Tree has its roots (no pun intended) in firmly entrenched in the belief that that the evergreen trees acted as a shelter for all the poor, shivering woodland Spirits when all the other trees shed their leaves.

Of course, if you subscribe to the popular historical accounts, Prince Albert earned the distinction of introducing the first Christmas Trees into British homes in 1841.

A Host Of Merry Olde Customs

The feat of Yule which involved the drinking of vast quantities of ale and the igniting of blazing log fires) was the indoor equivalent of the great outdoor, Midsummer Bonfires. If you saved a piece of the 'Yule Log' for good luck, you would then be required to rekindle the flames at the following years festivities.

In the days before the modern deluge of TV, video, and computer games all greedily seeking to gain our attention like that annoying 'Buzz' character who thinks he's a real-life Space Ranger in the excellent film 'TOY STORY', people were left to make their own entertainment. And this they did with great enthusiasm.

Christmas back then, lasted for a full *ten* days, (beginning on December 21st) and you didn't return to work again until Plough Monday.

The custom of singing Christmas carols is a tradition that can be traced back to as early as 1521 (the year of the earliest English published collection).

The 'Mumming Play', a morality performance centred upon the eternal conflict between the

of Good and Evil, (held at Easter in the Northern Counties of Britain, with the notable exception of Bromborough on Merseyside, of all places), was also part of the Christmas celebrations.

In the parish of Chester, the poor people would go from house to house with a basket begging for corn. This custom was known as 'Curning'. It was more often than not the woman of the family who went, and a pint or a quart of wheat was usually given to her. She was very rarely refused or turned away.

Also in the county of Cheshire, 'Kissing Bushes' were very often (and on some cases *still* are) made to imitate primitive marriage rites. Hoops of iron are bent into the shape of a crown, which is then smothered with various evergreens, tinsel and ribbons. Lighted candles are set at the base, and apples and other fruit hung upon it. Sometimes, small gifts are suspended on them from long, gaily-coloured ribbons.

The old English word; 'Wassail' was a greeting meaning to 'to be of good cheer' and at the height of the festivities, people would toast each other by drinking from an elaborate 'Wassail Cup'. Parties of peasants would often knock upon the doors of the abodes of the rich, singing traditional 'Wassail' songs and begging for drinks or money.

There is an old and very beautiful belief that in country areas that the cattle knelt in their byres at midnight on Christmas Eve, in memory of the night that the Christ child was amongst them.

Father Christmas himself, of course, has his origins in the children's Saint, St Nicholas. He was the patron of children, and is said to have miraculously revived three schoolboys murdered by an inn-keeper. His generosity was legendary, and people often found his gifts in their homes at times when they needed him most.



As for the traditional foods we stuff ourselves to bursting point with during the festive period...Flaming plum Puddings were introduced sometime around 1670, and were once made up of broth, fruit and spices, which were consumed by our cast-iron bellied ancestors in amazingly large quantities.

To eat twelve mince pies (due to their spices, they were supposed to represent the Three Wise Men of the East), was to ensure twelve happy months in the year ahead.

Turkey was first placed upon the food-laden tables sometime in the 16th century, though it

didn't immediately replace goose and beef as the main delicacy.

We'll round off this article with the relating of the time-honoured superstition that it's most important that the first person to cross the threshold of the house on New Year's Day, should be a dark-haired man. A fair-haired man is very unlucky, and a red-haired man is a damn sight worse.

To avoid the risk of such a disastrous calamity befalling *your* household, the author of this piece, (who just happens to be dark-haired), will be only too happy to call around at your address on New Year's Eve...For a wee dram and a small fee, of course.

Lee Walker. (Reprinted from original articles first published in 'DEAD OF NIGHT' Issues 2-3)

BIG CAT FEVER

Among the Scottish animals beautifully mounted in the museum at Inverness, capital of the Highlands, there is an odd outsider. This is Felicity, a large female Puma, lolling casually on her side in a glass case. The label tells the visitor that Felicity had been caught alive in a trap Cannich in 1980, and that she lived happily in the Highland Wildlife Park for a further five years.



Although an adult Puma is easily capable of killing a man, Felicity was tame from the first, and had obviously been somebody's pet. The label writer goes on to warn readers against releasing 'exotic pets', as so many people seem to have done, ever since the Dangerous Wild Animals Act of 1976 was passed to regulate such amateur zoo-keepers. Wild beasts on the loose seem to have been unforeseen outcome of this hasty Act.

However, not all the strange cats reported in the Highlands owe their presence to thoughtless pet-lovers. The Scottish Wildcat, a ferocious bushy tailed tabby, is known to share the hills with runaway domestic cats. 'Mixed marriages' are common between the two. Twenty years or so

ago, black wildcats began to be reported in the Highlands, particularly on the Kellas Estate in Morayshire.

Now recognised by all naturalists as a variety of wildcat, the Kellas Cat is a terrifying creature, jet black, on long thin legs, with a demonical snarl and large angry eyes. It resembles nothing more than a Witch's cat in a cartoon. Naturalist and cat expert Di Francis kept two Kellas Cats in captivity, Fred and Freda. They had to be caged at all times, and sad to say, none of the Kellas kittens survived for very long.

There is an excellent specimen of a Kellas Cat, spitting defiance to the world, in the museum of Elgin, north of Scotland. It was shot near Logie Farm in Moray, a place where many stories of Wild Cats may be heard. In order to hear some of them, I travelled up to Logie to speak to Mrs Sheena Hilleary. She is the owner of eighty six acres of forest and farmland, with the beautiful River Findhorn running through them. Over the phone, Mrs. Hilleary spoke had told me of the 'Kellas Cats' on her estate. It soon became apparent that some wires or cats whiskers had been crossed somewhere. Kellas Cats are like Witch' cats at Halloween, but the animal Mrs Hilleary spoke of seemed more like Felicity the Puma!

It was a big cat, capable of pulling down a deer and eating it.

'My sister saw one in June, 1995', Mrs Hilleary said, 'and she couldn't believe the size of it! It was sitting calmly in the middle of our drive at about half past six in the evening. It was a Kellas Cat the size of a Labrador dog.'

'What!' I exclaimed. 'That's not a Kellas Cat. It's a big cat, possibly a Puma. It could be very dangerous. Have you seen it?'

'Oh yes - it is very big. Now I come to think of it, perhaps it's a Moray Cat. In 1991, there was heavy snow, so I made a cast of its paw-print by pouring green candle-wax into it, which set at once.'

'And was it the size of a cat's paw-print?'

'Oh no-much bigger. As big as a man's hand. I'll send you a drawing of it.'

When I received the drawing, it resembled the print of a female Puma, with slight claw marks visible. Mrs Hilleary now referred to the animal as a 'Moray Cat'.

Many local people had seen the cats over the years, she wrote and (perhaps because of the confusion over the 'officially' discovered Kellas Cat) she appeared to think that the cats were a recognised Highland species, perhaps mentioned in guide books.

(Travellers on foot in the Glenferness area should try and avoid getting eaten.)

'You say the animal is jet black!' I almost shouted during our next conversation. 'A Puma is sandy coloured. What you have in your hills is an animal unknown to science! As soon as I can, I'll come up and see you.'

So, in September, 1996, I made the journey up to Logie, a rugged region of breathtaking beauty, not far from the seaside golfing town of Nairn.

When I arrived at Mrs Hilleary's home, which is also the Logie Riding Centre, I found my hostess tending a horse which had unexpectedly fallen ill. I used this as an excuse to slip away and explore the surrounding forest. Stepping gingerly

between the great firs, I made my way to the river's edge, not far from the place where a roe deer had been found dead with the meat stripped from its bones as if by a giant cat's rasping tongue.

Eventually, after much wandering, I found myself beside a quarry pool, examining the mud for the spoor of the beast with what I hoped looked like a professional eye. Some of Mrs Hilleary's horses and riders clopped by, led by a jolly Australian horse-girl who gave me a curious glance. By now I had deduced that most of the footprints at the water's edge had been made by horses, some by a fox and a few clawless ones by a small cat. The horses vanished, buzzards wheeled screaming overhead, and I made my way hastily back to the house, where Mrs Hilleary was now ready to receive me.

A cheerful, practical white-haired lady, Mrs Sheena Hilleary made me feel comfortable at once, and I admired the lovely home she had made from a 'steading' or farm building.

'I have thirty two horses and ponies here', she told me. 'I must inherit my love' of animals from my grandmother the Duchess of Hamilton, who campaigned successfully for the use of a humane killer at abattoirs. Her experiences touring abattoirs made her a vegetarian for life. We're surrounded by wildlife here - only this morning, I saw an osprey flying over the river. We have red squirrels - no greys - and pine martins who attack the wild ducks on the river, I'm sorry to say. Not long ago, I watched a mother otter and her babies playing by the side of the river - wonderful! I'm quite familiar with Scottish Wildcats - one walked right past the house once, and I watched it through the window. But nothing prepared me for the thrill of seeing the big black cat that night.'

It never gets really dark here in the Summer, and on that night in June, six years ago, at half past ten, there was a strange light, as clear as day. I was on my knees, just in front of the house (she led me to the spot) doing a bit of gardening when I heard the wire fence go 'ping' very faintly. Then I heard soft footsteps, and I looked up and saw the big black cat only yards away, loping rapidly across the field to the wood with a lovely flowing motion. It was black and glossy, and in the very peak of condition, with shiny flowing hair and its tail streaming behind in a long loop. I shall never forget that sight! A big cat - the size of it It was nothing like a dog.'

In August this year, I think I saw it again. I was in a remote of the wood when something black flashed down from a dead tree and off into the undergrowth. Many people have seen our Moray Cat. Fergus Brown saw it from his car one day. It pressed beside the wire fence on the verge of the road. He opened his car window for a look, and it reared back, showed its teeth and spat at him. Lambs have been lost - that might have been the cat.'

Paul Jackson, whose house faces onto Dava Moor, saw one at the edge of the Moor, almost on his doorstep. A student who came here saw one at the top of the field, and another has been seen running along the rim of the bridge over the river, on the motor road. One of my stable girls went to sunbathe by the river, but she came running back to the house, frightened by a terrible screaming noise.'

'A Puma screams', I observed. 'But Pumas are sandy coloured, not black.'

'Well, now I come to think of it, did see a strange, sandy-coloured animal back in the 1970's..

I was driving up a moorland track to get to a lonely cottage, and I passed a high bank with big holes in it. A faun coloured animal sprang past as if in great shock, and disappeared in a second. At the time I thought it odd that a dog should go so completely wild, but now I think it might have been a Puma.'

The most sensational big cat encounter happened in 1995, or was it 1994?

Darnaway Castle and Darnaway Forest are not too far from here - that's where the Earl of Moray lives. John Doune, the Earl's son, is fascinated by big cat stories, and collects them all the time. But his father the Earl always scoffed. One day the Earl was walking in Darnaway Forest with his daughters Rhodesian Ridgeback, a big dog bred for lion-hunting. The dog ran up a bank, then ran down yelping. At first the Earl thought it was chasing something, but then it stopped and stood close to him, as if afraid. He looked up, and there on the bank was a big black cat glaring at him and snarling. In a moment it span round and disappeared. Son now, the Earl's a believer and his son John is jealous, and says; "Why couldn't it have been me?"

Two days later, the Earl and his wife were walking in the forest, when they heard a strange scream-like sound.'

Mrs Hilleary kindly drove me to most of the places where the big cat had been seen. All looked quite ordinary, by daylight at least.

'What do you think it is?' She asked me.

'Well, unless it's an animal new to science, I think it's a Puma', I replied.

'You know the fallow deer is an introduced species to Britain - in parks it's a sandy colour, with white spots, but in wild woodlands a dark, almost black, variety appears. This dark fallow deer is seldom seen in its native lands, the Mediterranean countries. Well, if Pumas were turned loose in the 1970's they would have been brown, like the animal you saw. Now that several generations have been raised in the wild, it may be that a black strain has developed, better suited to our climate.

The Pumas released would have been bred from captive stock, which may be the reason that their descendants are seen close by and are less elusive than our American Pumas. English rabbits, which seem very tame, are also descended from domestic animals that escaped from parks in the Middle Ages. However, the naturalist-author Di Francis believes that the cats are an undiscovered British Big Cat! Time will tell...

Bidding farewell to Mrs Hilleary and her friendly bull-terrier Haggis, I made plans to visit Di Francis in her Highland retreat. I was catching Big Cat Fever, like John Doune and the man who arrived on the scene when Felicity the Puma was caught, P.C. Cathcart of Inverness. He has now completed a vast log of big cat reports. Di Francis is the Queen or prima donna of Big Cat experts, and fortunately for myself, she had recently moved to Achanalt House, almost at the platform of Achanalt Station on the Highland line from Inverness.

She hurried down to meet me as I alighted from the train at a lonely spot. Forestry plantations, a mournful loch and tall, brooding mountains

made this the ideal place in which to be terrified by Big Cat stories.

Achanalt House, a former coaching inn, was draughty and not fully restored. A driven woman with dark hair and clear blue eyes, Di Francis is not a cosy soul, but passionately sincere. She told me of houses sold and hard-earned money spent in her twenty year quest to prove the existence of the British Big Cat. She has seen Big Cats nine times, seven of those in Scotland, and she has followed the Panther trail all over Britain. Her three books have made her well-known, but official recognition has always been denied her. High-up people in the museum would ridicule her stories in the desperate manner of men who fear that ridicule might be directed against themselves. She believes there is a 'government cover-up', to prevent farmers from claiming compensation for their cat-mauled stock. In short, like everyone who has seen a big cat in Britain, she has succumbed to Big Cat Fever. The only cure for this malady is to pursue big cats until at last one is caught or shot, and officially recognised. Then will come vindication, fame, glory and your name immortalised in Latin.

A friend's great-uncle, Harry Johnston, discovered the giraffe-like Okapi in the African jungle, and the beast now bears the Latin name 'Okapia Johnstoni'.

Di Francis, however, is above earthly vanities, and only seeks the Truth.

Single-handedly, she follows up all the Big Cat stories and reports for miles around, is restoring her house and running a Rare Breeds Farm. Next year, the farm is to be open to the public, along with a Big Cat Exhibition, to earn the money for further research. Her spectacular Kellas Cats, Fred and Freda, are now dead, and the only felines on the premises are two household cats, Myson and Pansy. Myson disgraced himself by catching a lark, as Di and myself sat outside for a meal. We faced her paddocks of rare sheep, thoroughbred Shetland ponies and dear little black piglets which snuffled around. These were the unlikely progeny of a tiny Vietnamese Pigmy Sow and a huge grunting Gloucester Old Spot Boar. As we spoke, the twinkle-eyed piglets trotted smartly around the field.

'The last time I saw a Big Cat was two years ago, near Keith in north-east Scotland. O had been told that a big cat had been seen near a distillery, and I saw it from the train window as I was on the way there. Sightings mean nothing to me now. People see the Cat all the time, but no one knows what it is.

Of a dozen men working here on the railway, three had seen big cats, and seven knew drivers who'd seen them. Most of these men hadn't told each other about the cats, let alone any authority. Reported sightings are just the top of the iceberg - even sightings are the tip of the iceberg, compared to the amount of cats who remain unseen. There are thousands of such cats in Britain, wherever forestry offers them cover. Sheep, deer, rabbits - there's no shortage of food for them.

It's rubbish to say that they descend from creatures released after the 1976 Act. Reports of Big Cats go back over the centuries - they used to call them Black Dogs or Devil Dogs because they have strange

An indigenous wild animal that had retreated to obscure mountain fastnesses and then began to increase and spread out would first of all be reported in Scotland and would only reach the suburbs of London after many years had passed. Surrey, where a Weybridge pet shop sold Pumas in the early 70's, seems more like a starting point for Released Big Cat Territory. As the creatures grew wilder, they may have taken to the hills. The reason a large animal might have a dog's head could be because it is a dog. Great Danes, Greyhounds and even lurchers have bodies not unlike those of Cheetahs or other Big Cats. Such reasoning is heresy to Di Francis, a person I hold in great respect. If she is right, we could be in for the discovery of the century, and I hope she gets the credit for it.

Meanwhile, I had a guided tour of the farm, stepping awkwardly over wire fences in Di's agile wake. I saw deer-like sheep of many kinds, brought from the Hebrides at great expense. Many of these sheep resembled their wild ancestors, the Mouflon, a pale-brown Mediterranean animal. Centuries of Hebridean climate has caused their wool to become *dark* brown, and one little lamb was as black as a Moray Cat. Do proudly pointed out some seaweed-eating sheep from the island of North Ronaldsay. In their native haunts, these sheep had a semi-wild existence, eating seaweed on the beach. It is almost impossible, I was told, to persuade these sheep to eat grass. Among her other feats, Di seems to have reared a strain of grass-eating, seaweed-eating sheep.

'I have 80 sheep, 16 ponies, 3 goats and 7 pigs,' she counted. She seemed more worried about attacks from her neighbours Husky dogs than from Big Cats sneaking up on her rare sheep and 'Tups' (rams). All the same, she went on to tell me of a fairly recent Big Cat attack in sheep near Gardiston near Aberdeen. Apparently, farmer Stanley Windsor saw three black cats in one of his fields, feeding on a dead sheep. He actually shot one, a bull-necked, pug-nosed male, of the sort Di had described. The wounded beast retreated into a field of corn and lay low. Arriving on the scene, Di accompanied the farmer as he attempted to stalk and despatch the beast, supposedly lurking in the corn.

'It was extremely dangerous...I did go in.' Di said simply. However, the Big Cat had left the farm and escaped into the wilderness, there to mend or die. Di's idea of a male cat with a thick, jowly, dew-lapped head and a female of Panther-like proportions is not so strange when you think of the difference between the huge, ungainly bull sea-lion and the sleek female usually seen at safari parks. Di believes that the British Big Cat can be black, brown or even striped.

We moved into the house and she showed me stacks of reports on such cats, and the originals of the startling photographs I had seen in her books. Among the many letters she showed me was one, very well written, from a man who had seen a black Big Cat swimming in the River Dee. The writer refers to the creature as 'the beauty.'

First of all her saw her travelling rapidly through the water. Then he noticed the top of her head, half-submerged. Finally, 'my beauty' came to land and revealed herself as a gleaming wet, panther-like animal with a long, wavy tail. The letter was dated 15.4.94.

While I was revelling in this exquisite pen-portrait, Di sprang her first surpass on me. Opening a box, she suddenly produced an enormous cat-skull with formidable teeth and popped it on the table in front of me, with a fierce snap of its wired jaws. The animal that had worn that skull had been an unusually vigorous Bengal tiger.

'In 1988, two teenage boys found the skull by the side of a Dartmoor lane,' Di explained. *'Some years before that, almost at the same spot, a motorist was hit by what he thought was a big dog. He got out of the car only to be confronted by a second animal that had come to the aid of the first - an angry Big Cat! So he quickly jumped back in the car and drove off. Next morning, he came back to the same place, but there was no body. The cat must have crawled off to die, and this maybe its skull that you see here!'*

In that same year, 1988, a lamb was killed with a massive bite on its back from a mystery assailant. I took the skull to the vet's post mortem, and the teeth and jaw width exactly fitted the marks on the lamb. The skull is from Devon, but the lamb was killed in Keith in Scotland. These cats are country-wide.'

Di's second surprise was to produce, with a flourish, a stuffed Kellas Cat even more frightening than the one I'd seen in the museum at Elgin. Like its Elgin counterpart, its black fur was sprinkled with protruding white hairs like sparks on the coat of a Witch's Cat. Museum naturalists, thanks to Di's efforts, now acknowledge that the Kellas Cat exists, but seem undecided whether it's a pure-blooded wildcat of a black (or melanistic) kind, or a hybrid between a wildcat and a feral ('gone wild') house cat.

Could Di surprise me further? Yes, for she had begun lay out bone specimens for my inspection, somewhat hampered by her tame tortoiseshell (*'Pansy, get off those skulls'*).

Before me was the skull of her great discovery - the Dufftown Rabbit-Headed Cat! Compared with the skulls of wild and tame cats, the Rabbit-Headed's breastbone was long, with huge eardrums, a clamping jaw and what anthropologists would have once have described as 'a small cranial capacity. Judging by the skull, the wayfarer in the Highlands should beware of a long-headed wildcat with enormous ears and virtually no brain. Just as I was thinking, how ridiculous, Di opened an album and showed me photographs of two such animals, shot by gamekeepers in different parts of Scotland. Museum people have been confounded by this, but can only burble incoherently.

At last it was time for me to say goodbye to Scotland and its amazing cats, and Di saw me off on the train. While we waited on the platform, she gave a sudden, predator-like sniff and exclaimed; *'A dead sheep!'* I flagged down the train, but felt that it was already too late. I had caught Big Cat Fever. The only thing is to sweat it out, cold turkey. That reminds me, what about the Moray turkey farmer who is supposed to have shot a Big Cat last year?

Roy Kerridge.

September, 1996

STOP PRESS!!!

The Horror Of Holborn Square

Our correspondent Tommy Brown wrote to us recently regarding a spectral encounter in downtown Tranmere on Merseyside. We include his experience here by way of an appeal for further information concerning this area and its reputation for being a haunted spot.

Tommy takes up the story;

On the evening of November 4th, 1996, my workmate Jock and I were both working in a unit opposite our main place of work in Holborn Square, Tranmere. This unit had been loaned to us for a couple of weeks so that we could carry out extra work. As there was no electricity in the building we used petrol-powered lighting. As we finished for the day, at around about 7pm, I locked up the unit whilst Jock took the lighting equipment back to the main workplace. A few seconds later he came running back babbling about the place being haunted!!!

His reference to Ghosts immediately brought to mind a childhood memory from 1973. Coincidentally (?) the date had also been November 4th. On that occasion, a gang of us were out collecting Bonfire wood in and around Holborn Square, when one of our group suddenly went hysterical claiming that he had seen the figure of a small, grotesque old man leering at him before promptly vanishing into the night air.



Before I could answer Jock, he told me that he had just seen the dark, shadowy figure of a small man facing our workplace. The figure disappeared as he approached it. It had apparently appeared in exactly the same spot where our gang member had seen it (or something similar) 13 years earlier. Back in 1973,

the area contained several two up, two down houses. Now our work site has taken their place. Who was this ghostly figure? Why does he appear on November 4th?

There is a local story, now passed into the realms of folklore, that a man threw himself and his dog over the edge of the quarry that dominates the landscape around Holborn Square. I have heard rumours of at least three suicides in the area. The locale is also associated with the priory monks who were housed here of old. Interestingly, 'The Britannia Inn', 'Birkenhead's most haunted pub' (see DON #4) is only a few hundred yards from the site.

Can any of 'DON's readers help supply some further information?

You can write to us at our usual address.

BUFORA CONFERENCE TO TAKE PLACE IN LIVERPOOL

Local UFO investigators have recently labelled Merseyside as a 'Window Area' due to the extremely high number of UFO-related incidents that have taken place right across the county. (A good friend of the Editor's witnessed four triangular-shaped UFO's whilst returning home from West Kirkby last Summer. And in Wallasey, a work colleague's son twice saw a similar-shaped 'craft' on consecutive nights in September - Their full stories will appear in the next issue of DON).

It is widely expected that many more accounts will come to light when BUFORA holds its fourth Merseyside Conference at The Hague, in Maryland Street, Liverpool City Centre, on Saturday, November 30th. There will be a host of guest speakers and Anthony Eccles, who hails from Halewood, expects there to be plenty of revelations at the event. He was quoted as saying in 'THE LIVERPOOL ECHO'; *'The UFO phenomenon is real. At the conference we take people seriously and they are more than willing to share their experiences.'*

Dead Of Night plan to be there, and a full review of the conference will appear in the next issue...

IT'S RAINING JELLYFISH!!!

The Unidentified Flying Objects Reporting Service in Tasmania, has recently been bombarded with accounts of strange lights being seen in the sky, followed by reports of fireballs. That was strange enough. What was even

weirder, was the news that subsequent to these sightings, it was reported to have rained slime that looked a lot like jellyfish.

The UFO Hotline has received more calls over two days in early November than they had over the past four years, according to their spokesman Ross Howe.

One witness, Marlene Smith, woke to find blobs in front of her house in Kempton, near Hobart. 'It was queer stuff. White clear jelly, oodles of it,' claimed Marlene.

The slimy substance apparently came down after a night of thunderstorms, which had been preceded by an unusual sight in the night sky. Her husband, Barry, saw a ball of yellowish fire fall from the sky.

A nearby farmer also found a paddock covered with the jelly-like substance on the same morning.

Ross Dowe suggested that the most likely explanation is that 'it might be fish eggs, or it could be a baby jellyfish.'

2nd November, 1996. Hobart, Tasmania.
'LIVERPOOL ECHO'.

And Finally, Yet More News About Life On Mars

At the time of going to press, the furore over the discovery of the Martian Meteorite had all but died down. It was in fact, starting to fizzle out like a damp squib that's long gone spinning to the sleeping earth.

However, just as I was about to run off the magazine, along came further 'proof' that life may well have existed, and maybe still does, on that 'remote, forbidding planet.'

Another meteorite from Mars is being investigated by British scientists and the scientific community was once more up in arms. A conference at London's Royal Society was informed of 'the strongest support yet for the hypothesis that life once existed on the planet Mars.' The nature of the new evidence is threefold. First, it has been confirmed that a Martian meteorite EETA 79001, discovered in 1979, contains organic material indigenous to the sample.

Second, tiny amounts of carbonate separated from the meteorite ALH 84001 - the NASA meteorite - contains a component which has a carbon isotopic composition, suggesting that it was formed from microbially-produced methane.

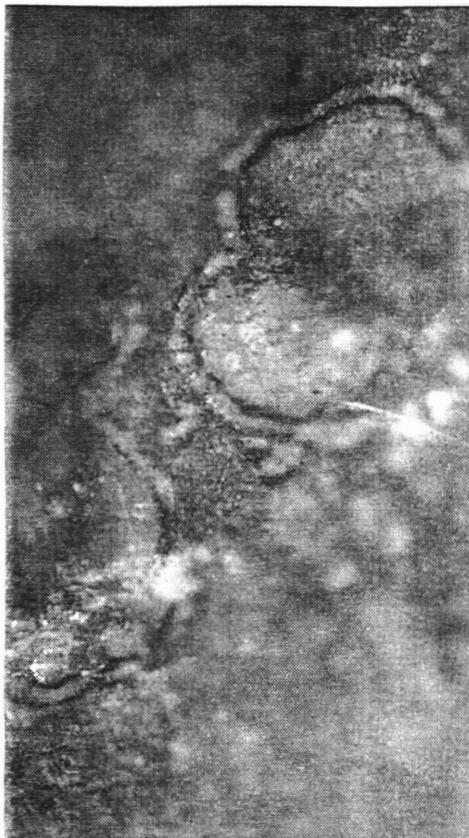
Thirdly, the isotopic composition matches values measured for organic matter in rocks accepted as the location of Earth's oldest fossils.'

The scientists responsible for the news of this finding include Dr Monica Grady of the Natural History Museum, who was initially highly sceptical of NASA's announcement during the Summer.

'Earlier workers have reported evidence for 3.6 billion-year-old fossils in a rock from Mars. However, if results from 79001 are accepted, then life could have been operating on Mars 600,000 years ago. Geologically speaking, this is sufficiently recently for there to be a good chance that life might still exist in protected areas on our neighbour.

Patrick Moore, ever the hard-boiled realist, was still rather more sceptical;

The Martian Meteorite ALH 84001: The globules pictured here have been positively identified as being carbonates by a team of scientists



'It is all very interesting. I think it adds to the possibility that there is life on Mars. It is not conclusive but there is a lot of this evidence.

There are no little green men, and nothing so advanced as a dandelion. But if we are going to find life on our Solar System, it will be on Mars. And it could take the form of these microbes.

Meteorite 79001 blew off Mars 600,000 years ago and landed, once more, in Antarctica 13,000 years ago.

Professor Pillinger was quoted as saying; 'We have identified this second meteorite, 79001, which appears to contain materials which were defined as organic. It is mostly carbon and burns at temperatures we associate with organic matter.

Also in the past two days we have extracted a few microscopic grains from the carbonate in meteorite 84001. We actually found in that a component we have not yet identified, but which has this signature which suggests that it is enriched in Carbon 12 isotopes. On Earth, the only thing which we find enriched with Carbon 12 are methane produced by organisms.

The sort of things which produce this type of methane are microbes. On Earth they live in paddy fields or cows' guts. But these are the sorts of organisms that existed on Earth 3.5 billion years ago. From them, more complicated life, including humans, evolved.'

The Natural History Museum later offered to let scientists study a 1,300 million-year-old Martian meteorite untouched by man since it was brought to London from Egypt in 1913.

The rock could well provide yet more clues. We await the results with huge interest.